



## Dharmarāja and Dhammarāja (II)

### Yudhiṣṭhira's moral dilemmas before the great battle (*Mahābhārata* 5,70)

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#### ABSTRACT

The paper offers a close examination of the *Mahābhārata's adhyāya* 5,70, one of the more interesting and representative chapters to analyse Yudhiṣṭhira's attitude on the dharma of the king and warfare. In this long chapter, addressing Kṛṣṇa (before the latter's diplomatic mission to Kauravas), the king deprived of his kingdom presents two different attitudes. On one hand, he states that even though peaceful conflict resolution would be the best to regain the kingdom, the war must be accepted if it is inevitable. On the other hand, he expresses his disapproval of war as evil in any form (MBh 5,70.44-66). Yudhiṣṭhira's ambivalent utterance is analysed against the background of early Buddhist ethics (as represented in the Pāli Canon), totally condemning war, and other passages from the *Mahābhārata*, especially those glorifying the dharma of *kṣatriyas*.

#### KEYWORDS

Yudhiṣṭhira; *Mahābhārata*; Buddhist ethics; Pāli Canon; *kṣatriyadharmā*; war; peace

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Continuing the considerations on Yudhiṣṭhira's moral dilemmas (begun in last year's issue of this journal; Szczurek, 2020), the author of the paper would like to look at chapter (*adhyāya*) 5,70 of the *Mahābhārata* (MBh). The essential part of this long chapter (93 *ślokas*) is Yudhiṣṭhira's statements on the negotiations for the restoration of the taken kingdom, war and peace, the rights and duties of the warrior and the king (stanzas 1–4 and 6–78). As in the previous paper (discussing MBh 3,30), the main impulse for the interpretation of the middle segment of this chapter, i.e. *ślokas* MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66, comes from looking at it through the prism of the ethical teachings of early Buddhism (as represented in the Pāli Canon), and introducing the early Buddhist parallels that can be seen there. As in the case of the previous paper, the confrontational aspect of Yudhiṣṭhira's speech has been highlighted.

Some *Mahābhārata* scholars trace the multiplicity and variety of voices expressed in the epic, in various episodes and during different disputes, and presented mainly in didactic parts (not related narratively to the main thread of the epic), though sometimes also in the strictly epic parts (Bailey, 2005; Hildebeitel, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2021). Some see here reflections of controversies and/or disputes that may have occurred in ancient Indian society. The presumed and probable time of the great epic's composition (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. — 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) prompts researchers to search for allusions, first of all, to Buddhism, the greatest heterodox current of that time successfully competing with Brahmanism, whose representatives were the editors of the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>1</sup> The present paper, following this path, explores a single chapter of the great epic. Noting the ambiguous approach of Yudhiṣṭhira in his statements on the duties of king and *ksatriya*, and the war aspects of his dharma, the author also tries to see a Buddhist impulse here. Diminishing his own social class (*varṇa*) and duties (*dharmā*), blaming the cruelty and injustice of warfare (against the epic praise of brave warriors' attitude), Yudhiṣṭhira in MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66 does not deviate from the arguments in MBh 3,30 (the subject of the previous paper). This attitude, as in the case of 3,30, has also met with a polemical response, bringing the two episodes even closer together.

## 2. MAHĀBHĀRATA 5,70

Both before and after the great battle (described in MBh books 6–9), the words of disapproval, sometimes condemnation of injustices brought about by war and warriors' dharma, or reflections on atrocities of war, were repeatedly

<sup>1</sup> On MBh and Buddhism see above all: Upadhyaya, 1983; Santina, 1992; Bailey, 2004; Bailey, 2011; Bailey, 2012–2013; Hildebeitel, 2011.

put in Yudhiṣṭhira's mouth.<sup>2</sup> Such is the case of MBh 5,70. The long speech of the king deprived of his kingdom was included in *The book of the effort* (*Udyogaparvan*, MBh 5) which mainly talks about various activities, efforts, legations, negotiations, or alliances made by both sides of the dynastic conflict just before the battle. The words of Yudhiṣṭhira are addressed to Kṛṣṇa immediately before the latter's diplomatic mission to the Kauravas (the main opponents of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas), and immediately after his unsuccessful mission.

Remarks on MBh 5,70 are preceded by presenting the content of this *adhyāya*.

1–5. The chapter begins with Yudhiṣṭhira's request for help and advice directed to Kṛṣṇa as a friend and trustworthy ally. The latter shows willingness of help.

Now comes a longer utterance of Yudhiṣṭhira (6–78).

6–12. Yudhiṣṭhira reproaches the old king, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, for giving in to his oldest son and unfairly dealing with him. Yudhiṣṭhira himself completed the conditions of agreement. Looking for peace without restitution of the part of the kingdom, the old king is acting contrary to the principles of his dharma (*svadharma*).

13–17. In his despair and with some of his allies by his side, the oldest of the Pāṇḍavas reminds them that he asked only for five villages or towns, to which the oldest son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, desirous for power, did not agree.

In the following stanzas (18–39) there comes a series of reflections by Yudhiṣṭhira inspired by his present situation, but also of a more general nature.

18–19. First, Yudhiṣṭhira talks about fatal consequences of noble man's greed. Greed leads successively to the destruction of wisdom, modesty, righteousness (*dharmā*), good fortune, and finally destroys the man. At the basis of man's destructions is lack of property.

20–29. He then discusses the discomforts of being poor. Relatives, friends, and priests turn their backs on a person not possessing any property. Poverty is like death: There is no state worse than poverty. Wealth is the highest law; the three aims of man's life (law and duties/*dharmā*, profit/*artha*, sexual pleasure/*kāma*) undergo destruction together with the destruction of wealth. Poverty hastens men towards extermination of different kind: they die, go away to the country, to the forest, they go mad, yield under enemies' power, fall into slavery. On the other hand, property is at the base of man's righteousness and pleasure, a worthy cause to give a life for; while a righteous death is subject to the ancient order of things which nobody will surpass. Man poor by nature does not suffer so much as the one brought up in prosperous conditions and later devoid of wealth.

