Ugraśravas and the Double Introduction

Brian Black

Introduction

In the outer frame story Ugraśravas describes the *Mahābhārata* as having been told on multiple occasions, by different narrators, to different audiences, with different lengths, and including different content. Although Ugraśravas privileges the version of the *Mahābhārata* that he knows, the one told by Vaiśaṃpāyana at Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*, he offers his rendering as one telling among others. Keeping in mind that his account contains alternative and sometimes divergent renditions of narrative episodes, I want to explore the extent to which the Ugraśravas narration is itself a multiple telling of the text. I will consider the possibility of parallel versions included within the *Mahābhārata* by following the implications of a narrative bifurcation in the Ugraśravas frame story. As noted by V. S. Sukthankar, the Ugraśravas frame dialogue seems to begin twice. Some scholars have dismissed such occasions as duplications, but I want to build on the insights of others who have seen a creative and imaginative textual structure.[1] In particular, I want to build on Vishwa Adluri's suggestion that the two introductions 'constitute distinct textual moments and therefore must be held apart while reading the epic' (2011: 165). As such, I will read the two Ugraśravas frame dialogues as offering alternative lenses through which to view the text as a whole. I will suggest that this double vision offers different references points with subtlety discrete perspectives that gently prepare the text's listeners and readers for the plurality of doctrines and viewpoints that feature throughout the text.

[1] As Hopkins infamously stated: 'Tale is added to tale, doctrine to doctrine, without much regard to the effect produced by the juxtaposition' [1901] (1993: 370). In contrast, Ramanujan called repetition a central structuring principle (1991: 421). Similarly, Hiltebeitel described heterogeneity as the *Mahāhārata*'s 'trademark', explaining that the 'poets felt no need to harmonize or eliminate what critics call contradictions and doubled passages' (2015b: 155).

This paper will explore the implications of three features that expose the creative tensions between the two Ugraśravas introductions. First, we will examine Ugraśravas's distinct justifications for his own narratorial authority and how they characterise his narration differently. Second, we will briefly review the multiple summaries that Ugraśravas offers in the first introduction, two of which are particularly attuned to the Kaurava perspective. Third, we will consider the several discrete explanations for the causes of the *sarpasatra* (snake sacrifice) – the central event of the frame story – that are offered across the two introductions. I will conclude by suggesting that the double lenses encourage readers to interpret the *Mahābhārata* with an epistemic pluralism that includes seeing the same events and teachings from different perspectives.

What is the 'Double Introduction'?

The *Ādi Parvan*, the first book of the *Mahābhārata*, begins with the *sūta* Ugraśravas encountering a group of *ṛṣi*s in the Naimiṣa Forest. van Buitenen translates this opening sentence as follows: 'The Bard Ugraśravas, the son of Lomaharṣaṇa, singer of the ancient Lore, once came to the Naimiṣa Forest where the seers of strict vows were sitting together at a the Twelve-year Session of family chieftain Śaunaka' (1.1.1). As V. S. Sukthankar (1944), Mahesh Mehta (1973), and Adluri (2011) have pointed out, the *Puloman Parvan* begins with exactly the same words.[2] In the first book, Ugraśravas only addresses the *ṛṣis* of the Naimiṣa, whereas in the fourth book, Saunaka joins them and becomes the primary listener.[3] This paper will focus on the differences between what Ugraśravas says to the *ṛṣis* of the Naimiṣa Forest when Śaunaka is not a named listener, and what he says to them once Śaunaka becomes his primary interlocutor.

---

[2] 1.1.1*: lomaharṣaṇaputra ugraśravāḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇiko naimiṣāraṇye śaunakasya kulapater dvādaśavārṣike satre;* 1.4.1: *lomaharṣaṇaputra ugraśravāḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇiko naimiṣāraṇye śaunakasya kulapater dvādaśavārṣike satre*

[3] van Buitenen referred to the second introduction as 'the more formal opening' (1973: xxii)

Mehta has described these two, seemingly distinct, beginnings as a 'double introduction', which he characterises as 'two blocks [that] are put together without any attempt at organic combination—a strange patchwork!' (1973: 547). Despite viewing their inclusion as an 'incongruous juxtaposition', he nevertheless sees them as having threads that link them together and suggests that they 'belong to the same redactoral agency' (1973: 549). Mehta was interested in the text-historical questions about their relative chronology and how the archetypal redactor incorporated the two versions in the same text. Adluri, in contrast, sets aside what he calls text-historical 'speculations' and attempts to understand the double introduction as 'a meaningful and necessary component of the epic's narrative architecture' (2011: 146). As he points out, the double introduction appears in all the manuscripts collated for making the Critical Edition. Rather than seeing the two introductions as a textual inconsistency, Adluri approaches it as an 'enigma' that 'confronts us with the problems of understanding the text as a unified whole, from both structural and philosophical perspectives' (2011: 156).

In this paper, I share many of Adluri's starting points in taking the double introduction as a hermeneutical challenge to be explored, rather than as a text-historical problem to be explained away. While Adluri takes the multiple beginnings as indicating a 'cyclical conception of narrative which mirrors the cyclical conception of eonic time' (2011: 172), I want to go in a slightly different direction by arguing that the two narrations set up a dialogical hermeneutic for interpreting a text that includes a variety of voices, many of which are at odds with each other (see Black 2021: 15-17). In doing so, I agree with Adluri in taking the *Mahābhārata* as a text that has been purposefully woven together. However, I also see the text as playing with perspectives and including alternative views within itself that are never completely harmonised. In this way, I take the double introduction as a crucial instance whether the text invites us to recognise its tensions and explore how they might lead to different readings and interpretations.

From a narrative point of view, I suggest that there are three main ways to understand the relationship between the two introductions: 1) as one continuous scene, 2) as two separate scenes where the first one occurs chronologically after the second, and 3) as two parallel versions of the same scene. Although it is not clear which of the three is the best explanation, all of them make a distinction between what Ugraśravas says to the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s when Śaunaka is not a named audience member and what he says when Śaunaka is explicitly present.

