

## ■ VYĀSA'S *BAKAVADHAPARVAN*: A SOURCE FOR BHĀSA'S *MADHYAMAVYĀYOGA*

Roberto Morales-Harley

*University of Costa Rica*

As its primary/explicit source, the *Madhyamavyāyoga* has the *Hiḍimbavadhparvan*, where Bhīma kills Hiḍimba and marries his sister Hiḍimbā. As a possible secondary/implicit source, it also has the *Bakavadhparvan*, where Bhīma kills Baka and ends up saving a brahman and his family. This paper proposes a comparison between the two epic sources, on one hand, and the dramatic adaptation, on the other, to determine the key features of such supposed merging. To that end, it examines (1) psycho-affective components (*sneha*), (2) socio-cultural components (*dharma*), and (3) religio-philosophical components (*toya/jala*). The main conclusion is that, on these subjects, the resemblances of the play with the story of Baka are more significant than those with the story of Hiḍimba.

### INTRODUCTION

The *Madhyamavyāyoga* is one of the thirteen plays that Gaṇapati Śāstrī discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century CE and proceeded to attribute to the legendary Sanskrit playwright Bhāsa, who himself might have lived around the third century CE. However, it is worth noting that not all scholars agree even on such basic matters as the dating of the plays, their attribution to Bhāsa, or a single playwright for that matter. This disagreement came to be known as the “Bhāsa problem”, and it is still subject to some debate (Esposito 2010: 1–13).

The scholarly view regarding the sources of the *Madhyamavyāyoga* can be summarized in the three following statements: the play is not a dramatization of the *Mahābhārata*, it is the product of an adaptation of the *Hiḍimbavadhparvan*, and it is the product of a *contaminatio* of the story of Bhīma and Hiḍimbā with some other story.

The play is not a dramatization, that is, “a dramatized version” (“Dramatization” n.d.: para. 2), of the *Mahābhārata*. This is the view of Pusalker (1940: 84): “No trace of the former [the main plot] being found in the *Mbh*, it is said to be of the poet’s own creation”; Dasgupta & De (1947: 724): “It is a story which is wholly invented”; Unni (2000 [1978]: 35): “it is generally held that it [the main story] is practically the poet’s own invention”; Haksar (1993: 4): “The story of the present play is evidently Bhāsa’s own creation”; and Menon (1996: lii): “It [the plot] is apparently a creation of the poet’s own fertile imagination.”

The play is the product of an adaptation – that is, “an interactive, relational process that changes entities to suit new environments” (Elliott 2020: 198) – of the *Hiḍimbavadhparvan*. Such opinion

has been sustained by Woolner & Sarup (1930: 141): “This one-act play is founded on an incident in the *Mahābhārata* [MBh. 1.139–144]”; and Sutherland Goldman (2017: 230): “The background of the story is an episode from the *Mahābhārata* [MBh. 1.139–144].”

The play is the product of a *contaminatio* – namely, “the procedure of [...] incorporating material from another [...] play into the primary play which he [the playwright] was adapting” (Brown 2015: para. 1) – of the story of Bhīma and Hiḍimbā with some other story. The latter could have come from the “Ghaṭotkaca-legend”, as postulated by Raychaudhuri (1934: 30): “Ghaṭotkaca’s hostilities to Brāhmaṇas and sacrifices must have been known to the writer of these verses [MBh. 7.156.25–26]”; and Salomon (2010: 8): “the MV can be understood as an adaptation and expansion of the original *Mahābhārata* legends about Ghaṭotkaca, partly by way of a ‘contaminatio’”.

The other story could have also come from the “Śunahśepa-legend”, as claimed by Pusalker (1940: 203): “The latter episode [the subsidiary one] was [...] suggested by the Śunahśepākhyāna in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* [AitBr. 7.15.7, 14–18]”; Brückner (1999/2000: 521): “the Śunahśepa-legend of the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* to which the text alludes almost literally (VII.15.7)”; and Sutherland Goldman (2017: 239): “The theme of the unloved and unwanted middle child has antecedents in the Śunahśepa story, known in its earliest version in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.15.14–18.”

A third possible origin for the other story is the *Bakavadhāparvan*. After first being suggested by Pavolini (1918/1920: 1), this hypothesis has been revisited by Devadhar (1927: 63); Menon (1996: lv): “Ghaṭotkaca had to carry away one of the brāhmaṇas in order to fall in line with the wishes of his mother. When ordered by his mother Bhīma had offered himself as prey to the man-eater Baka”; Brückner (1999/2000: 521): “The motives of the middle one and the substitution of a Kṣatriya for a Brahmin have structural parallels in the MBh-story of the killing of Baka (I.10.147, *Bakavadhāparvan*)”; Salomon (2010: 7): “Although Ghaṭotkaca does not figure in the story of the demon Baka, one may well surmise that this incident, given its proximity in the original epic, inspired the playwright’s elaboration of the older Ghaṭotkaca legends”; and Sutherland Goldman (2017: 239): “The other most probable source of Bhāsa’s play, as noted by Devadhar, is the story of the demon Baka in the *Mahābhārata*.”

In agreement with this third view, it is argued here that the *Madhyamavyāyoga* is a dramatic *contaminatio* of the epic stories from the *Hiḍimbavadhāparvan* and the *Bakavadhāparvan*. What is meant by that is simply that those two are its main sources but not necessarily its only sources. This analysis is based on the premises that the *Mahābhārata* is a unitary work of literature (Hiltebeitel 2001) and that the plays of Bhāsa can and should be appreciated on their literary merits regardless of their authorship problems (Brückner 1999/2000; Salomon 2010; Sutherland Goldman 2017).