30–39. Yudhiṣṭhira now presents the negative consequences of bad human behaviour and then positive results of human behaviour awakened by wisdom. The person behaving wrongly does it through his own fault, but blames others (i.e. gods, friends,

<sup>2</sup>The issue of interpreting Yudhiṣṭhira's attitude and moral dilemmas has been raised several times in the *Mahābhārata*, also in the context of designing his character against the background of the early Buddhism. See: Klaes, 1975; Sutton, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2001; Hildebeitel, 2001; McGrath, 2017. Cf. also Matilal, 1992.

servants) and does not perceive scriptures. Fury seizes him, he falls in blindness, and behaving sinfully he contributes to the promiscuity of castes (*samkara*). Hell is the destiny of sinners. On the contrary, one awakened by wisdom perceives scriptures and behaves according to dharma. He feels repugnance for sin, consequently his good fortune grows. He calmly bears the burden of his duties, thus turning back from *adbharma* (sins). Immoderate man acting in blindness, who does not acknowledge the authority of the moral norm of dharma, is like a *sūdra*. Just the opposite, the moderate person who protects gods, forefathers and himself, steps towards immortality—the destination of virtuous.

40–43. After those more general considerations (esp. 30–39), Yudhiṣṭhira now refers to his poor condition. Deprived of his kingdom, he is not able to give up his good fortune even at the price of destruction. The best way of regaining the kingdom would be the peaceful way on equal conditions, the other, extreme way could result in terrible acts and massacre of the Kauravas.

44–45. Yudhiṣṭhira is however aware that one should not kill even dishonourable enemies, to say nothing of relatives, friends, or gurus. There is nothing excellent in war. Then follows the passage in which Yudhiṣṭhira presents his arguments against military conflict resolution, condemning both the duty of warriors (*kṣatriyadbharma*) and warfare.

46–66. Warrior's duty is evil (*pāpa*), it is in fact *adbharma*. Yudhiṣṭhira regrets the established social order in which everyone is attributed his role, he also deploras the cruelty of the world in which living beings kill each other. He totally condemns war, fighting, violence, and enmity as bringing noxious consequences. War destroys life, is based on strength and violence only, and is a part of policy. It is evil in each respect. There are no rules in war, one can kill many and inversely, the noble heroes full of compassion perish, whereas the villains save their lives. On both sides of conflicts there can be both victory and defeat; the one who kills will also be killed; close persons perish, which causes survivors to feel repugnance for life. The survivors among the defeated collect a new army to defeat the victor. Therefore, to put an end of violence the conqueror totally annihilates his enemies. Victory brings forth violence, whereas defeat brings misfortune. Happy is the one who abandoned both. Unhappy is also the man full of hostility; destroying all, he gains ill-fame. Though, even long-lasting enmity does not end because of ancestral connections. Enmity cannot be appeased by enmity, and peace should be reached in the opposite way, by giving up one's prowess and ceasing one's mind. Because total eradication of enemies would only bring noxious results.

In the next stanzas, however, Yudhiṣṭhira modifies the content and tone of this statement.

67–69. He states that peace gained by giving up can only cause extermination. He does not want to give up his claims, he does not want the extermination of his family either, assuming peace through submission to the will of the opposite side. At the same time, he states that when reconciliation is thrown aside, war is inevitable even for those who do not want it.

70–73. Once more in Yudhiṣṭhira's statement are words with unambiguous anti-war significance. When reconciliation is not possible, terrible results occur. The escalation of mutual hostility, ferocious struggle and its effects are compared to a fight among dogs. The stronger shows violence, disrespect, and hostility, whereas the weaker is forced to submit.

74–78. Although the old king, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, deserves honour and respect, his love for his son makes Yudhiṣṭhira's submission to his will impossible. Therefore, in trying to solve this difficult matter Yudhiṣṭhira again appeals for help to Kṛṣṇa.

79–81. In Pāṇḍavas' interest, Kṛṣṇa undertakes a diplomatic trip to Kauravas, as he declares, for both sides of the conflict

82–93. For fear of Kṛṣṇa's safety in the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Pāṇḍava king does not approve this trip; yet Kṛṣṇa himself shows fearlessness and determination in undertaking the mission. Therefore, Yudhiṣṭhira consents, praising Kṛṣṇa's friendship and negotiation skill.

In his final appeal Yudhiṣṭhira asks Kṛṣṇa to speak to Duryodhana in accordance with dharma, regardless of what is at stake, i.e. reconciliation or its opposite.

Chapter MBh 5,70 shows traces of a complex structure.<sup>3</sup> First of all, it is noticeable here that Yudhiṣṭhira refers to a few ways of argumentation, in particular segments of the text that differ from one another, and sometimes are even contradictory to each other. Vaiśampāyana, the epic narrator, introducing and concluding Yudhiṣṭhira's words, refers to him as Dharmarāja (stanzas 1 and 79). The entire chapter ends with Yudhiṣṭhira's appeal to Kṛṣṇa to speak according to the principles of dharma (93), when undertaking his ambassadorial trip to the Kauravas. The term dharma is used several times. Throughout the chapter, however, a different approach to the concept of dharma can be found, especially regarding this aspect of the capacious term that refers to the duties prescribed in the established Brahminic social order. On the one hand, Yudhiṣṭhira blames the old king for not seeing his own duties (*svadharma*, 11); reflecting on the misfortunes caused by lack of prosperity, Yudhiṣṭhira acts as a defender of three traditional goals in human life (the *trivarga*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*) which are destroyed with the loss of property (24, 27, 76) and whose defence is worthy of a righteous death (28: *dharmyam maraṇam*); he expresses his objection to caste mixing (*saṁkara*, 33); praises behaviour in accordance with the recommendations of normative texts (*śāstra*, 35) and favours the one who, constantly guided by the principles of dharma (*dharmā-nityaḥ*), calmly endures the burden of his duties, thus turning away from *adharma* (sins, 37); he criticises the one who, like a *śūdra*, finds no authority in dharma (38). Yet, on the other hand, the same Yudhiṣṭhira in stanzas 46 to 48 appears as an enemy of the established social