Following the sequence of how they appear in the text, the first possibility would be to take the two introductions as one continuous scene, with Śaunaka making a late entrance after Ugraśravas has already narrated the first three *upaparvan*s. Although such a reading would suggest a single Ugraśravas narration, there is nevertheless a shift in how he introduces the text to different audiences. On several occasions throughout the *Mahābhārata*, the conversation or narration changes depending on who is in the audience.[4] In this case, there is an important shift between when Śaunaka is not a named member of the audience and when he is the primary interlocutor. As we will explore in more detail below, when speaking to the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s collectively, Ugraśravas talks about the qualities, characteristics, and content of the *Mahābhārata*, however, when Śaunaka arrives Ugraśravas discusses the Bhṛgu lineage and the causes of the *sarpasatra*.

Another possibility is that the two introductions represent distinct narrations that occurred at different times. This is indicated when Ugraśravas, addressing the Naimiṣa brahmins in the first introduction, refers to a narration he delivered to Śaunaka in on a previous occasion: 'I will narrate to you the entire Bhārata tale from the Pauloman tale onwards, as it was told at Śaunaka's *satra*' (1.2.30). As the second introduction begins at the *Pauloman Parvan*, this remark suggests that the previous occasion to which he refers could be the narration that is depicted in the second introduction. Other comments further point to this possibility. For example, after

[4] For example, when Sanatsujāta enters into conversation with Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura leaves in the *Udyogaparvan* (5.42-45)

listing the *Mahābhārata*'s one hundred books, Ugraśravas tells his audience: 'These one hundred *parvan*s were previously recited by the great-spirited Vyāsa. They were again narrated by Ugraśravas, son of Lomaharṣaṇa, in the Naimiṣa Forest, but in eighteen books' (1.2.70–71). These words also indicate that a Ugraśravas narration in the Naimiṣa Forest has already happened. Taken together, these two references to the second introduction within the first introduction raise the possibility that the double introduction represents two different Naimiṣa frame stories.

A third possibility is that the double introduction offers two parallel accounts that are distinct imaginations of the same scene. As I have discussed elsewhere, there are other cases where duplications in the *Mahābhārata* are presented as alternative realities. For example, there are different versions of a crucial dialogue between Duryodhana and Dhṛtarāṣṭra that leads to the dicing match. The *Mahābhārata* contains three versions of this scene, each of which portrays the two characters and their interaction with each other slightly differently (Black 2021: 88-103). Although it is possible to read them together, it is also revealing to think of them as alternative versions of the same episode. When we do this, we see the lead up to the dicing match quite differently and are provided with different accounts of which characters and events are most culpable for bringing it about. Similarly, throughout the text, we are offered multiple explanations for central decisions and events, whether that be Draupadī's polyandrous marriage (2021: 57-81) or Bhīṣma's death (2021: 49-52). While some of these differences can be attributed to the subjective perspective of different characters in the text, others seem to point to parallel narrations within the same text. Similarly, in the case of the double introduction, we might see the framing of the *Mahābhārata* as including all the details of both Ugraśravas narrations, but we might also think about how the *Mahābhārata* is presented differently if we only had the lens of one of these frames and not the other.

I find this possibility particularly compelling because of how Ugraśravas, in the first introduction, characterises the *Mahābhārata* as a text that has been told in a variety of ways on multiple occasions. As he explains to the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s, poets have recited

the epic before, are reciting it now, and will recite it again in the future (1.1.24). He also informs the *ṛṣi*s that there are different ways of remembering and reciting the *Mahābhārata*: 'There are brahmins who learn the *Bhārata* from Manu onwards, others again from the tale of the *Book of Āstīka* onward, others again from the *Tale of Uparicara* onward. Learned men elucidate the complex erudition of this Grand Collection: there are those who are experienced in explaining it, others in retaining it' (1.1.50). Additionally, Ugraśravas tells the *ṛṣi*s that Vyāsa composed the text in different stages: 'First he composed the collection of the *Bhārata* in twenty-four thousand couplets, without the minor narratives; this much the learned call the Bhārata proper. The seer then made a summary of them in a hundred and fifty couplets, the Book of the List of Contents, of the events and their books' (1.1.61). Furthermore, Ugraśravas tells his audience that there are different traditions of transmission: Nārada teaches it to the Gods, Asita Devala to the ancestors, and Śuka to the *gandharva*s, *yakṣa*s, and *rākṣasa*s (1.1.60-65). By mentioning all these other versions, Ugraśravas places his own account within a context of multiple narrations.

If we take the double introduction as two distinct frames, then not only are there different versions of the text from one telling to another, but the *Mahābhārata*, as represented throughout the Sanskrit manuscript tradition, is itself a multiple telling, containing alternative versions of itself within itself. Taken this way, the repetitions in the frame story are not merely further examples of a textual feature we find throughout the *Mahābhārata*, but frame the text at the outset with two distinct lenses. Indeed, whichever way we explain the double introduction, – as one continuous scene, as two different frames, or as two versions of the same scene –, it offers distinct frames for the *Mahābhārata*, while inviting us to reflect upon the implications of its 'incongruous juxtaposition'. In the remainder of this paper, I will contrast the two Ugraśravas introductions and explore the implications of their differences. In particular, as I will show, they offer different perspectives on Ugraśravas's status as a narrator, on the content and meaning of the main story, and on the causes of Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*.

The Double Explanation for Ugraśravas' Narration

One of the most significant differences between the two introductions is the different ways they explain how Ugraśravas knows what he is narrating. In the first introduction (1.1.1–26) Ugraśravas informs his brahmin hosts that he recently returned from King Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, where he heard Vaiśaṃpāyana recount the great stories that comprise the *Mahābhārata* (1.1.10). Throughout the first *upaparvan* of the first introduction, Ugraśravas focuses his attention on the *Mahābhārata* itself – its nature, character, qualities, and contents. Mehta describes the first introduction as 'Purāṇa-like' because it 'explains the origin, value, extent, content, and merit of the Mahābhārata' (1973: 548). When the *ṛṣi*s ask to hear the *Mahābhārata*, they describe it as the compilation of Vyāsa, part of the Vedas, containing *dharma*, and 'dispelling all danger of evil' (1.1.19). After paying homage to divine beings and giving a brief account of the beginning of the universe and the structure of the cosmos, Ugraśravas begins to describe some of the text's content, claiming that it includes *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* (1.1.47) and that it is exhaustive: 'everything has been entered here' (1.1.48). He then offers a brief account of Vyāsa: son of Satyavatī, father of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura, author of the *Mahābhārata*, and teacher of Vaiśaṃpāyana. Throughout this opening section, Ugraśravas speaks about the *Mahābhārata* self-reflexively. He includes within his narration descriptions of the text he is reciting and information about its author. By praising the gods and talking about the text's qualities, he puts the *Mahābhārata* into a cosmic context.