In other words, the paper argues that in the *Madhyamavyāyoga* there is a poetic depth of the influence from both the *Hiḍimbavadhāparvan* and the *Bakavadhāparvan*, and that the quantity and quality of such indebtedness can be exemplified through an analysis of three key terms: *sneha*, *dharma*, and *toya/jala*. The aim of this analysis is to raise awareness about *contaminatio*, or the merging of stories, as a useful procedure employed by Sanskrit playwrights as part of their creative process.

## SUMMARIZED PLOTS OF THE STORIES

The *Mahābhārata* is a narrative about duty, devotion, active life and refraining from worldly acts, education, genealogies, power struggles, and the destruction of a generation of heroes. During the first of its eighteen books, the *Ādiparvan*, the readers learn about narrative frames and plot summaries, backstories and substories, remarkable births and partial incarnations, weddings and kingdoms, house fires and forest fires, and much, much more. At some point, the narrative focuses on two sets of cousins, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, as well as on the injustices perpetrated by the latter against the former. After a fire in a lacquer house that was plotted as a murder attempt, the Pāṇḍavas go to the forest and, during their journey, fight supernatural beings like *gandharvas* and *rākṣasas*. Before proceeding with the argument, it is necessary to give a summary of the three stories about Bhīma's encounters with *rākṣasas*: Hiḍimba, Baka, and Ghaṭotkaca. The first two come from the *Mahābhārata*, whereas the last one is found in the *Madhyamavyāyoga*.

The story of the *rākṣasa* Hiḍimba (*MBh.* 1.139–144) is set in a forest, at night. Bhīma is awake, while the other Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī are sleeping. Meanwhile, Hiḍimba and his sister Hiḍimbā are watchful. Hiḍimba orders Hiḍimbā to fetch the humans for their meal, but Hiḍimbā falls in love with Bhīma. Hiḍimba decides to kill them himself, but Bhīma stands in his way. Their fight comes to an end when Bhīma breaks Hiḍimba in half. Then, the war theme makes room for the love theme. Hiḍimbā asks to marry Bhīma, and the two of them are instructed to consummate their marriage during the day and to be back by the following night. A single day is enough for their son Ghaṭotkaca to be born as a fully grown youth. Immediately, Vyāsa (in character) makes sure that the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī make it to the next stop in their journey.

The story of the *rākṣasa* Baka (*MBh.* 1.145–152) is set in a town called Ekacakrā, and its actions unfold throughout several days. Bhīma is keeping Kuntī company while the other Pāṇḍavas are out begging for alms. Meanwhile, the brahman in whose house they are staying starts to lament out loud. Bhīma and Kuntī overhear the conversation between the brahman and his family. The brahman is facing either his own death or that of one of the members of his family. The brahman's wife is willing to sacrifice herself, for as she sees it, her life is the one thing that she has not yet given to him. The brahman's older daughter steps up, too, for in her opinion, a daughter is always one to be given away. And the brahman's younger son even offers to protect them all with a sword-like straw.

The cause for their grief is revealed in retrospect. Baka demands that the townsfolk offer themselves, by turns, as part of his meal. The next day, the victim is supposed to come from the brahman's house. However, when Bhīma fills in for him, he taunts Baka by eating the food that was intended as his offering. Baka responds by throwing a tree at Bhīma. After some more fighting with trees, Bhīma breaks Baka in half. The townsfolk, unexpectedly set free, ask the brahman about the giant corpse at their city gate, but the brahman, honoring a promise that he had made, does not reveal the identities of his guests.

Lastly, the story of the *rākṣasa* Ghaṭotkaca (*MV*) takes place in the Kuru jungle, between the villages of Yūpa and Udyāmaka (*MV* 31.12–13).<sup>1</sup> Its actions unfold, as expected from any

---

1 For the *Madhyamavyāyoga*, the text from Bhāsa-Projekt Universität Würzburg (2007) is followed. The English translations are by the author.

*vyāyoga* (NS 18.90),<sup>2</sup> within a single day. The brahman Keśavadāsa is walking at ease with his wife and his three sons, up until Ghaṭotkaca starts following them. The brahman wants to call the Pāñḍavas for help, but his eldest son informs him that nearly all the Pāñḍavas are away for a sacrifice, that Bhīma alone is overseeing their hermitage, and that Bhīma too is temporarily out for his exercise routine. The eldest son pleads for Ghaṭotkaca's mercy, and Ghaṭotkaca agrees to take only one person with him, as a meal for his mother. Following their unanimous self-sacrifice, Ghaṭotkaca rejects the brahman, for he would be too old for his mother's taste, as well as the wife, who as a woman would not interest his mother either. The brahman impedes Ghatotkaca from taking the eldest son, and his wife does the same for the youngest son. Stoically, the remaining "Middle One" just asks to go to a nearby pond to get some water before facing his destiny.

Ghaṭotkaca starts calling him, but another "Middle One" answers his call. Bhīma and Ghaṭotkaca are near mirror images of each other (Salomon 2010: 13–17). The brahman recognizes Bhīma from the latter's use of the name "Middle One" for himself. So, when the middle son gets back from the pond, the brahman asks for Bhīma's help. Bhīma recognizes Ghaṭotkaca from the latter's mention of his mother Hiḍimbā, and so Bhīma offers himself as her meal. Father and son fight each other, resorting, among other things, to some tree-throwing. Hiḍimbā recognizes Bhīma just by looking at him, but Ghaṭotkaca only recognizes Bhīma once Hiḍimbā addresses him as her husband. Then, father and son embrace each other. In the end, they all go their separate ways.