<sup>3</sup> Without drawing attention to the text criticism of MBh 5,70, let me only mention that some parts of this *adhyāya* can be recognised as interspersed in the text later. Stanzas 5,70.30–39, due to their content and universal character, look like a part embedded between earlier existing parts of the text. The topic of stanzas following 39 refers to the part from before 30. The supposed interspersion between them enriches the meaning of the text by new and more universal considerations, but in a way also disturbs the continuity of thought in parts between 30–39. The passage discussed in this paper, MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66, can be recognised also as a separate text segment.

order, describing the duties of his order (*kṣatriyadharmā, svadharmā*) as sinful and discordant with dharma/righteousness (*pāpa, adharma*, 46).

Likewise, across the entire chapter, a different approach to war and peace emerges. On the one hand, Yudhiṣṭhira does not agree to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's offer of peace without the restitution of part of the kingdom (8); he approves of a peaceful solution to the conflict, but only on equal basis (42, 90), which means that he wants peace, but not at all costs. On the other hand, in 64 and 65 he advocates peace at all costs, even rebuking warriors' heroism as a great misfortune. While Yudhiṣṭhira speaks as a supporter of earlier agreements, he wants to regain the kingdom after thirteen years of exile (3, 8–10); he amicably asks for five villages, at the same time pointing to his concluded military alliances (14–16), which means that he conducts peace negotiations from the position of force; as a king deprived of his kingdom he regrets the loss of his prosperity, emphasising that he is unable to abandon it even at the cost of bloodshed (29, 40–41); generally speaking, he wants peace and prosperity for both sides of the conflict, but to regain his kingdom he is ready for the fight against the Kauravas (42–43), and agrees that when peaceful solutions fail, war is an inevitable solution (68–69). However, in passage 46 to 66 (and 44–45 spoken in a similar tone as a sort of introduction to this part), Yudhiṣṭhira gives a speech in which he unequivocally condemns war with its harmful aspects, without going into compromises or exceptions.<sup>4</sup>

The differences in Yudhiṣṭhira's approach and argumentation, however subtle, appear to be significant.

1. Yudhiṣṭhira from the parts preceding and following the stanzas 5,70. (44–45)46–66 is presented as a royal defender of the accepted so-called traditional Brahminic values, social order, and moral norms (such as *varṇadharmā* or *trivarga*). He cares for the material well-being of himself and the state. In the face of conflict, he has doubts that other heroes do not have. He expresses his worries, anticipating the death of relatives, the confusion of castes, the extermination of kin. Showing good will, he is open to negotiations, considering diplomatic solutions to be the best. However, he is aware of his royal status, as a king he wants to regain his lost inheritance, and therefore, although he considers the force solution as final, in the face of the coming war and bloodshed he does not hesitate to resort to such a solution.

2. The “second” Yudhiṣṭhira — the one from passage (44–45)46–66 — rejects the established social order, the norms allowing and ordering warriors to take lives during war, and any resolution of the conflict by force. Everything Yudhiṣṭhira says in this part could be considered an extension of the statement from stanza 53(a): *sarvathā vrjīnam yuddham* — “war is disastrous in every way”.

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned, in stanzas 70–73, Yudhiṣṭhira returns once more to total condemnation of war and violence.

Undoubtedly, Yudhiṣṭhira's widely celebrated point of view in 5,70.(44–45) 46–66 is not a typical approach of a ruler and warrior, and can even be taken as the opposite of what constitutes the ethos of warrior and ruler in the epic. For when the issue of war, fight or a military solution to a conflict appears in the epic, we meet most often with unequivocal glorification of both warriors (as a social group) bravely fighting on the battlefield during the war (especially just war, *dharmya yuddha*, *dharmya saṁgrāma*), as well as the war itself. Repeatedly, the epic expresses the view (through the words of different heroes) that fighting in war is the main duty of the warrior class. The stanzas depicting the image of a heroic warrior create a sort of code of conduct or the ethos of *kṣatriya*. Thus, one often meets epic phrases such as: during a fight, warriors face the only possible alternative: either they will kill their enemies or they will die themselves in a heroic fight, there is no third option (e.g. retreat, *nivartana*); it is glorious for a warrior to endanger his life, while it is reprehensible to flee the battlefield or to die at home; wounds sustained by *kṣatriya* on the battlefield are considered his bodily ornaments; a warrior heroically fighting in a war can only count on profits: if he wins, he gains enemy territory (*rājya*/kingdom, *mahī*, *prthivī*/land), spoils of war and wealth (*vitta*), happiness (*sukhāni*), eternal fame (*kīrti*), and glory (*yaśas*), if he loses and is killed on the battlefield (and only there) he reaches heaven (*svarga*), Indra's kingdom, where he enjoys heavenly pleasures in the company of heavenly nymphs — *apsarasas*; therefore one should not lament a warrior killed in battle.<sup>5</sup>

It seems evident that the approach attributed to Yudhiṣṭhira in MBh 5,70.46–66 corresponds to the anti-war or generally pacifist approach of *abimsā*, which is a crucial element of moral ethics represented in those parts of the epic that express the ideas of both Brahminic and non-Brahminic ascetism. Abstaining from violence is one of the elements of *nivṛtti*, detachment from the social problems of this world, renunciation of the world, the concept presented in the so-called didactic, and particularly ascetic parts of the great epic. It is contrasted with the concept of *pravṛtti*, involvement in the social problems of this world, propagated both in the epic's narrative and didactic parts, one of its elements being the ethos of a warrior (Klaes, 1975: 108–130; Bailey, 2005). What seems important here is that Yudhiṣṭhira's uncompromisingly anti-war statements from MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66 are much better expressed in heterodox currents of Indian thought than in the Brahminic ascetic parts of the epic. Especially in Jainism and Buddhism, where they form the main thread of moral ethics. It can be particularly satisfying to compare the pacifistic ideas attributed to Yudhiṣṭhira with those found in early Buddhist ethics, as the most significant and widespread among heterodox currents (from the viewpoint of

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hopkins, 1889: 184–190; and esp. Hara, 1999; Hara, 2001a; Hara, 2001b, where the verses of the *Mahābhārata* on that topic have been collected and classified.