The second introduction begins with the same sentence as the first, but subsequently Ugraśravas' arrival is portrayed quite differently. Rather than wait for the *ṛṣi*s to offer him a seat, Ugraśravas speaks first, asking the *ṛṣi*s what they want to hear. They reply that they will ask him to tell stories later, but first they must wait for Śaunaka, who is in the fire hall attending to the ritual. When Śaunaka finally arrives, he then addresses Ugraśravas: 'Your father, my boy, formerly learned all the stories

of old. Have you learned them all too, son of Lomaharṣaṇa?' (1.5.1). Śaunaka then asks to hear the 'lineage of the Bhṛgus' (1.5.3).

Crucially, throughout his conversation with Śaunaka, Ugraśravas never refers to what he is narrating as the *Mahābhārata*, nor does mention that he has been to King Janamejaya's *sarpasatra,* nor does he say that he has toured any pilgrimage sites. Indeed, it is not at all clear that he is about to narrate the *Mahābhārata*, as what Śaunaka asks to hear is the story of his own family's lineage. It is this narrative that Ugraśravas claims to have learned from his father, who, in turn, had learned it from Vaiśaṃpāyana: 'All that was formerly learned perfectly and was formerly narrated perfectly by the great-spirited Vaiśaṃpāyana and the brahmins, that was learned by my father and has been perfectly learned by me' (1.5.4–5).

Similarly, at the beginning of the *Āstīkaparvan*, Ugraśravas refers to what he is about the narrate as the 'story of Āstīka' (*ākhyānam āstīkaṁ*), which, like the 'lineage of the Bhṛgus', he claims to have learned from his father in a line of transmission that goes all the way to Vyāsa. 'This ancient *itihāsa* was recited by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana to the dwellers of the Naimiṣa Forest. My father, the bard Lomaharṣaṇa, Vyāsa's student, was once asked by the brahmins to tell it. Therefore, I have listened to it. I will now relate it just as I have heard it' (1.13.6–8). Here, apparently in addition to teaching the *Mahābhārata* to his five students, Vyāsa is said to have recited the *Āstīkaparvan* to brahmins in the Naimiṣa Forest. Crucially, Ugraśravas adds that his own father, rather than learning this story from Vaiśaṃpāyana and his successors, had learned it directly from Vyāsa, as his student. Additionally, Ugraśravas claims that his father had once recited the *Āstīkaparvan* to brahmins.

Śaunaka observes that Ugraśravas narrates like his father: 'You speak like your father; we are very pleased. Your father was always ready to please us. Tell us now this story as your father told it' (1.14.2–3). Here Śaunaka verifies Ugraśravas' claim that his father had narrated this tale to brahmins, and suggests that he had heard

such tales from Lomaharṣaṇa himself. Ugraśravas then confirms that he has learned to narrate like his father: 'I will tell the Āstīka story as I heard it from my father' (1.14.4).

As we can see, the two different Ugraśravas narrations offer distinct accounts for how the *sūta* knows what he narrates.[5] Indeed, they also offer different accounts of what he is narrating. In the first introduction, he is narrating the *Mahābhārata*, as he heard it at Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*; in the second he is narrating the 'decent of the Bhṛgus', which he learned from his own father. In the first introduction, when Śaunaka is presumably not present, Ugraśravas does not mention learning from his father; in the second introduction, Ugraśravas never mentions being in attendance at King Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. While not necessarily talking about the same narrative content, the two introductions nonetheless contain different explanations for how Ugraśravas knows the stories he recites, with each explanation placing him within a different type of lineage of transmission.

The second introduction presents a lineage that resembles a Vedic *paramparā*, with Ugraśravas learning the tradition from his father, who in turn learned it from Vyāsa and/or his student. Although Ugraśravas and his father are not brahmins themselves, the father to son transmission, combined with a lineage that goes directly back to Vyāsa, gives the appearance of an orthodox mode of transmission. The first introduction, however, is seemingly much more problematic. Although Ugraśravas' claim to have heard the *Mahābhārata* at Janamejaya's *sarpasatra* places him closer to Vyāsa in terms of the history of the text's transmission, this explanation seems to open up more complications, as Ugraśravas is neither the student of Vyāsa nor of Vaiśaṃpāyana. In fact, according to this account his only means of knowing the *Mahābhārata* is overhearing the text as it was narrated to someone else.

---

[5] The end of the *Mahābhārata* seems to recognise the first introduction, with Ugraśravas concluding that he has narrated everything that was told by Vaiśaṃpāyana, rather than everything that had been told by his father (18.5).

While this might seem to undermine his authority as a narrator, his outsider status could at the same time contribute to portraying his narration of the *Mahābhārata* as appropriate to be heard by everyone, including women and *śūdra*s. As I have argued elsewhere, his *sūta* status helps characterise his narration as addressing a universal audience (Black 2023: 77-78). Indeed, in addition to attending Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*, Ugraśravas reports that he has also visited numerous sacred fords (*tīrtha*s) and sanctuaries (*āyatana*s), including the location of the war between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. Ugraśravas's travels along the pilgrimage circuit demonstrate his bardic credentials, as, according to the *Mahābhārata* itself, such locations were venues for performing oral legends. Nevertheless, there remains a tension in the first introduction between Ugraśravas portraying the *Mahābhārata* as having Vedic status and his own lack of authority to recite a Vedic text. Moreover, as an unnamed attendee at Janamejaya's *sarpasatra* he seems to have learned what he is narrating by dubious means.

In the second introduction, Ugraśravas does not describe his narration as having the authority of the Vedas, but his more orthodox way of learning what he recites gives his narration and his own status as narrator more authority. Moreover, the presence of Śaunaka as the primary listener, whose family name appears in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, brings Vedic credentials to Ugraśravas's narration. The two introductions, however, not only portray Ugraśravas differently, but they also characterise his narration differently. As we will see in the duration of this paper, the content of his narration is quite different between what he tells the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s on their own and what he tells them when Śaunaka arrives. In the first introduction Ugraśravas talks about the *Mahābhārata* itself, establishing its ontological status and soteriological qualities; yet in the second introduction his narration is in response to Śaunaka's question about how Janamejaya could carry out the massacre of snakes in the *sarpasatra*.

