

VARUṆA AND DHṚTARĀṢṬRA¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Mahābhārata* has been known and studied by Western scholars for about 150 years. Taking into account the material with which they have worked it is not surprising to find that in the course of time different “schools” have emerged building up theories which are incompatible with each other. Here two “binary oppositions” will be discussed, viz. analysis versus synthesis, history versus mythology.

The advocates of the analytical school claim that the *Mbh.* as we have it to-day is a patchwork made up of disparate fragments. They are of the opinion that the Epic has developed from a nucleus over which later a net of threads has been spun which, according to them, does not represent an organic whole. Their principal aim has accordingly been to reconstruct an Ur-*Mahābhārata*. Typical representatives for this trend are S. Sørensen,² A. Holtzmann jun.,³ and E. W. Hopkins.⁴ Their opponents argue that the textual criticism practiced by these scholars is based on mere arbitrariness. There is no generally accepted norm after which the elements that constitute the whole, i.e. the *Mbh.*, can be chronologically arranged. Recently S. Wikander⁵ has demonstrated that this criticism

¹ This paper was written during a stay at the Kern Institute, Leiden, in the academic year 1964-1965. I seize the opportunity to thank Prof. F. B. J. Kuiper and Prof. J. C. Heesterman for many constructive and inspiring discussions of this theme.

² S. Sørensen, *Om Mahābhāratas stilling i den indiske litteratur, I: Forsøg på at udskille de ældste bestanddele* (Kjøbenhavn, 1883).

³ A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata und seine Theile*, Vol. 1-4 (Kiel, 1893-1895).

⁴ E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India. Its character and origin* (New York-London, 1901)

⁵ “Pāṇḍavasagan och Mahābhāratas mytiska förutsättningar”, *Religion och Bibel*, Vol. 6 (Stockholm, 1947). Transl. by G. Dumézil in *Jupiter Mars Quirinus* (Paris, 1948), pp. 37-53; “Nakula et Sahadeva”, *Or. Suec.*, Vol. VI (1958).

is justified⁶ by showing that the group of the Pāṇḍavas reveals a mythical structure which in detail is Indo-Aryan. He also states⁷ that it is no longer possible to take for granted that the linguistically oldest documents also reveal the most original ideas. The Epics of India and Iran in his opinion offer better material for comparative mythological studies than the Vedas and the Avesta. Although somewhat categorically formulated, I think that this point of view must be seriously taken into account in further studies of the Epic.

As representatives of a more synthetical standpoint may be mentioned J. Dahlmann⁸ and G. J. Held.⁹ According to the former, who pleads a rather extreme point of view, the Epic represents an organic unity, which cannot be explained unless one assumes that it has been compiled by a single person. He thus introduces the *Diaskeuast*. Held also assumes a structure, which however is a projection of the organisation of the society in which the Epic originated. Dualism is the chief trait of this organisation. "It is only by turning to the reality that the idea of an antagonism existing between two groups in a phratry-relationship can be maintained with the same consistency as is done throughout the Epic."¹⁰ As stated above, S. Wikander found within the group of the Pāṇḍavas a mythic hierarchy corresponding to Dumézil's "idéologie tripartite". Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma, whom Wikander identified with Mitra,¹¹ represents the "fonction souveraine". Bhīma and Arjuna, sons of Vāyu and Indra, stand for the "fonction guerrière". Finally, Nakula and Sahadeva, incarnations of the Aśvins, personify "productivité". Dumézil has later added Varuṇa to the scheme, whom he identifies with Pāṇḍu.¹² The "fonction souveraine" is thus represented in its two "aspects juridique et magique". Wikander's main aim has been to demonstrate that the tendency to organize the world of the gods after the social pattern, which Dumézil has stated to be characteristic of Indo-European mythology,

⁶ A structural view does of course not exclude a historical study of the *text* as it stands.

⁷ "Från Bråvalla till Kurukshetra", *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, Vol. 75, p. 192.

⁸ J. Dahlmann, *Genesis des Mahābhārata* (Berlin, 1899).

⁹ G. J. Held, *The Mahābhārata. An ethnological study*, Thesis (Leiden, 1935).

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 344.

¹¹ *Pāṇḍavasagan*... Cf. however S. Wikander, "Sur le fonds commun indo-iranien des épopées de la Perse et de l'Inde", *La nouvelle Clío*, Vol. 7 (1950), p. 323.

¹² *Jupiter Mars Quirinus*, p. 76ff. Dumézil treats Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura in "La transposition des dieux souverains mineurs en héros dans le Mahābhārata", *IIJ*, Vol. III (1959), p. 1-16. Cf. also "Karna et les Pāṇḍava", *Or. Suec.*, Vol. III (1954), pp. 60-66 and "Les pas de Kṛṣṇa et l'exploit d'Arjuna", *Or. Suec.*, Vol. V (1957), pp. 183-188.

has found its expression also in the Epic. In addition to this his explanation of Draupadī's polyandry eliminated a great crux.¹³

In addition to the principal contrast here briefly sketched there is another between those scholars who read the Epic as a historical record and those who hold that the fight between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the *Mbh.* is a struggle between gods and demons and that no historical information whatsoever can be gathered from it. Even Dahlmann, although aware of the intertwined mythic features, says (*Genesis*, p. 225): "Als fest müssen wir annehmen, erstens dass dem Mahābhārata ein historischer Vorgang zu Grunde liegt. Dieses Ereignis besteht in der Aufrichtung eines mächtigen Reiches im westlichen Indien durch Niederwerfung der östlichen Völker und Stämme." Hopkins, although he expresses himself cautiously, also discerns a historical kernel at the bottom of the Epic.¹⁴ Turning to the mythologists we just pass over Ludwig's meteorological discoveries, although they are in a way ingenious. According to Held the rivalry between the "brothers" is modelled on a social organisation in which "potlatch-ceremonies" play a great role. This organisation, again, corresponds to mythic realities. Another Dutch scholar, F. D. K. Bosch, points to the fact that the Pāṇḍavas are incarnations of gods whereas the Kauravas are sons of demons. Further, that "the rivalry between the two groups culminates in the game of dice at Hastināpura and later in the battle of Kurukshetra both of which occurrences in all probability have the struggle for the amṛita as a leading motif".¹⁵ The contributions of Wikander and Dumézil to a mythic interpretation of the *Mbh.* have already been dealt with. F. B. J. Kuiper¹⁶ has demonstrated that the "digvijaya" of the Pāṇḍavas is based on a mythic classificatory system. On the whole he accepts the theories of Wikander but introduces Varuṇa instead of Mitra as the representative of Dharma. But while doing this he is aware of the difficulties that arise from a structural point of view.

¹³ Dahlmann had something of the same in mind as Wikander when he wrote, *Genesis*, p. 232; "Draupadī ist eine aus dem Opferfeuer erstandene Incarnation der Ṛi"; *Ibid.* p. 211: "Die fünf [Pāṇḍavas] stellen eine Haus- und Gütergemeinschaft, einen Kollektivbesitz im strengsten Sinne dar und ihren prägnantesten Ausdruck erhält diese Rechtseinheit in dem gemeinsamen Erwerb und Verlust der Draupadī"; *Ibid.*, p. 221: "Ein polyandrisches Volk als 'historische' Grundlage der Pāṇḍava und ihrer Verbindung mit Draupadī ist ausgeschlossen." F. D. K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ* ('s-Gravenhage, 1960), p. 88f. interprets Draupadī's marriage with the five Pāṇḍavas on the basis of the tree-motif. The five brothers represent the five main branches of the Tree rooted in the common *mūla*.

