

Kill and be Killed: The *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā* in the *Mahābhārata*

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Abstract: When after the great battle in the *Mahābhārata* Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to tell him again what he told him in the so-called *Bhagavadgītā* before that same battle, Kṛṣṇa comes up with what has become known as the *Anugītā*, or the ‘Later Gītā’ (MBh. 14.16–50). On closer consideration, this *Anugītā*, which teaches liberation through yoga consisting of knowledge (*jñāna*) or meditation (*dhyāna*), contains a message which is the very opposite of the *karmayoga*, or disinterested action, of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In the article, an attempt is made to answer the question as to how a text which teaches the abandonment of action could be passed for a repetition of a text which insists on the necessity to act. In this connection, it will be argued that the two texts have comparable functions in the story of the *Mahābhārata*, or what the *Bhagavadgītā* is for the following battle, the *Anugītā* is for the subsequent attempts of the Pāṇḍavas to get rid of guilt they have incurred in this battle.

Introduction¹

In the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*,² after the great battle, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to repeat the lecture he had delivered earlier at that anxious moment when the armies of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas stood facing each other ready to attack. However, instead of repeating what has become known as the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa comes up with an entirely different story, the message of which appears to be completely the opposite to the one found in the *Bhagavadgītā*.³ In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa teaches a path to final liberation through *karmayoga*, or disinterested action, and in the *Anugītā* one through *jñāna*, or knowledge, which is characterised by the very absence of action. In order to understand the function of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the story of the *Mahābhārata* *karmayoga* is to be translated into *ṣatriya* terms. With it Kṛṣṇa provides Arjuna as if it were with a license to kill. With the argument that as long as he does not entertain a personal interest in the killing he will remain free of guilt, Kṛṣṇa succeeds to overcome Arjuna’s and his brothers’ reluctance to fight against their own relatives. Apparently, however, it did not work out as expected, for after the battle the Pāṇḍavas suffer greatly from feelings of guilt. From different sides they are advised to perform a horse sacrifice as the means to get rid of this guilt. After this advice comes the *Anugītā* and after that the horse sacrifice, the death of the Pāṇḍavas’ allies and, finally, the Pāṇḍavas’ ascension to

heaven. The connection made in the *Mahābhārata* between the *Anugītā* and *Bhagavadgītā* suggests that the pair of knowledge and absence of activity of the *Anugītā* has the same function as the disinterested action of the *Bhagavadgītā*, namely that of offering a way out of the problems and dilemmas Arjuna and his brothers are facing. The question which I therefore propose to deal with here is what the role might be of the pair of knowledge and absence of activity in the Pāṇḍavas' attempts to get rid of their guilt. Before tackling this question, however, first the context and, next, the contents of the *Anugītā* will be dealt with. However, before proceeding with that, two general remarks should be made. The first concerns the relative chronology of the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā*, or rather of their respective teachings. This is a moot point, as arguments have been put forward for the anteriority of the (theism and *bhakti* of the) *Bhagavadgītā* as well as for that of the (non-theistic, gnostic Sāṃkhya of the) *Anugītā*.⁴ More or less independent of this question, some scholars maintain that the *Anugītā* is only a late insertion in the *Mahābhārata*.⁵ Interesting as these topics may be, they do not affect the present study, the aim of which is to understand the meaning of the *Anugītā* in the context in which it is presently found.

The second remark concerns the composite nature of the *Anugītā*. Like the *Bhagavadgītā* it contains material from different periods or from different schools of one and the same system. A case in point are the different lists of the *tattvas* in *Anugītā* 14.35.36–9 and 14.46.52, respectively.⁶ In this connection, the question arises as to what extent the *Anugītā* in its present form is representative of the version which was 'inserted' in the first instance. Probably, we will never be able to answer this question with any degree of certainty. Apart from that, one may seriously ask if each and every instance of the occurrence side by side of different lists of items should indeed be explained as the result of secondary insertions. Rather, we might be dealing with a specific feature of epic composition.⁷

The context of the *Anugītā*

We take up the story of the *Mahābhārata* at the very beginning of the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* (XIV), when the Pāṇḍavas and the elders of the Kauravas arise from their bath in the Ganges after Bhīṣma's cremation. The first few *adhyāyas* focus on Yudhiṣṭhira in conversation with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Kṛṣṇa, and Vyāsa, respectively. These conversations take place on the banks of the Ganges. After that, the scene shifts to Indraprastha, where we meet Arjuna in the *sabhā* in the company of Kṛṣṇa.

Thus, the first person we meet is Yudhiṣṭhira on the banks of the Ganges. Grief for the death of his relatives has reduced him to a state of complete inactivity.⁸ Dhṛtarāṣṭra tells him to stand up and do what is to be done.⁹ If anyone should grieve and repent it is he himself, because he had failed to follow Vidura's advice to kill Duryodhana at the very beginning. In the second *adhyāya*, Kṛṣṇa takes over from Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He advises Yudhiṣṭhira to start sacrificing again, because without

sacrifices the forefathers as well as gods remain deprived of sustenance.¹⁰ Moreover, if his relatives have died, Kṛṣṇa reassures him, they have died gladly in fulfillment of their destination as *kṣatriyas*.¹¹ Notwithstanding this well-meant advice Yudhiṣṭhira asks permission to retire to the forest where he hopes to find peace of mind after he had so treacherously killed Bhīṣma and Karṇa.¹² He requests Kṛṣṇa to tell him through what action he might become free from (the consequences of) these cruel deeds and his mind might become pure again.¹³

At this point, Vyāsa takes over from Kṛṣṇa. He tries to comfort Yudhiṣṭhira by saying that man in general is merely carrying out orders of a higher being. The term Vyāsa uses here is *īśvara* (14.3.2). As he was not personally responsible for what he did, there is also no need for Yudhiṣṭhira to feel any regret. If he nevertheless does feel guilty, he should listen as to how this feeling can be removed, namely by ascetic practices, sacrifices, and liberality.¹⁴ As a remedy he is advised to perform a horse sacrifice, or *vājimedha*, spending many *dakṣiṇās* in the process.¹⁵

Yudhiṣṭhira replies that he would like to perform such a sacrifice but that as a result of the battle the earth is exhausted and he is therefore unable to secure presents to give away as sacrificial fees. Vyāsa advises Yudhiṣṭhira to depart for the Himalayas to collect the treasures left behind there by the priests who had officiated at Marutta's sacrifice. What follows is the story of Marutta's sacrifice (*adhyāyas* 4–10).

