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# Patrilocality in the *Harivamśa's Viṣṇuparvan*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article suggests that the principle of patrilocality, as espoused by Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, can be applied as an interpretive frame to almost all of the narrative material that Vaiśampāyana presents to Janamejaya in the *Harivamśa's Viṣṇuparvan* (Hv 46–113), and that the principle of patrilocality is thus a key theme of the *Viṣṇuparvan*, with Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva as its heroes. This suggestion is supported by an overview of the *Viṣṇuparvan's* narrative from beginning to end, in eleven sections which repeatedly feature – or can be interpreted to feature – conflict with in-law families about where a couple will have children, and which of the two families the children will be raised for.

**KEYWORDS:** abduction, Baladeva, *Harivamśa*, in-laws, Kṛṣṇa, patrilocality, wives.

## INTRODUCTION

Patrilocality, also called virilocality, is opposed to matrilocality, also called uxorilocality. Patrilocality is when children grow up where their father is from, not where their mother is from. If children grow up where their mother *lives*, patrilocality means women move when they get married, but men do not.

If iterated over generations, patrilocality produces a pattern resembling a royal patriline, where fathers and sons serve as kings one after another in the same capital. Nonetheless, in such a family some sons may move away and have matrilocal children elsewhere, and some daughters may stay at home and have matrilocal children. So

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matrilocality and patrilocality may be mixed, the tendency towards one or the other being partial, temporary, or dependent on which parts of the family are focused on or known about.

At the extreme, matrilocality would not require the concept of genital paternity. The subject is fraught with a peculiarly male kind of insecurity (and perhaps a peculiarly female kind of security), because human reproduction is extremely asymmetrical in terms of gender. Although human children have a long infancy and are parented for many years, the genital father is only necessarily involved very briefly, at the very beginning of the process. The cultural ramifications of this asymmetry are far-reaching, not least because individual psychologies are typically compounded through three or more generations in the successive roles of child, parent, grandparent, and even great-grandparent. Perhaps patrilocality is a cultural response to the fact that men cannot have babies. Here the problem is not that paternity is uncertain in the sense that various men could be the father of a specific child, but rather that paternity as a form of parenthood is itself uncertain and must be modelled on maternity. Hence O'Brien writes of men 'creating institutional and ideological modes of continuity over time to heal the discontinuous sense of man the uncertain father' (O'Brien 1981: 131).

In human reproduction the competition for dominant identity is gendered, and in many textual traditions the masculine inflection of that competition shows the masculine reacting to the perceived prior dominance of the feminine by establishing cosmogonies in which the world-parental role is male. Discussing several such cosmogonies from different ancient cultures, Hawthorne remarks:

The notion of the law of the father(s) as inevitable – natural – is precisely what patrilineal rhetoric and origin myths are able to achieve through their presentation of male rule, directed from a male creative source, as authentic and thus legitimate. Moreover, the authority of its claims can be seen to rest on the assumption of a procreative metaphor for masculine endeavors such that the authority of the father is inscribed in his creation of order under the sign of a law he inaugurates. In so doing, the moment *before* the advent of the patrilineal order is necessarily effaced, and the current order is rendered natural and inevitable because the alternative is 'forgotten.'

(Hawthorne 2017: 258)

These and similar myths present patriliney, patrilocality, and patriarchy as the default mode for current human being.

Previously I have explored the patrilineal pattern in the Bhārata-Kuru genealogy that is the main subject of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (Brodbeck 2009). The present article began as an attempt to explore the same theme in the genealogy of the Yādava-Vṛṣnis. But in studying the Yādava-Vṛṣnis, though a concern for the genealogical paternal line is evident, there is also, relatedly, a focus upon the paternal *place*. This article explores patrilocality in relation to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva's political career as described in the critically reconstituted *Harivamśa*.

The *Harivamśa* contains three books. First there are the *Harivamśaparvan* (Hv 1–45), which contextualizes Viṣṇu's manifestation as Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, and the *Viṣṇuparvan* (Hv 46–113), which begins with Kṛṣṇa's birth and narrates episodes in his biography not covered in previous parts of the *Mahābhārata*. These two books are narrated by Vaiśampāyana to King Janamejaya at the latter's snake sacrifice, in response to Janamejaya's further questions, after the story of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas has finished. Finally there is the short *Bhaviṣyaparvan* (Hv 114–18), which returns to the framing conversation between Śaunaka and Ugraśravas, and concludes the story of King Janamejaya. The hypothesis advanced in this article concerns only the middle book of the three, the *Viṣṇuparvan* (Hv 46–113).

If most of the preceding parts of the *Mahābhārata* consisted of narratives connected with the Bhārata-Kuru genealogy, then the *Viṣṇuparvan* consists of narratives connected with the Yādava-Vṛṣni genealogy. The central hypothesis of this article is that a Kṛṣṇa-led adherence to the principle of patrilocality can be applied as an interpretive frame to almost all of the narrative material that Vaiśampāyana presents to Janamejaya in the *Viṣṇuparvan*, and is thus a key theme of the *Viṣṇuparvan*. To support this hypothesis, an interpretive marital-political survey of the *Viṣṇuparvan*'s narrative is presented and discussed.

The *Viṣṇuparvan*'s narrative is organized chronologically in the text. It tells Kṛṣṇa's adventures beginning with his birth and ending when he is soon to be a great-grandfather, at which point Vaiśampāyana catches up with the narrative of Kṛṣṇa that he has already concluded with the deaths of Kṛṣṇa and family and the flooding of Dvārakā in the *Mausalaparvan* (Mbh 16).

In this article the *Viṣṇuparvan*'s narrative is briefly presented and discussed in eleven numbered and named sections, using the methods of summary, paraphrase, and

quotation. The eleven numbered sections of the article correspond to eleven sections into which I have divided the *Viṣṇuparvan* text. The eleven sections of the *Viṣṇuparvan* text are of very different lengths, and so are the eleven sections of the article – though not in the same proportions. The sections of the *Viṣṇuparvan* (Hv 46–113) are as per Figure 1.

[Figure 1 goes here]

The survey is presented in this way because the apparent narrative parallelisms between §2 and §10 and between §5 and §7 have led me to fold the textual material in half, as it were, to align the parallel passages. This fold, and the centre it produces, will be discussed after the survey. For the purposes of the chronological survey of material under the theme of patrilocality, the splitting into sections serves primarily to punctuate and group the text more conveniently than it is punctuated into its sixty-odd chapters. While reading the survey, the reader is invited to unfold, regroup, and, if desired, refold the material by imaginatively removing my subjective section breaks and adding other ones instead. The central argument of the article, to the effect that patrilocality is a key theme of the *Viṣṇuparvan*, should not be affected. For the time being, if desired, the section numbers and titles can be thought of as all aligned against the left-hand margin, rather than in an arrowhead shape.

Genealogy is important to the exposition, and the reader is invited to refer repeatedly to Figure 2 (taken from the *Harivamśa* as a whole) as indicated and/or as desired.

[Figure 2 goes here]

In relation to South Asia, genetic exploration facilitated by new techniques has allegedly mapped genes onto the old philological dichotomy of (Indo-)‘Aryan’ (or ‘Indo-European’) and Dravidian. Reich says that ‘Indians today descend from a mixture of two highly divergent ancestral populations’ – Ancestral North Indians (ANI) and Ancestral South Indians (ASI) – and that this mixture happened four to three thousand years ago (Reich 2018: 134–35, 140). Mitochondrial DNA studies of Indian populations show that the maternal line was much more stable in this period than the DNA package as a whole.