¹⁴ *The Great Epic of India*, p. 398ff.

¹⁵ *The Golden Germ*, p. 86f.

¹⁶ *Numen*, Vol. 8:1 (1961), p. 41.

Even if Dharma stands for the couple Mitrā-Vāruṇā one must conclude “that the epic tripartite system which may be recognized in the structure of the group of Pāṇḍavas does not represent the ancient classificatory system. Nor is it likely to be a later recast of it: the introduction of an ‘incarnation’ of Vāruṇa in a group with a decidedly upper world character would have been too radical an alteration of the old system which was still known to the epic poets (cf. the myth of the churning of the Ocean in I.16.13 crit. ed., where the antagonistic character of Devas and Asuras is fully clear). The epic system, accordingly, would seem to be made up of elements of the cosmic *dualistic* system.”¹⁷

2. EPIC DUALISM, I

When reading the main works that have been devoted to the *Mbh.*, one is struck by the fact that the only point on which there is general agreement among the scholars is that the Epic is built up round a main plot and that the antagonism and the disastrous war between the sons of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra constitute this plot. As soon as it comes to further discussion about this simple fact there is no longer any unanimity. There is indeed a veritable abyss between those scholars who adhere to a mythical interpretation of the Pāṇḍava-story and those who regard it as historical reality and even place it in a definite historical context. The latter have, however, to face the embarrassing fact, that it is very difficult to reconcile the information supplied by the *Mbh.* with external evidence. Nothing is known about any fight of these eschatological dimensions during the “Epic period”. In spite of his vast knowledge of sacred law which Pāṇḍu mobilizes to justify his way of procuring offspring from his two wives, he de facto transgresses the rules laid down in the *Dharmaśāstra*.¹⁸ And even though several attempts are made to motivate Draupadī’s *svayaṃvara* and marriage to the five Pāṇḍavas, polyandry is alien to the *śāstras*. Dahlmann remarks¹⁹ that it would be curious if²⁰ the *Mbh.*, though showing all the characteristics of an Aryan origin, had adopted a feature like polyandry from some aboriginal tribes. Wikander’s theory according to which Draupadī-Lakṣmī is the all-supporting goddess, is, as far as I can see, the best of the explanations hitherto proposed.²¹

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 44.

¹⁸ M. Winternitz, “Notes on the Mahābhārata”, *JRAS*, 1897, p. 731f.

¹⁹ *Genesis des Mahābhārata*, p. 179.

²⁰ As Winternitz pleads, *op. cit.*, p. 755ff.

²¹ Cf. p. 3, note 13.

His demonstration of the relations between the Persian and Indian epics and possibly some Nordic traditions recorded by Saxo poses the question whether it is now once and for all time to stop looking upon the *Mbh.* as a historical record. And those who still insist on this should recognize that what is found in the Epic is not “Indian” but rather “Indo-Aryan” or “Indo-European” history.

The general agreement upon the main plot does not mean anything more than that the opposition between the two parties is regarded as a dramatic *sine qua non*, whether one interprets it as a conflict between two historical kings or as a struggle between gods and demons placed in a pseudo-historical framework. What evidence can be adduced for the latter standpoint?

The Pāṇḍavas are sons of gods and the Kauravas (i.e. the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra) are incarnations of Rākṣasas, a class of demons. The deva-character of the Pāṇḍavas is stressed even more by the fact that they are all Indras, who, although begotten by different gods, are reborn on earth.²² Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra are brothers although born of different mothers. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the elder of the two. This point must be stressed because together with his blindness it is an essential detail. The Asuras are sons of Diti and Kaśyapa, the Devas of Aditi and Kaśyapa.²³ In Vedic literature the Devas and Asuras are often spoken of as brothers. The Asuras are the elder brothers.

Brh.Ār.Up. I.3.1:²⁴ “There were two groups of offspring of Prajāpati, the Devas and the Asuras. The Devas were the younger, the Asuras the elder...”

One should in this connection also bear in mind that Kaśyapa was the husband of both Kadrū and Vinatā. Kadrū bore the serpents and Vinatā became the mother of Garuḍa and Aruṇa. Just as Kadrū and Vinatā were competing with each other, so Garuḍa and the snakes were known to be deadly enemies.

Mbh. XII.34.13:²⁵ “This, O son of Pṛthā, is told about the fight of yore between Devas and Asuras. The Asuras were the elder brothers, the Devas were the younger...”

²² E.g. I.2.87; I.189.27; 32-33; 38-39; I.199.49.

²³ Cf. V. Fausbøll, *Indian mythology according to the Mahābhārata*... (London, 1903), p. 1f.

²⁴ *dvayā ha prajāpatyā devāś cāsurāś ca |*
kanīyasā eva devā jyāyasā asurāś... |

²⁵ *idaṃ ca śrūyate pārtha yuddhe devāsure purā |*
asurā bhrātaro jyeṣṭhā devāś cāpi yavīyasaḥ ||

The passage from which this quotation is given ends with the defeat of the Asuras. It is told by Vaiṣampāyana in order to encourage Yudhiṣṭhira. He should kill those who further Adharma, i.e. the Kauravas, just as the strong Daityas were slain by the Devas.²⁶ “You are now following a path which long ago was trodden by the Devas, O Bhārata.”²⁷ The instances could be multiplied.²⁸ It is not only in the preliminaries that gods and demons take active part. Even in what happens later they play such a dominating role that they seem indispensable for the dramatic development of the Epic. Sometimes the poet creates visions, which reveal both a fundamental dichotomy of the Universe and an eschatological character. *Mbh.* VIII.63.31ff. deals with the duel between Arjuna and Karṇa, the latter representing the Kauravas. The whole universe is divided into two parts which take the side of either of the combatants. It may briefly be summed up as follows:

<i>Arjuna</i>	<i>Karṇa</i>
Earth	Heaven
Devas	Asuras
Brahma-Kṣatra	Viśaḥ-Śūdrāḥ

This list, which is not given here in extenso is interesting for several reasons. Earth takes the side of Arjuna. This reminds us of *AS* XII.1.6 where Earth in the battle between Indra and Vṛtra sides with Indra (cf. note 47). In this dichotomy of Heaven and Earth siding with Karṇa and Arjuna respectively one might also see a reminiscence of the Rig-Vedic Dyaus Asura or Pitṛ Asura. Anyhow, an Asura-character has been attributed by the Vedic poets to Heaven.²⁹ It is in this connection also worth mentioning that Bhīṣma, the great sage and warrior, is an incarnation of Dyaus. The dvandva *dyāvā-prthivī* can thus be said to stand for an asura- and a deva-principle while also representing the male and female moieties which constitute the totality.³⁰ The Ādityas side with Karṇa but on the

²⁶ XII.34.18. ... ye 'dharmasya pravartakāḥ /
hantavyās te durātmāno devair daityā ivolbaṇāḥ ||

²⁷ XII.34.21. devaiḥ pūrvagatam mārgam anuyāto 'si bhārata ||

²⁸ E.g. III.92.22, V.126, VI.54.12, VI.95.19-20.

²⁹ Cf. P. von Bradke, *Dyāus Asura, Ahura Mazdā und die Asuras. Studien und Versuche auf dem Gebiete altindogermanischer Religionsgeschichte* (Halle, 1885), passim but spec. pp. 41-76.

