Non-Sāṃkhya Constructions of the Person and Body in the *Mahābhārata*

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Abstract:
It is generally acknowledged that among the most intimate aspects of the *Mahābhārata*, of ayurvedic literature, and, later, of the Purāṇas is the fundamental place in them of Sāṃkhya. Whether this was original to these texts (presuming that we can realistically reconstruct what was original) or whether much of this Sāṃkhya was palimpsested onto earlier versions is germane to our story. Regardless, however, of whether we can conclusively reconstruct such textual and ideological layerings, we can still locate in the *MBh* clear notions of persons and bodies conceived along very different lines. This is what I shall attempt to do here. First, I shall discuss a few passages in which Sāṃkhya is insufficient to explain mental and material substantiality in the *MBh* (and elsewhere, esp, in ayurvedic texts). I shall further draw from passages in the *MBh*, including from the Anugītā (*MBh* 14.16-50), to show that certain notions that are often regarded as insubstantial, including of *prāṇa*, *puruṣa*, and *ātman* are in fact substantial, and not only fit uncomfortably into Sāṃkhya evolutionary schemata, but can be and are explained adequately in other terms. Not only can these comparatively insubstantial notions be firmed up but the more abstract "person" and the more concrete "body" can also be understood with little reference to Sāṃkhya. In short, in this presentation I'll examine the relationship between person and body, then show how the *MBh* and related literature construct them differently, both within and without the Sāṃkhya paradigm.

Several papers in this workshop are dedicated to examining Sāṃkhya, and it appears that many of us, myself included, have grown tired of it: tired of finding it everywhere, tired of its procrustean and formulaic applications, tired of the absence of easily explicable alternative models that may serve as a tool box for the construction of self and body. Despite our curious disaffection and misgivings, repeatedly we marvel at Sāṃkhya's elegance and explanatory power and the fact that it has long been counted among the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. Nevertheless, due to the superimposition of Sāṃkhya on the *MBh* and its clear imprint on the epic, classical medical textuality, and other forms of classical philosophy and narrative, one suspects the existence of other paradigms, other structures, that are neither built upon the edifice of Sāṃkhya nor dependent on it, and which may (or may not) possess Sāṃkhya's elegance and applicability. If so, where might we find these paradigms, especially in the *MBh*?

One place to look, not surprisingly, is in the medical sections of the *MBh* (and in more or less corresponding ayurvedic texts) and in descriptions of battles. The evident reason for this is because of their attention to the body, to the very facts of embodiment and its processes of creation, fragmentation, and destruction. Towards this end I would like to examine a few of the medical passages in the Āśvamedhika parvan, some of which I have dealt with before, but which I will examine rather differently here. While it is possible to probe below the surface and find a pre-packaged Sāṃkhya, it is by no means necessary or, we might argue, the most productive way to view the material.

On the topic of violence and its opposite, non-violence, let us look first near the beginning of the Āśvamedhika-parvan. After discussing the indivisibility of *brahman* and *mṛtyu*, Vāsudeva states, rather ironically, "If it is invariably true that a being is not destroyed, O Bhārata, then non-injury (*ahiṃsā*) may be achieved (even) when the bodies of living beings are violated" (*avināśo 'sya sattvasya niyato yadi bhārata | bhittvā śarīraṃ bhūtānām ahiṃsām pratipadyate ||* 14.13.5). This reiterates the doctrine of the eternality of the *jīva* or *ātman* found most famously in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The verb √*bhid*, to cleave, break, split, fracture, etc., denotes a decisively physical act of fragmentation, of killing. Classically, Dakṣa's sacrifice is broken, ripped asunder by Śiva, yet the ideology of the Vedas and classical textuality, perhaps even more consistently than the presence of the discourse of Sāṃkhya in the *MBh*, informs us that nothing is ever quite destroyed, that materiality, even on its subtlest levels, is constantly recycled. One need search no further than *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* 2.5.1, which explains that when Indra killed Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭṛ, he transferred one third of the "stain" (*mala*) of murdering a *brāhmaṇa (brahmahatyā)* to the earth, one-third to plants, and one-third to women. The very name Viśvarūpa indicates an omniform being, in this case one with three heads (*triśiras*) who drinks *soma* with one head, *surā* with another, and eats food with the third. This multiple and multipurpose embodiment is consistent with the theoretical basis of the Vedic sacrifice articulated in the *Ṛgveda*, the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* and elsewhere, in which the thousand headed Puruṣa creates the universe through his act of self-dismemberment only to have it reconstructed through the act of sacrifice.