The genetic data from Indians today ... reveal something about the history of differences in social power between men and women. Around 20 to 40 percent of Indian men and around 30 to 50 percent of eastern European men have a Y-chromosome type that, based on the density of mutations separating people who carry it, descends in the last sixty-eight hundred to forty-eight hundred years from the same male ancestor. In contrast, the mitochondrial DNA, passed down along the female line, is almost entirely restricted to India, suggesting that it may have nearly all come from the ASI, even in the north. The only possible explanation for this is major migration between West Eurasia and India in the Bronze Age or afterward. Males with this Y chromosome type were extraordinarily successful at leaving offspring while female immigrants made far less of a genetic contribution ... [M]ales from populations with more power tend to pair with females from populations with less ... This pattern is exactly what one would expect from an Indo-European speaking people taking the reins of political and social power after four thousand years ago and mixing with the local peoples in a stratified society, with males from the groups in power having more success in finding mates than those from the disenfranchised groups.

(Reich 2018: 137–38, 140)<sup>2</sup>

In a recent *New Scientist* article, the north-western influx is credited to steppe pastoralists, the so-called Yamnaya people:

[I]ncomers from the steppe may have brought major cultural changes ... As in Europe, it looks like the steppe migrants were largely young, male and violent ... Martin Richards at the University of Huddersfield, UK, and his colleagues found that maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA sequences changed relatively little when they arrived. By contrast, between 60 and 90 per cent of men now living in the area can trace their paternally inherited Y chromosome to Yamnaya-related migrants. ‘Indigenous males seem to have been marginalised by the new arrivals much more than the women and were unable to have children to the same extent,’ says Richards. ‘This seems unlikely to have been a wholly benign process.’

(Barras 2019: 30)

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2. For technical details, see Reich et al. 2009; Moorjani et al. 2013; Silva et al. 2017.

Interpretations of the currently assembled genetic data might soon be overtaken by new and richer genetic data. Its relation to textual data is impressionistic at this stage and may not get any easier to frame in future, but the textual data from the *Viṣṇuparvan* seem broadly to fit the gendered skew of the reported genetic data, as if this kind of textual material and the datable male genetic influx were somehow connected.

### §1. KRṢNA KILLS KAMSA AND REINSTATES UGRASENA (HV 46–78)

Kṛṣṇa son of Vasudeva is born, is smuggled out of Mathurā for fear of King Kamsa, and grows up in the cattle station with his brother Baladeva. As children they defeat Kamsa's fellow-demons, and as adolescents they come to Mathurā, where Kṛṣṇa kills Kamsa and reinstates Kamsa's deposed father Ugrasena.

My proposal for this long section is that Kamsa's marriage, though not matrilocal, is one where the competition for influence between Kamsa's father Ugrasena and his father-in-law Jarāsamādha is won by the latter, to the detriment of Ugrasena's family, the Yādava-Vṛṣṇis. This is represented starkly by the idea that Kamsa suppressed his father Ugrasena and took the kingship from him – kingship being the paradigm of patrilocal patrilinearity.

Succession between generations is a basic problem of kingship, and in Indian theory it is to be managed through the institution of the *yuvarāja* ('young king').<sup>3</sup> The *yuvarāja* – properly the king's eldest son – should be carefully educated, should marry, produce the next heir, rule with his father, and only move up to be main king when his father retires or dies. So Kamsa's act against his father means regime change.

Kamsa is the disgrace and the ruin of his people, the Yādava-Vṛṣṇis. He is called *kulapāmsana* and *kulāntakrt* (66.4–9; 96.26–27). The family is split. Kamsa's relatives try to hold it together (65.19). Kamsa, the disgrace of his people, says that Vasudeva is the disgrace of his people (65.70–81). Vasudeva is loyal to Ugrasena, and Kamsa suppresses them both, but to no avail. Kamsa is alienated from his family, and fantasizes about killing them (73.37). He knows Vasudeva's son will kill him, but he cannot stop it, even by killing babies.

Andhaka says to Kamsa:

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3. For references to the *yuvarāja* in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, see Olivelle 2013: 740 (under 'crown prince').

Your behaviour has succeeded in cutting the lineage of the Yadus down to its roots, but Kṛṣṇa will bring relatives back together and make it whole again.

(Hv 66.36)<sup>4</sup>

Beholding Kṛṣṇa shortly thereafter, Akrūra recalls a prophecy:

This is surely the cowherder that the wise experts on the future saw within that future. He will expand the weakened Yādava lineage. As a result of his brilliance, hundreds and thousands of Yadus will now fill up the lineage, like floods of water filling up the great restless ocean.

(Hv 68.28–29)<sup>5</sup>

In the *Viṣṇuparvan*'s first section, Kaṁsa's behaviour is aberrant and demonic. We expected this, since Kaṁsa is a reincarnation of arch-demon Kālanemi, as mentioned in the preceding *Harivamśaparvan*. And as we discover later (in §3 below), Kaṁsa is aberrant because of his father-in-law's influence:

King Jarāsandha of Magadha was the son of Brhadratha, your majesty. He had two beautiful daughters named Asti and Prāpti, both of whom had bulging breasts and buttocks, and he had given them to Kaṁsa as wives. King Kamsa, the ruler of the Śurasena country, had been delighted with them, and with Jarāsandha to depend upon he had imprisoned his own father, Ugrasena the son of Āhuka, and had stopped caring about the Yādavas, just as you have repeatedly heard.

(Hv 80.3–4)<sup>6</sup>

4. *chinnamūlo hy ayam vamśo yadūnām tvatkṛte kṛtaḥ | kṛṣṇo jñātīn samānāyya sa saṁdhānam kariṣyati ||*  
66.36 ||. *Harivamśa* translations are adapted from Brodbeck 2019.
5. *ayaṁ bhaviṣye dṛṣṭo vai bhaviṣyakuśalair budhaiḥ | gopālo yādavām vamśām kṣīṇām vistārayisyati ||*  
68.28 || *tejasā cāsyā yadavāḥ śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ | vamśām āpūrayisyanti oghā iva mahārṇavam ||* 29  
||
6. *astīḥ prāptiś ca nāmnāstām māgadhasya sute nṛpa | jarāsandhasya kalyāṇyau pīnaśronipayodhare |*  
*ubhe kaṁsasya te bhārye prādād bārhadratho nṛpah ||* 80.3 || *sa tābhyaṁ mumude rājā badhvā pitaram*  
*āhukam | samāśritya jarāsandham anādṛtya ca yādavān | śuraseneśvaro rājā yathā te bahuśo śrutah ||* 4  
||

Kamsa shares his demonic identity with his cronies, the animal demons slain by Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in the countryside near Mathurā. Mathurā was once Madhu's Forest, the site of Śatruघna Aikṣvākava's ancient victory over the demon Lavaṇa, as per Nārada's story (44.21–53). That victory was the Aikṣvākava centre's colonization of the periphery. Since the Aikṣvākava royal line in Ayodhyā, descended from Manu, is the paradigm of patrilocality (Hv 9.17–18; Rām 1.69; 2.102; Brodbeck 2011), its centre is male and the aberrant periphery is structurally female. In the story of Lavaṇa's defeat the aberrant periphery is represented by a male, but he is a demonized autochthonous male.<sup>7</sup> In this respect the capitulation of Kamsa to his father-in-law is something of a reversion to the old local method, even though Kamsa's father-in-law lives miles away.

By implication, demonic identity represents the danger to the husband's family from the wife's family. Kamsa in Mathurā lives far to the west and north of Jarāśamḍha in Magadha, so Kamsa's capitulation to Jarāśamḍha is compatible with patrilocality: Kamsa's sons would presumably have inherited Mathurā. But there would still have been regime change, and disgrace.