³⁰ Cf. Stella Kramisch, “The triple structure of the creation in the Rg Veda”, *History of Religions*, Vol. 2:1 (1962), p. 140ff. By the same author: “Two: its signification in the Rgveda”, *Indological studies in honour of W. Norman Brown* (New Haven, 1962), p. 109ff.

other hand Varuṇa joins the Devas. This seems to be an innovation of the old system in which Varuṇa is both an Asura and an Āditya.³¹ V.29.45ff.³² the contrast is worked out in a different way. The Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas now stand for Dharma and Manyu respectively.³³ Yudhiṣṭhira is the Dharma-tree, Arjuna its trunk, Bhīmasena the branches, Nakula and Sahadeva flowers and fruit, Kṛṣṇa, Brahma and the Brāhmaṇas the root. Suyodhana (Duryodhana) is the Manyu-tree, Karṇa its trunk, Śakuni the branches, Duḥśāsana flowers and fruit and Dhṛtarāṣṭra the mūla. Bosch observes,³⁴ when discussing the tree-motif in general, that the five Pāṇḍavas correspond to the five branches of the celestial tree whereas the Kauravas stand for the innumerable offshoots of the terrestrial tree. J. L. Swellengrebel³⁵ points out that in an Old-Javanese text the Kauravas are connected with the south and the demons. Attention should also be drawn to an interesting observation made by Kuiper.³⁶ The river Yamunā is in later texts called “Tapanaduhitṛ”, “daughter of the sun”, whereas Gangā is said to originate from the moon. Gangā is connected with “left” and Yamunā with “right”.³⁷ Hāstinapura, capital of the Kauravas, is situated on the Gangā and the town of the Pāṇḍavas on the Yamunā. It should be noted that Indraprastha derives its name from the Deva “par excellence”. Further, the Pāṇḍavas are encamped in the West facing East and the Kauravas in the East facing West.³⁸

An opposition between Indra and Varuṇa may be inferred from XII.122.27 ff., where the Crit. ed. reads: ...*apāṇ rājye surāṇāṃ ca*. Indra has been appointed ruler of the Devas while Varuṇa according to this passage is Lord of the waters and the Suras. Ed. Calc. reads *apāṇ rājye 'surāṇāṃ ca*, “(appointed to) the rulership of waters and Asuras”, which

³¹ In an appendix to VIII.63 (Crit. ed. p. 591) a passage is given of which I quote lines 11-12: “... all hosts of gods and creatures. On Pārtha's side were the Devas, the Asuras were for Karṇa” (*sarve devagaṇāś caiva sarvabhūtāni yāni ca | yataḥ pārthaḥ tato devā yataḥ karṇaḥ tato 'surāḥ ||*).

³² *suyodhano manyumayo mahādrumaḥ skandhaḥ karṇaḥ śakunis tasya śākhāḥ | duḥśāsanaḥ puṣpaphale samṛddhe mūlaṃ rājā dhṛtarāṣṭro 'maṇiṣi || yudhiṣṭhiro dharmamayo mahādrumaḥ skandho 'rjuno bhīmaseno 'sya śākhāḥ | mādriputrau puṣpaphale samṛddhe mūlaṃ tv ahaṃ brahma ca brāhmaṇāś ca ||*

³³ Cf. XII.34.18.

³⁴ *The Golden Germ*, p. 87.

³⁵ *Korawāgrama*, ed. by J. L. Swellengrebel (Santpoort, 1936), p. 25 ff. (quoted by Bosch, *The Golden Germ*, p. 87).

³⁶ “Naar aanleiding van De gouden kiem”, *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, Deel 107:1 (1951), p. 75 f.

³⁷ Cf. *Kāth.S.* IX.11: Prajāpati created the Devas to the right, the Asuras to the left.

³⁸ G. J. Held, *The Mahābhārata*, p. 296.

makes better sense since *sura* and *deva* are interchangeable in the *Mbh.* The avagraha does not affect the metre and can therefore easily be omitted. Actually, the avagraha is only occasionally marked in MSS.³⁹ It may therefore seem justified to follow the Calcutta-text.

3. EPIC DUALISM, II

In spite of all that has been written⁴⁰ about the game of dice between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas (*Mbh.* II.53ff.) there are many obscure points awaiting elucidation. Yudhiṣṭhira stakes one after another his kingdom, the four brothers, himself and at last Draupadi. Two questions call for attention: 1. Why did Yudhiṣṭhira save Draupadi till the very end of the game? 2. How is it that, when the game is finished and the Pāṇḍavas are totally ruined, the quarrel which arises is not about the kingdom but about Draupadi? Vidura, the Pāṇḍava protagonist in the gambling scene, tries to turn the juridical debate that arises in favour of the Pāṇḍavas by telling an “old story” (*itihāsaṃ purāṭanam*, II.61.58ff.) about Virocana, son of Prahlāda, a Daitya, and Sudhanvan, son of an Angiras. They were disputing about a maiden (*kanyāhetor*). The older of the two would get her. As they could not come to an agreement on this point, they asked Prahlāda to make a decision. He remitted the case to Kaśyapa, who did not give any definite answer but stressed the importance of telling the truth. Prahlāda then had to admit that Sudhanvan was superior to his own son.

Mbh. II.61.77-78⁴¹ “Having heard Kaśyapa’s word Prahlāda said to his son: Sudhanvan verily is superior to you, likewise the Angiras to me. Sudhanvan’s mother is superior to your mother. Sudhanvan is lord of your vital spirits, O Virocana.”

³⁹ Cf. O. Böhtlingk, *ZDMG*, Vol. XLIII (1884), p. 602. W. D. Whitney, *A Sanskrit grammar* (Leipzig and London, 1896), paragraph 18. L. Renou, *Grammaire sanscrite* (Paris, 1961), p. XVIII.

⁴⁰ H. Lüders, “Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien”, *Abh. Gött. Ges. Wiss., Phil.-Hist. Kl.*, N.F., IX.2.107, pp. 1-75. Reprinted in H. Lüders, *Philologica Indica* (Göttingen, 1940), pp. 106-175. G. J. Held, *The Mahābhārata*, p. 33f. F. D. K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ*, p. 86f. K. de Vreese, “The game of dice in ancient India”, *Orientalia Neerlandica* (Leiden), 1948, p. 349ff.

⁴¹ *kaśyapasya vacaḥ śrutvā prahlādaḥ putram abravīt |*
śreyān sudhanvā tvatto vai mattaḥ śreyāṃs tathāṅgirāḥ ||
mātā sudhanvanaś cāpi śreyasī mātṛtas tava |
virocana sudhanvāyaṃ prāṇānām īśvaras tava ||

Who is now the *kanyā* and has the myth any “inner” meaning apart from its apparent parallelism with the actual case? A more detailed version is found in V.35ff., from which one learns that the name of the maiden is Keśinī. She apparently is in a situation where she has to choose between Sudhanvan and Virocana. She asks Virocana what he thinks about brāhmaṇas and he expresses himself disdainfully about Devas and brāhmaṇas.⁴² The story ends in the same way as in II.61.

According to I.189 Śrī was to be reborn as the daughter of the Pāñcāla king Drupada and to be the wife of the five Pāṇḍavas, incarnations of Indra and four former Indras although begotten by Dharma, Vāyu, Indra and the Aśvins. In *Mbh.* XII.218 Śrī figures again, this time together with Indra and Bali, an Asura. Brahman sends Indra to Bali for instruction but knowing Indra to be a sworn enemy of the Asuras he forbids him to kill Bali. During a discussion between the two about the vanity and transience of power (Bali has been defeated and lives as a hermit in a deserted house)⁴³ Śrī appears literally leaving Bali’s body and joining Indra (XII. 218.5). When asked by Indra she tells that she first lived with Bali but as he has offended against truth she can no longer stay with him. She might stay with Indra if he gives her protection. Bali, who has thus been deserted by Śrī, says that there will be another fight between Devas and Asuras and then he will surely overcome Indra. Thus ends this meeting.⁴⁴ Harivaṃśa gives a very detailed account of the fight between Devas and Asuras. Bali and Indra stand face to face with each other (14000 Calc.ed.). Indra throws a missile at Bali, who makes it ineffective by means of a *vāruṇāstra*. Indra then hears an incorporeal voice which says that he will not be able to vanquish Bali, who is superior to him as regards tapas, dharma, and satya.