This much is well known. What, then, is the body, what is its relationship does it have with the person or culturally constituted individual, and what kind of a model of birth, individuation, fragmentation, and death, does this offer as an alternative to Sāṃkhya?

Brefore proceeding further, let us briefly summarize a few theoretical approaches to the issue of selfhood and the body, including the notion of fragmentation, even if the theorists in question were not considering the Vedas in their theorizing. A brief and thoughtful summary was recently set forth by Axel Michaels and Christoph Wulf (2009). From a broad diachronic perspective, they understand five processes for viewing the body (and, implicitly, selfhood) in India: (1) dematerialization, (2) technologization, (3) fragmentation, (4) sexuality, and (5) performativity. It is not important to recapitulate all the points they raise in this article, but three are germane to my analysis, namely dematerialization, fragmentation, and performativity. Michaels and Wulf state, "Any attempt to put forward a single concept of the body would be falsifying Hindu or Indian thought, which is based on a variety of independent sources, social groups, languages and regions, religions and beliefs, and which, therefore, cannot be reduced to one, single, uniform world-view" (2009: 11). In this statement, they identify the problem precisely: practically without exception, especially among Sanskritists, Sāṃkhya has been put forward as the single most reliable, attractive, and characteristic method of understanding the self and body in India. By dematerialization, Michaels and Wulf understand that the presence of the body is unnecessary. An image or textual description is sufficient. This is not only the case in contemporary media such as film, television, or other mass productions in which a tactile physical presence is absent, but also in classical India in which a body is conveyed through the imagination, in story or text, oral or written. An abstraction, a story, even the *Mahābhārata*, is itself, then, a body and in possession of countless other bodies. It is difficult to account for this through Sāṃkhya, although not impossible given the dedication to it demonstrated historically by the class of Indian philosophical literati. Fragmantation, in the view of Michaels and Wulf, indicates the portrayal of bodies fragmented, such as in modern advertisements, in classical sacrifice, or even in a large swath of classical textuality that inscribes the theology of primeval or archetypal dismemberment. Medicine, including

Ayurveda, must be included here in spite of its claims to view the body holistically and through the methodological lens of Sāṃkhya. So too, the *Mahābhārata* is replete with body parts, dismemberment, and sacrificial imagery and symbolism. Performativity, according to Michaels and Wulf, inscribes human and cultural production and human relationships. Ritual is included under this rubric, as are other relationships of power, language, and social action. Squarely within the compass of all three of these are possession and other interventions of self formation and definition in the *MBh* including blessings, curses, and boons, all of which are of the greatest importance in pressing forward the plot and action of the epic.

With these guideposts in mind, let us look at the viability (or non-viability) of the construction, maintenance, and destruction of self and body through acts of violence or non-injury, as suggested in *MBh* 14.13.5 cited above. The easiest part of what I'm trying to do here is to look at the *MBh* as if Sāṃkhya were not there at all. It is debatable whether Sāṃkhya is indispensable to the *MBh*, but, supposing for the moment that it were dispensable, what would the *MBh* look like without it? Would it alter the dynamics of the narrative? Would selfhood appear differently constituted? Even if Sāṃkhya seems to be everywhere, in fact it is not. It is not *vyāpta* in the *MBh*. It appears in chunks. In the Āśvamedhikaparvan it appears at odd angles, except in the Anugītā, where it is always assumed and sometimes directly addressed. The long sections on the three *guṇas*, perhaps the most complete accounts of this in the *MBh* (or anywhere else), assumes the edifice of Sāṃkhya, which is summarized unambiguously only once in the *parvan* (14.35-26-40), even if the sections dealing with the "large *ātman*" (*mahān ātmā*, cf. van Buitenen 1964) present innovations to the usual Sāṃkhya evolutionary formulae. On the whole, the Anugītā contains much more that we might associate with the Upaniṣads than with Sāṃkhya. For example, the chapters on the *hotṛ* mantras (14.21-23 on the *daśahotṝ*, *saptahotṛ*, and *pañcahotṛ* mantras, respectively) could never be found in the *BhG*, but are very much more in keeping with the content of this *parvan*. Nevertheless, more pervasive than Sāṃkhya or other Upaniṣadic discursive interventions in this parvan is the discourse on violence and non-violence, both human and sacrificial, recounting their horrors, benefits, and moods. Even the Anugītā does

not allow us to set the violence aside: the story of Paraśurāma is summarized (14.29-30). The self is as well extracted from these discursive and, indeed, cosmological elements.