After this 'interruption' by Vyāsa, in *adhyāya* 11 we get to hear what more Kṛṣṇa said to Yudhiṣṭhira. According to Kṛṣṇa they should stop wasting their time with talking about grief, as the work to be done is still far from finished and the enemies have not yet been conquered. The real enemy is within. It is *mṛtyupada*, the state of being subject to dying, which is identified with, and by implication caused by, *mamatā*, self-interest or selfishness. This *mṛtyupada* is contrasted to *brahmaṇaḥ pada*, which refers to the state of being liberated from death, that is, *mokṣa*, or final liberation, which state is won by the absence of any selfishness.¹⁶ The war against this internal enemy is said to be difficult to win. Arrows, soldiers, or relatives are of no use in it.¹⁷ It can only be won by, again, a horse sacrifice during which many *dakṣiṇās* are to be distributed.¹⁸ As I will argue below, the distribution of these *dakṣiṇās* turns the sacrifice into a veritable show of one's lack of *mamatā*, or, *mutatis mutandis*, makes it the ideal occasion to get rid of this attitude.

Having been consoled and advised Yudhiṣṭhira takes heart, completes the death rites for Bhīṣma, and sets out for Hāstinapura.¹⁹ He felicitates himself with having such reliable advisors and once more mentions his decision to perform a sacrifice and to go to the Himalayas to collect Marutta's treasures there.²⁰

Next, the scene shifts to Indraprastha where Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are sitting in the *sabhā* exchanging reminiscences of the great battle. Kṛṣṇa's task, however, is also to try and comfort Arjuna, who is grieving for the death of his son and his relatives.²¹ At a certain point, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that while he is greatly enjoying his company he is also very anxious to see his own people again. He suggests that the two of them go to Hāstinapura to ask Yudhiṣṭhira for permission for him to return to

Dvārakā. The visit to Yudhiṣṭhira takes place at the end of *adhyāya* 50, after Kṛṣṇa has actually finished telling the *Anugītā*.²²

In *adhyāya* 16, Arjuna refers to the moment right before the battle, when he had come to learn about Kṛṣṇa's greatness (*māhātmya*) and superhuman form (*rūpa aiśvarya*).²³ However, he regrets to have to admit that he had completely forgotten the details. He requests Kṛṣṇa therefore to inform him once again about these topics (*teṣvartheṣu punaḥ*, 14.16.7) before he actually returns to Dvārakā.

Kṛṣṇa is at first greatly disappointed by Arjuna's stupidity. Next, he tells him that he is not able to tell the complete story again, for when it comes to explaining the *brahmaṇaḥ pada* the 'Dharma' is extensive.²⁴ Moreover, at the time he explained this *brahmaṇaḥ pada* he was *yogayukta*. The implication is that he is not in that state now. Therefore, he promises to tell an ancient tale about this topic (*tasminn arthe*) instead.²⁵ What follows are actually three separate tales containing conversations between a *siddha* and his pupil, a brahmin and his wife, and personified Brahma and the *ṛṣis*, respectively, which together have become known as the *Anugītā*.

After Kṛṣṇa has finished this ancient tale, he says to Arjuna that if he carefully carries out the Dharma explained in it he will get rid of every form of guilt and attain *mokṣa*.²⁶ Kṛṣṇa adds that (in this respect) the sermon resembles the one preached before the battle.²⁷ Therefore, Arjuna is advised to consider it carefully and act accordingly (*tasmād atra manaḥ kuru*, 14.50.48c).

A summary of the *Anugītā*

On final analysis, the *Anugītā* is a text on *jñāna*, or knowledge, as a way to final liberation. That is, knowledge of the creation of the material world out of an undifferentiated state of consciousness. Through this knowledge one comes to know what is the real self and what not. It enables one to return from the material existence one lives in to that state of pure consciousness beyond change and decay. The path of knowledge is marked by the abstention of action. In this context, *yoga* (of *yogasāṃkhya*) is specifically described as *dhyānayoga*, and *jñāna*, or the knowledge itself, is equated with *saṃnyāsa*, or renunciation. I should immediately add that the choice for the path of knowledge made in the *Anugītā* does not mean that no references at all are found to the disinterested activity of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Such passages, however, are outbalanced by those explicitly arguing in favour of the total rejection of action. By way of introduction to the following summary it should also be noted that the contrast between the paths outlined in the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā*, respectively, is largely played out in a restricted set of common terms, which have acquired different (shades of) meanings in each text. An example is the word *naiṣkarmya*, which in the *Bhagavadgītā* refers to acting without any interest in the outcome and in the *Anugītā* seems to have the more literal sense of complete abstention from activity.²⁸

Anugītā part 1: MBh 14.16–19

The *Anugītā* falls into three sections. In the first one, *adhyāyas* 16 up to and including 19, a *siddha* is addressing a pupil on the topic of *mokṣadharmā*.²⁹ The *siddha* has abandoned worldly life (*lokatantra*, 14.16.37) and is on his way to the highest goal (our *brahmaṇaḥ pada*, 14.16.39) from which he will not return. However, before going there he is prepared to answer any questions his pupil might ask him. The pupil's questions concern, among other things, rebirth, *karma*, liberation techniques, and final destination, and one way or the other all these questions are covered by the *siddha*'s reply. In the first place, the *siddha* sketches the endless cycle of birth and death and the role of *karma* in it. Birth and death will not stop as long as one does not know the means leading to liberation (*mokṣayoga*, 14.18.12), which include such good deeds as liberality, chastity, and honouring one's teacher and parents (14.18.13–16). At the same time, he notes that liberation by these means is a slow process taking a long time (14.18.21), that is, takes place only after many lives. After this and by way of introduction to a faster alternative,³⁰ the *siddha* starts to explain how and by whom our bodies have been created, beginning with a state of pure consciousness (14.18.25). Here, he introduces knowledge of this process of creation of the material world, and in particular knowledge of the state of pure consciousness, as a path leading towards liberation. Thus, 'the person who sees that the Great Spirit enjoys the qualities but at the same time is free from the five gross elements and the qualities, has no bodily form, and is free from taints and qualities, that person is liberated'³¹ and 'will reach *nirvāṇa* (sic)' (14.19.12). This is immediately followed by a treatise on *yoga* (*yogaśāstra*, 14.19.14). Through *yoga* one is said to arrive at a vision of *brahma* and through this to become a *pradhānavit*, or a person possessing the liberating knowledge of the material world.³²

Anugītā part 2: MBh 14.20–34

The second part of the *Anugītā* is made up of a dialogue between a brahmin and his wife. She wants to know to what world she will be going, now that her husband is sitting at a lonely place abstaining from any activity (*nyastakarmāṇaḥ*, 14.20.3). For, after death wives go where their husbands go and she does not see where she will be going, with him doing nothing. The brahmin replies that people who are without *jñāna* go astray by performing actions, but adds that complete abstention from activity is not found (*maurta*) in this world.³³ In this world, *karma* is inevitable. Therefore, leaving it for what it is the brahmin has turned his eyes inwards and has seen a place within himself where *brahma* resides (14.20.9), a place from which everything proceeds and into which everything merges again (*tata eva pravartante tameva praviśanti ca* 14.20.15ab)³⁴ and which is immaterial and can, for instance, not be smelled by the organ of smell. It can only be approached by the mind (*manasā tveva gamyate* 14.20.12).