Moving on to the level of details, the epic story of Baka and the dramatic story of Ghaṭotkaca share the family of brahmans, the single-member choice, the multiple-member volunteering, the water offering related to death, the intervention by Bhīma, and the hero-versus-ogre duel. Out of all these possibilities, three key terms have been chosen to pursue the claim of a *contaminatio*: *sneha* and *dharma*, as correlate causes of the multiple-member volunteering, and *toya/jala*, as a sign of the relation between the water offering and death. The idea is that the phraseology from the *Madhyamavyāyoga* mirrors both that of the *Hidimbavadhaparvan* and that of the *Bakavadhaparvan*, precisely because the epic author intended for them to be taken in tandem.

As stated, the chosen key terms (*sneha*, *dharma*, and *toya/jala*) relate to only two of the main parallelisms between the *Bakavadhaparvan* and the *Madhyamavyāyoga*: namely, the multiple-member volunteering and the water offering related to death. If the emphasis on these two themes appearing in the epic source can be identified in the dramatic adaptation, too, and if the phrasing around the key terms within both texts coincides, then a case can be made in favour of the poetic depth of the influence. Nonetheless, further studies on the other parallelisms (the family of brahmans, the single-member choice, the intervention by Bhīma, and the hero-versus-ogre duel), and on other key terms as well, should also be carried out if one wants to reach more definitive conclusions about this type of proposal. Hopefully, this paper is the first of many on this topic.

## PSYCHO-AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS (SNEHA)

The noun *sneha*, coming from the verb root *√snih* 'is moist' or 'is fond of' (Mayrhofer 1976), means both 'fat' and 'appetite/love' (Monier-Williams 1899). A broadening of the semantic

2 For the *Nātyaśāstra*, the text from the Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (2020) is followed.

field can be inferred from the fact that the latter sense appears from the epic onwards. Moreover, there is a clear path from the “stickiness” of being moist, through the “greasiness” of being fatty, and up to the “attachment” of being fond of something or someone.

By looking at the three texts under study, there are a total of nine uses of *sneha*: five in the story of Hiḍimba, two in the story of Baka, and two more in the story of Ghaṭotkaca. Among these nine uses, there are three examples of it functioning as an uncompounded noun, as well as six cases of it working as part of a compound, where it appears twice as the first member and four times as the second member. These six compounds can be further subdivided into one *avyayībhāva*, one *bahuvrīhi*, and four of the *tatpuruṣa* type.

In the *Hiḍimbavadhaparvan*,<sup>3</sup> the word first occurs near the very beginning, when Hiḍimba is talking to Hiḍimbā about his fondness of human flesh.

#### Passage 1

*upapannaś cirasyādyā bhakṣo mama manahpriyah |  
snehasravān prasravati jihvā paryeti me mukham ||*

Today, at last, I have obtained my favourite food. My tongue pours out streams of appetite and makes its way around my mouth.

(*MBh.* 1.139.5)<sup>4</sup>

In this context, the *tatpuruṣa sneha-srava* is the object of Hiḍimba's watering tongue. Also, the sense of moistness is emphasized by the repetition of *srava* ‘stream’ and *pra-śru* ‘pour out’. Just ten verses later, the second occurrence of the word is to be found. Having been talked into it by Hiḍimba, Hiḍimbā is now pondering whether to take all the Pāñdavas, together with Kuntī, and turn them into a meal for her and her brother, or to take just Bhīma and turn him into her husband.

#### Passage 2

*nāham bhrātrvaco jātu kuryām krūropasamhitam |  
patisneho 'tibalavān na tathā bhrātrṣauḥṛdam ||*

I would never follow the cruel orders of my brother. **Love** for a husband is very strong, friendship with a brother, not so much.

(*MBh.* 1.139.15)

Hiḍimbā's thought process is dichotomous: on one side, there is the actual brother/sister relationship, which represents nothing but kindheartedness; on the other, there is the potential husband/wife relationship, which amounts to a stronger kind of affection. In her hierarchy of values, *sneha* trumps *sauḥṛda*; personal ties trump those of kinship. The *tatpuruṣa pati-sneha* refers to Hiḍimbā's feelings towards Bhīma.

As a sort of conceptual frame for this first *rākṣasa* narrative, *sneha* next appears near its end. Just as Vyāsa the author showcases his skill in weaving together two back-to-back stories about ogres, so too does Vyāsa the character make his appearance to steer the characters – and the plot – in the right direction. And “love” seems to be a key component of his guidance. If Hiḍimba

3 For the *Mahābhārata*, the text from Sukthankar et al. (1971 [1933]) is followed. The English translations have been made by the author.

4 The boldface has been added throughout by the author.

and Hiḍimbā are to be credited with two utterances of the word in chapter 139, now, in chapter 144, after four consecutive *sneha*-free chapters in this six-chapter story, Vyāsa mentions it thrice in a mere two-*śloka* utterance.