The destructive effect upon the local patriline is not just the crisis in the Mathurā royal house. The regime change is correlated with a wider cultural change. The loss of the patriline's reputation means there are not as many Yādavas in the lineage as there could be. When Kṛṣṇa reverses the decline, he makes the lineage fill up again. So Kṛṣṇa's campaign against Kamsa is also a campaign for the sons of Yādava men to be reckoned as Yādavas – which, by implication, they were more likely to have been before Kamsa fell under the spell of Jarāśamḍha's daughters. The sons of Yādava men are reckoned as Yādavas when those men's in-law families do not interfere with those sons' cultural identity as Yādavas.

## §2. KRṢNA RECOVERS SĀṂDĪPANI'S LOST SON (HV 79)

After Kamsa's death, Sāṁdīpani teaches Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, in Avanti. When they graduate, Kṛṣṇa rescues and returns Sāṁdīpani's long-lost son, to thank their teacher for

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7. The autochthonous or primeval nature of the demonic is symbolically female in a reflex that has to do with being a mammal, and more specifically a primate mammal. Our primeval is female both individually (since you grew in utero as part of your mother) and collectively (since maternity must have enabled socio-cultural interactions before paternity did).

the teaching. Years before, while on pilgrimage at Prabhāsa, Sāṃdīpani's son was carried off by a whale (79.10–11). So now Kṛṣṇa goes there, kills Pañcajana the whale, conquers Yama the lord of death, and brings the son back to Sāṃdīpani, just as he was.

This section is discussed later, when discussing §10.

### §3. KRṢNA ESCAPES FROM JARĀSAMDHA AND KILLS KĀLAYAVANA (HV 80–86)

Kaṃsa's father-in-law Jarāsamdha hammers Mathurā repeatedly with many powerful allies, including Bhīṣmaka, and their armies. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva fight boldly, but then they and their people – including King Ugrasena – flee to the western ocean and found the city of Dvārakā. Kṛṣṇa then engineers the death of Jarāsamdha's ally Kālayavana; and later he also engineers the death of Jarāsamdha himself, as described in the *Mahābhārata*'s *Sabhāparvan*.

This section continues the theme of §1, in that it presents and refutes the power of the in-law family.

Jarāsamdha attacks Mathurā in response to the death of his son-in-law Kaṃsa. But the Yādavas flee to Dvārakā only when Kālayavana joins Jarāsamdha. Who is Kālayavana? Here is the story. Brahmin Gārgya, guru of the Vṛṣnis and Andhakas, had no son and was reviled by his brother-in-law, who said he was impotent (25.7–9; 85.7–9).<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Gārgya was overpowered by his in-laws.<sup>9</sup> Anyway, Gārgya performs fearsome austerities to Śiva and proves his virility. Śiva grants him a son who will be able to punish the Vṛṣnis and Andhakas. That son, Kālayavana, is born from a cowgirl *apsaras* in the realm of a childless

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8. For Gārgya as Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva's guru, see 95.5; 96.44–45. Couture sees Śiśirāyana and Gārgya as the same person, who marries Vṛkadevī daughter of the Trigarta king (Couture 2017: 957 and n. 24). But Couture also equates the Trigarta king with the Yavana king (p. 949). At 25.7–8 Vṛkadevī daughter of the Trigarta king could be wife of Vasudeva and mother of Agāvaha (Brodbeck 2009: 83). I wonder what Couture makes of Agāvaha. An Agāvaha is elsewhere the son of Gada (98.15–16); and Vasudeva's wife Vṛkadevī is elsewhere the daughter of Devaka (27.26–27), so there could be two Vṛkadevīs. In any case, Couture makes a nice analogy (which he links to the *pralaya* myth) between two Kṛṣṇa-led exodes: that of the cowherds from the wolf-infested forest to Vṛndāvana (Hv 52), and that of the Vṛṣnis from Mathurā to Dvārakā (Hv 84; Couture 2017: 955–56).

9. With regard to the cultural implications of Kaṃsa's submission to the wife's family (i.e. the regime change discussed in §1 above): here we see implications for brahmins.

*mleccha* Yavana king; he is adopted as that king's heir; and he is crazy for battle against Kṛṣṇa's people. Kālayavana thus embodies and symptomatizes the perverse situation whereby a man's in-laws overpower him, curtailing his lineal options. So it fits that Kālayavana is the tipping point in the struggle between Kṛṣṇa's family and Kamṣa's in-laws.

The retreat from Mathurā is successful resistance against regime change. It disarms the in-law attack, conceding Mathurā but preserving the old family elsewhere. Dvārakā is glorious, and the retrenchment there is supported and facilitated by the gods, who also assist in the death of Kālayavana.<sup>10</sup>

#### §4. KRṢNA ABDUCTS RUKMINĪ (HV 87.1–88.39)

In Vidarbha, Kṛṣṇa abducts his distant cousin Rukminī when she is about to be married, at Jarāśamdhā's behest, to Kṛṣṇa's first cousin and enemy Śiśupāla, Jarāśamdhā's ally and protégé. Baladeva stays in Vidarbha long enough to bash seven stars out of anyone who objects. Rukminī's brother Rukmin chases and fights Kṛṣṇa, who defeats him but spares his life. Kṛṣṇa brings Rukminī to Dvārakā and marries her, and their ten sons and one daughter are listed by name. Rukminī is Kṛṣṇa's first wife, and this section's theme is the securing of Kṛṣṇa's progeny in Dvārakā.

The Rukminī affair ties in with the aforementioned Jarāśamdhā affair. Both affairs come to a head as previously narrated in the *Mahābhārata*'s *Sabhāparvan*, where Kṛṣṇa gets Bhīma Pāṇḍava to kill Jarāśamdhā, and then himself beheads Śiśupāla with his discus at the Pāṇḍava *rājasūya* (Mbh 2.13–22, 33–42). The *Harivāṇśa* fills in details that are only implicit in the *Sabhāparvan* account.

The geopolitical implications of Kṛṣṇa's abduction of Rukminī have been discussed by Christopher Austin (2014: 31–36; Austin sees the abduction as a step towards securing Dvārakā against enemies uniting from the northeast and the southeast). In the context of the present article, we are thinking in terms of gender-political implications. The marriage by abduction asserts power over the bridal family (Hara 1974):<sup>11</sup> the groom physically relocates the bride. Bhīṣma took three women at once (Mbh 1.96.3–41). In Kṛṣṇa's abduction of Rukminī the gendered skew is compounded because the bridal family is

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10. The gods grant Mucukunda the boon that results in Kālayavana's death; see 85.40–43.

11. When Arjuna abducts Subhadrā, Baladeva wants to respond with battle, but Kṛṣṇa discourages him, saying that Arjuna would win (Mbh 1.213.8–11).

related to Kṛṣṇa more closely on his mother's side than on his father's (see Figure 2). Kṛṣṇa is more loyal to his father's relatives than to his mother's, and this fits with the idea that when he marries someone, his people overpower hers in the children.

#### §5. KRṢNA'S 16,000+ OTHER WIVES (HV 88.40–44)

Here is the whole section:

After that, strong-armed Madhusūdana married seven other women, all of them beautiful, endowed with good qualities, and born in good families: Kālindī Mitravindā, Nagnajit's daughter Satyā, Jāmbavat's tall daughter Jāmbavatī who could change form at will, the daughter of the king of the Madras with her good manners and beautiful eyes, Satrājit's daughter Satyabhāmā, sweet-smiling Lakṣmaṇā, and Sudattā of the Śibis, who had the grace and beauty of an *apsaras*.