Hariv. 14008f.:

nirvartasva mahābāho surāṇāṃ nandivardhana |
purandara suraśreṣṭha na jeṣyasi baliṃ raṇe ||
tapasā hy uttamo daityo varadānena cādhikāḥ |
svayaṃbhūparitoṣāc ca satyād dharmāc ca vāsava ||

Indra is vanquished and Bali anointed king. Śrī comes to Bali declaring

⁴² *prajāpatyā hi vai śreṣṭhā vyaṃ keśinī sattamāḥ |*
asmākaṃ khalv ime lokāḥ ke devāḥ ke dvijātayaḥ ||

⁴³ In *Mbh.* XII.10.17 it is said that one should renounce the world in times of distress, when overcome by old age or when vanquished by an enemy. Cf. J. C. Heesterman, “Brahmin, ritual and renouncer”, *Wiener Zeitschr. f.d. Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens*, Vol. VIII (1964), p. 24ff.

⁴⁴ Cf. also XII.124.

that she has come to him because of his righteousness and bravery. This is the virtuous Bali alluded to by Śrī in *Mbh.* XII.218.

The myths here referred to are centred on a female figure, in XII.218 and *Hariv.* 14000ff. the goddess Śrī, in II.61 and V.35 called *kanyā* and *Keśinī*. From XII.218.7 it can be concluded that these female figures are identical. Śrī says: *na mā virocana veda na mā vairocana baliḥ* “Virocana does not know me, nor Bali, son of Virocana” (Cf. note 47). The two competing parties are in the first case represented by an Asura and Indra, the Deva par excellence, in the second by a Daitya (Asura V.35.7) and an Āṅgīrasa. But not only that: the two Asuras, Virocana and Bali, are in father-son-relationship to each other.

Taking into account that Draupadī incarnates Śrī and that the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the Epic are identified with Devas and Asuras (the Pāṇḍavas are even five Indras) it is not, as far as I can see, too hazardous to suggest that the fatal game of dice between the royal cousins is a representation on the epic level of the struggle for Śrī between Devas and Asuras. From the Brāhmaṇas onwards there is a clear relation between Śrī(śrī) and kingship (*kṣatra*). In XII.34.14 it is stated that the gods and demons fought about śrī (*śrīnimittam*). Śrī also originated from the churning of the Ocean. This was a creation act performed by means of a contest between Devas and Daityas.⁴⁵ When looking upon it in this way one must admit that the despair of the Pāṇḍavas after the loss of Draupadī was not without reason. It is also quite natural that they saved her as long as possible. The indignation with which they attacked the Kauravas was not due to chivalry but to the fact that a king may lose his kingdom but that it is even more fatal if he loses his *śrī*.⁴⁶ Rājaśrī is necessary for a king's success. But, as is seen from XII.218 etc., Śrī is not without a will of her own. It is she herself who decides to leave the Asura and go to Indra. She states that nobody knows her, neither Devas, nor Asuras. Nobody can be sure of possessing her.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. V. Fausbøll, *op. cit.*, p. 15f., 23f.

⁴⁶ For the general importance attached to Śrī-Lakṣmī see G. Hartmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī* (Wertheim am Main, 1933), p. 25ff. For the relation between Śrī and kingship cf. also J. Gonda, *Aspects of early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht, 1954), p. 188f.

⁴⁷ XII.218.7f.

na mā virocana veda na mā vairocana baliḥ |
āhur mām duḥsahety evaṃ vidhitseti ca mām viduḥ ||
bhūtīr lakṣmīti mām āhuḥ śrīr ity evaṃ ca vāsava |
tvaṃ mām śakra na jāniṣe sarve devā na mām viduḥ ||

This passage is also of importance because it apparently contains an allusion to the story about Virocana and Sudhanvan found in II.61 and V.35 in which passages reference

4. KAURAVAS AND SERPENTS

PvB. XXV.15.³⁴⁸ describes a sattra performed by serpents. The list of the partakers and their functions runs as follows:

Jarvara: Gṛhapati
 Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata: Brahman
 Pṛthuśravasa Daureśravasa: Udgātṛ
 Glāva and Ajagāva: Prastotṛ and Pratihartṛ
 Datta Tāpasa: Hotṛ
 Śitipṛṣṭha: Maitrāvaruṇa
 Takṣaka Vaiśāleya: Brahmanācchamsin
 Śikha and Anuśikha: Neṣṭṛ and Potṛ
 Aruṇa Āṭa: Acchāvāka
 Timirgha Daureśruta: Agnīdh
 Arimejaya and Janamejaya: Adhvaryū
 Arbuda: Grāvastut

is made to a *kanyā* and Keśinī respectively. From XII.218.7 we may conclude that Śrī is identical with the *kanyā* and Keśinī. – Apart from this, these passages raise other problems. It is clear that Śrī (*kanyā*, Keśinī) chooses between two contesting parties: Indra – Bali, Virocana – Sudhanvan, Virocana – Āṅgīrasa. The final decision ultimately depends on Śrī herself. This corresponds exactly to a *svayamvara*-situation. Przyluski holds the element of contest to be secondary, but his arguments are not very convincing (*JA*, Vol. 205, 1924, p. 110). On the contrary the contest between the wooers seems to constitute an integral part of the ceremony. Cf. *Mbh.* VI.89.40, where a battle is compared with a *svayamvara*:

*svayamvara ivāmarde prajahrur itaretaram |
 prārthayānā yaśo rājan svargaṃ vā yuddhaśālinah ||*

If Śrī's choice between the Deva and Asura is a mythic prototype of the *svayamvara* other difficult problems ask for solution. E.g. to what extent has the *svayamvara* been actually practiced? One may even ask if it has been practiced at all. I shall not here try to give an answer to this very complicated problem. I refer to P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II:1 (Poona, 1941), p. 523f. According to Kane (1) the *svayamvara* often spoken of in the dharmaśāstras was practically the *gāndharva-vivāha*; (2) some traditions state that a girl can choose a husband herself if her father cannot find a suitable partner; (3) *svayamvara* is for a girl without parents a way to find a husband. Cf. further J. J. Meyer, *Das Weib im altindischen Epos* (Leipzig, 1915), Index s.v. "*svayamvara*", P.W. s.v. "*svayamvara*", J. Przyluski, *JA*, Vol. 205 (1924), p. 108ff. – One may think of the role of Vāc in *Kāth.S.* XXIV.1, *Kap.Kāth.S.* XXXVII.2, *MS.* III.7.3, *TS.* VI.1.6. Vāc prefers the singing Devas to the talking Gandharvas. In *AS.* XII.1.6 Earth (Pṛthivī or Bhūmī) takes Indra's part. In this hymn Earth is repeatedly said to be under Indra's protection. In *ŚB.* III.9.4.14ff. it is said that the Āpaḥ have slain Vṛtra and then submitted to Indra. The goddess or goddesses who choose between the parties of Devas and Asuras seems to be a rather common theme in Vedic literature. Cf. also *RS.* X.124, where Agni leaves the old Pitṛ Asura and goes over to the Devas.
⁴⁸ This list is also found in *Baudh. Śr.S.* XVII.18 and *Baudh. Gṛh.S.* III.10, although slightly altered.