Ugraśravas's Multiple Summaries

Considering that in the second introduction Ugraśravas does not refer to his own narration as the *Mahābhārata*, it is not surprising that he does not offer any summaries of the *Mahābhārata*'s main story. In contrast, in the first introduction, where he talks about the status and qualities of the *Mahābhārata*, Ugraśravas offers four distinct summaries. In other words, even within the first introduction Ugraśravas offers multiple accounts of the content of the text, indicating that the same episodes can be presented and interpreted differently.

The first two summaries appear early in the *Ādiparvan*, shortly after Ugraśravas describes the qualities of the *Mahābhārata.* Both of these summaries gesture towards a Kaurava perspective of the central story, but in different ways. The first summary contains several details that are slightly different from other summaries and distinct from how things play out in the main story as narrated by Vaiśaṃpāyana. This summary is told directly by Ugraśravas to the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s. It does not summarise the entire story, but begins with Pāṇḍu's exile and deer hunt, and includes details of the story all the way up to the end of the war. At this point, the first summary segues into the second summary, which is presented as a dialogue between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Saṃjaya. Ugraśravas begins the first summary when Pāṇḍu 'settled down with his family in a forest' (1.1.67) where his five sons are born, all with divine fathers. Notably, Ugraśravas does not mention that Pāṇḍu's departure to the forest was initially meant to be temporary. He implies that Pāṇḍu died when he killed a mating deer, but he does not explain that the deer was a *gandharva* who placed a curse on him to die when he procreated – which in Vaiśaṃpāyana's narration occurs sometime after the curse, and definitely after his five sons are born. In Ugraśravas's account, the two mothers – he does not name them – conceived the Pāṇḍavas by 'a secret law' (*dharmopaniṣada*; 1.1.69). Although he does not explain the chronology, the sequence of his narration implies that Pāṇḍu had already died when the Pāṇḍavas were conceived by their two mothers from divine fathers. Ugraśravas then says that the Pāṇḍavas were 'looked after by their two mothers in holy and pure forests, and in the hermitages of the great' (1.1.70). These details

further suggest that Mādrī outlives Pāṇḍu by several years, when in Vaiśaṃpāyana's main narrative she dies on his funeral pyre (1.116.31).

A more significant deviation, however, is Ugraśravas's description of the Pāṇḍavas returning to 'the family of Dhṛtarāṣṭra' (1.1.74). While some of 'the Kauravas, the learned men, the four classes, and the townspeople' recognised the five boys as the sons of Pāṇḍu, others claimed: 'They are not his'. Others asked: 'How can they be his, when Pāṇḍu has been dead long since' (1.1.75). In contrast, the identity of the Pāṇḍavas is never called into question directly in the main story as narrated by Vaiśaṃpāyana. Here, however, in the text's very first account of the content of the main story, Ugraśravas alerts his audience to a controversy about whether people believed that the Pāṇḍavas were who they claimed to be. Ugraśravas himself does not appear to doubt their identity, talking about the boys as Pāṇḍu's sons, but he indicates that there was uncertainty about their legitimacy among the people, as well as by the Kauravas themselves. Although not explicitly taking sides with the Kauravas, Ugraśravas's first summary includes details that question the Pāṇḍavas' claim to the throne and offers a point of view that is potentially more sympathetic to the Kaurava perspective than much of Vaiśaṃpāyana's narration.

Ugraśravas' own words in this summary recount events all the way up to the end of the war, when 'the baronage killed off one another in a tumultuous battle' (1.1.94). At this point, his narration segues into a long exchange between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Saṃjaya, where the blind king seeks atonement for his role in events leading to the Mahābhārata war: 'Listen, Saṃjaya, and pray grudge me nothing – you are learned, wise, alert, and respected by the wise. I did not intend, nor do I rejoice in, the ruin of the Kurus' (1.1.96-97). This dialogue is both a continuation of the first summary and a distinct summary of its own. Its main contrast that is it is told from the perspective of Dhṛtarāṣṭra who lists those incidents that made him lose hope of his sons' victory and shares with Samjaya his remorse about the destruction of his family.

It is not clear exactly when this dialogue takes place within the central narrative and it is worth noting that an alternative account of this scene is never told by Vaiśaṃpāyana as part of the main story itself. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's summary is formulaic, consisting of a list of fifty-five episodes in the story framed by his words: 'When I heard … I lost hope of victory'. Although he acknowledges his sons were 'bent on revenge' and that he was weak because his love for his son, Dhṛtarāṣṭra offers his reflections to demonstrate to Saṃjaya that he has the 'eyesight of insight'. He concludes by talking about Gāndhārī in mourning and the widows 'bereft of their fathers and brothers' (1.1.157). Foreshadowing his response to Saṃjaya's narration during the war itself, Dhṛtarāṣṭra faints as he is overcome with despair. When he regains consciousness, he cries: 'Saṃjaya, as this has befallen I want to give up my life, now, at once – I see not the slightest profit in going on living' (1.1.161). Even though it is unclear the degree to which Ugraśravas is sympathetic to how the blind king portrays the events leading up the war, it is nevertheless significant that Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the first character from the main story to have his perspective shared within the narrative. Although he recognises the faults of his own sons and praises the Pāṇḍavas, we are nonetheless presented with a sympathetic portrayal of events from the losing king.

This summary also foregrounds the sections of the text that are narrated by Saṃjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. By recounting this dialogue so early on in the first introduction, Ugraśravas begins his framing of the *Mahābhārata* by zooming into the battle books, introducing his listeners to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Saṃjaya – the main interlocutors of books six through nine – and their relationship with each other, as well as their discussions about the war and its aftermath. We might also see the inclusion of this dialogue here as setting up a parallel between Ugraśravas's narration and Saṃjaya's narration. The two of them are the most prominent *sūta* characters in the text, yet both of them remain mysterious, with very few personal details about either of them and looming questions about their narratorial authority.