Hṛṣīkeśa, whose powers were unparalleled, also married sixteen thousand other women, and he made love with them all in equal measure. Their jewellery and clothes were of the highest quality, and they were blessed with everything they might desire. They bore him thousands of strong sons, all of whom were great and mighty warriors versed in every missile, virtuous sacrificial patrons, and powerful, momentous men.

(Hv 88.40–44)<sup>12</sup>

This section is mentioned again when discussing §7 below.

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12. *mahiṣīḥ sapta kalyāṇīs tato 'nyā madhusūdanah | upayeme mahābāhur guṇopetāḥ kulodbhavāḥ || 88.40 ||*  
*kālindīṁ mitravindāṁ ca satyāṁ nāgnajitīṁ api | sutāṁ jāmbavataś cāpi rohiṇīṁ kāmarūpiṇīṁ || 41 ||*  
*madrarājasutāṁ cāpi suśīlāṁ śubhalocanāṁ | satrājitīṁ satyabhāmāṁ lakṣmaṇāṁ cāruhāsinīṁ |*  
*śaibyāṁ sudattāṁ rūpeṇa śriyā hy apsarasopamāṁ || 42 || strīsaḥasrāṇi cānyāni śoḍāśatulavikramāḥ |*  
*upayeme hṛṣīkeśāḥ sarvā bheje sa tāḥ samam | parārdhyavastrābharaṇāḥ kāmaih sarvaiḥ samehitāḥ ||*  
*43 || jajñire tasya putrāś ca tāsu vīrāḥ sahasraśāḥ | sarvāstrakuśalāḥ sarve balavanto mahārathāḥ |*  
*yajvānah puṇyakarmāṇo mahābhāgā mahābalāḥ || 44 ||.* On Kṛṣṇa's wives, see Brinkhaus 2012 and n. 19\* below.

#### §6. BALADEVA KILLS RUKMIN AND DEFEATS DURYODHANA (HV 89–90)

In the next two generations, Rukmin’s family gives two brides who move to Dvārakā. Baladeva kills Rukmin at a dice match, and rescues Krṣṇa’s son Sāmba from Duryodhana.

With his many wives, Krṣṇa’s lineage, the *harivamśa*, expands horizontally. It also expands vertically, because Rukminī’s move from Vidarbha to Dvārakā is followed in successive generations by Śubhāngī’s move there as Krṣṇa’s son Pradyumna’s wife, and then by Rukmavatī’s move there as Pradyumna’s son Aniruddha’s wife. So the patrilocal victory over Krṣṇa’s in-laws is also a victory over his son’s and his grandson’s in-laws. Krṣṇa’s family takes wives from Rukmin’s in a relationship founded on force.<sup>13</sup>

While the Vṛṣnis are in Vidarbha for the wedding of Aniruddha and Rukmavatī, Rukmin’s allies persuade him to challenge Baladeva to a game of dice, to humiliate Baladeva. This game resembles the game between Śakuni and Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Sabhāparvan*, except at the end. Like Yudhiṣṭhira, Baladeva loses throw after throw and is humiliated; but unlike Yudhiṣṭhira, on the final all-or-nothing throw Baladeva amazingly wins, then kills Rukmin for humiliating him.

The *Viṣṇuparvan* dicing scene restates the victory of Krṣṇa’s family over Rukmin’s, as compounded over multiple generations. Importantly, Baladeva, the protagonist in this scene, is only Krṣṇa’s half-brother, so he is not related to Rukmin’s family through Devakī as Krṣṇa is; he is related to them only more distantly, through Kroṣṭu (see Figure 2).

I group the *Viṣṇuparvan* dicing scene together as one episode with a scene in the following chapter, where Baladeva defeats Duryodhana over a couple’s location. The dicing scene recalls the *Sabhāparvan*, so a link to Duryodhana is already made.

[Krṣṇa and] Jāmbavatī’s son Sāmba was captured in Hāstinapura while he was trying to abduct Duryodhana’s daughter. When Rāma Halāyudha heard about

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13. Lévi-Strauss differentiates wife-givers and wife-takers at localized transactional points within a system of generalized exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1969 [1949]). Trautmann in his typology of Indian kinship systems writes that ‘the Indo-Aryan system appears to be structured by the opposition of wife-givers and wife-takers’ (Trautmann 2008: 301). Trautmann also notes that in the so-called Indo-Aryan system ‘The regime of marriage implied by the terminology and recorded in the ethnography requires the nonrelatedness of bride and groom and the non-reciprocity of the marriage transaction, which in principle flows from the bride’s people to the groom’s without return’ (*ibid.*).

it he was furious and went to rescue him, but then when he got there he could not get him back. So the strongman lost his temper and performed a great miracle. The strongman raised his weapon – the irresistible, unbreakable, incomparable, celestial plough, consecrated by Brahmā’s staff – and aimed it at the town’s rampart wall. The strongman wanted to throw the Kaurava’s town into the River Gaṅgā. But when King Duryodhana noticed that the town was shaking, he returned Sāmba to the wise Rāma, along with his wife.

(Hv 90.8–12)<sup>14</sup>

The struggle between the two families is about where the couple will settle, which will determine the identity of their sons. The two alternatives are: successful abduction of the bride by the groom’s family, and successful capture of the groom by the bride’s family. Baladeva shows force, and Duryodhana backs down.<sup>15</sup> In this scene and in the scene with Rukmin, Baladeva enforces the patrilocality of Kṛṣṇa’s lineage.<sup>16</sup> He brings the boys back home, with their wives and sons.

14. *duryodhanasya kanyāṁ tu haramāṇo nyagrhyata | sāmbo jāmbavatīputro nagare nāgasāhvaye || 90.8 || tam upaśrutya saṃkruddha ājagāma halāyudhāḥ | rāmas tasya vimokṣārtham āgato nālabhac ca tam | tataś cukrodha balavān adbhitam cākaron mahat || 9 || anivāryam abhedyam ca divyam apratimam balī | lāngalāstram samudyamya brahmadañdānumantritam || 10 || prākāravapre vinyasya purasya sa mahābalāḥ | prakṣeptum aicchad gaṅgāyāṁ nagaraṇ kauravasya tat || 11 || tad āghūrṇitam ālakṣya puraṇ duryodhano nṛpaḥ | sāmbaṇ niryātayāṁ āsa sabhāryam tasya dhīmataḥ || 12 ||*
15. Regarding this as a repeated violent stance from Kṛṣṇa’s side: Vidura tells Kṛṣṇa in the *Udyogaparvan* that ‘All warriors of earth have gathered together / And the kings have joined with the rulers of countries / In Duryodhana’s cause to war on the Pārthas: / Earth is overturned and cooked by Time! / They have old feuds with you, all of them, / You have robbed these kings of their properties, Kṛṣṇa; / Out of terror for you these heroes rely / On the Dhārtarāṣṭras and stick with Karṇa’ (*paryasteyam prthivī kālapakvā duryodhanārthe pāṇḍavān yoddhukāmāḥ | samāgatāḥ sarvayodhāḥ prthivyāṁ rājānaś ca kṣitipālaiḥ sametāḥ || Mbh 5.90.23 ||* *sarve caite kṛtavairāḥ purastāt tvayā rājāno hṛtasārāś ca kṛṣṇa | tavodvegāt saṃśritā dhārtarāṣṭrān susaṃhatāḥ saha karṇena vīrāḥ || 24 ||*; trans. van Buitenen 1978).
16. The scene at Hv 83, in which Baladeva moves (the River) Yamunā to where he is, could be compared. On that scene, though without mention of this connection, see Brodbeck in press. There are 37 chapters of the *Viṣṇuparvan* before Hv 83, and 30 chapters of it after it.