Ajira: Subrahmaṇya

Cakra and Piśaṅga: Unnetārau

Ṣaṇḍa and Kuṣaṇḍa: Abhigara and Apagara.

It has long been recognized,⁴⁹ that *dhṛtarāṣṭra* apart from being the name of the blind king in the *Mbh.* also denotes a serpent [-demon] both in Vedic literature and the Great Epic itself. In *Baudh.Śr.S.* XVII.18 it is stated that Jarvara, Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata etc. are kings and princes of the serpents.⁵⁰ In *Jaim.Up.B.* IV.11.5.15⁵¹ Dhṛtarāṣṭra occurs together with Pārthuśravasa in a serpent spell (Pārthuśravasa is the patronymic of Pṛthuśravas):

“Homage to Atisāmā, Atureta, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pārthuśravasa and may those who protect the vital force (prāṇa) protect me.”

Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Takṣaka Vaiśāleya are mentioned in *AS* VIII.10.29:⁵²

“She [Virāj] ascended; she came to the serpents; the serpents called to her: O poisonous one, come! of her Takshaka descendant of Viśāla was young, the gourd-vessel [was] vessel; her Dhṛtarāṣṭra son of Irāvanta milked; from her he milked poison; upon that poison the serpents subsist; one to be subsisted upon becometh he who knoweth thus.”⁵³

Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata, Takṣaka, Pṛthuśravas and Janamejaya have in the Epic retained their positions as prominent nāgas. The Vedic Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata, however, has been split up into two nāgarājas in the *Mbh.*, each forming a nāgakula of his own.⁵⁴ Something of the same kind has happened to Takṣaka Vaiśāleya. Takṣaka is well-known in the Epic but his epithet has also survived. The Vaiśāleyas are mentioned among the serpents in VIII.63.37. Janamejaya is known in the *Mbh.* both as a royal performer of a sarpasattra and as a snake. II.9.6ff.⁵⁵ enumerates serpents living with Varuṇa in his sabhā.

⁴⁹ E. W. Hopkins, *Epic mythology* (Strassburg, 1915), p. 24; J. Ph. Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore or the Nāgas in Hindu legend and art* (London, 1926), p. 207-214; F. B. J. Kuiper, *Numen*, Vol. VIII:1, p. 43, note 1.

⁵⁰ *ete vai sarpaṇām rājānāś ca rājaputrāś ca.*

⁵¹ *namo 'tisāmāyai 'tūretāya dhṛtarāṣṭrāya pārthuśravasāya ye ca prāṇam rakṣanti te mā rakṣantu.*

⁵² *Sōdakrāmat sā sarpān āgacchat tām sarpā ūpāhvayanta viśavaty ēhīti. tāsyās takṣakō vaiśāleyō vatsā āśid alābupātrām pātram. tām dhṛtārāṣṭra airāvato 'dhok tām viśam evādhok. tād viśam sarpā ūpa jīvanty upajīvanīyo bhavati yā evām veda*

⁵³ Transl. by Whitney, *Harvard Oriental series*, Vol. 8.

⁵⁴ I.52.11.13.

⁵⁵ *yasyām āste so varuṇo vāruṇyā saha bhārata divyaratnāmbaraadharo bhūṣaṇair upaśobhitaḥ* (6)

1. Vāsuki	7. Citra	13. Kuṇḍaladhara
2. Takṣaka	8. Kambala	14. Karkoṭaka
3. Airāvata	9. Aśvatara	15. Dhanamjaya
4. Kṛṣṇa	10. Dhṛtarāṣṭra	16. Prahlāda
5. Lohita	11. Balāhaka	17. Mūṣikāda
6. Padma	12. Maṇimān	18. Janamejaya ⁵⁶

Hopkins⁵⁷ proposes the theory that the Kurus were a Nāga-clan whereas the Pañcālas were five snake-clans. I shall not enter here into his argumentation. But I think that he is right in recognizing the importance of the identity of names borne by Kauravas and snakes. The material, however, which he had at his disposal did not allow any further conclusions. The situation would be different if one could demonstrate that this similarity of names is so wide-spread that it seems impossible to account for it unless one assumes that there is a pattern behind it. A further discussion of this theme may start from a list containing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.⁵⁸ It is striking that many of the names in this list are also attributed

*sragviṇo bhūṣitās cāpi divyamālyānukarṣiṇaḥ
ādityās tatra varuṇaṃ jaleśvaram upāsate (7)
vāsukis takṣakaś caiva nāgaś cairāvatas tathā
kṛṣṇaś ca lohitaś caiva padmaś citraś ca vīryavān (8)
kambalāśvatarau nāgau dhṛtarāṣṭrabalāhakai
maṇimān kuṇḍaladharaḥ karkoṭakadhanamjayau (9)
prahlādo mūṣikādaś ca tathaiva janamejayaḥ
patākino maṇḍalinaḥ phaṇavantaś ca sarvaśaḥ (10)*

⁵⁶ Janamejaya is known from ŚB. XIII.5.4.1, where he is said to have performed a horse-sacrifice.

⁵⁷ *Epic mythology*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ *Mbh.* 1.108.1 ff.:

*Janamejaya uvāca |
jyeṣṭhānujyeṣṭhatām teṣāṃ nāmadheyāni cābhibho
dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāṇām ānupūrvyeṇa kīrtaya (1)
Vaiśampāyana uvāca |
duryodhano yuyutsaś ca rājan duḥśāsanas tathā
duḥsaho duḥśalaś caiva jalasaṃdhaḥ samaḥ sahaḥ (2)
vindānuvindau durdharṣaḥ subāhur duṣpradharṣaṇaḥ
durmarṣaṇo durmukhaś ca duṣkarṇaḥ karṇa eva ca (3)
vivimṣatir vikarṇaś ca jalasaṃdhaḥ sulocanaḥ
citropacitrau citrākṣaś cāricitraḥ śarāsanaḥ (4)
durmado duṣpragāhaś ca vivitsur vikaṭaḥ samaḥ
ūrṇanābhaḥ sunābhaś ca tathā nandopanandakau (5)
senāpatīḥ suṣeṇaś ca kuṇḍodaramahodarau
citrabāṇaś citravarmā suvarṇmā durvimocanaḥ (6)
ayobāhur mahābāhuś citrāṅgaś citrakūṇḍalaḥ
bhīmavego bhīmabalo balāki balavardhanaḥ (7)
ugrāyudho bhīmakarmā kanakāyur dṛḍhāyudhaḥ
dṛḍhavarmā dṛḍhakṣatraḥ somakīrtir anūdarah (8)*

to snakes. When we take into account the huge size of the *Mbh.* this need not in itself be very significant. But it is a different matter if it should turn out that these names are exclusively attributed to the Kauravas and serpents, or putting it in a negative way, if they are not attributed to any of the Pāṇḍavas. I shall discuss the names in the order in which they are found in I.108.

Saha: Son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra I.108.2. Name of a snake I.52.5.⁵⁹

Subāhu: Name of a Dhṛtarāṣṭra I.108.3, attributed to a serpent I.31.13-14.⁶⁰ Sørensen gives *Subāhu* as a name of a Pāṇḍava warrior but the passage in question (Ed.Calc. VII.2951) is not accepted by the editors of the Crit. ed. I do not think that it is mere accident that by the side of Kauravya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, names which explicitly reveal a Kaurava-character, also occur *Aparājita*, *Virajas* and *Subāhu*, all three of which are also names of Dhṛtarāṣṭras (*Aparājita* I.108.10, *Virajas* I.108.14, *Subāhu* I.108.2). *Durmukha* is given by Sørensen also as a name of a Pāṇḍava warrior but the reading is highly questionable (see Crit. ed.). *Durmukha* is the name of a serpent XVI.5.14-15.⁶¹ He too figures together with well-known serpents such as *Takṣaka*, *Vāsuki*, *Prthuśravas* and *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*.