### Passage 3

*samās te caiva me sarve yūyam caiva na samśayah |  
dīnato bālataś caiva **sneham** kurvanti bāndhavāḥ ||  
tasmād abhyadhikāḥ **sneho** yuṣmāsu mama sāmpratam |  
**snehapūrvam** cikīrṣāmi hitam vas tan nibodhata ||*

All they and you are the same for me, no doubt about it; but relatives show their **love** for the sake of the young and wretched. Therefore, I currently have more **love** for you; and preceded by **love**, I wish to do you a service, so listen.

(*MBh.* 1.144.9–10)

Talking to the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī, Vyāsa first says that, as their relative, he loves both them and their cousins the same, but also that any relative shows their love to a higher degree when it comes to those who need it the most. The *bāndhava* clearly recalls Hiḍimbā's conundrum, but it does so with a twist: now blood ties appear to be more relevant. Nevertheless, the most interesting detail in this speech is the fact that, although there is a theoretical sameness in the matter of family love, there is also a factual difference due to circumstances: *sāmpratam*. Therefore, the *sneha* from 10a is qualified as *abhyadhika*. Lastly, the *avyayībhāva snehapūrvam* serves to connect the general to the particular in an almost syllogistic manner: all relatives love; Vyāsa is a relative and, therefore, Vyāsa loves. The repetition of *kurvanti* and *cikīrṣāmi* further supports this claim.

As was the case with Hiḍimba, both appearances of *sneha* in the *Bakavadhaparvan* have been incorporated into its beginning. The troubled brahman is lamenting with his family as his immediate audience, but also loud enough so that Bhīma and Kuntī can hear him. In a *śāstra*-like form, the brahman warns his family members, as well as Bhīma and Kuntī (not to mention the readers themselves), about the dangers of becoming overly attached to *artha*, because all that has been won could just as easily be lost. Wanting things is bad for self-realization; having them and losing them, even worse.

### Passage 4

*arthepsutā param duḥkham arthaprāptau tato 'dhikam |  
jātasnehasya cārtheṣu viprayoge mahattaram ||*

The desire for possessions is great misery; in obtaining possessions, misery is greater than that; but the greatest misery is when someone who has come to **love** possessions loses them.

(*MBh.* 1.145.24)

The *bahuvrīhi jāta-sneha* is used with the sense of being fond of one's possessions. Now, is the brahman referring to his attachment to his family, or is he thinking of his wife's attachment to their town? The text is intentionally ambiguous in this respect. Nonetheless, it is quite straightforward in its use of (*a*)*dhika*, which was also present in Vyāsa's friendly words of advice.

A dozen verses later, the brahman, still in the same setting of lament, utters the words that might have inspired the author of the play to merge this story with the one about Hiḍimba.

### Passage 5

*manyante ke cid adhikam sneham putre pitur narāḥ |  
kanyāyām naiva tu punar mama tulyāv ubhau matau ||*

Some men consider the **love** of a father for his son to be greater than that for his daughter; however, I consider them to be equal.

(*MBh.* 1.145.36)

Love can be seen as manifesting itself in varying degrees, an idea already developed in passages 2 and 3. And there are two ways of looking at it: either as *tulya*, which resounds with the *sama* from passage 3, or as *adhika*, which echoes the *abhyadhika* also from passage 3. Furthermore, the brahman's dilemma can be taken as an extrapolation of that of Hidimbā: if a husband is more valuable than a brother, then who stands out between a son and a daughter? The epic's father is undecided.

The play's father right up front chooses his eldest son. This, paired with his wife's choice, favouring their youngest son, leaves the second son believing himself to be 'unwanted' (*anisṭa*; *MV* 19.3), that is, 'unloved'. Nevertheless, he still considers himself fortunate, for he can help those who could not help him.

### Passage 6

*dhanyo 'smi yad guruprāṇāḥ svaiḥ prāṇaiḥ parirakṣitāḥ |  
bandhusneḥād dhi mahataḥ kāla-snehas tu durlabhaḥ ||*

I am fortunate that the lives of my elders are protected by my own life. Indeed, an unusual **appetite** for death results from a great **love** for one's relatives.

(*MV* 20)

The two compounds of the *atpuruṣa* type that are found in 20c and 20d nearly equate the love for one's relatives (*bandhu-sneha*) and the "love" for death (*kāla-sneha*). Since the apple tends to not fall far from the tree, the resolute son chooses death (*kāla*) over life (*prāṇa*) – or, to put it another way, he chooses other people's lives over his own. The *bandhu* recalls the *bāndhava* from passage 3; the *maha*, the (*abhy*)*adhika* from passages 3, 4 and 5. On the other hand, the son from the play who puts others before him contrasts with the father from the epic who puts neither daughter nor son first.

It is here contended that the playwright brings together these two stories, among other things, through the *sneha* motif: The *kāla-sneha*, with its reference to death, connects to the epic story of Hidimba, whereas the *bandhu-sneha*, with its family connotations, points to the epic story of Baka.

## SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPONENTS (DHARMA)

The noun *dharma*, derived from the verb root  $\sqrt{dhṛ}$  'bear', means, among other things, 'duty', 'law', and 'nature' (Monier-Williams 1899). These meanings reveal three correlated senses: respectively, an individual and moral one, a social and ethical one, and a cosmological one. More importantly, *dharma* is one of the main subjects of the *Mahābhārata* itself (Biardeau 1981).

In the texts under consideration, the word occurs an astounding thirty-nine times: sixteen in the *Hidimbavadhaparvan*, twenty-two in the *Bakavadhaparvan*, and one in the *Madhyamavyāyoga*. The uses include fourteen uncompounded nouns, four derivatives, and

twenty-one compounds, which in turn can be further analysed as eleven *tatpuruṣas*, seven *upapadas*,<sup>5</sup> two *karmadhārayas*, and one *dvandva*.