### §7. KRṢNA'S 16,000+ OTHER WIVES (HV 91–97)

Indra comes and sends Kṛṣṇa off on a mission for the gods, to kill the demon Naraka Bhaumya and get back Aditi's earrings. As well as stealing those earrings, the evil Naraka<sup>17</sup> has hoarded treasure of all kinds, including 16,100 women, among them the finest daughters of *gandharvas*, gods, and humans, and all seven kinds of *apsaras*. The women are in the fortress of Jewel Mountain. Naraka seems not to bother with them: they were 'all avowed to the path of the virtuous, their hair in single plaits'; they were 'deprived of pleasure ... all of them clothed in ochre, all their senses suppressed' (91.13cd, 92.26).<sup>18</sup>

Kṛṣṇa kills Naraka and his cronies for the gods, returns the earrings to Aditi, and gets the treasure in return. He takes it to Dvārakā, taking Jewel Mountain itself, and all the women. In a beautiful scene, as Kṛṣṇa returns to Dvārakā on Garuḍa, before landing he surveys the city from the air, including the palaces of his eight existing wives (93.39–51). Those eight palaces being there in Dvārakā, all eight of his wives having moved there permanently, implies Kṛṣṇa's victory over all his in-laws.<sup>19</sup> The thousands of new women are installed in luxury there too, as Kṛṣṇa's wives (94.24–28).

§7 is a double of §5, which describes Kṛṣṇa's wives, the main eight and the thousands of others.

17. See 91.7–8: 'Bhauma raped Tvaṣṭṛ's shapely fourteen-year-old daughter Kaśeru. He overpowered her in the form of an elephant. After Naraka the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa had forced himself upon the voluptuous girl, he felt as if his troubles and sorrows were over ...'

18. *ekavenīdharāḥ sarvāḥ satāṁ mārgam anuvratāḥ* || 91.13cd || ... || *parivavrur mahābāhum ekavenīdharāḥ striyah* | *sarvāḥ kāśayavāsiṇyāḥ sarvāś ca niyatendriyāḥ* || 92.26 ||

19. We are only told stories of some of Kṛṣṇa's marriage-victories. Rukmiṇī was abducted from Vidarbha. Jāmbavatī was taken from her father Jāmbavat along with the Syamantaka jewel after Kṛṣṇa defeated him in combat in his bear-cave (Hv 28.15–29). Satyabhāmā is a gift to Kṛṣṇa from her father Satrājit (28.34), along with her sisters Dṛḍhavratā and Padmāvatī (neither of whom are listed among Kṛṣṇa's eight wives). Satyā Nāgnajitī, also called Gāndhārī, was brought home by Kṛṣṇa after killing a hundred princes in battle (97.16). Nagnajit was among Jarāsamṛda's allies at the siege of Mathurā, as were a *madrarāja* and a śaibya, who could potentially be the fathers of Kṛṣṇa's wives Subhīmā Mādrī and Sudattā Śaibyā (80.14–15). Kṛṣṇa's victory over those kings is implied by his victories over Jarāsamṛda and Śiśupāla. Kṛṣṇa humbled Kāśī and torched the town (97.11), so perhaps he got a wife from that. There is also Akrūra's sister Sundarā, who is given to Kṛṣṇa and marries his son Sāmba (28.40–41; 29.34).

## §8. KRṢNA'S DESCENDANTS (HV 98)

In this section Kṛṣṇa's children are listed, wife by wife, to the eighth wife and beyond. Far more sons are mentioned than daughters. All 36 sons are named, but only four of the eight daughters.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps these daughters are in Kṛṣṇa's home team in Dvārakā. After Kṛṣṇa's sons, there is brief mention of *their* sons, and of some descendants of other eminent Vṛṣnis.

## §9. PRADYUMNA KILLS ŚAMBARA (HV 99)

This section starts with the comment that Pradyumna, son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī, 'wanted what was best for [his father] Vāsudeva' (*vāsudevasya lakṣmīkāmo*, 99.2ab).<sup>21</sup>

Pradyumna is stolen from Dvārakā as a baby, by the demon Śambara. He grows up as the son of Śambara and his wife Māyāvatī. In time Māyāvatī desires Pradyumna and makes sexual advances, and to aid her aim she tells him who his real parents are. Pradyumna then kills Śambara and takes Māyāvatī with him 'to his own city, the city of his father' (*svām agacchat purīm pituḥ* || 99.28d). Kṛṣṇa welcomes Māyāvatī as his daughter-in-law and tells Rukmiṇī to do the same. Kṛṣṇa tells Rukmiṇī that whenever Māyāvatī had sex with Śambara, she used a magic body-double (99.46–47).

Here Śambara's family stands in for the defeated in-law family. A lost son returns, and a wife is added to the Dvārakā harem, to have Yādava sons.

20. The named daughters are Cārumatī daughter of Rukmiṇī, Mitravatī daughter of Jāmbavatī, Bhadravatī daughter of Nāgnajitī, and Gātravantī daughter of Lakṣmaṇā.

21. The full verse is: *rukmiṇyāṁ vāsudevasya lakṣmīkāmo dhṛtavrataḥ | śambarāntakaro jajñe pradyumnah kāmadarśanah* || 99.2 ||. The presented translation reads *vāsudevasya* with *lakṣmīkāmo* across the *pāda* boundary, partly to make sense of *lakṣmīkāmo*, and partly because if *vāsudevasya* were there to specify Pradyumna's father alongside his mother, we might expect the father in the ablative (rather than the genitive). Among the manuscripts used for the critical edition, there are no variants for the first *pāda* of the verse. In the second *pāda*, K2 Ņ2.3 V B Dn D5.6 T1.2.4 G1-3.5 M1-3 read *lakṣmyāṁ kāmo* for *lakṣmīkāmo*, which equates Kāma and Pradyumna (Austin 2019), and also equates Rukmiṇī and Lakṣmī (Austin 2014: 36–40). Š1 reads *lakṣmīkāmābhidhah sutah*. After this verse, Š1 D5 add: *sanatkumāra iti yah purāne parigīyate* || 1108\*.

### §10. KRṢNA RECOVERS A BRAHMIN'S LOST SONS (HV 100–05)

In this section, Arjuna narrates what once happened while he was visiting Dvārakā. A brahmin came and asked Kṛṣṇa for help. This brahmin's baby sons kept being stolen. Kṛṣṇa was busy, so Arjuna went instead, to the brahmin's village, but he could not stop the brahmin's next baby son being stolen. So Kṛṣṇa then told Arjuna to drive his chariot. They travelled magically far away, and eventually they found a person-shaped portal of power. Kṛṣṇa entered it alone, and emerged with the brahmin's lost sons.

Later, Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa what that power was. Kṛṣṇa said:

The divine marvel that you saw was made of the power of brahman. It was me, best of the Bhāratas. That was my everlasting power. The transcendent matrix is mine in her manifest and unmanifest aspects, Bhārata. In this world, those who penetrate her mysteries become liberated, supreme Bhārata. She is the refuge of those who follow the sāṃkhya philosophy, son of Pṛthā, and she is the refuge of the yogis and ascetics. The whole world shares in the highest brahman, which lives in her. You should know, Bhārata, that that treasured power is nothing but me.