Nanda and *Upanandaka*: Dhṛtarāṣṭras I.108.5, serpents V.101.12.⁶²

-
- dr̥ḍhasaṃdho jarāsaṃdhaḥ satyasaṃdhaḥ sadaḥ suvāk*
ugraśravā aśvasenaḥ senānūr duṣparājayaḥ (9)
aparājitaḥ paṇḍitako viśālākṣo durāvareḥ
dr̥ḍhahastaḥ suhastāś ca vātavegasuvarcasau (10)
ādityaketur bahvāśī nāgadantograyāginau
kavacī niṣaṅgi pāśī ca daṇḍadhāro dhanurgrahaḥ (11)
ugro bhīmaratho vīro vīrabāhur ulolupaḥ
abhayo raudrakarmā ca tathā dr̥ḍharathas trayaḥ (12)
anādhṛṣyaḥ kuṇḍabhedī virāvī dīrghalocanaḥ
dīrghabāhur mahābāhur vyūḍhoruḥ kanakadhvajah (13)
kuṇḍāśī virajāś caiva duḥśalā ca śatādihikā
etad ekaśataṃ rājan kanyā caikā prakīrtitā (14)
⁵⁹ *koṭiko mānasaḥ pūrṇaḥ sahaḥ pailo haliśakaḥ*
picchilāḥ koṇapaś cakraḥ koṇavegaḥ prakālanaḥ
⁶⁰ *aparājito jyotikaś ca pannagaḥ śrīvahas tathā*
kauravyo dhṛtarāṣṭraś ca puṣkaraḥ śalyakas tathā (13)
virajāś ca subāhuś ca śālīpiṇḍaś ca vīryavān
hastibhadraḥ pīṭharako mukharaḥ koṇavāsanaḥ (14)
⁶¹ *karkoṭako vāsukis takṣakaś ca prthuśravā varuṇaḥ kuñjaraś ca*
miśri śaṃkhaḥ kumudaḥ puṇḍarīkas tathā nāgo dhṛtarāṣṭro mahātmā (14)
hrādaḥ krāthaḥ śītikanīṭho 'gratejās tathā nāgau cakramandātīṣaṇḍau
nāgaśreṣṭho durmukhaś cāmbarīṣaḥ svayaṃ rājā varuṇaś cāpi rājan (15)
⁶² *sumanomukho dadhimukhaḥ śaṃkho nandopanandakau*
āptaḥ koṇanakaś caiva śikhī niṣīhūrakas tathā

In V.101.11 mention is further made of *Nandaka*, a serpent.⁶³ *Nandaka* is, although not mentioned in I.108., a son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He was present at Draupadī's svayamvara (I.177.3).⁶⁴

Kuṇḍodara and *Mahodara*: Sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra I.108.6, serpents I.31.15.⁶⁵

Aparājita, I.108.10 and *Virajas*, I.108.14 have already been discussed (p. 258).

Apart from the sons enumerated in I.108 Dhṛtarāṣṭra had still others and one is struck by the fact that even some of these sons have their names in common with serpents.

Kuṇḍala: a Dhṛtarāṣṭra I.89.51.⁶⁶ *Kuṇḍala* is a nāga of Kauravya's kula I.52.12.⁶⁷

Krātha: Son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra I.89.51 (cf. note 66), a serpent in Varuṇa's sabhā XVI.5.15 (cf. note 55).

I shall now discuss some names that point to some relation between the Kauravas in general and serpents. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* is naturally a very striking example. Just as the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the most eminent among the Kauravas, the serpent with the same name is said to be the best among the nāgas IV.2.14 (*dhṛtarāṣṭras ca nāgānām ... varaḥ*).

Kauravya has already been mentioned several times. The word as such raises no difficulties in so far as it is in the *Mbh.* a synonym for *Kaurava*. The nāgas are grouped into five kulas (I.52): Vāsuki-, Takṣaka-, Airāvata-, Kauravya- and Dhṛtarāṣṭrakula. Of the five kulas that of Dhṛtarāṣṭra is by far the biggest. *Kaurava* and *Kauravya* are both epithets of king Parikṣit in Vedic literature.⁶⁸ This king occurs also in the *Mbh.* and he has his residence in Hāstinapura, the Kaurava-town. As for *Takṣaka*,

⁶³ *āryako nandakaś caiva tathā kalaśapotakau*

⁶⁴ *kailāsakaḥ piñjarako nāgaś cairāvatas tathā*

⁶⁵ *sukuṇḍalaś citrasenaḥ suvarcāḥ kanakadhvajah*

⁶⁶ *nandako bāhuśālī ca kuṇḍajo vikaṭas tathā*

⁶⁷ *karkarākarkarau cobhau kuṇḍodaramahodarau*

⁶⁸ *dhṛtarāṣṭro 'tha rājāsīt tasya putro 'tha kuṇḍīkaḥ*

hastī vitarkaḥ krāthaś ca kuṇḍalaś cāpi pañcamah

haviśravās tathendrabhaḥ sumanyuś cāparājītaḥ

aiṇḍalaḥ kuṇḍalo muṇḍo veṇiskandhaḥ kumārakaḥ

bāhukaḥ śṛṅgavegaś ca dhūrtakaḥ pātapaṭarau

⁶⁸ *Khil.* V.8.1, *AS.* XX.127.1, *Śāmkh.Śr.S.* XII.14.1. *AS.* (ed. by Sātavalekar) and *Śāmkh.Śr.S.* (ed. by Hillebrandt) read *Kauramā* instead of *Kaurava* (cf. K. Hoffmann, *WuS*, N.F., 3 (1940), p. 139f.). *Khil.* V.10.2, *AS.* XX.127.8, *Śāmkh.Śr.S.* XII.17.2:

parikṣiṇ naḥ kṣémam akarāt táma āsaná á saram |

arāyyām kurván kauṛavyaḥ pátir vadati jāyáyā |

Bloomfield translates (*SBE*, Vol. 42): "Parikshit has procured for us a secure dwelling, when he, the most excellent one, went to his seat. (Thus) the husband in Kuru-land, when he founds his household, converses with his wife."

it is stated that he lives in the Khāṇḍavawood in Kurukṣetra (I.3.144).

Śakuni: It is interesting to note that Śakuni, the Kaurava protagonist in the gambling scene, shares his name with a serpent of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kula!