In the story of Hiḍimba, Hiḍimbā is the first to adduce *dharma* as a reason for compelling Bhīma to do the “right” thing, which would be to marry her.

#### Passage 7

*etad vijñāya dharmajñā yuktam mayi samācara |  
kāmopahatacittāngīm bhajamānām bhajasva mām ||*

Knowing this, O expert **on duty**, do right by me; since I am in love, with my mind and my body affected with passion, love me back.

(MBh. 1.139.24)

The *upapada dharma-jñā* is used as a vocative for Bhīma, as well as a reminder of his code of conduct as a *kṣatriya*. Hiḍimbā’s reasoning is that anyone who is acquainted with this overarching duty would have to act accordingly. When tackling the *sneha*, two diverging perspectives stood out: family love and husband/wife love. This first appearance of *dharma* would agree with the latter. In fact, there is an emphatic repetition of *bhajamāna* and *√bhaj*, which also directs one’s attention to the love theme.

Also, as was the case with *sneha*, *dharma* is absent from the next three chapters, only to reappear near the end of the narrative, now with fifteen appearances.

#### Passage 8

*mayā hy utsṛjya suhṛdaḥ svadharmaṇi svajanam tathā |  
vṛto 'yam puruṣavyāghras tava putraḥ patiḥ śubhe ||*

O fair one, having abandoned my friends, my own **duty**, and my family, I chose this tigerlike son of yours as my husband.

(MBh. 1.143.7)

Yudhiṣṭhira warns Bhīma to follow his duty (*dharma*; MBh. 1.143.2d) by not killing Hiḍimbā. This represents the first step away from the war theme that characterized Bhīma’s encounter with Hiḍimba. And shortly thereafter, Hiḍimbā tells Kuntī, as a way of trying to get her potential mother-in-law on her side, about everything that she has had to leave behind. The already discussed *suhṛda*, as well as the *jana*, refers to Hiḍimba. The *karmadhāraya sva-dharma*, in turn, alludes to Hiḍimbā’s duty in terms of blood ties. Nonetheless, Hiḍimbā knows her audience enough to direct her *dharma*-arguments to the Dharma king himself.

#### Passage 9

*āpadas tarane prāṇān dhārayed yena yena hi |  
sarvam ādr̥tya kartavyam tad dharmam anuvartatā ||  
āpatsu yo dhārayati dharmam dharmavid uttamah |  
vyasanam hy eva dharmasya dharmīnām āpad ucyate ||  
puṇyam prāṇān dhārayati puṇyam prāṇadam ucyate |  
yena yenācared dharmam tasmin garhā na vidyate ||*

5 An *upapada* is a *tatpuruṣa* whose second member is an adjusted verbal root.

In overcoming distress, one should preserve life in whichever way; the person who is following that **duty** must do everything with care. He who preserves his **duty** while in distress is the foremost expert **on duty**, for a period of distress is said to be the very ruin of the **duty** of the **dutiful**. Merit preserves life; merit is said to be life-giving. Whichever way one might do one's **duty**, one is never criticized.

(*MBh.* 1.143.13–15)

When talking to Yudhiṣṭhīra, Hiḍimbā mentions *dharma* four more times, including two new uses: one is the *upapada dharma-vid*, which closely resembles the *dharma-jñā* from passage 7, and the other is the derivative *dharmin*, whose sense is also similar. Distress (*āpad*), repeated three times in just as many *ślokas*, points to a whole subset of uses of *dharma* within the *Mahābhārata* (Bowles 2007).

Once Yudhiṣṭhīra gives Kuntī his answer, which naturally approves of her duty (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.143.16c), the narrative closes with several other mentions, which no longer refer specifically to the situation at hand. According to the text, the Pāṇḍavas collectively are experts on duty (*dharma-jñā*; *MBh.* 1.144.5c), whereas the Kauravas are living un-dutifully (*a-dharma*; *MBh.* 1.144.7c). The *nañ<sup>6</sup> tatpuruṣa* is, then, quite appropriate for them. Yudhiṣṭhīra himself is referred to as the son of Dharma (*dharma-putra*; *MBh.* 1.144.13b), the Dharma king (*dharma-rāj*; *MBh.* 1.144.13d), the one who will triumph through his duty (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.144.14a), and an expert on duty (*dharma-vid*; *MBh.* 1.144.14b).

The story of Baka evinces a greater emphasis on the subject, especially in its opening chapters: 145 is dedicated to the brahman's *dharma*; 146 to that of his wife; and 147 to that of his daughter. The first mention has the noun (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.145.22a), alongside *artha* and *kāma*, as one of the *puruṣārthas*.

#### Passage 10

*sahadharma-carīm dāntām nityām mātṛsamām mama |  
sakhāyām vihitām devair nityām paramikām gatim ||*

You are my patient partner **in duty**; you are always like a mother to me; you are the friend the gods supplied me with; you are always my ultimate resource.

(*MBh.* 1.145.31)

Here, the brahman moves away from the general sense of the *dvandva dharmārtha* and into the particular one of the *tatpuruṣa saha-dharma-carī*, which serves to characterize his wife as a “partner” precisely on this matter. The *sama* could allow for a reading of family love having been substituted for husband/wife love, a procedure that closely resembles the one seen in the story of Hiḍimba in the case of Hiḍimbā's pondering. In this sense, the *sakhi* would echo the *s(a)uhṛda* from passages 2 and 8 as well.