(Hv 104.9a–12b)<sup>22</sup>

In §2, Kṛṣṇa killed Pañcajana the whale, conquered Yama, and brought Sāṃdīpani's son back from the dead. §10 is a double of §2 because in both sections Kṛṣṇa rescues the sons of a suffering brahmin.<sup>23</sup> It is also similar to the capture and return of Sāmba in §6, and

22. *brahmatejomayam divyam āścaryam drṣṭavān asi | aham sa bharataśreṣṭha mattejas tat sanātanam || 104.9 || prakṛtiḥ sā mama parā vyaktāvyaktā ca bhārata | tāṁ praviṣya bhavantīha muktā bharatasattama || 10 || sā sāṃkhyānāṁ gatiḥ pārtha yogināṁ ca tapasvinām | tatpadam paramām brahma sarvāṁ vibhajate jagat || 11 || mām eva tad dhanāṁ tejo jñātum arhasi bhārata | 12ab |.* For this whole episode (where Arjuna drives Kṛṣṇa's chariot), cf. the *Bhagavadgītā* (Mbh 6.23–40).

23. In his forthcoming paper on ‘the corporeal *vāṇīśa*’, Austin discusses these two stories as a pair, under the subheading ‘Kṛṣṇa Rescues Other People’s Sons’. In that paper Austin suggests ‘a model of a *vāṇīśa* or lineage as a kind of living body of multiple members ... which requires continual sustenance from different sources and is always susceptible to failures, obstructions or threats, as is any single living body’; ‘The seizure of any one male imperils the corporate body

the abduction and return of Pradyumna, §9. The taker of the son is defeated and the son brought home. This happens with Sāṃdīpani's son, the brahmin's sons, and several of Kṛṣṇa's sons.

Viṣṇu, embodied in human form, seems to embody the victory of patrilocality, as if patrilocality were his simple beneficent effect. In the case of the brahmin's sons, *prakṛti* (the 'matrix') is grammatically feminine and plays a feminine role representing the culture of the wife – here, as it were, the wife or wives of that brahmin. By implication, in the case of Sāṃdīpani's son, the waters play the same feminine role representing the culture of the wife. (The waters already have a primeval feminine sense, with amniotic associations, as the home and host of the golden egg that became the world; *Manusmṛti* 1.8–13; Mbh 1.1.27–30; \*Gonda.) The wife's culture is usually represented by a male figure (who is then a fitting target for *kṣatriya* violence): her father, brother, ex-husband, or a whale. But still that male figure can represent matriliney, matrilocality, or matriarchy – these here perhaps figuring as fantasy objects rather than as definable phenomena.

The story of the brahmin's stolen sons resembles the story of Pradyumna in that they and he are stolen as babies. In contrast, Sāṃdīpani's son and Sāmba are taken when they are sexually mature. What is meant by baby sons being stolen? We know that human infants are incomparably more dependent on their mothers than on their genetic fathers. The granting of any paternal right, duty, or stake in any son would be in terms of the mother, and in terms of where she is. It is as if Kṛṣṇa made any wives who went to their natal homes to have their babies (and happened to have male ones) come back to their new home with them after they had had them. This scenario fits §10. It can fit §2 if one envisages Sāṃdīpani's son as taken away from the patrilocale by his own mother.

In other cases, or optionally in the case of Sāṃdīpani's son, one might think of the son being taken away from the patrilocale not by his mother but by his own son's mother, which is the same thing, but in the next generation. Just as in the stories of Sāmba and Pradyumna (§6, §9) the return of the lost son involves the importing of the son's wife, so also the story of Sāṃdīpani's son and the story of the brahmin's sons (§2, §10) both implicitly involve the importing of women – either the sons' wives, or the sons' mothers. This mother–wife ambiguity is underlined in §9, where Pradyumna's (adoptive) mother becomes his wife.

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of the lineage'; 'the conspicuously repeating motif of bodily seizure and hostage-taking expresses in narrative form a deep anxiety about the fragility of the male patriline'.

### §11. KRṢNA AND COMPANY DEFEAT BĀNA (HV 106–13)

In his own fortress, the demon Bāna finds his daughter Uṣā making love with Kṛṣṇa's grandson Aniruddha. Bāna fights Aniruddha and imprisons him in snakes. Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva, Pradyumna, and Garuḍa fly there, defeat Bāna, release Aniruddha from his fetters, and bring the couple to Dvārakā, where they will presumably breed. Austin (forthcoming) makes a connection between Aniruddha's name and his 'unfettered' state after the rescue.

This is a familiar type of story by now. A son is taken away, and after heroic action comes back with a woman. It is the victory of patrilocality over matrilocality.<sup>24</sup> The story of Aniruddha in §11 matches the story of Sāmba in §6: the lost, sexually inclined son is brought back to Dvārakā with his wife, by Baladeva or by Baladeva and team. In variants of this story the son brings himself back (§6, §9), or the woman and the sexual inclination are obscured and the generation is switched (§2, §10).

The Bāna section includes a demon, as do §1, where Kamsa is the demon Kālanemi reborn, and §9, where the demon is Śambara. By implication Aniruddha gets trapped away from home because Uṣā's father is a demon.

The story is beautifully and slowly told. Uṣā dreams that she loses her virginity to Aniruddha, and so her friend magically goes to Dvārakā and fetches Aniruddha for her, and they make love in secret. When Bāna finds out he tells his minions:

Go, all of you together, and kill this fool. In his corrupt state he has corrupted our family's reputation, for if Uṣā is violated, our great family is violated. He dared to help himself to her because we did not give her away, and he was so stupid as to enter this home and fortress of ours. Damn the fool's virility, damn his courage, and damn his audacity!

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24. For discussion of the Pradyumna and Aniruddha narratives, see Austin 2018. Austin notes that 'Pradyumna and Aniruddha are both abducted and made to reside in the home of an enemy demon; both sexually conquer a female under the protection of the enemy, following which the enemy is defeated and the male returns home with the conquered female as his new bride' (2018: 8); 'What begins as a threat to Krishna's patriline soon becomes an opportunity for the trumpeting of the Hari-vamśa's virility and power as the young men surreptitiously seduce the demon women right in the very home of their enemies' (p. 14).

(Hv 108.15–17)<sup>25</sup>

But Aniruddha escapes with Uṣā in the end. He is lucky he has Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva, Pradyumna, and Garuḍa to rescue him, since in the process they also have to defeat Bāṇa's allies Śiva and Skanda, and the snakes.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The *Harivamśa*'s middle *parvan*, the *Viṣṇuparvan*, unpacks as per Figure 1. Two parallel pairs, §2-and-§10, and §5-and-§7, act as straps folding the text in half around a central point, and encourage analysis of the *Viṣṇuparvan* as a ring structure.

A ring structure, generally, is a ring in that it ends where it began. The beginning and end sections form a pair. This symmetry is also markable by other paired sections, thus various pairs frame and are framed by each other and then together frame a middle. 'Ring composition' has been generally described by Douglas in *Thinking in Circles* (2007), and has been identified in many ancient Indian texts in recent decades (see e.g. Brereton 1999; Johnson 2001: xi–xiv; Hock 2002; Jamison 2004; Brodbeck 2006; Jamison 2007: 78–89; Huìfēng 2015; Balkaran 2019: 88–117, 131–36). In both of her cited papers Jamison calls this an omphalos structure, 'omphalos' being the Greek word for 'navel' – the middle, the centre. According to Douglas the centre corresponds somehow with the edges and/or the whole, and by cognizing the framing symmetry the recipient of the text discriminates something fundamental about the text. The recipient's discrimination would be somewhat akin to the discrimination of a reflecting surface of water or glass, triggered by the symmetry between visual features and their reflections.