Ugraśravas also uses the Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Saṃjaya dialogue – its topics, themes, and dynamics – to characterise the *Mahābhārata* as a tragic tale, as a series of seemingly unconnected incidents cascading into fateful events with disastrous consequences. Dhṛtarāṣṭra seems to describe each incident as its own reason or cause for the destruction of the Kauravas, but by listing them together and as part of the same larger refrain, he also indicates that each event operates within a sort of karmic-chain reaction. Although their discussion of karma and fate in the frame story anticipates their protracted discussion throughout the battle books, there is a role reversal of sorts between how Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Saṃjaya appear in Ugraśravas's rendering, and how they appear in Vaiśaṃpāyana's main narrative. Within the main narrative, Dhṛtarāṣṭra wants to blame fate for the horrors happening on the battlefield, but Saṃjaya argues for the importance of human action, repeatedly reminding Dhṛtarāṣṭra that he is, at least partly, to blame. In Ugraśravas's account, however, Saṃjaya seems to offer him a sense of absolution that never appears within the main story. Instead of urging him to accept his own responsibility for the events that led to the tragic war, here Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra not to grieve, assuring him that his sons were to blame and he could not have done anything differently.

In the next book (*The Summaries of the Books*) there are two more summaries juxtaposed with one another. The first is a list of the hundred books, which operates as a sort of table of contents. For the most part, this summary is just a list, but on some occasions Ugraśravas adds a very short description, which we might see as an informal commentary. For example, he describes *The Origins* as 'a wondrous book compiled by the gods'. Or he seems to add his own view on what justifies Draupadī's marriage when he describes the twelfth book, *The Choice of a Bridegroom*, as 'by the Divine Daughter of the Pāñcālas, where victory is gained according to *kṣatriya-dharma*' (1.2.36-37). The list of one hundred books then segues into Ugraśravas's longest and most detailed summary in which he sums up the content of each book. Compared to the others, this summary is more textual, not merely describing events, but also mentioning the number of chapters and couplets in each of the eighteen

*parvan*s. At the end of this summary, Ugraśravas includes a *phalaśruti*, explaining that for 'a man who learns it', the *Mahābhārata* is 'sanctifying, purifying, atoning, and blessing' (1.2.242).

Looking at these different summaries together, we might see Ugraśravas's skilful narration as using the juxtaposition of different accounts to invite comparison between them. Together, he offers the summaries of the text in two pairs: the first pair consists of two abridged synopses, one of which is presented as the subjective perspective of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; the second two summaries are more about the structure of the text – how many books or how many *parvan*s, with brief descriptions of the content of each one. By presenting all four summaries in the first introduction, Ugraśravas conveys that there are multiple ways to present the content of the text. No two summaries are the same, with each one including details and perspectives that do not appear in the others. Through these four contrasting summaries, Ugraśravas characterises the *Mahābhārata* as a story that can contain alternative episodes and as a text that can be organised and understood in different ways.

Multiple Explanations for the *Sarpasatra*

Another significant differences between the two introductions is how they portray Janamejaya's *sarpasatra.* Both introductions provide more than one explanation for the massacre of the snakes, but they incorporate references to this event into their narratives quite differently, thus offering distinct understandings of the significance of snake sacrifice in relation to the *Mahābhārata* as a whole.[6] As Mehta observed, the two introductions lead to the 'same situation' by 'completely different path[s]': 'It appears that we are in the presence of two different versions of the Janamejaya sacrifice' (1973: 548).

The sarpasatra in the first introduction

[6] As Bowles as astutely remarked: 'Causal explanations of violent events are layered in complex ways' (2023: 38).

As we have seen so far, Ugraśravas's main concern in the first introduction is to describe the *Mahābhārata* as a text, not only its narrative content and a synopsis of each book, but also its ontological status and soteriological qualities. And as we have noted, this is in sharp contrast with the second introduction, where his primary interlocutor is Śaunaka and his primary concern is to explain the causes of Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. Indeed, there are only two occasions where the *sarpasatra* is mentioned in the first introduction before the *Pauṣya Parvan*: 1) in the opening scene, when Ugraśravas tells the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s that he has just attended the snake sacrifice, where he heard Vaiśaṃpāyana narrate the *Mahābhārata* (1.1.8) and 2) in the fourth summary, where the *sarpasatra* is mentioned as part of the content of the *Āstīka Parvan* (1.2.27). The first example is part of qualifying which version of the *Mahābhārata* Ugraśravas is narrating and establishing his credentials as a narrator; the second example is part of summarising the context of his narration. In other words, both of these references mention the *sarpasatra* descriptively as a part of the *Mahābhārata* as a text, while neither addresses the snake massacre as a problematic episode that needs to be explained.

Nevertheless, the *sarpasatra* is still a concern of the first introduction, even if it is addressed more indirectly. Indeed, despite not being the explicit focus of the first introduction, the *sarpasatra* frames the first three *upaparvan*s: Ugraśravas's attendance is the first thing he says about himself to the Naimiṣa *ṛṣi*s; and his narration of the *Pauṣya Parvan* culminates with Janamejaya announcing that he will preform the *sarpasatra.* Moreover, even though the first introduction never explicitly addresses the question of what caused the *sarpasatra*, it nevertheless offers two answers to this question: 1) Uttaṅka's revenge for the humiliation he suffers because of Takṣaka and 2) Janamejaya's revenge on Takṣaka for killing his father. Both of these explanations are offered in the *Pauṣya Parvan*, which contains a mixture of personal genealogy, Upaniṣadic lore, and tangentially connected narrative episodes. Interestingly, it is not clear until the very end of the *Pauṣya Parvan* that the several loosely connected narratives leads into an explanation for the *sarpasatra*.