The wife from the *Bakavadhaparvan* is the character that most utilizes the word *dharma*, with thirteen instances. According to her, duty (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.146.6a, 6c) is the topic of her speech. First, if the brahman were to die and leave their son fatherless, she would have to instill in him all the good qualities that his father would have wanted him to have. And those qualities have to do with duty, since the brahman is well acquainted with duty (*dharma-darśivas*; *MBh.* 1.146.15d).

<sup>6</sup> A *nañ* is a *tatpuruṣa* in which *na* is reduced to *a(n)*, used to negate.

### Passage 11

tad idam yac cikīrṣāmi **dharmyam** paramasaṁmatam |  
 iṣṭam caiva hitam caiva tava caiva kulasya ca ||  
 iṣṭāni cāpy apatyāni dravyāṇi suhṛdah priyāḥ |  
 āpaddharmavimokṣāya bhāryā cāpi satām matam ||

I want to do this, which is **dutiful**, highly regarded, certainly wanted, and beneficial both for you and for our family. Children, possessions, and dear friends are wanted for a deliverance from **the duty** of distress, and so is the wife, as is known by the wise.

(MBh. 1.146.25–26)

Then, the wife qualifies her own self-sacrifice with the derivative *dharmya*. Once again, there seems to be a contrast between friends (*suhṛda*) and family (*apatyā* and *bhāryā*). In addition, the *tatpuruṣa āpad-dharma-vimokṣa* serves to revisit the subject of distress.

The following reasoning by the wife mirrors Vyāsa's syllogistic use of *dharma* during the transition between the two *rākṣasa* narratives.

### Passage 12

avadhyāḥ striya ity āhur **dharmajñā** **dharmaniścaye** |  
**dharmajñān** rākṣasān āhur na hanyāt sa ca mām api ||  
 niḥsamśayo vadah pūṇṣām strīṇām samśayito vadah |  
 ato mām eva **dharmajñā** prasthāpayitum arhasi ||  
 bhuktam priyāṇy avāptāni **dharmaś** ca carito mayā |  
 tvatprasūtih priyā prāptā na mām tapsyaty ajīvitam ||

In their inquiry **about duty**, the experts **on duty** have said that women are not to be killed, and they have said that rakshasas are experts **on duty**, so perhaps he will not kill me. The killing of men is unproblematic, but the killing of women is problematic, so, O expert **on duty**, you should send me away. I loved, I fulfilled my pleasures, I did my **duty**, I had your dear children; death will not bother me.

(MBh. 1.146.29–31)

Resorting to the *dharma-jñā*, which by this point starts to look very much like a Leitmotif, the wife assumes that since experts on duty are against the killing of women, and since *rākṣasas* are supposed to be experts on duty, then a *rākṣasa* such as Baka might not kill her. By the same logic, an expert on duty such as her brahman husband would have to agree to letting her go. What stands out in the previous passage is the laconic summary that the wife gives of her own life: love and pleasure, check; children and duty, check and check; so, what else is there left to do but die? As per her moral code, she has already accomplished all her goals.

### Passage 13

utsṛjyāpi ca mām ārya vetyasya anyām api striyam |  
 tatah pratiṣṭhito **dharma** bhavisyati punas tava ||  
 na cāpy **adharmaḥ** kalyāṇa bahupatnīkatā nrñām |  
 strīṇām **adharmaḥ** sumahān bhartuḥ pūrvasya laṅghane ||

Moreover, O sir, having abandoned me, you will find another woman; then, your **duty** will once again be steadfast. O good sir, having several wives is not **undutiful** for men; but for women, moving beyond a former husband is very **undutiful**.

(MBh. 1.146.33–34)

After that, the wife goes on to establish a contrast between the duty of women and that of men. If hers is to die, his is to remarry, for men are allowed to have more than one wife, even when women are not. What is *dharma* for a man can be *a-dharma* for a woman. The *nañ tatpuruṣa* is the same one that appeared when contrasting the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, implying that, as is well known in the *Mahābhārata*, duty is relative (Matilal 2002: 19–35).

Once the wife has said her piece, the daughter speaks up as well.

#### Passage 14

*dharma* 'ham parityājyā yuvayor nātra samśayah |  
tyaktavyām mām parityajya trātam sarvam mayaikayā ||

Acting **from duty**, you two must give me away, no doubt about it; so, by being given away as I am supposed to be, I can sort everything out all on my own.

(*MBh.* 1.147.3)

Based on the derivative *dharma*tas, the daughter argues that, since a daughter is to eventually be given away (in marriage), then the brahman and his wife might as well sooner rather than later give her away (as a sacrifice). Cleverly, she is using  $\sqrt{tyaj}$ , which means ‘offer (as a sacrifice)’ (Monier-Williams 1899), as if it were a synonym of  $\sqrt{dā}$ , which means ‘give (in marriage)’ (Monier-Williams 1899).

Then, taking after her mother, the daughter minimizes her importance by claiming that both the wife, who has already spoken, and the son, who has yet to share his thoughts, outrank her. In her opinion, by giving her away, the brahman will kill two birds with one stone: he will get rid of the “problem” (*kṛcchra*; *MBh.* 1.147.11b–c) of having a daughter, and he will follow his duty (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.147.11d). A similar reasoning serves to close her argument, by saying that saving himself and abandoning her are but two sides of the same coin. It is all for the sake of duty, as boiled down by the *tatpuruṣa dharmārtha* (*MBh.* 1.147.15a), which not coincidentally occurs in a *śloka* that also repeats the  $\sqrt{tyaj}$  discussed in passage 14.