My narrative summaries have been selective, and my grouping of the *Viṣṇuparvan* into these eleven sections is subjective. It is hard to imagine how one might argue conclusively that the two straps (§2-and-§10 and §5-and-§7) are secure, or that the author of the text imagined these eleven sections in a ring as indicated in Figure 1. These issues merit more discussion than can be afforded here, and the matter is left to the reader to

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25. *gacchadhvam sahitāḥ sarve hanyatām esa durmatih | yena nah kulacāritram dūṣitam dūṣitātmanā || 108.15 || uṣayām dharṣitāyām hi kulaṁ no dharṣitam mahat | asaṁpradānād yo 'smābhiḥ svayaṁgrāham adharṣayat || 16 || aho vīryam aho dhairyam aho dhārṣṭyam ca durmateḥ | yaḥ puram bhavanam cedam praviṣṭo nah subāliśah || 17 ||*

decide. But in view of the apparent popularity of ring-composition in ancient Indian texts, we should suspect that ancient Indian audiences were well attuned to symmetrical coding.

The centre of a ring-composition often corresponds with the edges. Would it do that here? The story comprised by §11, the final section, is the same as the story of Sāmba in §6, the central section, in that both are stories of a member of Kṛṣṇa's close family being lost to love abroad, and fetched back to the patrilocal, with woman, by a heroic patrilocal war-party. This is the basic story of the *Viṣṇuparvan*, as told repeatedly, with variations. So the centre corresponds with the end. The centre also corresponds with §1, the first section, but not so clearly, because the story in §1 is a variation. It is still the story of victory against an in-law family, but in §1 Kamsa is too far abroad to be fetched back, as it were. He seems to have gone so far that he never even left, and so he is killed. But despite this preliminary victory, in §3 the threat that Jarāsamdha's family poses to the Mathurā patriline continues and is bolstered by Kālayavana, and so the people have to move.

I might have fudged the central section by including two different stories – the story in which Baladeva kills Rukmin, and the story in which he defeats Duryodhana. But both central stories feature Baladeva. Also, with two stories in the central section, the edges and centre narrate four patrilocal victories: victories over the families of Jarāsamdha, Rukmin, Duryodhana, and Bāṇa. These victories occur in four successive generations: Kṛṣṇa's father's generation, Kṛṣṇa's own, his son's, and his grandson's.

Baladeva's type of masculinity is highlighted at the centre, as emblematic of the theme. Baladeva's deeds are featured more rarely in the text than Kṛṣṇa's are, and their being doubly highlighted is a striking effect caused by folding just here, which might repay further research. Baladeva stars in the first and last sections too.

What happens next, after §11? Kṛṣṇa's adult male relatives die at Prabhāsa, as related earlier, in the *Mausalaparvan*.

The Andhakas, Bhojas, Śaineyas and Vṛṣṇis, urged on by fate, fell to fighting, and killed one another with clubs ... Men rushed drunkenly about, smashing each other with clubs. The Kukuras and Andhakas fell, like moths falling into a flame.

(Mbh 16.4.36, 40c–41b, trans. Smith 2009: 761, adapted)<sup>26</sup>

Pradyumna and Aniruddha are killed. Then Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva die. Arjuna comes to Dvārakā, evacuates the remaining inhabitants, and Dvārakā is flooded by the ocean. After many women have been stolen en route, Arjuna settles some Yādavas at the Pāñḍavas' old capital Indraprastha, and installs Vajra as king there (Mbh 16.8.68, 70ab). Vajra is Aniruddha's son by his wife Anu;<sup>27</sup> Vajra's son is Prativaha, and his son is Sucāru (Hv 98.24c–25b). The Indraprastha region was cleansed years earlier, by Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, when they burned down Khāṇḍava Forest and almost all of its inhabitants (Mbh 1.214–25; Brodbeck 2014).

In the *Viṣṇuparvan* there are many stories, one after another, on the theme of competition with in-laws over where a couple will settle. It is a main theme, pursued throughout the text. The victory of patrilocality is always a cause for the celebration of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva as its protagonists. Throughout the *Viṣṇuparvan*, Vaiśampāyana celebrates, to Janamejaya, the victory of patrilocality that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva achieved. But it was a fleeting victory, since Kṛṣṇa's family only really prospered in the purpose-built context of Dvārakā, and then only temporarily, before it was brought down because of the curse cast upon Kṛṣṇa by Gāndhārī. Suffering as the mother of the one hundred sons whose death he had caused, she told him that one day he would slay his own kinsmen, family, and sons, then die an ignominious death (Mbh 11.25.36–42; Fitzgerald 2004: 71). Kṛṣṇa's model of patrilocality seems to be an ideal, since it is only briefly instantiated; though it is endorsed by the gods, it is pernicious to women.

Imagine Kṛṣṇa's family occasions. Apart from unmentioned daughters, the women there were imported from different places by and for different men in different generations. What happens inside after the patrilineal doors close behind such women?

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26. tato 'ndhakāś ca bhojāś ca śaineyā vṛṣṇayas tathā | jaghnur anyonyam ākrande musalaiḥ kālacoditāḥ ||  
Mbh 16.4.36 || ... | mattāḥ paripatanti sma pothayantāḥ parasparam || 40cd || pataṅgā iva cāgnau te  
nyapatan kukurāndhakāḥ | 41ab |

27. Other than this we know nothing about Anu, unless we link her to Anu the man, son of Yadu.

The local male discourse includes co-present male relatives of four or more generations. The physical production of each generation is done through females, but the long cultural trace is tracked and retrospectively ramified through males.

Giving or taking girls in patrilocal marriage makes girls into currency. They are commodified and sacrificed as transferable wealth, as wombs on legs.

'I have a hundred thousand slave-girls,' said Yudhiṣṭhira, 'young and lovely, with shell bracelets, medallions and other fair adornments; they are decked with costly garlands and ornaments, well dressed, and sprinkled with sandal-scented water; they bear gold and jewels, and all of them are clad in fine garments. Skilled at singing and dancing, they wait upon householders, ministers and kings at my command. This is my stake, king; I wager it against you!'

(Mbh 2.54.12–14, trans. Smith 2009: 133)<sup>28</sup>

This aspect requires explorations into ancient economic history. Was capitalism founded on the abuse of women? Women can also be sexual objects, and capable slaves. The demon Naraka's sin is hoarding, in Jewel Mountain, what should be widely transferred. It is an economic sin. Kṛṣṇa, the recipient of wrongly amassed treasure, also seems guilty of this. Why should he have so many wives? Well, he is Viṣṇu. Some might say he thus has circumstantial reasons for meriting a brief brilliant blaze at Dvārakā. But is being Viṣṇu a good enough excuse?

Engels linked the subject of ancient kinship to the development of property and the state (Engels 1968 [1884]). Perhaps gender politics is the source of all politics. In the patrilocal model, perhaps by implication the families one takes wives from are lower in

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28. *yudhiṣṭhira uvāca | śatam dāśīsaḥsrāṇi taruṇyo me prabhadrīkāḥ | kambukeyūradhāriṇyo niśkakan̄thyah svalamkṛtāḥ || Mbh 2.54.12 || mahārhamālyābharanāḥ suvastrāś candanokṣitāḥ | maṇīn hema ca bibhratyah sarvā vai sūkṣmavāsasah || 13 || anusevāṁ carantīmāḥ kuśalā nr̄tyasāmasu | snātakānām amātyānāṁ rājñāṁ ca mama śāsanāt | etad rājan dhanāṁ mahyāṁ tena dīvyāmy ahaṁ tvayā || 14 ||*. As Rubin says, 'If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the women being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it' (Rubin 1997: 37). Cf. Lévi-Strauss (1969: 115): 'it is men who exchange women, and not vice versa ... the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners between whom the exchange takes place.'

class that the families one gives daughters to. Men mate downwards, women mate upwards – that is the *anuloma* rule. The female is diffused in speculation as currency, and the male is particularized for accumulation within a multigenerational ranking system (cf. Rubin 1997: 57 on traditional Tonga).