5. VARUṆA AND SERPENTS

In a recent paper Kuiper⁶⁹ has pointed out that in the *RS*, where he is conceived as supporting heaven and earth by means of the cosmic axis, Varuṇa has a function that later on is given to Śeṣa. As will be demonstrated more in detail later on, the nature of Varuṇa as a serpent is quite clear in the *Mbh*. In literature prior to the Epic the evidence is not unambiguous. In *AS* V.13.1⁷⁰ Varuṇa is said to have given spells against the poison of a serpent. *Āśv.Grh.S.* II.3.3⁷¹ mentions seven Vāruṇis, who, judging from the context, are serpents. In *PvB.* XXV.15.4⁷² the Ādityas are identified with serpents: "The Ādityas are the serpents. Those who undertake this rite to their share falls the shining out, as it were, of the Ādityas." This passage strikingly resembles *Mbh.* III.3.139f.⁷³ where serpents are compared with the Ādityas: "Those serpents who, being kings of the Airāvata-kula, good in battle, raining like storm-clouds stirred up by winds accompanied by lightnings, with fair and unfair appearance and likewise having black earrings, shine like the Ādityas on top of heaven." Cf. also *Mbh.* XVI.5.13, where the serpents are said to be "celestial" (*divyā*). Whereas Varuṇa's relation to the serpents in Vedic literature is by no means a dominant feature,⁷⁴ the situation is different in the *Mbh*. Varuṇa is here both *salileśvara* "Lord of the Sea" and *nāgarāja* "King of Nāgas". The snakes are thought of as living in Varuṇa's sabhā together with the Ādityas (II.9.6ff.).⁷⁵ Durmukha, Ambariṣa and king

⁶⁹ *IJJ*, Vol. VIII (1964), pp. 108, 116, 118.

⁷⁰ *dadīr hi māhyam vāruṇo divāḥ kavīr vācobhīr ugrair nī riṇāmi te viśām*

⁷¹ ... *sapta ca vāruṇir imāḥ sarvāś ca rājabāndhaviḥ svāhā...*

⁷² *sarpā vā ādityā ādityānām ivaīśam prakāśo bhavati ya etad veda*

⁷³ *ya airāvatarājānaḥ sarpāḥ samitiśobhanāḥ
varṣanta iva jīmūtāḥ savidyutpavaneritāḥ
surūpāś ca virūpāś ca tathā kalmāśakuṇḍalāḥ
ādityavan nākapṛṣṭhe rejur airāvatodbhavāḥ*

⁷⁴ Cf. *AS*. X.4.1 dealing with a chariot-race. Indra was the first, then came the Devas, then Varuṇa and the serpents were the last. In this hymn, a charm against serpents, it is repeatedly said that Indra has slain Vṛtra, the first among serpents. But Vṛtra is also an Asura (cf. *RS*. III.19.14). Looking at *AS*. X.4.1 from a structural point of view one may perceive a pattern where the serpents occupy the place of the Asuras. One gets the impression that the poet deliberately avoids expressing in clear terms that this was in reality a competition between Indra and Varuṇa, followed by Devas and serpents respectively.

Varuṇa are the most prominent among the nāgas (XVI.5.15ff.).⁷⁶ Both in II.9 and in XVI.5 Varuṇa is listed among serpents known from Vedic sources: *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, *Airāvata*, *Prthuśravas*, *Takṣaka* and *Janamejaya*.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is an attempt both to reveal a main structure underlying the composition of the *Mbh.* and to view single facts in the light of this theory. As stated in the introduction Dahlmann already approached the Epic from a structural point of view. He was later followed by such scholars as Held, Wikander, Dumézil, Bosch and Kuiper. The studies by Wikander and Dumézil have contributed considerably to an understanding of the mythic background of the *Mbh.* I think, however, that the constructive criticism given by Kuiper,⁷⁷ according to which the structure *within* the group of the Pāṇḍavas is only of secondary importance as compared with the antithesis existing between their group as a whole and the Kauravas, merits serious consideration. This fundamental difference in opinion, “idéologie tripartite” versus dualism, inevitably leads to diverging valuations and interpretations of single facts. In the sections 2-3 attention has been drawn to facts pointing to a basic dualism underlying the Epic. The relation between the Kauravas and serpents (section 4) in my opinion also forms an integral part of this conception. Section 5 gives an account of Varuṇa as a serpent and his relations to snakes in Vedic literature and in the *Mbh.* The results may briefly be formulated as follows:

1. The material put forward in this paper supports the theory of Held and others according to which the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the Epic represent Devas and Asuras. The antithesis Deva-Asura is only one way of expressing a dualistic conception of the world.
2. The serpents belong to the realm of the Asuras. The Asura-character of the Kauravas is emphasized *inter alia* by the fact that many of them have their names in common with serpents.
3. The game of dice reflects a mythic conflict between Indra and the Asura (Virocana, Bali, Vṛtra), between gods and demons. Held is quite right in stressing the sacred character of the game (*The Mahābhārata*, 243ff.).

⁷⁵ Cf. note 55.

⁷⁶ Cf. note 61.

⁷⁷ *Numen*, Vol. VIII:1 (1961), p. 43., note 1. But cf. S. Wikander, *Från Bråvalla till Kurukshetra*, where he pleads that the fight in Kurukshetra is a recast of an Indo-European eschatology.

4. As the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas represent Devas and Asuras and as the group of the Pāṇḍavas as a whole and more specifically Arjuna represents Indra, one would expect the Asura par excellence, Varuṇa, to be represented by somebody among the Kauravas (cf. p. 248). An antagonism between Indra and Varuṇa may be inferred from *RS* IV.42 and if the interpretation proposed p. 260, note 74 is correct also from *AS* X.4.1. No-one is better fitted for Varuṇa's role than Dhṛtarāṣṭra.⁷⁸ This venerable king represents the supreme authority for the Kauravas. As head of the Kauravas he is responsible for the fatal blows that hit them.⁷⁹ He has been blamed for weakness and for having no will of his own⁸⁰ but nevertheless he occupies a key-position in the Epic.⁸¹ I think that it is rather misleading to speak about him as a loyal and indispensable counsellor of Yudhiṣṭhira.⁸² Dhṛtarāṣṭra, if anybody, is a sovereign in his own right. It is equally incorrect to identify Varuṇa with Pāṇḍu, who fades away when the others enter the stage.⁸³ On the contrary the Vedas stress Varuṇa's omniscience and omnipresence. Even when he has ceded the sovereignty to Indra he is still there. Varuṇa is both a serpent and an Asura, functions which are closely connected with each other. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* stands for a serpent and for the father of the Kauravas, who are incarnations of Rākṣasas, a class of demons.

An account of the epic transposition of Varuṇa must needs rely on hypotheses. Maybe it is something like this:

	VARUṆA	
Dhṛtarāṣṭra	Varuṇa	Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(king and father		(serpent)
of the Kauravas)		

5. Śrī's choice between Indra and the Asura is the mythic prototype of the Svayaṃvara.

7. EXCURSUS ON *Mbh.* I.108.11

In the list of Dhṛtarāṣṭras contained in I.108 there is a group of names

⁷⁸ Dumézil, "La transposition...", *III*, Vol. III (1959), p. 1ff., takes Dhṛtarāṣṭra to represent Bhaga.

⁷⁹ Cf. Dumézil, "La transposition...", p. 11, note 26.

⁸⁰ J. Dahlmann, *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch* (Berlin, 1895), p. 44f. Cf. Dumézil, "La transposition...", p. 11, note 27.

⁸¹ G. J. Held, *The Mahābhārata*, pp. 298f., 330f.

⁸² Dumézil, "La transposition...", p. 8.