What are the constituents of embodied knowledge? And why is embodied knowledge so crucial in self construction? And where might this be found in the *MBh*? We can well imagine Sāṃkhya operating in both its normative evolutionary manner and in its reverse process, from differentiated, developed, and physical, to undifferentiation, fragmentation, and dematerialization. Practically, among the markers of this kind of selfhood is initiation. The self in the *MBh* (and elsewhere in Indian praxis) is defined, constructed, and marked by various features of maturation, development, and differentiation, features that render an embodied individual a "person" irrespective of the constructive abstractions that constitute Sāṃkhya. Included among these transitional events that are recorded in the *MBh* are life-cycle rituals such as rites of passage and special Vedic initiations such as those undergone by Yudhiṣṭhira at the time of his two great sacrifices, the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha*. Similar to initiations in marking selfhood are spiritually transformative events such as Arjuna's change of heart after hearing Kṛṣṇa out in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and then, after the war was over and he had developed a thirst for violence, his project to curb this violence after being instructed to do so by Yudhiṣṭhira while he followed the horse in its year of conquest leading up to the *aśvamedha*. Such *saṃskāras*, *dīkṣās*, and other pivotal instructive measures enable the body to embolden and enhance the person as an acting agent, as a locus of ritual and intellectual knowledge and power. As Ute Hüsken points out, these various features are empowered by embodied knowledge rather than disembodied belief (2009: 210). Practice creates memory, as various ritual theorists have shown (Grimes 2006; Csordas 1990; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; Freeman 1993, 1998), and bodily memory or *habitus*, to use Bourdieu's term, is the bedrock of our self construction.

It is, I propose, more productive to examine selfhood as an embedded aspect of embodied practices than it is to search within these practices for ethical content that provides the fundamental constituents of self construction. It is a mistake, I think, for

scholars based in a culture in which the ethics of practice are the primary determinants of self definition. In India, as ritual theorists have shown, it is the practices themselves that are the building blocs of self actualization, not the moral or ethical choices within these practices that constitute self consciousness and actualization. Scholars are, on the whole, blinded to the significance of embodiment, tempted as they are by the shape of ethics as a field that they see, mistakenly, as transferable from the Western study of ethics. Three places we will examine this in the Āśvamedhikaparvan are, first, in the story of the half gold mongoose that appears near the end of the *parvan*; second, in Arjuna's journey of mayhem and conquest with the sacrificial horse; and, third, in the story of the great sage Uttaṅka's encounter with Kṛṣṇa in the deserts of western India after the war was over.

Let's begin with the last of these three, the tale of the half gold mongoose and the importance of the bare facts of embodiment and bodily practice that may be understood from it. The outline of the story is well-known and need not detain us for long. In short, a giant half gold mongoose appears after the *aśvamedha* and relates in a thunderous voice comparable to that of Indra that half his body turned to gold as a result of eating particles of flour that had fallen on the ground in the kitchen of a family of poor righteous brahmans who, during a scorching famine, gave all their food to a guest. For their act of selflessness they were rewarded by the gods with an ascension to heaven in a golden chariot. However, the mongoose adds, the ash from the sacred fires of the sacrifice failed to turn the other half of his body into gold. This is presented as proof that the dharma generated by the *aśvamedha* is only a fraction of that generated by a selfless act of generosity in a time of need. Although the story ends on a note of ambiguity, the point here is, first, that the prosperity and power of the Pāṇḍavas achieves its final validation through a ritualized act of physical fragmentation—an *aśvamedha* requires hundreds of animal sacrifices during which the dismemberment of the animals serves, in part, as the material for the regeneration of Prajāpati's body. Furthermore, the sacrifice itself, its performativity, represents the consolidation not only of the power of the Pāṇḍavas but the consolidation of the social body, of the people of the kingdom with the ruling clan. Second, the progressive

dematerialization through gradual starvation and eventual ascension to heaven of the family of the righteous, pure, ritually exacting, but thoroughly nonviolent brahman, who fed his family with gleanings of grain from harvested fields, exhibits the value of sacrificial fragmentation on an individual basis. The family broke up their last chappatis and fed them all to the hungry guest. And, like Yudhiṣṭhira, their social victory, their validation, was assured by the very fact of their gift, which is to say in their performativity.