Brahmin orthodoxy) in the time of the *Mahābhārata's* composition, represented by the Pāli Canon in those parts that deal with the issues of warrior's duties, war, violence or taking life during war.

### 3. MBH 5,70.44–66 AND EARLY BUDDHIST PARALLELS

In the Buddha's teaching one does not find approval for any war operations or resolving conflicts by force and violence. Various parts of the Pāli Canon directly or indirectly condemn war and warfare as bringing violence and annihilation of human life.<sup>6</sup> The reasoning for war is presented as futile, insignificant, and unworthy of sacrificing the invaluable lives of soldiers (Jāt V 412–414). As a matter of fact — as the Buddha states — disputes, conflicts, and cruel wars are based on people's selfish desires or passions, attachment to material things (such as property, territory, wealth, economic dominance, or political supremacy), and thus to sensual pleasures (MN I 86–87). While the consequences which wars bring about are fatal both for the conqueror and the defeated (SN I 83; Dhṛ 201), they actually do not end with peace, are not decisive, and they arouse more wars (SN I 85). Physical strength is a fools' strength only; on the contrary, forbearance and forgiveness represent considerably larger strengths (SN I 222). The true winner is the one who defeated only himself with the power of self-control and righteousness (Dhṛ 103). Life full of the four cardinal states of thought and feeling (*brahma-vihāra*) — loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), benevolence (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) towards all living beings — leads to real peace and is among others, the Buddhist reply to anger, hatred, enmity, and violence (Wijesekera, 1994: 93–101).<sup>7</sup> And the perfect symbol of peace is the Buddhist *saṅgha*.<sup>8</sup>

One of the better known parables illustrating the Buddha's attitude toward war and the duties of *ḷṣatriyas* directly contrasting with the most common

<sup>6</sup> On the early Buddhist attitude towards wars and using force, see: Horner, 1945: 443–446; Rahula, 1959: 84–89; Upadhyaya, 1983: 528–537; Harvey, 2000: 239–255. While comparing the *Bhagavadgītā's* attitude towards war with that of the early Buddhism, Upadhyaya, 1983: 532, draws attention that according to the Buddhist ideal, the phrase “righteous war” (*dharmya saṃgrāma*, BhG 2.33), war fighting evil-doers, would be a contradiction in terms, “since ‘righteous’ and ‘war’ can hardly go hand in hand”.

<sup>7</sup> See DN I 250–251, II 186–187, 250, III 49–50, 78, 223–224; SN IV 296, 322, V 115; AN I 183, 196, II 128–129, 184, III 225, V 300, 344–345. These four *brahmavihāras* are particularly emphasized in the ethics of the Mahāyāna Buddhism (Skr. *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekṣā*).

<sup>8</sup> The Pāli Canon further states that even the weapons trade (*sattḥavaṇijjā*) is regarded as an evil way of making a living for a layperson (AN III 208). Monks are forbidden to be involved in talks about army or war (*senākaṭṭham*, *yuddhakaṭṭham*) as these are among topics not fundamental for the holy life and do not lead to supreme goal (SN V 419–420). The recurrent list of “low talks” or “animal/bestial talks” (*tiracchāna-kaṭṭham*) that are forbidden to monks begins with “talk of kings, of robbers, of ministers of state, of war, of terrors, of battles”, DN I 7, Vin I 188.



approach of the *Mahābhārata* is the story from the *Gāmaṇi Saṃyuttam* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (XLII 3, SN IV 308–309). This story may be simply recognised for the Buddhist reply to the old Vedic and then traditional post-Vedic conviction (propagated by the epic literature) about the posthumous fate of warriors killed on the battlefield. According to this conviction, as mentioned above, this is the godly abode, Indra's heaven, where warriors killed in battles are welcomed.<sup>9</sup> The Pāli passage SN IV 308–309, a dialogue between the Buddha and a warrior chief (*yodhājīvo gāmaṇi*), alludes to this: In the presence of the Buddha, the chief says that he has heard from his ancestral teachers that a soldier fighting eagerly in battle, killing others and being killed himself, is reborn in heaven in the company of gods. He then asks the Buddha if it is correct. The Buddha's reply is, quite to the contrary, that such a soldier is reborn in hell. Moreover, the Buddha criticises the view presented by the warrior chief declaring that one guilty of that perverted view attains either hell or rebirth as an animal.

It must be stated that Yudhiṣṭhira's approach in MBh 5,70.44–66 to war and violence is closer to the ethical early Buddhist approach than to the traditional epic, characteristic of Brahminic society. A comparison of a few stanzas and phrases from this part of the epic with selected passages of the Pāli Canon will make it possible to indicate a bit more clearly the similarity in the arguments of Yudhiṣṭhira and those of the early Buddhist parts.

Dharmarāja begins his anti-war speech by reflecting on the duty of *kṣatriyas* (*kṣatriyadharma*), within a more general context of the established social order that assigns everyone his place in society and appointed duties. The king regrets this order as it leads to the taking of life and forces *kṣatriyas* to kill. *Kṣatriyadharma* is here described *expressis verbis* as *pāpa* and *adharma*.