The importance of *yoga* in all this is established by the story about Paraśurāma (*adhyāyas* 29–30). The latter was exterminating the *kṣatriyas* in revenge for the killing of his father. His forefathers try to dissuade him, a brahmin, from any further killing of *kṣatriyas*. In this connection, they tell him the story of the ṛṣi Alarka. After Alarka has conquered the whole world, he decides to direct his arrows at other enemies. He tries to conquer his mind, nose, tongue, skin, ear, eyes, and faculty of perception (*buddhi*), but fails to subdue these enemies. Next, he undertakes severe ascetic penances (*tapo ghoram āsthāyātha*, 14.30.26), but this does not work. Next he turns to *yoga*, which does work. This *yoga*, probably in opposition to *tapas*, is characterised as a purely mental process during which the *yogin* only ‘thinks’ without moving (*niścala*).³⁵

Anuḡitā part 3: MBh 14.35–50

While in the passage discussed just now, *tapas* and *yoga* are distinguished, in the one immediately following the two terms are used as synonyms. Thus, while the brahmin concludes the story about Alarka by saying that there is nothing better than *yoga* he next advises Paraśurāma to perform *tapas* (14.30.29–30). Something similar we will see in the third part of the *Anuḡitā* to be discussed now.

In the final, third, part of the *Anuḡitā* (personified) *brahma* is instructing the ṛṣis. In this part, *jñāna* is equated with *saṃnyāsa*, ‘renunciation’, or the final one of the four *āśramas*: ‘The characteristic of *yoga* is activity, the characteristic of knowledge is renunciation. Therefore, a wise man here on earth should practise renunciation in order to acquire knowledge. A renouncer possessed of knowledge attains the highest goal’.³⁶ It seems as if the text is making a distinction between *yoga* of the ‘*tapas*’ type and a form of *yoga* which fits *jñāna*, or is *jñāna*. Note the following passage: ‘Wise men say that the highest goal is attained by knowledge and by penance (*tapas*). Penance is said to be the lamp (pointing out the path), but we know that knowledge is the highest (path) and renunciation is the highest penance (*tapas*)’.³⁷

In this part of the *Anuḡitā*, the various paths leading to the highest goal are distributed over the four *āśramas*, or stages in life: those of pupil or *brahmacārin*, of householder or *grhastha*, of forest dweller or *vanaprastha* and of renouncer or *saṃnyāsin*, respectively. For the latter stage, the expression *adhyātma parama pada*, or ‘the highest state based on the self’, is used (14.35.30). The householder and forest dweller (the pupil is not specified) believe in the efficacy of sacrifice and go the path of the gods (*devayāna*, 35.34). Only the person who practises *dharma* on his own or apart from these people (pupil, householder, and forest dweller) will be able to see the origin and decay of beings.³⁸ This is followed by an enumeration of the 24 *tattvas*, or ‘things’ of Sāṃkhya (14.35.36–8). In the following *adhyāyas*, all this is further specified: the three *guṇas*, namely *tamas* (14.36), *rajas* (37), and *sattva* (38). These three *guṇas* are said to be inherent in the undifferentiated (*avyakta*) (39). Next, the creation of the material world is described, beginning with

the undifferentiated, that is, the *mahān ātmā*, or 'Great Spirit' (14.40), *ahaṁkāra*, or 'Ichbewusstsein', *manas*, or mind (41), the five gross elements and ending with the senses (42), respectively.

A similar enumeration, in the case of elements making up the material world, is found in 14.42.27–39. The knowledge of all these elements is called the *adhyātma-vidhi*, the 'mode based on the self'.³⁹ Here, again, a connection is made of the path of knowledge with the *saṁnyāsa* stage of life, which is labelled *adhyātma parama pada* (see above). This path appears to be reduced to a purely mental process: 'The senses, the objects of the senses, and the five gross elements, having placed all these together, one should consider them with the mind. When everything has vanished in the mind, the pleasure of worldly life is no longer desired. By those knowing beings that alone is considered pleasure'.⁴⁰

As already indicated, *saṁnyāsa* does not seem to imply the non-use of *yoga*, but the use of a special kind of *yoga*, a '*jñānayoga*'.⁴¹ In this connection, I would like to refer briefly to the passage *adhyāyas* 14.45–6. It starts with an enumeration of, again (see above), the four stages of life: pupil, householder, forest dweller, and mendicant monk, or *bhikṣuka* (14.45.13). Next, it is said through which ways of life the first three conquer heaven. The pupil, for instance, by eating only after having acquired permission from his *guru* (46.3), the householder by sacrificing and liberality (45.17), the forest dweller by wearing clothes made of animal skins and the bark of tree (46.10). 'However', the text continues, 'if [instead of just conquering heaven] the householder, pupil or forest dweller desires to attain liberation, he should take recourse to the highest mode of living'.⁴² What follows is, first, a description of the way of life of a wandering mendicant (*parivrajat*, 14.46.38) who has left behind the *lokaśaṁgrahadharmā*, or 'the duty to keep the worlds in order' (14.46.37); and in the second place, a description of *yoga*. ('Having completely drawn in the senses in the same way as a tortoise draws in his limbs, with one's senses, mind and perception vanished, one sees without the help of the senses'.⁴³) This is followed by the statement that 'the person who [in this way] knows everything (*sarvajña*), is completely liberated' (14.46.44). The following enumeration of the contents of this knowledge, namely the senses, the objects of the senses, the five gross elements, mind and perception, and the undifferentiated Supreme Spirit, is concluded as follows: 'Next, having enumerated (*prasaṁkhyāya*) all these elements, after having renounced the world in the proper way, untainted by guilt he will attain heaven, liberated from all ties'.⁴⁴ After this, almost by way of an *encore*, we are told how one should proceed when one is about to die: 'At the moment of dying, after having enumerated (*parisaṁkhyāya*) all these elements, knowing the "things" (*tattvas*), one should meditate (*dhyāyēd*) in a lonely place. In this way one who is without any other support becomes liberated'.⁴⁵ This passage is interesting in that it mentions meditation (*dhyāyēd*). In a later chapter, the text indeed uses the term *dhyānayoga*, or *yoga* consisting of meditation: 'Through pure *dhyānayoga*, those great souls who are without envy and without selfishness attain the great and highest world'.⁴⁶