It may be better to view this in the Foucaultian sense of "technologies of the self" rather than through the prism of comparative ethics. As Vedic *śrauta* ritual became increasingly impossible for all except members of closed brahman communities and wealthy and powerful kṣatriyas, it was these ritualists who appeared transgressive within the cultural and political standards of the middle to late Mauryan period and into the era of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga. It is often noted that dharma in Indian history was largely self-regulating, but what we see in this tale is a display of the virtues of hospitality and generosity strengthened by the influence of Jainism and Buddhism. These virtues had clear Vedic antecedents, but in the Vedic texts they never opposed the Vedic ritual. In the present case, however, I suspect that they were emphasized by the ruling dynasties of northern India, both as a matter of spiritual preference and because they posed no political or social threat to the order these ruling houses sought. The actions of both Yudhiṣṭhira and the poor brahman defined their self concept, determined who they were in relation to their social and cultural environments. These actions were, then, "technologies of the self" that were adopted by the north Indian rulers and inculcated in the social and moral fabric of public culture. Eventually they did indeed become largely self-regulating. What we see in the story of the half gold mongoose, then, is a discursive display of the conflict between competing technologies of self actualization, one technology represented by a powerful ruler the other by an ordinary, if particularly righteous, citizen. Self construction by a powerful member of a ruling clan required the all consuming ritual grandiosity of the horse sacrifice, which included not only the year long journey off conquest and the elaborate sacrifices themselves, but also an exceptionally ostentatious ritual arena. Indeed, an entire city

made almost entirely of gold was built for the sacrifice. Not terribly dissimilar is the self construction of the poor brahman who was, by no accident and not unlike Yudhiṣṭhira, unrelenting in keeping his vow (*uñchāvṛtti*). It was absolutely the correct course of action for him; indeed, it was paradigmatic. The mongoose in this scenario represents the great booming but peculiarly ethereal presence of the state in its role of valorizing the virtue of self-discipline, which was mobilized by the state in a way that encouraged individuals to take responsibility for their actions, for their selves, in a healthy and non-threatening manner.[1]

This impression is borne out by Strabo (63/64 BCE – ca. 24 CE), citing the authority of Megasthenes (ca. 350 – 290 BCE):

> "The Indians all live frugally, especially when in camp. They dislike a great undisciplined multitude, and consequently they observe good order. Theft is of very rare occurrence. Megasthenes says that those who were in the camp of Sandrakottos [Candragupta Maurya], wherein lay 400,000 men, found that the thefts reported on any one day did not exceed the value of two hundred drachmae, and this among a people who have no written laws, but are ignorant of writing, and must therefore in all the business of life trust to memory. They live, nevertheless, happily enough, being simple in their manners and frugal." Strabo XV. i. 53-56 (McCrindle 1877: 69f., Majumdar 1958: 274).

One further comment is worth making on this story. In 14.94, as an addendum to the story of the mongoose Janamejaya asks Vaiśaṃpāyana once again why the mongoose disparaged the *aśvamedha*. Vaiśaṃpāyana asks him to listen to his discourse about sacrifice and its fruits. Once upon a time, long ago, at a sacrifice of Indra attended by great sages and ritualists, there was a debate on the rectitude of animal sacrifice. The sages agreed that it was not proper. But Indra, fallen under conceit and delusion, disagreed. The debate was inconclusive, so they turned to King Vasu of Cedi for

[1] I was motivated to think about this by a recent article of Francis Zimmermann's (2009).