<sup>9</sup> As Hara showed, this heavenly abode is particularly characterised in the *Mahābhārata* by the full range of terms and synonymous expressions. All of them shape an united and clear view of posthumous rewards promised to brave warriors. See Hara, 2001b: 138–139 (cf. also Hara, 2001b). Among those names and expressions, the following are in the epic: *svarga* — heaven (e.g. MBh 9,54.6; 11, 2.9), *svargaloka* — heavenly world (12,99.43), *vīraloka* — the world of heroes (9,30.40), *ayaṃ loko'kṣayaḥ* — this world [of Indra] forever (3,51.16), *indra(=śakra)loka* — the world of Indra (Śakra) (7,131.128; 11,10.03), *śakrasya/indrasya salokatā* — residence in the same world with Śakra/Indra (12,98.30–31), *śakrasya brahmaṇas'ca salokatā* — residence in the same world with Śakra and Brahmā (6,17.8), *brahma-sadana* — the seat of Brahmā (11,26.16; 13,61.22; 13,61.55), *kṣatra-dharma jītā lokāḥ* — the worlds acquired by the *kṣatradharma* (6,117.31), *śastra-jītā lokāḥ* — the worlds acquired by weapons (15,5.17), *kāma-dughā lokāḥ* — the worlds capable of yielding every wish (11,2.10), *puṇya-kṛtām lokāḥ* — the worlds of the pious (7,50.64; 7,54.15; 11,20.25), *sukṛtinām lokāḥ* — the worlds of the virtuous (6,79.10), *nāka-prṣṭa, nākasya prṣṭa* — the uppermost heaven ("sky-ceiling") (12,12.36), *paramā gati* — the highest goal (7,54.17), *vīrābhilaṣitā gati* — the goal desired by heroes (7,54.14).

MBh 5,70.46–47:

It is the evil Law of the barons [= *kṣatriyas* — P.Sz.] (*kṣatriyadharmah*), and we have been born in the baronage (*kṣatrabāndhavāḥ*). It is our Law (*dharmā*), be it Lawless (*adharmā*); any other way of life is forbidden to us. The *sūdra* obeys, the *vaiśya* lives by trade, we live off killing, the Brahmin prefers his begging bowl.<sup>10</sup>

Early Buddhism provides evidence of the disapproval of social division into *varṇas* and of the values of the associated hereditary professions. Consequently, the traditionally established duties of *kṣatriyas* are not approved.<sup>11</sup> The story from the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* (No. 537, Jāt V 456–511), in which the Bodhisatta addresses a man-eater, is an example of condemnation of the *kṣatriya* duties (Pāl. *khattadhamma*; Skr. *kṣatradharma*) related to the politics of ruling the state:

Jāt V 490:

All such as are in *kṣatriya* doctrine (*khattadhamman*) versed  
In hell are mostly doomed to life accursed.  
Therefore I have all *kṣatriya* lore abhorred  
And here returned, true to my plighted word [...]. (Trans. by Francis)

Among the *gāthās* of *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (No. 543, Jāt VI 157–219) are the words of Bodhisatta that reject completely the Brahminical rules of fixed social division as well as taking of life:

Jāt VI 207–211:

Brahmins he [= god Brahmā] made for study, for command  
He made *Khattiyas*; *Vessas* plough the land;  
*Suddas* servants made to obey the rest;  
Thus from the first went forth his high behest.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *pāpaḥ kṣatriyadharmo 'yam vayan ca kṣatrabāndhavāḥ / sa naḥ svadharmo 'dharmo vā vṛttir anyā vigarhitā //*

*sūdraḥ karoti śuśrūṣām vaiśyā vipañijīvinaḥ / vayan vadhena jīvamaḥ kapālan brāhmaṇair vṛtam //*

All the translated MBh *ślokas* in this paper come from van Buitenen's translation (van Buitenen, 1978), unless stated otherwise.

As mentioned above, in stanzas 46–47 Yudhiṣṭhira shows himself as an opponent to his own previous words from the same *adhyāya*; see e.g.: MBh 5,70.37: “Constant in the Law (*dharmamityaḥ*), serene of soul, always carrying the yoke of his tasks, he does not set his mind on lawlessness (*adharme*) and does not wallow in evil”.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g., Wijesekera, 1994: 339–353; Upadhyaya, 1983: 528–532; Collins, 1998: 414–436; Harvey, 2000: 253–255.

<sup>12</sup> This first verse is here a citation from the earlier part of this *Jātaka* story (Jāt VI 201) in which a Nāga named Kāṇāriṭṭha (who in his previous life was born as a Brahmin) explains to his brother, Subhaga, that the world was made “by Brahmā, the grandfather of the Brahmins” (*brāhmaṇānam pitāmabena Brahmunā*). This vision recalls the well-known parts of the *śruti*

We see these rules enforced before our eyes,  
 None but the Brahmins offer sacrifice,  
 None but the *Khattiya* exercises sway,  
 The *Vessas* plough, the *Suddas* must obey.  
 These greedy liars propagate deceit,  
 And fools believe the fictions they repeat;  
 He who has eyes can see the sickening sight;  
 [...]  
 I count your Brahma one th'injust among,  
 Who made a world in which to shelter wrong.  
 These men are counted pure who only kill  
 Frogs, worms, bees, snakes or insects as they will, —  
 These are your savage customs which I hate, —  
 Such as *Kamboja* hordes might emulate.  
 If he who kills is counted innocent  
 And if the victim safe to heaven is sent,  
 Let Brahmins Brahmins kill — so all were well —  
 And those who listen to the words they tell. (Trans. by Cowell & Rouse)

In spite of the different context of the Bodhisatta's statement in comparison with the epic context of Yudhiṣṭhira's, one may recognise the former's words as an almost ideological background on which the latter formulates his accusations. When Yudhiṣṭhira characterises *svadharma* as *adharma*, he as if follows the Bodhisatta himself who uses the same epithet, *adhamma*, to characterise the *dhamma* propagated by the Brahmins.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Mūghapakkha Jātaka* story (No. 538, Jāt VI 1–30), which can be recognised as a great condemnation of the very idea of kingship, its protagonist,