This *dhyānayaoga* looks like a synonym of *jñānayaoga*, mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* as one of the two sides of *sāṃkhyayoga*, the other being *karmayoga* (6.25.3). In the *Anugītā*, the idea of *karmayoga* is thus in the end completely rejected. *jñāna* implies the complete absence or renunciation of activity. In this connection, I would also like to quote a passage from the final chapter of the *Anugītā*, namely 14.50.30–2, which seems to be directed directly against the *Bhagavadgītā* and in particular against the ideas about *karma* put forward in that treatise:

Some persons, rather stupid ones, extol action but those great-souled persons, who have attained enlightenment, do not extol action. By action a creature is born with a body and with the sixteen (things). Knowledge (*vidyā*) brings forth the Great Spirit, which cannot be grasped and enjoys immortality. Therefore, those who are far-sighted have no attachment to actions. The Great Spirit is said to consist of knowledge (*vidyāmaya*), not of action (*karmamaya*).⁴⁷

The function of the *Anugītā*

After the great battle, the Pāṇḍavas are plunged into grief for the relatives who have died in it. At the same time, they are overcome by feelings of guilt. In this connection, Yudhiṣṭhira, for instance, refers to his treacherous killing of Bhīṣma and Karṇa.⁴⁸ As far as their grief is concerned, they are simply told to stop with it; the *kṣatriyas* who have died in the battle have been well aware of the risks and are at present enjoying themselves in heaven. So why should one cry, Kṛṣṇa asks. As far as the Pāṇḍavas' feelings of guilt are concerned, both Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa urge them to perform a horse sacrifice, which is presented as a sure means to get rid of these feelings. However, such a sacrifice regularly involves a great lay-out of *dakṣiṇās*, or sacrificial fees. This appears to be a problem for the Pāṇḍavas, for where are they to find the necessary wealth on this earth depleted by the war. This practical problem is solved by Vyāsa, who directs Yudhiṣṭhira to the Himalayas, to the treasures left there by the brahmins who had officiated at King Marutta's sacrifice. Next Kṛṣṇa adds that the horse sacrifice is also an ideal occasion to get rid of one's *mamatā*, or selfishness (see the passage on *mamatā* referred to above).

Next, in his private conversation with Arjuna, in the *Anugītā*, Kṛṣṇa changes his tune. He teaches a path leading to liberation through *jñāna*, which is characterised by the complete absence of activity. So in the end, two solutions are offered to the Pāṇḍavas's problem. The first one, offered to Yudhiṣṭhira in public, is to perform a horse sacrifice and the second one, offered to Arjuna in private, is to do nothing. As I like to show, the Pāṇḍavas try both ways in exactly that same order. That is to say, first they organise an *aśvamedha*, which, however, fails to produce the desired result. Next they take resort to the second method of complete inactivity and renunciation, which in the case of *kṣatriyas* has been translated into refusing to defend themselves and offering themselves to be killed. Already at this point, I would like to note that the difference between these two means, sacrificing

and refusing to defend oneself respectively, seems to be a matter of degree only and represents only different stages of the same trajectory.

In order to understand what is happening after the *Anugītā*, we have to go back to the very beginning of the epic, when the realm is divided between the Kauravas in Hāstinapura and the Pāṇḍavas in Indraprastha.⁴⁹ The Pāṇḍavas have built a beautiful *sabhā*, or assembly hall, there with the help of the heavenly architect Maya. When they are seated in that hall, Nārada arrives from heaven with a message from their father Pāṇḍu. Pāṇḍu has seen how King Hariścandra is enjoying himself in heaven after he had performed a royal consecration, or *rājasūya* sacrifice. Therefore, he urges his sons to perform such a sacrifice, so that they may enjoy heaven as well. It is this sacrifice, which in the epic is represented by the game of dice, which leads to the conflict between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas and to the great battle. In the end, the Pāṇḍavas – and the Kauravas – arrive in heaven.

The purpose of sacrifice is indeed heaven. In this connection, I may quote from the well-known phrase from the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*: ‘he who desires heaven should sacrifice’ (*svargakāmo yajeta*). At the same time, one must be without *pāpa*, or ‘guilt’. For one who dies tainted by guilt will not be allowed in. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how one can act without accumulating guilt. If Kṛṣṇa’s aim was to urge the Pāṇḍavas into action, he did succeed. If his aim was also to keep them from accumulating guilt, it seems he did not. In any case, after the battle Yudhiṣṭhira feels oppressed by feelings of guilt. Vyāsa advises him to get rid of it by performing a horse sacrifice (14.3.8–10).⁵⁰ With Yudhiṣṭhira’s decision to perform the sacrifice, the scene shifts to Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, and the *Anugītā*.

After the *Anugītā*, Yudhiṣṭhira performs the horse sacrifice as he was advised to do by both Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa, but interestingly enough it seems to fail to serve its purpose. This is made clear by the story of the mongoose. After the sacrifice a mongoose appears, whose body is gold-coloured on one side. The mongoose starts to belittle the Pāṇḍavas’ sacrifice. It tells how once a poor brahmin who with great difficulty (through *uñchavṛtti*, or gleaning) had managed to collect some barley, gave it all away to a guest. The brahmin and his wife and children were prepared to die from starvation for the sake of the guest. However, the guest happens to be God Dharma, who then led the whole brahmin family to heaven. It was by touching a small quantity of the barley left behind that the mongoose acquired a gold-coloured head. Since then he has visited many royal sacrifices in order to become gold-coloured all over. In the course of his peregrinations, he had arrived at the sacrifice organised by the Pāṇḍavas, but his body is still ugly brown. The implication is clear: the sacrifice has been carried out only half-heartedly. The liberality of the Pāṇḍavas at the horse sacrifice did not equal that of the poor brahmin, who went so far as to give away his own life and that of his family. To use the terminology introduced earlier by Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas were not yet free from *mamatā*. The result is that they did not go to heaven and did not get rid of their guilt, that is to say, not yet.⁵¹