arbitration. The sages asked him, "Most fortunate one, how is it, O king, that the animal sacrifices should be performed according to what is stated in the Vedas? Is it with seeds that are fit for sacrifice or is it with goats?" (14.94.20). Vaiśaṃpāyana comments: "Hearing that, he did not deliberate on the strength or weakness of the statements; rather, the king replied, 'One should offer in sacrifice whatever has been brought.' Having answered in this way, this king, powerful lord of the Cedis, entered Rasātala [a lower hell world] for having uttered this falsehood. Indeed, if an unlettered man (*apaṇḍita*) who has a strong desire for dharma, encounters an unlawful transgressive substance and uses it in sacrifice, he will not obtain the fruit of that dharma." In other words, because of his equivocation King Vasu of Cedi is sentenced to residence in a hell world. Vaiśaṃpāyana states that actions or gifts that are not in accord with dharma are fated to fail, and the person achieves infamy. On the other hand, those whose actions are virtuous, whose actions are borne of asceticism, and whose gifts of material are gained legitimately, go to heaven" (14.94.21-23).[2]

What, we might ask, was the wise and judicious King Vasu's egregious transgression? His answer does not, on the surface, appear to be particularly wrong or condemnable, certainly not warranting an indefinite sentence in hell. In fact, I think, it was just as the text suggests: it was his equivocation, his foregrounding of wisdom and common sense over ritual order, his disregard of selfhood generated by ritual exactitude and firmness of vows. In this way Yudhiṣṭhira was also notably transgressive, but he managed to save himself from the depths of hell. Plagued with doubt throughout the epic, he could not be faulted for asking Arjuna to leaven his penchant for violence and compromise his *kṣatriyadharma* in his journey with the sacrificial horse; in the end the conquest was successful and the *aśvamedha* was, we are often informed, performed according to the letter of the law. In this way, King Vasu, Yudhiṣṭhira, and the unnamed poor brahman, all acted transgressively. Yudhiṣṭhira overcame his personal problems to emerge as sovereign of the entire land, even if he did this knowingly through repeated acts of

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[2] *mahābhāga kathaṃ yajñeṣv āgamo nṛpate smṛtaḥ | yaṣṭavyaṃ paśubhir medhyair atho bījair ajair api ||20|| tac chrutvā tu vacas teṣām avicārya balābalam | yathopanītair yaṣṭavyam iti provāca pārthivaḥ ||21|| evaṃ uktvā sa nṛpatiḥ praviveśa rasātalam | uktveha vitathaṃ rājaṃś cedīnām īśvaraḥ prabhuḥ |22|| anyāyopagataṃ dravyam atītaṃ yo hy apaṇḍitaḥ | dharmābhikāṅkṣī yajate na dharmaphalam aśnute ||23||*

transgressive violence, in war and in sacrifice, in both cases, probably, against his more noble intentions. The poor brahman's very lifestyle was transgressive in the extreme, but he could not have imagined living through gleaning had there not been settled agriculture to sustain him, which is to say that his vow was supported by the social fabric that allowed him to define himself through his vows. King Vasu, we learned in the Ādiparvan (1.57), achieved greatness through the strength of his austerities, but released his semen at the wrong time and through various acts of transfer bore two children through the body of a fish,[3] and in the present story gave inappropriate advice. All these characters, noble though they surely were, managed their self construction through performance and fragmentation.

Let us turn briefly now to Arjuna's arduous journey with the sacrificial horse and the remarkable adventures he endured (14.72-86). Most important among these is his death at the hands of his son Babhruvāhana, the young king of Maṇipura by his wife Citrāṅgadā, and his subsequent revival by another of his wives, Ulūpī, daughter of the king of the *nāgas*, who traveled into the underworld to bring up the secrets of revivification (14.78-82). Like the figures in the tale of the half gold mongoose, this story explores Arjuna's personality without reference to Sāṃkhya, but inclusive of the elements of dematerialization (Arjuna dies, at least temporarily), fragmentation (multitudes are killed and local sovereignty is disrupted), and performativity (the entire adventure was within the confines of a ritual whose outcome was a foregone, conclusion, which is to say a ritualized conclusion, even if risk and failure were theoretical possibilities). The transgressive elements of this story are numerous, beginning with the character of the little known son and at least one of the wives of Arjuna. Babhruvāhana, like his father, was a consummate and unbeatable warrior, and one of the wives was at least half *nāga*. The great hero, Arjuna, is killed but returns to life after Ulūpī travels to the underworld and fetches a healing gem that is eventually laid on the dead Arjuna's chest. In an act in which she displays her skill in the art of dematerialization, Ulūpī explains to Babhruvāhana that the entire fight between him