Ugraśravas opens the *Pauṣya Parvan* by mentioning Janamejaya, but here the setting is a different *satra*, one that the king attends with his brothers in Kurukṣetra. In another gesture towards an account of the snake sacrifice, Ugraśravas recounts how Janamejaya acquired a priest who is born from a human man and a snake woman. Here, the priest is Somaśravas, but in the second introduction a priest named Āstīka, who is also half human and half snake, will convince Janamejaya to stop the snake sacrifice. This episode then segues into a longer narrative that involves the Vedic student Uttaṅka and his quest to retrieve King Pauṣya's wife's earrings as a gift for his guru's wife. When the king's wife hands them over, she warns Uttaṅka that Takṣaka, king of the *nāga*s, also wants to have them. On his way back to his teacher's house, Uttaṅka encounters a naked mendicant who turns out to be Takṣaka, who steals the earrings and escapes to *nāgaloka* through a hole in the ground. Uttaṅka follows Takṣaka down the hole and offers praise to all the snakes, but does not retrieve the earrings. At this point, Uttaṅka encounters a man who instructs the brahmin to blow into the ass of a horse. Somehow, this smokes out *nāgaloka* and Takṣaka returns the earrings to Uttaṅka. Finally Uttaṅka returns to his teacher and seeks an explanation for all the surreal things that have happened. Afterwards, Uttaṅka goes off to Hāstinapura to urge Janamejaya to perform a *sarpasatra*. He convinces Janamejaya to 'wreak vengeance' on Takṣaka by disclosing that the king of snakes had killed his father Parikṣit.

Here, at the very end of the first introduction, the two explanations for the *sarpasatra* are brought together in the figure of Uttaṅka, who is the one who tells Janamejaya how his father died and who has his own motivations for taking revenge on Takṣaka. Crucially, both of these explanations cast Takṣaka as a villain and a worthy recipient of revenge. Indeed, even before we learn that Takṣaka will steal the earrings and had killed Janamejaya's father, Pauṣya's wife warns Uttaṅka about him. This is the first time Takṣaka is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. Although the *nāga* king's motivations for killing Parikṣit are not explored, the story of Uttaṅka serves to reinforce the notion that Takṣaka needs to be punished for his bad deeds. As we will

see below, Takṣaka is not portrayed as explicitly at fault for the *sarpasatra* in the second introduction. Both the explanations offered in the *Pauṣya Parvan* will also be included in the second introduction, in the *Āstīka Parvan*, yet they are portrayed differently and are given different weight as additional explanations are emphasised more.

The sarpasatra in the second introduction

Compared with the first introduction, the second introduction is much more focused on the *sarpasatra*, with each of its narratives addressing this episode either indirectly or directly. In particular, the second introduction focuses on the cause of the *sarpasatra*, with the entire *Āstīka Parvan* narrated in response to Śuanaka's question: 'Why did King Janamejaya, a tiger among men, carry on with the full snake sacrifice until all snakes were finished? Tell me that! And why did that excellent brahmin Āstīka, the best of the mumblers of spells, have the snakes set free from the fire that had blazed forth?' (1.13.1-2). Notably, Śaunaka's question is not so much about what happened, but rather why events happened the way they did. Here we see that not only does the second introduction offer several explanations for Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*, but it characterises it as a moral problem that needs to be reflected on and explained.

We should not be surprised, however, to find that Ugraśravas's narration does not solve the moral question with a simple explanation. As I have argued elsewhere, the *Mahābharata* raises a number of moral questions that generate prolonged discussions between characters in the narrative, without offering answers or solutions (Black 2021). Like the many moral questions in other sections of the text, Ugraśravas responds to Śaunaka's question by offering a range of possible explanations, some of which might not sit easily with each other, and possibly none of which is fully satisfying. The point of Ugraśravas's framing, I would argue, is not to offer a definitive solution, but rather to characterise the *Mahābhārata* as a guide for reflecting on why and how such a horrendous event could have happened. As we will see, Ugraśravas includes four main causes for Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*: 1) the curse

of Kadru, mother of the snakes; 2) Brahmā's endorsement; 3) Parikṣit's impatience; and 4) a hermit's curse.

The first story that Ugraśravas narrates to Śaunaka is the *Puloman Parvan*. Although it does not explicitly attempt to explain the causes of the *sarpasatra*, it does place it within a wider context of violent vendettas between humans and snakes, while also introducing the character of Āstīka, who will later bring an end to Janamejaya's mass slaughter. In this story, we are introduced to Śaunaka's Bhṛgu ancestor, Ruru, whose fiancée, Pramadvarā, dies from the bite of a snake (*bhujaga*). When Ruru is inconsolable, an envoy of the gods suggests that he can revive her by bestowing half his own life onto her. But even after bringing Pramadvarā back to life, Ruru nonetheless swears to destroy all snakes (*jihmaga*) and begins killing them indiscriminately with a stick. One day Ruru mistakes a lizard (*ḍuṇḍubha*) for a snake (*śayāna*) and is about to kill it, before the lizard convinces him not to. This lizard, as it turns out, is actually a sage who has been cursed because he had frightened another sage with a snake. The lizard then instructs Ruru that a brahmin should observe non-violence and only a *kṣatriya* should wield the staff. The lizard then mentions the massacre of the snakes (*sarpa*) by Janamejaya. Ruru asks to hear the story, but the lizard says he must hear it from a brahmin. Ruru then returns to his father, who tells him the story. Although the Ruru story does not explain the events leading up Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*, it is thematically related by recounting a vendetta against snakes amongst one of Śaunaka's ancestors and by foregrounding the story of Āstīka as providing a peaceful ending to Janamejaya's massacre.

It is at the beginning of the *Āstīka Parvan*, which follows immediately after the tale of Ruru, when Śaunaka explicitly asks Ugraśravas to provide an explanation for the *sarpasatra.* Ugraśravas's response is complex and circuitous, weaving together a number of tales, including those of Āstīka, the rivalry between Kadrū and Vinatā, the churning of the milk ocean, the stealing of *soma*, and the battle between the *deva*s and *asura*s. Along the way he offers multiple explanations for Janamejaya's massacre of snakes.

The first explanation is a curse that had been placed on the snakes by their mother, Kadrū, but we get two different narrative threads leading to this curse. The first is in the story of Āstīka, which begins with his father Jaratkāru, a great seer who never spilled his seed. When his ancestors plead with him to continue the family line, he agrees to marry. One day, while wandering in the forest Jaratkāru comes across the snake (*bhujaṅga*) Vāsuki, who offers his sister, also named Jaratkāru. Ugraśravas explains that Vāsuki gives his sister away to appease a curse on the snakes (*bhujaga*) that had been pronounced upon them by their mother: that Agni would burn the snakes at Janamejaya's sacrifice. Jaratkāru accepts Vāsuki's sister and they marry, producing a son Āstīka, who will later save the snakes (*nāga, mātula* [and the other snakes]; 1.13.41) from their mother's curse. This is the first mention of the curse, but it is not clear why the snakes would be cursed by their own mother.