The Pāṇḍavas' second attempt to get rid of their guilt and reach heaven is told in the *Mahāprasthānikaparvan* (XVII) and has a completely different character.⁵² When the Pāṇḍavas hear about the death of Kṛṣṇa and his kinsmen (see *Mausalaparvan*, XVI), they decide that for them too the time has come to retire from the world (*prasthāna*). Together with Draupadī and a dog they start on a journey to heaven by ascending Mount Meru. They are said to be 'in yoga trance' (*yogayukta*, 17.1.28a) and to have discarded their weapons.⁵³ During the journey, the Pāṇḍavas drop dead one after the other as the result of some sin or transgression. Draupadī is said to collapse because she had shown a preference for Arjuna, Sahadeva because of the pride he took in his wisdom, and Nakula for the pride in his beauty. Arjuna has to die because he considered himself a hero and prided himself on being the best bowman in the world. Finally, Bhīma drops dead because he ate too much. Yudhiṣṭhira appears to be an exception. Thus, while the others drop down halfway, Yudhiṣṭhira is the only one who actually makes it alive and with his body intact to the entrance of heaven. Except for two minor peccadilloes, he is without fault and goes straight to heaven, while the others, as it appears later, had to wait in a kind of purgatory until their sins were fully expiated.

What is interesting to note here is that on their journey to heaven the Pāṇḍavas have left behind their weapons. In addition to their being 'in yoga trance', they apparently voluntarily forgo the possibility to do what *kṣatriyas* are supposed to do, namely to fight and to defend themselves. Variants of this 'strategy' we also see with the two allies of the Pāṇḍavas, namely the Pāñcālas and Yādavas.

To begin with the Yādavas, as depicted in the *Mausalaparvan* (XVI), after Kṛṣṇa has visited his brother Balarāma, who died while practising *yoga*, Kṛṣṇa realises that his time has come as well. He lies down on the ground, checking his senses. A hunter with the female name Jarā, seeing Kṛṣṇa in his *yoga* sleep, mistakes him for a deer and kills him with an arrow that pierces his heel. Kṛṣṇa is thus killed while he is lying down on the ground in a kind of *yogic* trance. He is completely passive and not willing to defend himself against any attack on his person.

Kṛṣṇa is not the only one killed while lying on the ground. Draupadī's kinsmen, the Pāñcālas, suffered a similar fate. In the night of the last day of the battle, they were killed by Aśvatthāman while they were sleeping (*Sauptikaparvan*, X). The motive behind Aśvatthāman's attack is revenge for the treacherous way in which his father Droṇa was murdered by the Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Droṇa was killed after he had been made to believe that his son Aśvatthāman had died and he had cast down his weapons. The massacre of the Pāñcālas is a punishment for a sin or, looking at it from the side of the Pāñcālas, an expiation of a sin. What is particularly striking is the passive way in which the culprits undergo their punishment. They were caught while sleeping on their bed, unable to offer any resistance.

The bond between the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas, and Yādavas was special, in that it was sealed by marriages (with Draupadī and Subhadrā, respectively). At the end of the battle, the three allies split up and each goes its own way. Typically, they die under similar conditions. The Pāñcālas die first. They are killed in their sleep.

Next follows Kṛṣṇa, who is killed while lying on the ground in a *yogic* trance.⁵⁴ And, last but not least, we have the Pāṇḍavas, who die on their way to heaven and after they have cast away their weapons. By this passive, un-*kṣatriya*-like behaviour the Pāṇḍavas and their two allies did indeed attain heaven.

What we see is two successive attempts of the Pāṇḍavas to get rid of their guilt incurred in the course of the great battle. What is required of them is a form of self-sacrifice: they have to be prepared to give away everything they have, including their own lives. At the horse sacrifice, the Pāṇḍavas simply did not go far enough in this. As the story of the mongoose tells us, one should be prepared to give away everything, even one's own life. This is precisely what the Pāṇḍavas subsequently did, and what the Pāñcālas and Kṛṣṇa, and, we should not forget them, the Kauravas had been doing before them. In this respect, the *Mahābhārata* after the great battle seems to present us with a story of a learning process, in which we see how the Pāṇḍavas gradually mastered the process which led them to heaven.

When after the failed horse sacrifice the Pāṇḍavas decide to ascend Mount Meru, they are actually carrying out the second solution, suggested in the *Anugītā*. Or, if the *Anugītā* is indeed a later addition (see above), this treatise can be seen to provide the religious foundation for the Pāṇḍavas' decision to retire from the world in that way. That is to say, their refusal to defend themselves and fight for their lives would be the *kṣatriya* variant of inactivity and renunciation. On closer consideration the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā* seem to form a most interesting pair: in both treatises, Kṛṣṇa tells the Pāṇḍavas what to do next: in the battle, they have to act and kill and after the battle they have to remain passive and be killed.

The teaching of *mokṣa* in the *Mahābhārata*

While the immediate aim of the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā* in the story of the *Mahābhārata* is thus to incite the Pāṇḍavas to action and non-action, respectively, taken by themselves these two treatises deal with final liberation. The *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā* are, however, not the only texts in the *Mahābhārata* dealing with this topic. In this connection, I need only refer to the *Śāntiparvan* (XII), a large part of which deals with *mokṣa*. One of the questions is what these extensive treatises on final liberation are doing in the epic. Another, and as we will see related, question is what all this killing and being killed is about. In what follows, I will try to give a beginning of an answer to these two questions.

On another occasion, I have tried to show that the *Mahābhārata* evokes an archaic, violent world of sacrifice.⁵⁵ Raiding seasons alternate with periods of sedentary life, and the end of the raiding season is marked by great communal feasts in which the hosts seek to establish themselves as great men (*grands seigneurs*) by all kinds of extravaganzas: they give away and spend practically everything they have managed to accumulate in the preceding period, even at the risk of dying from starvation in the following lean period. But this year's guest is next

year's host. When his turn comes, the latter will try to outdo the former in an even greater show of liberality. In this way, both parties are caught in an unending cycle of competition, unending because there will always be someone who thinks that he can outdo the present champion. Vedic sacrifices are the heirs and successors of these communal feasts. They present smoothed-up, bowdlerised versions of these feasts. For instance, the extravagant gifts and lavish entertainments have turned into sacrificial fees, or *dakṣiṇās*. More importantly, the competitive element has been taken out of it: the guests have been replaced by Brahmin priests, who are *hors de concours*. They need not reciprocate.