[3] His wisdom, austerities, friendship with Indra, and his family, including his wife Girikā and offspring (King) Matsya and daughter Satyavatī, are recounted in the *Ādiparvan* (1.57).

and his father Arjuna was a product of her own power of illusion, so that Arjuna could see what an accomplished warrior he had become. In spite of this admission, she nevertheless gives the magical gem to Babhruvāhana to place on his father's chest so that in fact he ends up reviving his father from a fatal wound that he himself caused by piercing Arjuna's heart with an arrow. Arjuna rises, fully restored to life, after which Indra showers divine flowers on Arjuna, celestial drums resound through the heavens, and Arjuna rises and embraces Babhruvāhana, seemingly unaware that he had died. Ulūpī then explains to Arjuna that she arranged all of this as expiation for his non-dharmic action in assisting Śikhaṇḍin in the slaying of Bhīṣma. So, this turns out to be a healing rite involving violence, illusion, dematerialization, and fragmentation. As a kind of healing, in which Arjuna is once again made whole, freed from the rupture of his own inner self, it was a ritual of self construction no less healing than the validation of the social and moral fabric achieved by both Yusdhiṣṭhira through his *aśvamedha* and the poor brahman through is vow of poverty.

Herman Tieken has recently proposed (2009) that the Anugītā was not a nonsensical interpolation placed more or less randomly in the Āśvamedhikaparvan. He makes a case its purposeful inclusion there because it is directed towards the ethics of renunciation, just as the Bhagavadgītā is not accidentally placed where it is. Just as in the latter case, Arjuna's dilemma is resolved by his agreeing to fight against his cousins, in the Āśvamedhikaparvan the Anugītā is a prelude to the ultimate resolution of the epic in renunciation and an eventual ascent to heaven. Whether he is right about this is uncertain, but his case may be fortified by understanding the Āśvamedhikaparvan as a series of interlocking rituals, revelations, and renewals in which selfhood is restored to many of the important characters (and one is born – Parikṣit) and the social fabric strengthened by validation of conflicting dharmas.

One of the most interesting and multilayered stories in the *MBh* is that of the sage Uttaṅka (14.52-57), of the Bhṛgu clan, who encounters Kṛṣṇa in the deserts of Western India. Kṛṣṇa has taken Yudhiṣṭhira's permission to return home to Dvārakā after the end of the war and after the obsequies were performed on Bhīṣma, but before the

performance of the *aśvamedha*. On his journey home he meets a sage named Uttaṅka, a disciple of Gautama. He asks Uttaṅka to request a boon from him, and Uttaṅka asks that he might find water whenever he needs it, an important request for someone who lives in the desert. Kṛṣṇa decides to test Uttaṅka's spiritual insight and power, not to mention his sincerity and flexibility. Kṛṣṇa tells Uttaṅka that if he becomes thirsty to think of him and water will appear. He then continues on his way, and eventually Uttaṅka becomes thirsty. He thinks of Kṛṣṇa, but sees a filthy *cāṇḍāla* with mangy dogs in tow. The *cāṇḍāla* is engaged in continuous urination and tells Uttaṅka, "Drink!," pointing at his flow of urine. Uttaṅka is insulted and refuses. Later it is revealed that the *cāṇḍāla* is Indra in disguise, who has plotted with Kṛṣṇa to test Uttaṅka. To make a long story short, Kṛṣṇa lets Uttaṅka off the hook and grants him a boon in any case, even though he failed the test. That's not the end of the story, however. It turns out that Uttaṅka is tired of the ashram life and wants to leave. His guru, Gautama, refuses any gifts, a traditional token of gratitude towards the guru when a disciple departs. However, Gautama's wife Āhalya asks for a gift, a pair of jeweled earrings belonging to the wife of the possessed and cannibalistic but otherwise generous and honorable king Saudāsa.[4] Adding to the transgressive character of this story is the nature of Uttaṅka's quest for the earrings. Without going into too many details, in part because this is a relatively well-known story, it should suffice to say that the earrings were stolen by a serpent and taken to the *nāga* world, and Uttaṅka, determined to retrieve them, followed the serpent.