After the focus on *dharma* in the three speeches – that is, the brahman’s, the wife’s, and the daughter’s – the word is only briefly mentioned by the brahman, who affirms that a woman sacrificing herself for a brahman is unbecoming, even among the most undutiful ones (*a-dharmiṣṭha*; *MBh.* 1.149.5b), and that harming a guest is a crime, even according to the duty of distress (*āpad-dharma*; *MBh.* 1.149.11d). It is used as well by Kuntī, who claims to have acted from duty (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.150.19c), so that their greatest accomplishment during this adventure would be precisely that (*dharma*; *MBh.* 1.150.20d). It is worth noting that all twenty-two appearances of the word precede the actual hero-versus-ogre encounter, which takes place in chapter 151.

The wife from the *Madhyamavyāyoga* is the only character to utilize the word *dharma*, which is quite telling, especially when considering that the wife from the *Bakavadhaparvan* was the character that used it the most in that narrative.

#### Passage 15

*patimātrādharma*ñī pativrateti nāma

One whose **duty** is only her husband is called a devoted wife.

(*MV* 15.2b)<sup>7</sup>

7 For the sake of convenience, this Prakrit passage has been quoted by its Sanskrit *chāyā*.

The context of this isolated example is one of laconism, which has also been noted as a feature of the epic wife's speech. Moreover, its content equates the concepts of *dharma* and *pativrata*, which also corresponds to the emphasis on *strīdharma* observed in passages 11, 12, and 13.

### RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL COMPONENTS (*TOYA/JALA*)

The word *toya*, meaning 'water', especially that offered to the dead (Monier-Williams 1899), is mentioned only once in the story of Hiḍimbā. It is used in a general sense, almost like that of *jala*, during the descriptive tour of all the places where Bhīma and Hiḍimbā enjoyed their sexual encounters (*MBh.* 1.143.23c). The story of Baka, on the other hand, although also contributing with just one example, allows for a more significant interpretation.

#### Passage 16

avaśyakaraṇīye 'rthe mā tvāṁ kālo ṛyagād ayam |  
tvayā dattena **toyena** bhavisyati hitam ca me ||

When an action is perforce to be done, do not let time pass you by; I will be favoured **by** your **water** offering.

(*MBh.* 1.147.16)

The daughter, who, as seen, has conflated the actions of being given in marriage and being given as a sacrifice, is also the one who mentions the word. The construction is similar, too: If the usual form is *toya* +  $\sqrt{kṛ}$  (Monier-Williams 1899), she turns it into *toya* +  $\sqrt{dā}$ . But most importantly, when formulating this offering, she resorts to a phrasing that explicitly signals a sacrificial environment.

The bringing of water is a recurring motif in the plays of Bhāsa, including, for instance, the *Madhyamavyāyoga*, *Pañcarātram*, *Dūtavākyam*, *Abhiṣekanāṭakam*, *Pratimānāṭakam*, *Pratijñāyaugandharāyanam*, and *Svapnavāsavadattam* (Pusalker 1940: 18–19). In the story of Ghaṭotkaca, *toya* never appears, but it is here contended that *jala* is used, implicitly, in the same sacrificial sense. *Jala* occurs twice, and both times the audience hears it from the mouth of the second son. The first comes at about one third through the play, when the second son notices – and causes the audience to notice – a nearby water reservoir.

#### Passage 17

etasmin vanāntare **jalaśaya** iva dr̥syate

In the middle of this forest, some sort of **water** reservoir becomes visible.

(*MV* 22.7)

The second occurrence is to be found about halfway through the play, when the second son returns from said reservoir, after having drunk the water.

#### Passage 18

asyām ācamya padminyām paralokeśu durlabham |  
ātmānaivātmano dattam padmapatroyvalam **jalam** ||

Sipping at this lotus pond, I have offered to myself the bright **water** of the lotus leaves that is so hard to find in the other world.

(*MV* 31)

The most telling details at this point are that the second son equates the sipping with the offering, and that such offering is phrased in terms of *jala* +  $\sqrt{dā}$ . This clearly resembles the language of passage 16. Moreover, if the *Bakavadhaparvan*'s water offering can be interpreted in a sacrificial sense, when the daughter equates her being given away in marriage to her being given away as a sacrifice, and if the *Madhyamavyāyoga*'s water offering can also be interpreted in a sacrificial sense, when the second son has to bring water for his own death *while* going to a relative's initiation (Tieken 1997: 32), then *toya/jala* can also be taken to signal a literary reference.

## CONCLUSIONS

Its physical and thematic proximity to the *Hiḍimbavadhaparvan* certainly make the *Bakabadhaparvan* a good candidate for the secondary source of the *Madhyamavyāyoga*. Moreover, the epic story of Baka shares with the play about Ghaṭotkaca more than just a *rākṣasa*, a *rākṣasa*-slayer, and a family of brahmans: for instance, a seemingly intentional use of *sneha*, *dharma*-, and *toya/jala*. There are three main examples that can serve as arguments in support of this proposed influence.