The *Mahābhārata* revolves around one such sacrificial feast, namely the *rājasūya*. It involves a fierce competition, in which the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas constantly change positions and in which with each step the stakes are raised. The sacrifice is represented, among other things, by the game of dice in the *sabhā*.⁵⁶ In fact, the rivalry between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas starts with the *sabhā* itself, or the question which of the two parties has constructed the most beautiful hall. In the beginning, we have the Pāṇḍavas, who have built a beautiful *sabhā* with the help of the divine architect Maya. They invite the Kauravas along, who are completely bewildered by its splendour. The eldest Kaurava, Duryodhana, makes a fool of himself by jumping into the pond with its crystal-clear water only to find out that he is dealing with real crystal. The Kauravas take revenge for this humiliation by building a *sabhā* themselves, which is as beautiful as that. They invite the Pāṇḍavas for a game of dice there, which game the Pāṇḍavas dramatically lose.

With regard to the dice game, the following three points should be noted.

1. In the first place, in the course of the dicing game the stakes are raised with every new round. It is clearly a test in how far each of the parties dares to go. In the end, the Pāṇḍavas put everything at stake, except for their lives.
2. In the second place, the Pāṇḍavas seem to know beforehand that they are going to lose. That is to say, Yudhiṣṭhira does not really know how to play dice (*anakṣajñā*). At the same time, he apparently cannot decline the invitation. The challenge has to be taken up. On the other hand, from the point of view of the Kauravas the outcome must have been unpredictable as well. They decide the game by foul play, which indicates that they felt that they could not win by playing it according to the rules.
3. Finally, the Kauravas win but do not show any interest in the outcome of the dice game. For, after they have won they put everything at stake again and allow the Pāṇḍavas one more chance, in which the winner takes all.

The Pāṇḍavas lose and go into exile. After thirteen years, they return and demand their share of the realm. At this stage, the roles are completely reversed. In refusing to hand over half the realm to their cousins, the Kauravas risk a war, which they are told by their elders they are going to lose. The Pāṇḍavas do indeed win but, like the Kauravas in the dicing game, at the very end they put their victory

at stake again by allowing Duryodhana a duel. He may choose his opponent himself and he selects Bhīma. If the Kauravas thought they were going to lose the battle, the Pāṇḍavas for their part were not certain of victory either. In any case, in the end they have to resort to unfair means to force a decision: after a long fight, Bhīma decides the duel in his favour by hitting Duryodhana below the belt. But Bhīma, instead of dealing with Duryodhana once and for all, leaves him alive and puts victory at stake again. The mortally wounded Duryodhana appoints Aśvatthāman as leader of the army. This Aśvatthāman manages not only to kill all the Pāṅcālas but also all the children of the Pāṇḍavas, including the foetus in Uttarā's womb (Uttarā is Abhimanyu's wife). Later, through the intervention of Kṛṣṇa this foetus is revived and born as Parikṣit. But at this point in the epic, the line of the Pāṇḍavas has become virtually extinct.

What we see is that in the course of the *Mahābhārata* the stakes in the competition between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas become ever more dramatic. At first, it is about who possesses the most beautiful *sabhā*; next, about how far one dares to go in raising the stakes in the dice game; and after that, it consists in showing that one is not interested in the outcome of the contest, first in the dicing game and finally in war. The participants are prepared to risk not just their goods but also their very lives. In the great battle, the Kauravas indeed get what they asked for and are killed. For, as already said, they were warned by their elders that they would be defeated. As we are to find out later, after their heroic deaths the Kauravas have gone straight to heaven.

As the Pāṇḍavas want to go to heaven as well, they have to offer themselves to be killed, to show that they do not cling to their lives. And this is precisely what they, and their allies, do in the second part of the *Mahābhārata*. This switch made by the Pāṇḍavas from killer to victim may be compared to that of guest and host at a sacrifice, respectively. The guest has to do his social duty and show up at the sacrifice. He has to be prepared to accept the sacrificial fees and as it were kill the host. In this connection, it is to be noted that with the *dakṣiṇās* the sacrificer is literally said to give away himself.⁵⁷ When it is the guest's turn to be host, he has to be prepared to be killed by the guest.

At the beginning of the *Mahābhārata*, the Pāṇḍavas are warned that the *rājasūya* will end in a complete holocaust. The Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas are indeed caught in a self-destructive competition, which ends in the death of both parties. But even after one has gone as far as one can possibly go, namely by putting one's life at stake, the competition does not end; it simply begins all over again. Thus, before the Pāṇḍavas take their final departure they hand over Hāstinapura to Yuyutsu, a bastard son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. But at the same time, they place their own grandson Parikṣit on the throne. In this way, a situation is created which is exactly the same as the one with which the *Mahābhārata* started, namely with the Kauravas as the legal heirs to the throne and the Pāṇḍavas as the actual rulers. The competition can begin all over again.

The protagonists of the *Mahābhārata* are caught in a painful cycle of fighting for life and death, which repeats itself endlessly. The interest of the *Mahābhārata* in *mokṣa*, or final liberation, should be considered against this background. In the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Anugītā*, two different paths are offered, one for the guest at the sacrifice, who has to kill the host, and the other for the host, who has to be killed by the guest. Both treatises are in this way directly related to the main theme of the *Mahābhārata*, which is the presentation of a world marked by violent strife and competition, by offering ways to escape from that world.

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Notes

- 1 I wish to express my gratitude to Henk Bodewitz, Chlodwig Werba, and the two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.
- 2 All references are to the Critical Edition from Poona.
- 3 Vassilkov (2005).
- 4 See Vassilkov (2005:222–3).
- 5 See Vassilkov (2005:230) and Brockington (1998:153–4).
- 6 See Vassilkov (2005:228–9).
- 7 See Malinar (1996:66).
- 8 See *paṇḍita tīre gaṅgāyā(h)* in 14.1.2 and *tam ārtam patitam bhūmau viśvasantam punaḥ punaḥ* in 14.1.4. Compare *śidamānaḥ* in 14.1.3.
- 9 14.1.7: *uttiṣṭha kuruśārdūla kuru kāryam anantaram*.