This realm "possessed myriads of celestial enclosures made of gold and ornamented with pearls and gems. It had ponds with crystal staircases and rivers of unpolluted water. He saw many trees with different kinds of birds settling on them. The upholder of the Bhṛgus saw the door to this world that was five leagues wide and a hundred long. After observing the realm of the *nāgas*, Uttaṅka became dejected and again lost hope of recovering the earrings.

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[4] See Smith 2006: 265-267. Saudāsa is also called Kalmāṣapāda. See Magnone 2006 for an account of this as a quest story.

"Then a black horse with a white tail spoke to him. Its face and eyes were copper, descendant of the Kauravas, and it was ablaze with fiery energy. 'Blow into my ass (*dhamasvāpānam*), brahman, and you will obtain the earrings of yours that were brought here by the offspring of Airāvata. Don't act at all like you're disgusted to do this, son (*putra*); you used to act this way at Gautama's hermitage" (14.57.34-40). Uttaṅka replied, "How should I know you from the hermitage of my teacher? I would indeed like to hear about what I used to do" (14.57.41).[5]

Setting aside the problem of interpreting *dhamasvāpānam* in 14.57.39a and the type of behavior that was apparently condoned in Gautama's *āśrama*, which I'm addressing as fully as possible in my annotations to the text, the story ends with the horse revealing itself to be Jātavedas, the deity Agni himself, the guru of Gautama, his own guru. The horse then slowly transformed itself into smoke, then into fire, revealing Uttaṅka to be as lustrous as Agni himself. Uttaṅka was then given the earrings, was honored by the nāgas, and returned to Gautama's *āśrama* to present the earrings to Āhalya.

Like in the story of Arjuna and Babhruvāhana, the significance of this story is that it rectifies transgressions and brings about wholeness and resolution. Uttaṅka had grown tired of life in the āśrama and undertook a journey in order to bring closure to his discipleship. In spite of his long service to Gautama, he felt disappointed and fragmented, the parts of himself distanced from one another. The journey made up for his lack of recognition of Indra disguised as the *cāṇḍāla* and as expiation for his transgressive behavior in Gautama's *āśrama*. The parts of his self were brought together just as Arjuna's parts were brought together by his temporary if illusive death and

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[5] *prakāranicayair divyair maṇimuktābhyalaṃkṛtaiḥ | upapannaṃ mahābhāga śātakumbhamayais tathā ||34|| vapīḥ sphaṭikasopānā nadīś ca vimalodakāḥ | dadarśa vṛkṣāṃś ca bahūn nānādvijaguṇāyutān ||35|| tasya lokasya ca dvāraṃ dadarśa sa bhṛgūdvahaḥ | pañcayojanavistāram āyataṃ śatayojanam ||36|| nāgalokam uttaṅkas tu prekṣya dīno 'bhavat tadā | nirāśaś cābhavat tāta kuṇḍalāharaṇe punaḥ ||37|| tatra provāca turaṅgas taṃ kṛṣṇaśvetavāladhiḥ | tāmrāsyanetraḥ kauravya prajvalanniva tejasā ||38|| dhamasvāpanam etan me tatas tvaṃ vipra lapsyase | airāvatasuteneha tavānīte hi kuṇḍale ||39|| mā jugupsāṃ kṛthāḥ putra tvam atrārthe kathaṃ cana | tvayaitad dhi samācāirṇaṃ gautamasyāśrame tadā ||40|| kathaṃ bhavantaṃ jānīyām upādhyāyā-śramaṃ prati | yan mayā cīrṇapūrvaṃ ca śrotum icchāmi tad dhy aham ||41||*

resurrection. Many other stories in the Āśvamedhikaparvan can be told exploring the themes of dematerialization, fragmentation and transgressiveness, of materialization, embodiment, and expiation, all wrapped within the boundaries of ritual, rectitude, and order. It is a discourse on the maturity and validation of selfhood, quite distinct from the formal presentation of selfhood as a product of the static yet ironically evolving principles of Sāṃkhya.

II. The self according to non-Sāṃkhya principles in the medical discourse of the MBh and ayurvedic texts.

[To be continued]

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