But if patrilocal marriage treats females as currency, it also metes out this kind of treatment more broadly, since it treats males as currency when they are made expendable as heroes who can be physically sacrificed in the patrilocal cause. If females may be mistreated because they have wombs – that is, because of their biological sex-specialization – then males may be mistreated because they do not (that is, because of *theirs*). Male lives are cheaper because a family's ability to reproduce itself depends on the number of its fertile females, even if there are dramatically fewer fertile males. Although the wave of mainstream feminism that began in the second half of the twentieth century might tend to focus our attention on the exploitation of women, the cheapness of male lives is shown in the Kurukṣetra war, and has been shown in the two world wars.<sup>29</sup> In the case of both sexes the value of the commodity is temporary: women are only briefly nubiles, and men only briefly young braves. Time hurries and forces individual decisions and gambles en masse, easily translated into economic processes.

There is exploitation and human sacrifice irrespective of gender and class. But at Kurukṣetra there was no equivalent of national male conscription. Billions of *kṣatriyas* died at Kurukṣetra, and one brahmin. Perhaps brahmin lore connected with relatively successful royal houses survived, accumulating and passing between houses along with the brahmins who served royal success. In the *Mahābhārata* we see the success of Janamejaya in his war against the snakes and beyond, strengthened as that success is by the success of his ancestors the Pāñdavas, strengthened as *that* success was, for ulterior motives, by Krṣṇa, who also had some success of his own, all through brahmin lore for kings.

The gendered study of ancient texts facilitates interdisciplinary exploration of the history of our own and related species. This article has offered a summary and basic interpretation of one old collection of stories, but there is a wider discourse to which that contributes. Fully framing the research anticipated here would require explorations into

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29. This paper was first written, by a male national and resident of the so-called United Kingdom long held by monarchy, in the centenary year of the end of the so-called Great War, whose lost uncles are commemorated by name in public art in villages and towns across the land, and in theatre such as *Oh What a Lovely War* (Chilton et al. 1965).

ancient anthropology and the prehistory of kinship systems, in light of old work by Bachofen and Morgan (Bachofen 1967 [1861]: 69–120; Morgan 1877; Trautmann 2008), and in light of new work by archaeologists and anthropologists (e.g. Allen et al. 2011, esp. Knight 2011), and in light of ongoing developments in historical genetics, and the full body of ancient literature.

This closing discussion has attempted to place the theme of patrilocality in a wider context than that of ancient Indian literature, but this is to dabble in a subject that has been dealt with many times, in many forms, by many others besides Engels, Lévi-Strauss, and Rubin. It is hoped that this discussion has not diminished the specific contribution of the article: the assertion and demonstration of the *Viṣṇuparvan*'s thematic integrity.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

Hv	<i>Harivamśa</i>
Mbh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>

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- §1. Kṛṣṇa kills Kamṣa and reinstates Ugrasena (Hv 46–78)
- §2. Kṛṣṇa recovers Sāṁdīpani's lost son (Hv 79)
- §3. Kṛṣṇa escapes from Jarāsaṁdha and kills Kālayavana (Hv 80–86)
  - | §4. Kṛṣṇa abducts Rukminī (Hv 87.1–88.39)
    - §5. Kṛṣṇa's 16,000+ other wives (Hv 88.40–44)
    - | §6. Baladeva kills Rukmin and defeats Duryodhana (Hv 89–90)
    - §7. Kṛṣṇa's 16,000+ other wives (Hv 91–97)
  - | §8. Kṛṣṇa's descendants (Hv 98)
  - §9. Pradyumna kills Śambara (Hv 99)
- §10. Kṛṣṇa recovers a brahmin's lost sons (Hv 100–05)
- §11. Kṛṣṇa and company defeat Bāṇa (Hv 106–13)

Figure 1. Sections of the *Viṣṇuparvan* (Hv 46–113)

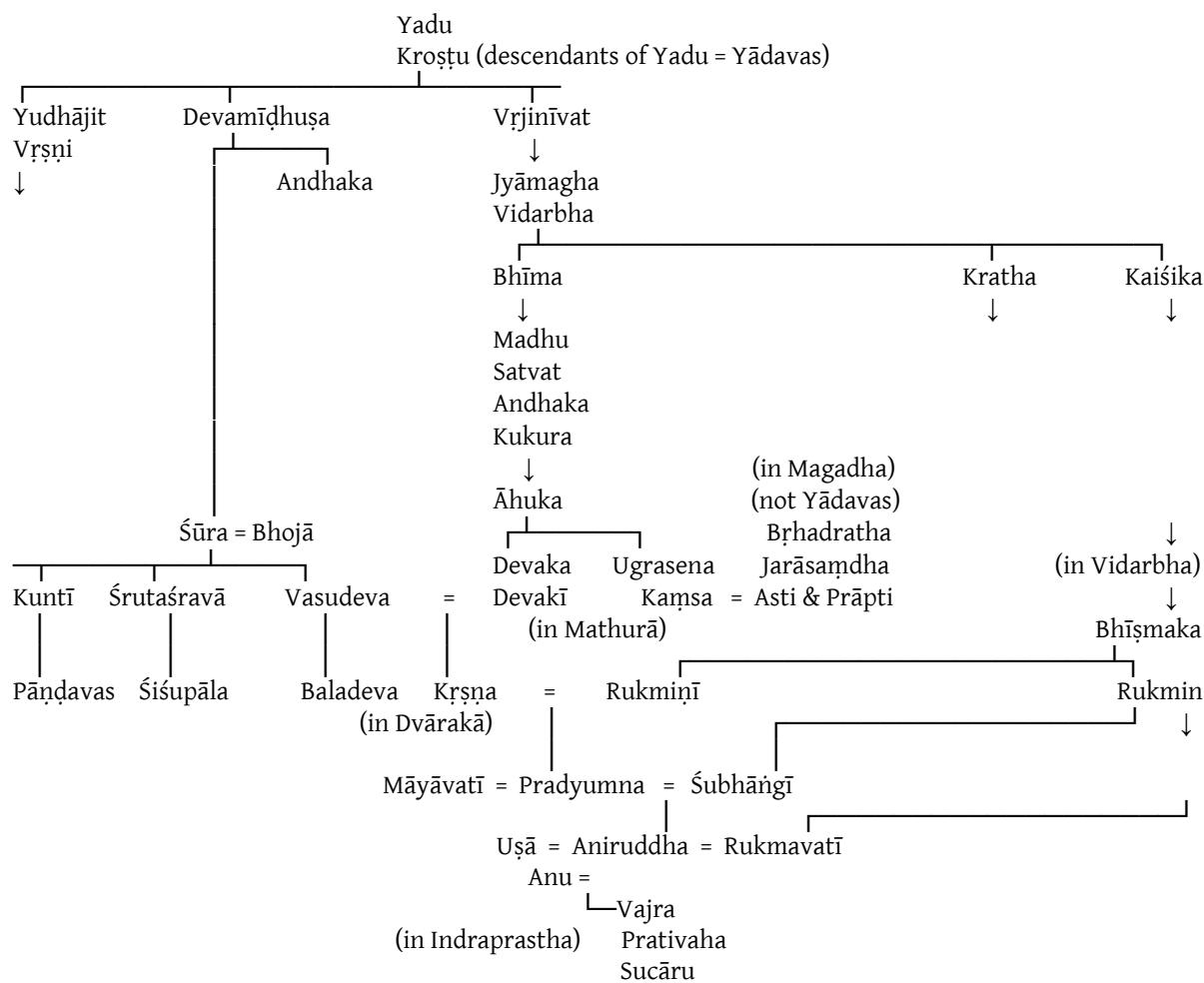


Figure 2. Genealogy as relevant to the *Viṣṇuparvan*