10 14.2.2–3:

*atīva manasā śokaḥ kriyamāṇo janādhipa
saṃtāpayati vaitasya pūrvapretān pitāmahān
yajasva vividhair yajñair bahubhiḥ svāptadakṣiṇaiḥ
devāṃs tarpaya somena svadhayā ca pitṛṇapi*

We are dealing with an echo of 6.14.40–5, for which, see also Malinar (1996:119).

11 14.2.7:

*yuktam hi yaśasā kṣatram svargam prāptum asaṃśayam
na hi kaścana sūrāṇaṃ nihato'tra parāṇmukhaḥ.*

12 14.2.12:

*yadi mām anujānīyād bhavān gantum tapovanam
na hi śāntiṃ prapaśyāmi ghātayitvā pitāmaham
karṇam ca puruṣavyāghraṃ saṃgrāmeṣvapalāyinaṃ.*

13 14.2.13:

*karmaṇā yena mucyeyam asmāt krūrād arimḍama
karmaṇas tad vidhatsveha yena śudhyati me manaḥ.*

14 14.3.1–4:

*yudhiṣṭhira tava prajñā na samyag iti me matiḥ
na hi kaścit svayaṃ martyaḥ svavaśaḥ kurute kriyāḥ
īśvareṇa niyukto'yaṃ sādhasādhu ca mānavaḥ
karoti puruṣaḥ karma tatra kā paridevanā
ātmānaṃ manyase cātha pāpakarmāṇam antataḥ
śṛṇu tatra yathā pāpam apakṣyeta bhārata
tapobhiḥ kratubhiścaiva dānena ca yudhiṣṭhira
taranti nityaṃ puruṣā ye sma pāpāni kurvate.*

15 14.3.9: *yajasva vājimedhena vidhivad dakṣiṇāvataḥ*. This covers the sacrifices and liberality mentioned by Vyāsa. It is not clear if sacrifice also somehow includes the ascetic practices mentioned by him.

16 14.11.4: *sarvaṃ jihmaṃ mṛtyupadam ārjavaṃ brahmaṇaḥ padam*. But see in particular 14.13.3:

*dvyakṣaras tu bhaven mṛtyus tryakṣaram brahma śāśvatam
mameti dvyakṣaro mṛtyur na mameti ca śāśvatam.*

As it becomes clear from 14.16.11, the topic of the *Anugītā* is precisely this *brahmaṇaḥ pada* (see below, note 24).

17 14.12.12:

*yatra naiva śaraiḥ kāryaṃ na bhṛtyair na ca bandhubhiḥ
ātmanaikena yoddhavyaṃ tat te yuddham upasthitam.*

18 14.13.18–19ab:

*tasmāt tvam api taṃ kāmam yajñair vividhadakṣinaiḥ
dharmaṃ kuru mahārāja tatra te sa bhaviṣyati
yajasva vājimedhena vidhivad dakṣiṇāvata.*

19 14.14.16:

*tato dattvā bahu dhanaṃ viprebhyaḥ pāṇḍavarṣabhaḥ
dhṛtarāṣṭraṃ puraskṛtya viveśa gajasāhvayam.*

20 14.14.7–9ab:

*āśvāsito'haṃ prāgyṛddhair bhavadbhir munipuṃgavaiḥ
na sūksmamapi me kiṃcid vyalīkam iha vidyate
arthaśca sumahān prāpto yena yakṣyāmi devatāḥ
puraskṛtyeḥa bhavataḥ samāneṣyāmahe makham
himavantaṃ tvayā guptā gamiṣyāmaḥ pitāmaha.*

21 14.15.9:

*putrasōkābhisaṃtaptaṃ jñātīnāṃ ca sahasraśaḥ
kathābhiḥ śamayāmāsa pārthaṃ śaurir janārdanaḥ.*

22 14.50.50–1:

*ityuktavacanaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ pratyuvāca dhanaṃjayah
gacchāvo nagaraṃ kṛṣṇa gajasāhvayam adya vai
sametya tatra rājānaṃ dharmātmānaṃ yudhiṣṭhiram
samanujñāpya durdharsaṃ svāṃ puriṃ yātum arhasi.*

23 14.16.5:

*viditaṃ te mahābāho saṃgrāme samupasthite
māhātmyaṃ devakīmātas tacca te rūpam aiśvaryam.*

24 14.16.11:

*sa hi dharmāḥ suparyāpto brahmaṇaḥ padavedane
na śakyaṃ tan mayā bhūyas tathā vaktum aśeṣataḥ.*

For the *brahmaṇaḥ pada*, see above, note 16.

25 14.16.12:

*paraṃ hi brahma kathitaṃ yogayuktena tan mayā
itihāsaṃ tu vakṣyāmi tasminn arthe purātanam.*

26 14.50.47:

*tatas tvaṃ samyag ācīrṇe dharme'smin kurunandana
sarvapāpaviuddhātmā mokṣaṃ prāpsyasi kevalam.*

27 14.50.48:

*pūrvamapyetadevoktaṃ yuddhakāle upasthite
mayā tava mahābāho tasmād atra manaḥ kuru.*

As to my interpretation of this *śloka*, it should be clear that Kṛṣṇa is not saying that the *Anugītā* is a recapitulation of some kind of the *Bhagavadgītā* (for this interpretation of the *Anugītā*, see Sharma 1978 and Vassilkov 2005). *Etad* in *pūrvamapyetadevoktaṃ* does not refer to the text of the *Bhagavadgītā*, but to its aim, which was to teach how Arjuna could kill and at the same time reach *mokṣa*, or remain free from 'guilt'.

28 For *naiṣkarmya* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, see Malinar (1996:156); for the same word in the *Anugītā*, see below.

29 For a more detailed analysis of this section, see Long (1980:52–7).

30 See *nacirādiva* in 14.19.43, quoted below in note 32, and 14.19. 60cd, which specifies that *yoga* takes only six months of practice:

ṣaṣṭhān nityayuktasya yogaḥ pārtha pravartate.