First, the *sneha* in passage 6 would signal both a deathly appetite and a love for one's family, which recall, respectively, the story of Hiḍimba and the story of Baka. Second, the *dharma* in passage 15, uttered by the brahman's wife, echoes in both wording and purpose the speech of the brahman's wife from the Baka narrative. And third, the *jala* from passage 18 could be read as an allusion to the *toya* from passage 16, since they both have sacrificial connotations. Other details, such as the resemblances of  $\sqrt{tyaj}$  (passage 14) and  $\sqrt{dā}$ , as well as those of *toya* +  $\sqrt{dā}$  (passage 16) and *toya* +  $\sqrt{kṛ}$  (Monier-Williams 1899), also within the Baka narrative, further support these claims.

However, more studies of this sort will be needed to reach more definitive conclusions, especially concerning the *toya/jala* claims. For instance, a systematic study of the water offerings in Bhāsa or a comparison with other *Mahābhārata* sections emphasizing this link between water and death (like the *Āraṇeyaparvan*) would be most welcome.

## REFERENCES

BHASA-PROJEKT UNIVERSITÄT WÜRZBURG 2007. *Multimediale Datenbank zum Sanskrit-Schauspiel: Texte, Manuskripte und Afführung klassischer indischer Dramen*. <<http://www.bhasa.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/>>.

BIARDEAU, Madeleine 1981. *L'hindousime: Anthropologie d'une civilisation*. Paris: Flammarion.

BOWLES, Adam 2007. *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India: The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata*. Leiden: Brill.

BROWN, Peter G.M. 2015. Contaminatio. In: S. GOLDBERG & T. WHITMARSH (eds), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.1799>>.

BRÜCKNER, Heidrun 1999/2000. Manuscripts and Performance Traditions of the So-Called 'Trivandrum plays' Ascribed to Bhāsa: A Report on Work in Progress. *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 17/18: 501–550.

DASGUPTA, Surendranath & Sushil Kumar DÉ 1947. *A History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Period*, I. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

DEVADHAR, C.R. 1927. *The Plays Ascribed to Bhāsa: Their Authenticity and Merits*. Pune: Oriental Book Agency.

Dramatization n.d. In: *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dramatization>>, accessed 20 Oct. 2022.

ELLIOTT, Kamilla 2020. *Theorizing Adaptation*. Oxford: OUP.

ESPOSITO, Anna Aurelia 2010. *Dūtavākyā, Die Vorte des Boten: Ein Einakter aus den 'Trivandrum-Dramen', kritische Edition mit Anmerkungen und kommentierter Übersetzung*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

GÖTTINGEN REGISTER OF ELECTRONIC TEXTS IN INDIAN LANGUAGES 2020. *Nātyaśāstra 1–16, 18–30, 33, 35–37*. <[http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/corpustei/transformations/html/sa\\_bharata-nATyazAstra-1-1618-303335-37.htm](http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/corpustei/transformations/html/sa_bharata-nATyazAstra-1-1618-303335-37.htm)>.

HAKSAR, Aditya Narayan Dhairyasheel (tr.) 1993. *The Shattered Thigh & Other Plays*. Haryana: Penguin Books India.

HILTEBEITEL, Alf 2001. *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. Chicago: UCP.

MATILAL, Bimal Krishna 2002. *Epics and Ethics: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*. Oxford: OUP.

MAYRHOFER, Manfred 1976. *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen: A Concise Etymological Sanskrit Dictionary*, III. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

MENON, K.P.A. (tr.) 1996. *Complete Plays of Bhāsa: Text with English Translation and Notes*, I. Delhi: Nag Publishers.

MONIER-WILLIAMS, Monier 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages: Revised by E. Leuman, C. Cappeller et al.* Oxford: OUP.

PAVOLINI, Paolo Emilio 1918/1920. I drammi Mahabharatiani di Bhāsa: 1. Madhyamavyāyoga. *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* 29: 1–20.

PUSALKER, Achut Dattatraya 1940. *Bhāsa: A Study*. Lahore: Mehar Chand Lachhman Das.

RAYCHAUDHURI, Hemchandra 1934. A Note on the Ghaṭotkacavādhaparvādhyaya of the Mahābhārata. In: *Commemorative Essays Presented to Professor Kashinath B. Pathak*: 29–31. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

SALOMON, Richard 2010. Like Father, Like Son: Poetic Strategies in 'The Middle Brother' (*Madhyama-vyāyoga*) Attributed to Bhāsa. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 53(1): 1–22. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1163/001972410X12686674794330>>.

SUKTHANKAR, Vishnu S, Shripad Krishna BELVALKAR, Franklin EDGERTON, Raghu VIRA, Sushil Kumar DE, Parashuram Lakshman VAIDYA, Hari Damodar VELANKAR & Ramachandra Narayan DANDEKAR (eds) 1971 [1933]. *The Mahābhārata: For the First Time Critically Edited*. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

SUTHERLAND GOLDMAN, Sally J. 2017. The Monstrous Feminine: Rākṣasīs and Other Others – The Archaic Mother of Bhāsa's Madhyamavyāyoga. In: G. THOMPSON & R.K. PAYNE (eds), *Meaning and Mantras: Essays in Honor of Frits Staal*: 247–274. Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America.

TIEKEN, Herman 1997. Three Men in a Row (Studies in the Trivandrum plays II). *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 41: 17–52.

UNNI, N.P. 2000 [1978]. *Bhāsa Afresh*. Delhi: Nag Publishers.

WOOLNER, Alfred & Lakshman SARUP (tr.) 1930. *Thirteen Trivandrum Plays Attributed to Bhāsa*, I. Oxford: OUP.