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literature about god's creation of the world and the divine origin of classification people into *varṇas* (esp. Rv X 90,12; BṛhU I 4, 11–14). This is rejected in early Buddhist thought, criticised, and ironically ridiculed, also in other parts of the Pāli Canon (cf. Gombrich, 1992; Wijesekera, 1994: 53–69). The cited passage belongs to the passages where the Bodhisatta himself responds to the false words of Kāṇārīṭṭha, denouncing Brahminic studying of the Vedas, fire worship and throwing sacrifices into fire, doctrines and rules which are supposed to lead to heaven, the concept of creation of the world by Brahmā, fixed classification of society into *varṇas* and duties related to it, absurd killing of innocent creatures, sacrificial killing of cows, greed, cheating, abjectness, and ignorance of Brahmins who deceive people for their own profit, etc.

<sup>13</sup> In a discourse between the Buddha and a Brahmin, named Esukāri (MN II 177–184), the latter referred to the concept of the prescribed duties as propagated by the Brahmins who taught them as “the four types of treasure” (*cattāri dhanāni*, MN II 180). Brahmin's treasure is walking for alms (*bbikkhācariyam*), *kṣatriya*'s — the bow and quiver (*dhanukalāpam*), *vaiśya*'s — agriculture and cow-keeping (*kaṣigorakkham*), and *śūdra*'s — the sickle and pingo (*asitabyābhaṅgim*). The Buddha responds that he himself, in contradiction to the Brahmins, teaches that a man's wealth is the noble, supramundane *dhamma* (*ariyam kbo abam ... lokutaram dhammam purissassa sandhanam paññāpemi*, MN II 181). Not approving the fourfold duties, the Buddha prescribes the holy life according to the *dhamma* and discipline (*vinaya*), alike for all without distinction.

Temīya (one of the earlier incarnations of the future Buddha), declares kingship to be “wrongdoing”, *adhamma-cariya*, referring among all to his father’s ruling, although in the first sentence of this story the narrator’s voice assures that Temīya’s father ruled justly, or “in accordance with what is right” (*dhammena*).<sup>14</sup>

Several stanzas of the *Suttanipāta*, representative of the ideas of early Buddhism, both express the negation of the Brahminic concept of varṇa and caste system and emphasise the value of a person as rested on individual choice and action. See above all:

Sn 648–652:

648. For what has been designated name and clan in the world is indeed a (mere) name. What has been designated here and there has arisen by common assent.

649. The (false) view of the ignorant has been latent for a long time. Only the ignorant say that one becomes a brahman by birth.

650. Not by birth does one become a brahman; not by birth does one become a non-brahman. By action one becomes a brahman; by action one becomes a non-brahman.

651. By action one becomes a farmer; by action one becomes a craftsman; by action one becomes a merchant; by action one becomes a servant.

652. By action one becomes a thief too; by action one becomes a fighting-man too; by action one becomes a sacrificer; by action one becomes a king too. (Trans. by Norman)

Taken together, stanzas MBh 5,70.48–49 express Yudhiṣṭhira’s brief reflection on the cruelty of omnipresent violence and killing because of life-destroying conflicts with disastrous consequences for both sides of the conflict.

MBh 5,70.48–49:

Baron kills baron, fish lives on fish, dog kills dog — behold, *Dāsārha*, the Law as it has come down. In war there is always discord; on the battlefield the spirits take leave. Force merely extends policy; victory and defeat rest on chance.<sup>15</sup>

This appears to be a reflection similar to that expressed in several Pāli texts, as for instance in the *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta* (“The Sutra on the Extent of Great Unsatisfactoriness”) from the *Majjhima Nikāya* (I 2), MN I 86–87.

See: MN I 86:

When sense-pleasures are the cause, sense-pleasure the provenence, sense-pleasures the consequences, the very cause of sense-pleasure, kings dispute with kings, nobles dispute with nobles, brahmans dispute with brahmans, householders dispute with

<sup>14</sup> In this story, as in some others from the *Jātakas* collection, the benefits of ascetism are contrasted with those of the royal power (Collins, 1998: 423–436).

<sup>15</sup> *ksatriyaḥ ksatriyaṃ hanti matsyo matsyena jīvati /  
śvā śvānaṃ hanti dāsārha paśya dharmo yathāgataḥ //  
yuddhe kṛṣṇa kalir nityaṃ prāṇāḥ sīdanti saṃyuge /  
balam tu nītimātrāya haṭṭhe jayaparājayau //*

householders [...]. Those who enter into quarrel, contention, dispute and attack one another with their hands and with stones and with sticks and with weapons; [...] having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver, both sides mass for battle and arrows are hurled and knives are hurled and swords are flashing. These who wound with arrows and wound with knives and decapitate with their swords, these suffer dying then and pain like unto dying. (Trans. by Horner)

Stanza 49 states that strength, i.e. military force and violence, is an instrument of policy. The Pāli passage takes a wider look, stating (in a way characteristic for the Buddhist doctrine) that man's selfish desires or attachment to sense-pleasures (*kāma*) lie at base of conflicts, wars, and violence.<sup>16</sup> Both passages mention the consequences of violence as disastrous for both sides.