31 See 14.19.11:

*pañcabhūtaguṇair hīnam amūrtimad alepakam
aguṇaṃ guṇabhoktāraṃ yaḥ paśyati sa mucyate.*

32 See 14.19.43:

*evaṃ satatam udyuktaḥ prītātmā nacirādiva
āsādayati tadbrahma yad dṛṣṭvā syāt pradhānavit.*

33 See 14.20.7:

*mohameva niyacchanti karmaṇā jñānavarjitāḥ
naiṣkarmyaṃ na ca loke'smin maurtam ityupalabhyate.*

34 Compare 14.20.24cd–25ab:

*tatraiva ca nirudhyante pralaye bhūtabhāvane
tataḥ saṃjāyate gandhas tataḥ saṃjāyate rasaḥ.*

35 See 14.30.27–8:

*susamāhitacetās tu tato'cintayata prabhūḥ
sa vicintya ciraṃ kālam alarko dvijasattama
nādhyagacchat paraṃ śreyo yogān matimatām varaḥ
sa ekāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā niścalo yogam āsthitaḥ
indriyāṇi jaghānāśu bāṇenaikena vīryavān
yogenātmānam āviśya saṃsiddhiṃ paramāṃ yayau.*

Note the verb *cint-* in the first two lines.

36 14. 43.24cd–25:

*pravṛttilakṣaṇo yogo jñānaṃ saṃnyāsalakṣaṇam
tasmāḥ jñānaṃ puraskṛtya saṃnyased iha buddhimān
saṃnyāsī jñānasamyuktaḥ prāpnoti paramāṃ gatim.*

37 14.47.3ab:

jñānena tapasā caiva dhīrāḥ paśyanti tatpadam,

and 14.47.5a, cd:

*tapāḥ pradīpa ityāhur...
jñānaṃ tveva paraṃ vidma saṃnyāsas tapa uttamaṃ.*

38 See 14.35.35ab:

*eteṣāṃ pṛthag adhyāste yo dharmam saṃśitavrataḥ
kālat paśyati bhūtānāṃ sadaiva prabhavāpyayau.*

39 See 14.42.40:

*yathāvad adhyātmavidhir eṣa vaḥ prakīrtito mayā
jñānam asya hi dharmajñāḥ prāptaṃ buddhimatām iha.*

40 14.42.41cd-42:

*sarvāṅyētāni saṁdhāya manasā saṁpradhārayet
kṣiṇe manasi sarvasmin na janmasukham iṣyate
jñānasampannasattvānāṃ tat sukham viduṣāṃ matam.*

41 On *saṁnyāsa* and *yoga* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, see Malinar (1996:213).

42 14.46.17:

*grhastho brahmacārī ca vānaprastho'tha vā punaḥ
ya icchen mokṣam āsthātum uttamaṃ vṛttim āśrayet.*

43 14.46.42:

*indriyāṅyupasaṁhṛtya kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
kṣiṇendriyamanobuddhir nirikṣeta nirindriyah.*

44 14.46.53:

*sarvam etat prasamkhyāya samyak samtyajya nirmalah
tataḥ svargam avāpnoti vimuktaḥ sarvabandhanaiḥ.*

It may be questioned, though, if the verb *pra-samkhyā-*, instead of 'to enumerate', should not be taken to mean something like 'to perceive' here. The same might be asked with regard to *pari-samkhyā-* in 14.46.54, for which see the following note.

45 14.46.54:

*etad evāntavelāyāṃ parisamkhyāya tattvavit
dhyāyed ekāntam āsthāya mucyate'tha nirāśrayaḥ.*

46 14.50.22:

*dhyānayogena śuddhena nirmamā nirahaṅkṛtāḥ
prāpnuvanti mahātmāno mahāntaṃ lokam uttamam.*

47

*karma kecit praśamsanti mandabuddhitarā narāḥ
ye tu buddhā mahātmāno na praśamsanti karma te
karmaṇā jāyate jantur mūrtimān ṣoḍaśātmakaḥ
puruṣaṃ sṛjate vidyā agrāhyam amṛtāśinam
tasmāt karmasu niḥsnehā ye kecit pāradaśināḥ
vidyāmayo'yaṃ puruṣo na tu karmamayāḥ smṛtaḥ.*

48 See 14.2.12 quoted in note 12 above.

- 49 In what follows, I will draw heavily from a previous investigation of the story of the *Mahābhārata* after the great battle (Tiekken 2004).
- 50 As already described above, Yudhiṣṭhira is considerably embarrassed by Vyāsa's advice because he lacks the wealth needed for such an enterprise. This problem, however, is solved by Vyāsa's suggestion that Yudhiṣṭhira go to the Himalayas to collect the wealth left over from a sacrifice by King Marutta. Another problem, namely the fact that the *rājasūya* requires the presence of the king's son and heir, is not discussed at this point in the story and is resolved only later by the revival of Parikṣit by Kṛṣṇa.
- 51 In the two following stories, in *adhyāyas* 94 and 95, a different explanation for the failure of the sacrifice is given: the sacrificial victims would have been acquired unlawfully (see Tiekken 2004:34–5; see also Reich 2001, who takes these stories as reflections of an internal debate taken place within the text of the *Mahābhārata*. Unfortunately, Reich's article came to my notice only after my 2004 article had been published).
- 52 On the final to *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*, see Tiekken (2004) (*passim*) and, more recently, Austin (2008).
- 53 This becomes clear at that point where Arjuna is requested to give back his Gāṇḍīva bow to Varuṇa (to throw it into the water; 17.1.33ff.). Arjuna appears to be the only one who has kept his weapons.
- 54 In this connection, I would also like to refer to what happens to the Kṛṣṇa's kinsmen, the Yādavas. The men had killed themselves during a picnic party. Befuddled by alcoholic drinks they started quarreling, accusing each other of unchivalrous behaviour during the battle. Kṛtavarma is accused of having killed people while they were sleeping and Sātyaki is accused of having killed Bhūriśravas while the latter was undertaking a fast. In the ensuing fight, the Yādavas kill each other to the last man. After that, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa go in *yoga* trance and die. Next, Kṛṣṇa's friend Arjuna leads the remaining Yādavas, women, children, and old men, away from Dvārakā, which is destroyed by a kind of tsunami. In Pañcāla (Pañjāb), the caravan is spotted by Dasyus. Seeing that they are dealing with widows, old men, and children who are accompanied by only one warrior, the Dasyus attack them. At that moment, Arjuna discovers that he can no longer rely on his weapons. He is not able to bend his bow, no longer 'remembers' his missiles, which previously came forth at mere thought, has lost the strength in his arms, and his arrows appear to have lost their speed and power. Arjuna is forced to look on while the women are kidnapped. Finally, and with significantly fewer people than he had departed with from Dvārakā, he arrives in Kurukṣetra. Here, again, we have a *kṣatriya* unable to defend himself and the people dependent upon him.
- 55 Tiekken (2004).
- 56 See Buitenen (1972).
- 57 See Heesterman (1959:241–6).