After hearing this abridged version, Śaunaka asks to hear 'this tale as your father used to tell it' (1.14). Ugraśravas then launches into the story of Kadrū and Vinatā, the two wives of Kaśyapa. One day Kaśyapa offered both his wives a boon. Kadrū chose to have a thousand snakes (*nāga*) for her sons, while Vinatā chose to have two birds as sons. When the two wives see the horse Uccaiḥśravas, they put a wager on the colour of the horse's tail, with the loser becoming the slave of the winner. Vinatā claims that the horse's tail is white, while Kadrū said that it was black. In an attempt to secure the outcome of her bet, Kadrū orders her sons to insert themselves into the horse's tail to make it look black. The snakes (*bhujaṅga*), however, do not obey her command, so she curses them to burn in the fire of Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. Here we see a more mythological or cosmological explanation of the *sarpasatra*, one that takes the causes back to a curse that took place in a mythical time, before the lifetimes of Janamejaya, Uttaṅka, or Āstīka, and before Takṣaka and the snakes who perish in the large-scale sacrifice.

Ugraśravas's second explanation to Śaunaka's question is Brahmā's inaction. When the gods learn about Kadrū's curse, they ask Brahmā why he approved it. Brahmā

responds by saying: 'There are two many snakes (*pannagās*), they are harsh, terribly brave, and covered with poison' (1.34.9). Although Brahmā cannot point to anything that the snakes have done wrong, his explanation indicates a prejudice against them, characterising snakes as too numerous and potentially dangerous. Brahmā then differentiates between those snakes who are 'the mean and evil and virulent ones, that are doomed to die' and the 'law-abiding snakes' who 'will escape from their deadly danger' (1.34.10). He then proclaims that the *dharma*-abiding snakes will be saved by Āstīka (1.34.12-13). Although Brahmā himself does not carry out any violence against the snakes, his approval indicates a divine sanction of violence against them.

The next explanation offered by Ugraśravas is revenge for the death of Parkṣit. This, as we have seen above, is mentioned in the first introduction. Only in the second introduction, however, does Ugraśravas explain the circumstances of Parikṣit's death. Indeed, Ugraśravas offers two accounts. The first one begins with Parikṣit, who, similar to Pāṇḍu embarks on a deer hunt that goes wrong. In this case, the deer runs away into the forest after it is shot and leads Parikṣit into a set of circumstances that will lead to his death.[7] While looking for the deer, Parikṣit comes across a hermit, Śāmīka, who had taken a vow of silence. The king becomes angry when the sage does not answer him, so he drapes a dead snake around his neck.

Although Śāmīka retains his composure, his son – when he learns about how Parikṣit had insulted his father – curses the king to be killed by Takṣaka. Śāmīka chastises his son when he learns of this spiteful curse, but he acknowledges that the curse cannot be changed. Instead, Kāśyapa goes to Parikṣit to cure him of snakebite once he is bitten (1.38.36-37). But before he can reach Parikṣit, Takṣaka, who has taken the form of an elderly brahmin, approaches Kāśyapa and pays him not to save the king. After eliminating his potential antidote, Takṣaka disguises himself as a worm and bites the king when he is eating fruit.

---

[7] See Ugraśravas's first summary in the first introduction (1.1.67)

Shortly afterwards, Ugraśravas offers another version of the Parikṣit story (see Shee 1986). This second account is also prompted by a question from Śaunaka, who asks: 'What did King Janamejaya at the time ask his councillors concerning his father's journey to heaven? Tell me once more in detail' (1.45.1). Ugraśravas then tells about the demise of Parikṣit again, this time through an account of a dialogue between Janamejaya and his councillors. Although Śaunaka initially asks to hear about the death of Parikṣit in more detail, this account is more abbreviated and does not significantly deviate from the first version. Some differences, however, are worth noting. When talking about Parikṣit's deer hunt, for example, the councillors add justifications for the king's anger when the hermit does not respond to him, explaining that the king was an old man who was hungry and tired when he was following the deer, and that he did not know that the hermit had taken a vow of silence. A more crucial difference is the explanation of how Takṣaka kills Parikṣit. Takṣaka comes in disguise to the palace and kills the king with his venom, but there is no mention him shapeshifting into a worm in this version. Another slight difference is that the councillors mention Uttaṅka, who was not mentioned in the longer version of Parikṣit's death (1.46.25).

As I have noted elsewhere, when Janamejaya asks to hear this exchange he is concerned with how his ministers could possibly recount a conversation that they did not themselves witness – a dialogue that was seemingly not witnessed by anyone at all: 'I first wish to hear the dialogue between the king of snakes and Kaśyapa in the forest, which was without inhabitants. Who witnessed and heard what came to be heard by you?' (1.46.26-27). The ministers respond that a man who was collecting branches just happened to have climbed up a tree when he overheard the conversation. Later this man recounted the dialogue in the city where the ministers were present. The ministers tell Janamejaya that what they related to him about this encounter was exactly as they had heard it from the eyewitness himself (1.46.31).

Crucially, after hearing this explanation King Janamejaya makes his fateful decision to conduct the snake sacrifice.

Even though Janamejaya realises that Śṛngin is also at fault, he determines that Takṣaka is to blame: Takṣaka 'alone made the curse of the seer Śṛngin come true' (1.46.37). Janamejaya then mentions Uttaṅka again, as a contributing causal factor to his decision to carry out the *sarpasatra*: 'To please Uttaṅka, and to please greatly myself and all of you, I shall go and avenge my father' (1.46.41). As we can see, like many of the morally problematic events within the main story, there are multiple explanations for the *sarpasatra*. The main ones Ugraśravas offers in the *Āstīka Parvan* are: 1) Kadru's curse; 2) Brahmā's endorsement; 3) Parikṣit's impatience; and 4) the hermit's curse.