The anti-war rhetoric is harnessed in the aphoristic stanza MBh 5,70.50 expressing a reflection on human life and death, happiness and suffering, as not man's own choice:

Life (*jīvita*) and death (*maraṇa*) are not a creature's choice; unless his time has come, he finds neither happiness nor suffering, best of the Yādus.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of the king's military statement, this stanza is to be a consequence of the previous one and refer to war circumstances, during which life, death, happiness, or suffering do not depend on individuals. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that war and its propitious result can contribute to the improvement of individual fate. But due to this stanza's aphoristic nature, it may also reflect a universal idea being a part of many Indian ethical views tinged with determinism, propagating the concept of nonattachment to the manifested form of existence, and postulating the same attitude to different, opposite aspects of life (such as happiness and suffering). This idea finds its full expression, among others, in the repeated stanzas of the *Theragāthā* (Th):

Th 606–607 (see Th 196; 654–655; 685–686; 1002–1003):  
 I do not long for death (*maraṇam*); I do not long for life (*jīvitam*);  
 but I await my time, as a servant his wages.  
 I do not long for death; I do not long for life;  
 but I await my time (*kālaṅ*), attentive and mindful. (Trans. by Norman)<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> One might suppose that this view could represent Buddhist commentary on the “real” reasons of the dynastic conflict in the *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>17</sup> *nātmacchandena bhūtānām jīvitam maraṇam tathā /  
 nāpy akāle sukham prāpyam duḥkham vāpi yadūttama //*

<sup>18</sup> These Pāli stanzas are repeated in Sanskrit with a slight change, in MBh 12,237.15 (cf. 12,9.24) and in Manu 6.45.

In early Buddhism, the approach of impartiality (*upekkhā*), detachment to life and all its manifestations is commonly recommended (from the Buddhist point of view, attachment is also manifest in the desire to end one's life). Many passages in the Pāli Canon commonly recommend the same approach towards happiness (*sukha*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*),<sup>19</sup> which with time has become a universal approach (well exemplified, for instance, in the *Bhagavadgītā*). Of course, in the words of Yudhiṣṭhira one can only find a general reflection of this kind of concept, adapted to the context of his speech.

An important argument against warfare, expressed by Yudhiṣṭhira several times (49d, 52, 53ab, 54cd, 64), emphasises the destructive consequences of hostilities and the use of force for both parts of the conflict. There is no real victory here because each winner will eventually be defeated at some point.

MBh 5,70.52–53:

Victory goes to either and to either goes defeat. The same is true of decline. If you run away from it, there is death and ruin. War is evil in any form. What killer is not killed in return? To the killed victory and defeat are the same, Hṛṣikeśa [= Kṛṣṇa].

54cd:

[...] the victor is surely diminished.<sup>20</sup>

Once again, this kind of argumentation can direct our attention to the concepts expressed in early Buddhist texts, in several places of the Pāli Canon.

SN I 85:

The slayer gets a slayer in his turn;  
The conqueror gets one who conquers him;  
Th'abuser wins abuse, th'annoyer, fret.  
Thus by the evolution of the deed,  
A man who spoils is spoiled in his turn. (Trans. by Rhys Davids)

SN IV 309:

In the case of a fighting-man who in battle exerts himself, puts forth effort, he must previously have had this low, mean, perverse idea: "Let those beings be tortured, be bound, be destroyed, be exterminated, so that they may be thought never to have existed." Then, so exerting himself, so putting forth effort, other men torture him and make an end of him. (Trans. by Woodward)

<sup>19</sup> See e.g., DN I 183, III 51, 187–188; SN II 22–23, 39–41, IV 71, 123–124, 171–172, 188; AN II 158–159, III 440; Sn 67, 737–739; Th 93, 662–665; 986; Thī 388; Cp 120, 124.

<sup>20</sup> *jayaś caivobhayaṃ dr̥ṣṭa ubhayaś ca parājayah / tathaiṅvāpacayo dr̥ṣṭo vyapayāne kṣayavyayau // sarvathā vṛjinam yuddham ko ghanan na pratibhanyate / hatasya ca hṛṣikeśa samau jayaparājayau //* [...] *yasya syād vijayah kṛṣṇa tasyāpy āpacayo dhruvam //*

Th 143:

Those people of harsh effort, who molest men with an action involving nooses and varying in aims, are treated in the same way, for their action does not perish. (Trans. by Norman)

Jāt I 313:

The conquest that by further victories  
Must be upheld, or own defeat at last,  
Is vain! True conquest lasts for evermore! (Trans. by Chalmers)

Quite a few passages of the *Mahābhārata*, gloryfying struggles and *kṣatriyas* participating in them, presuppose that both opposite sides may be victorious or defeated, as it is an inevitable turn of events. This, however, should not stop warriors from taking part in battle (since in both cases, victory and defeat, they can only count on benefits). Yudhiṣṭhira, however, puts the accents in a different way, so to speak, he turns this argument upside down. He does not see victory or defeat in battle as an inevitable turn of events and the only alternative. He emphasises the inevitability of defeat as an argument against warfare of any kind, which brings his words much closer to the Buddhist anti-war way of reasoning.<sup>21</sup>

Another Yudhiṣṭhira's anti-war argument is related to the previous. The king emphasises that no war, regardless of whether it is won or lost, ever finds its end, does not become decisive, and only gives rise to further conflicts and wars, until total annihilation.

MBh 5,70.57–58:

There is always remorse after the killing of others, Janārdana. The aftermath is evil, for survivors do survive. The survivors regain their strength and themselves leave no survivors but aim at total annihilation to put an end to the feud.

62:

For feuds, however long ago they may have been contracted, do not die down: there will be people to pass the word until a new man is born in the family.<sup>22</sup>

The Buddhist parallel here may be the statement of the Buddha himself, who commented on the long conflict of two kings of his time, Ajātasattu, king of Māgadha, and Pasenadi, king of Kosala (*Kosala Saṃyutta* III 2, SN I 82–85). The fights were won first by one, then the other, both were in mutual hostility,

<sup>21</sup> The cited Buddhist passages are comprised in a wider moral saying about karmic payback for every deed done; see also Th 144: “Whatever action (*kammam*) a man does, good or evil, he is the heir of whatever action he does” (Trans. by Norman).