⁸³ Dumézil, *Jupiter Mars Quirinus*, p. 77.

which deserves special attention, namely the second half of I.108.11 which runs as follows: *kavacī niṣaṅgī pāṣī ca daṇḍadhāro dhanurgrahaḥ*.⁸⁴ At first sight this may seem to be nothing else but a series of names put together according to the principle of semantic affinity, all five being formed from words denoting different pieces of military equipment.⁸⁵ Attention may be drawn, however, to ŚB. XIII.4.2.5,⁸⁶ which forms part of a passage dealing with the Aśvamedha. There is a prescription how the sacrificial horse should be guarded, for which purpose 400 persons are appointed: 100 *rājaputras* wearing *kavaca*, 100 *rājanyas* having *niṣaṅga*, 100 sons of *sūtas* and *grāmaṇīs* armed with arrows and finally 100 sons of *kṣattrīs* and *saṃgrahītṛs* equipped with *daṇḍas*. One may ask whether this prescription has any symbolic meaning. Actually, the ŚB. is fairly explicit on this point. In ŚB. XIII.4.2.16⁸⁷ it is said that the groups mentioned in XIII.4.2.5 are the human guardians whereas the Āpyas, Sādhyas, Anvādhyas and Maruts are the divine protectors of the sacrificial horse. There is, however, evidence that these watchmen are described as Maruts. RS. V.57.2⁸⁸ describes the Maruts as having good bows, arrows, quivers etc. VS. XVI.35-36,⁸⁹ forming part of a hymn to Rudra, gives a picture of Rudra which in many details corresponds to that of the Maruts in RS. V.57.2. Actually, the Maruts are often called Rudras (e.g. RS. V.57.1). When comparing these three passages, ŚB. XIII.4.2.5, RS. V.57.2, VS. XVI.35f., one notices that the last two are more detailed. They really stress the martial character of the Maruts and Rudra by the pedantic enumeration of all that belongs to a warrior's equipment. Further, the human guardians of the sacrificial horse are characterized by only one detail each: the *rājaputras* wear *kavaca*, *rājanyas* have *niṣaṅga* etc. Lastly, Rudra and the Maruts are not said to be *daṇḍinaḥ*. If one takes ŚB. literally, the Maruts correspond specifically to *kṣātr-trasaṃgrahītṛṇām putrā*, who in this particular situation are equipped

⁸⁴ A parallel passage, VIII.62.2, reads *dhanurdharaḥ*.

⁸⁵ For a general survey of arms and armour see P. C. Chakravarti, *The art of war in ancient India* (Dacca, 1941), p. 150ff.

⁸⁶ *tāsyaitē purāstād rakṣitāra upakṛptā bhavanti | rājaputrāḥ kavacinaḥ śatām rājanyā niṣaṅginaḥ śatām sūtagrāmaṇyām putrā iṣuparṣinaḥ śatām kṣātrasaṃgrahītṛṇām putrā daṇḍinaḥ śatām aśvaśatām niraṣṭam nirāmaṇam yāsminn enam apīsrjya rākṣanti | Cf. TB. III.8.5 and W. Rau, Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 67-72, 107-110.*

⁸⁷ *etām devēbhyo 'śvam medhāya prōkṣitam rakṣatēty uktā mānuṣā āśāpālā āthaitē daivā āpyāḥ sādhyā anvādhyā marūtas tām etā ubhāye devamanuṣyāḥ saṃvidānā āpratyāvartayantaḥ saṃvatsarām rakṣanti...*

⁸⁸ *vāśimanta rṣṭimānto manīṣinaḥ sudhānvāna iṣumanto niṣaṅginaḥ svāśvā stha surāthāḥ prānimātaraḥ svāyudhā maruto yāthanaḥ śūbham*

⁸⁹ = VS. XVII.35-36, Kap.Kāth.S. XVII.4, Kāth.S. XVII.14, TS. V.6.2.

with *daṇḍas*. It is not clear what *daṇḍa* here means. Probably Rau is right when he takes it to mean "Keule".⁹⁰ It seems that the groups of guardians are enumerated according to rank.⁹¹ It may be noted in this connection that the Maruts are sometimes identified with *viś*.⁹² *Daṇḍa* was specially a weapon for the foot-soldiers. But I do not think that it is advisable to stress this point. One should, then, also have to account for the *Āpyas*, *Sādhyas* and *Anvādhyas*, of whom little is known. The *Anvādhyas* are known only from *ŚB.* XIII.4.2.16 (see *P.W.* and the *Vedic Index* of Viśva-Bandhu Śāstri). The *Sādhyas* appear already in the *RS.*, but in a late hymn (I.164.50 = X.90.16 = *AB.* I.16). They are called the *pūrve devāḥ*, "the earlier gods".⁹³ The *Sādhyas* figure together with the *Vasus* *AS.* X.10.31, with the *Āpyas* *ŚB.* XIII.4.2.16, with the *Āptyas* *AB.* VIII.14; 16; 17; 19, *Vait.Śr.S.* XVII.7, *Brh.Dev.* I.116. *P.W.* takes *āpyá* to be an "andere Form oder irrig Schreibung für *āptya*". There can, however, be no doubt that a form *āpyá* actually existed at an early date. *TB.* III.2.8.10-11 speculates about the three earlier forms of *Agni*: *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita*.⁹⁴ They are called *Āpyas* because they are born in water and hence possess *āpyatva*.⁹⁵ About the same is said in *ŚB.* I.2.3.1. but there *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita* are *Āptyas*.⁹⁶ Probably *āptya* denoting a group of gods is older than *āpya*.⁹⁷ The former may be traced back to the *Rig-Veda*, e.g. X.120.6, where *Indra* is praised as the *Āptya* among *Āptyas* (*āptyám āptyánām*). The parallel passages read *āptám*

⁹⁰ Cf. W. Rau, *op. cit.*, p. 101. Further Macdonell-Keith, *Vedic index of names & subjects*, s.v. "*daṇḍa*", where further references are given.

⁹¹ Cf. Macdonell-Keith, *op. cit.*, s.v. "*kṣattr*" and "*saṃgrahitr*", W. Rau, *op. cit.*, p. 109ff.

⁹² *Varuṇa* is *kṣatra*, the *Maruts* represent *viś*. *ŚB.* II.5.2.34: *kṣatram vai vāruṇo viśo marútas* ... *Varuṇa* and the *Maruts* are also put in another complementary relation to each other, representing the male and female principles. *ŚB.* II.5.2.36: *kṣatram vai vāruṇo vīryam pūmān vīryam evaitāt kṣatrē dhatto 'vīryā vai strī viśo marútas tād avīryam evaitād viśam kurutas tasmād evām vipāriharataḥ*.

⁹³ Cf. K. Rönnow, *Trita Āptya. Eine vedische Gottheit* (Uppsala, 1927), p. 125.

⁹⁴ For *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita* as the three brothers of an Indo-Aryan Dreibrüder-Sage cf. Rönnow, *op. cit.*, p. XXIVf. Rönnow also gives a good survey of earlier views on *Trita Āptya* in an introductory chapter. Cf. A. K. Lommel, *Der arische Kriegsgott* (Frankfurt a. M., 1939), p. 59ff. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens: Veda und älterer Hinduismus* (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 58. W. Wüst, "Trita und Verwandtes", *WuS*, N.F., Vol. 3 (1940), p. 225-227. M. Fowler, "Trita Soter", *JOAS*, Vol. 67 (1947), p. 59f. G. Dumézil, *Aspects de la fonction guerrière* (Paris, 1956), p. 27. M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, s.w. "*āptyāḥ*" and "*Tritāḥ*".

⁹⁵ Cf. Rönnow, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁹⁶ For the role of the *Āptyas* in the ritual cf. Rönnow, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30, 33f., 35-37 and *passim*.

⁹⁷ According to Rönnow, *op. cit.*, pp. X-XI, "*āptyāḥ*" in the *RS.* does not denote a whole class of gods but only the three brothers *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita*.

āptyānām (AS. V.2.7, XX.107.10). Thus it seems that the conception of more than one Āptya is old. The form *apyá*, however, is not due to “irrigé Schreibung” but is a genuine form, as is proved by TB. III.2.8.10-11.