A more direct cause, of course, is 4) Takṣaka's bite, but it is interesting that in the second introduction, there is no explanation for why Takṣaka would want to bite the Kuru king. Rather, the only explanation for Takṣaka's involvement is that he is the one mentioned in the hermit's curse. Compared to the first introduction, where Takṣaka is more explicitly cast as a villain, in the second introduction his own agency in killing Parikṣit is seemingly taken away through the sage's curse. While Takṣaka's involvement seems to be downplayed, Ugraśravas's second introduction characterises Parikṣit as more complicit in the circumstances leading to his own death. While in the *Pauṣya Parvan* we also learn that Takṣaka killed Parikṣit, only in the *Āstīka Parvan* do we learn what Parikṣit did to deserve this.

Moreover, it is only in Vaiśaṃpāyana's narration of the main story where we will learn another explanation, that 5) the causes of the *sarpasatra* go all the way back to the times of the Pāṇḍavas, when Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burned down the Khāṇḍava Forest, Takṣaka's dwelling place. With this in mind, we see that the narration of *Mahābhārata* itself, then, is directly relevant to understanding Śaunaka's question about why the *sarpasatra* could possibly have happened. Unlike his narration to the

Naimiṣa *ṛṣis*, Ugraśravas segues into the Vaiṣaṃpāyana narration not because his audience asks to hear the *Mahābhārata*, but rather because it answers his question about Janamejaya's *sarpasatra.*

James Earl has pointed out that in comparison with the *Iliad*, the *Mahābhārata* tends to ask questions about causation, rather than merely about information: 'As the *Iliad* asks "what happened?", the *Mahābhārata* asks "why did it happen" … we might say that whereas the *Iliad* explores the consequences of an action, the *Mahābhārata* explores the causes of one' (2011: 54). 'Why do things happen? There are causes for any event, usually many causes, related or unrelated, and those causes have causes too' (2011: 54-55). Indeed, Śaunaka's question seems to go beyond wanting a causal explanation and towards asking for a moral explanation. He seems to want to know how Janamejaya could possibly 'carry on with' such a morally reprehensible activity as the murder of thousands of snakes. As we have seen, Ugraśravas answers Śaunaka's question with a complex and meandering narrative that offers several direct and indirect explanations for why the *sarpasatra* took place and how it could be justified. Earl sees the multiple explanations as characterising the sacrifice as destined to take place: 'The more causes adduced, of course, the more inevitable – fated – their end will seem. That is not exactly to say that something called Fate causes things to happen, however, since many of the causes do involve human agency. There is always room for moral action. This issue is complex, to say the least' (2011: 55).

Although I agree with Earl that the complexity of causes creates a sense of inevitability, at the same time I think multiple explanations are an indication that the text treats the *sarpasatra* as a moral problem. In a text that poses multiple ethical dilemmas throughout the main narrative, we might see the moral question of Janamejaya's snake sacrifice as the text's first moral problem. It is this moral problem that defines Ugraśravas's second introduction and is offered as the explanatory question that elicits the narration of the *Mahābhārata* as a whole. Indeed, as Earl has pointed out, we should keep in mind that the heinous acts of the

sarpasatra are taking place throughout the text's narration by Vaiśaṃpāyana: 'we have to imagine the whole poem that follows it being recited bit by bit during the intervals. Snakes will be pouring into the fire as the apocalyptic battle between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas is being recounted; and Āstīka's intervention to save the Snakes will correspond with the ending of the poem' (2011: 33).

Conclusion

As I have suggested, the bifurcation in Ugraśravas's narration presents us with more than one telling of the *Mahābhārata*. Whether the bifurcation is because his audience changes, or because his narration combines different tellings on different occasions, or because they are two imaginations of the same narration – each of these possibilities indicate that the *Mahābhārata* contains parallel narrations of itself within itself. In this way, Ugraśravas's account is not merely one telling among others, but it includes counter narratives, adjacent storylines, and alternative versions of the same event as part of its interpretive frame. Moreover, the double Ugraśravas frame sets up a way of reading the text that promotes a diversity of interpretations and invites ever new understandings, thus preparing readers and listeners for the *Mahābhārata*'s many layers of complexity.

***

Works Cited

Adluri, Vishwa. 2011. 'Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, how to Read the Ādiparvan', *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2: pp. 143-210.

Black, Brian. 2022. *In Dialogue with the Mahābhārata*. London: Routledge.

Black, Brian. 2023. 'Transitions and Transmissions in the *Mahābhārata*: Revisiting the Ugraśravas/Śaunaka Frame Dialogue'. In *Visions and Revisions of Ancient Indian Narrative: Studies of the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas*, edited by Raj Balkaran and McComas Taylor. Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 65-92.

Bowles, Adam. 2023. ‘Āstīka, Black Magic and Apotropaic Ritual: Peacemaking Brahmins and the Snake Sacrifice in the *Mahābhārata*’s Ādiparvan’. In *Visions and Revisions of Ancient Indian Narrative: Studies of the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas*, edited by Raj Balkaran and McComas Taylor. Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 37-64.

Earl, James W. 2011. *Beginning the Mahābhārata: A Reader’s Guide to the Frame Stories*. Woodland Hills, CA: South Asian Studies Association.

Hiltebeitel, Alf. 2001. *Rethinking the* Mahābhārata: *A Reader’s Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hopkins, E. Washburn. [1901] (1993). *The Great Epic of India: Character and Origin of the Mahabharata*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited. 19 Volumes. Eds. V. S. Sukthankar et al. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933–1966.

The Mahābhārata: 1. The Book of the Beginning. Trans. J.A.B. van Buitenen. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Mehta, Maheshi. 1973. ‘The problem of the double introduction to the Mahābhārata’. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93.4: pp. 547-50.

Ramanujan, A. K. 1991. ‘Repetition in the Mahābhārata’. In *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, edited by Arvind Sharma., pp. 419-43. Leiden: Brill.

Shee, Monika. 1986. *Tapas und Tapasvin in den erzählenden Partien des Mahābhārata [Tapas and Tapasvin in the Narrative Sections of the Mahābhārata]*. Reinbek, Germany: Dr Inge Wezler, Verlag für orientalistische Fachpublikationen.

Sukthankar, Vishnu S. (ed.) (1933) Introduction and Apparatus, *Ādiparvan*, with Appendix 1 and Critical Notes’ Vol. 1 with Prolegomena. In *Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, 19 vols. Edited by V.S Sukthankar et. al. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.