<sup>22</sup> *batvāpy anuśayo nityam parān api janārdana / anubandhaś ca pāpo 'tra śeṣaś cāpy avaśiṣyate // śeṣo hi balam āsādyā na śeṣam avaśeṣayet / sarvocchede ca yatate vāirasyāntavidhītsayā // na hi vairāṇi sām्यanti dīrghakālakṛtāny api / ākhyātāraś ca vidyante pumānś cotpadyate kule //*



and the victory of one only fueled another war. The Buddha's comment stresses this vicious cycle in which combatants turn.

SN I 85:

A man may spoil another, just so far  
 As it may serve his ends, but when he's spoiled  
 By others he, despoiled, spoils yet again.  
 So long as evil's fruit is not matured,  
 The fool doth fancy "now's the hour, the chance!"  
 But when the deed bears fruit, he fareth ill.  
 The slayer gets a slayer in his turn;  
 The conqueror gets one who conquers him;  
 Th'abuser wins abuse, th'annoyer, fret.  
 Thus by the evolution of the deed,  
 A man who spoils is spoiled in his turn. (Trans. by Rhys Davids)

Perhaps another comparison, based on juxtaposition of Yudhiṣṭhira's words from stanza 54 (ab) with the verse 194 of the *Theragāthā*, is not fully justified. Because in the epic passage we meet the literal understanding of the expressed idea, while in the Buddhist verse we meet the metaphoric one. Continuing his reflections on victory and defeat, Yudhiṣṭhira states that defeat is no different from death.

MBh 5,70.54:

I don't think that defeat is different from death; the victor too is surely diminished.<sup>23</sup>

A similar opinion is stated in Th 194:

If an elephant should trample upon me when I had fallen from the shoulder of my elephant in battle, death would be better than I should live, defeated. (Trans. by Norman)<sup>24</sup>

According to the commentary of the *Theragāthā* (Horner, 1945: 446), this verse was expressed by Soṇa, a former soldier, who at the early stage of his training as a monk, remained sluggish and not devoted to meditation exercise. The Buddha himself had to admonish him (Th 143), which made him reflect upon his shortcomings and stir up his insight. As a former soldier, Soṇa used the military simile, comparing "his own almost desperate state after he had turned monk with his imagined desperate state in battle" (Horner, 1945: 446).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *parājayaś ca maraṇān manye naiva viśiṣyate / yasya syād vijayaḥ kṛṣṇa tasyāpy apacayo dbhruvam //*

<sup>24</sup> *battikkhandhāvāpatitaṃ kuṅjaro ce anukkame / saṃgāme me mataṃ seyyo yaṅ ce jīve parājito //*

<sup>25</sup> Horner notices that these infrequent similes in the Pāli Canon, comparing monks'

However different these two situations and contexts may be, both stanzas refer to the same military reflections that defeat is no better on the battlefield than death. The first stanza comes from a warrior having doubts about his dharma, the second, from a former warrior who abandoned *svadharma* in favour of the Buddhist *dhamma*.

The next juxtaposition cannot raise any bigger doubts. As in the case of MBh 5,70.59 we meet its literal rendering in at least two places of the Pāli Canon.

MBh 5,70.59:	SN I 83 (= Dh 201):
<i>jayo vairam prasrjati</i>	<i>jayam veram pasavati</i>
<i>duḥkham āste parājitaḥ /</i>	<i>dukkham seti parājito /</i>
<i>sukham praśāntaḥ svapīti</i>	<i>upasanto sukham seti</i>
<i>hitvā jayaparājayau //</i> <sup>26</sup>	<i>hitvā jayaparājayam //</i> <sup>27</sup>

One can also find in early Buddhist texts reflections on enmity or wrath expressed quite similarly to the one of Yudhiṣṭhira from stanza 63.

MBh 5,70.63:  
Nor is feud laid to rest with another one, Keśava; it rather grows stronger, just as fire blazes up with the oblation.

*na cāpi vairam vaireṇa keśava vyupaśāmyati /*  
*haviṣāgnir yathā kṛṣṇa bhūya evābhivardhate //*

In several parts of the Pāli Canon one finds a straightforward view that enmity (*vera*) cannot be subdued by enmity, but only in the opposite way (the same applies to such states as anger, rage, or violence). The words attributed to the Buddha himself, to which the editors of the Pāli Canon refer several times, seem to be closest to those of Yudhiṣṭhira from the first part of his stanza.

MN III 154 (= Dh 5; Jāt III 212, 488):  
Nay, not by wrath are wrathful moods allayed here (and) at any time,  
but by not-wrath are they allayed: this is an (ageless) endless rule. (trans. by Horner)

*na hi verena verāni sammant'īdha kudācanaṃ /*  
*averena ca sammanti esa dhammo sanantano //*<sup>28</sup>

endeavours to the endeavours of soldiers, are used only in cases of initial stages of monks' spiritual training.

<sup>26</sup> "Victory breeds feuds, the defeated rest uneasy. But easy sleeps the man who serenely has given up both victory and defeat".

<sup>27</sup> The Pāli stanza of proverbial character is also well-known in the Sanskrit version in the Mahāyāna tradition. In the *Avadānaśataka* 10.1 it sounds identically: *jayo vairam prasavati duḥkham śete parājitaḥ / upāśantaḥ sukham śete hitvā jayaparājayam //*

<sup>28</sup> See Dh 291.

The simile used in the second part of MBh 5,70.63, comparing the mutual enmity to fire flaring up because of a poured oblation, seems also not to depart from the way and “spirit” of the early Buddhist exemplifications.<sup>29</sup> The metaphor of the burning fire lies at the basis of one of the most famous Buddha’s teachings, the so-called “Fire Sermon” (*Āditta-pariyāya Sutta*), SN IV 19–20 (XXXV 28)<sup>30</sup>. Beginning his sermon with the words “all is burning” (*sabbam ādittam*), the Buddha carries out an analysis of every sense as “burning with the fire of lust, hate, delusion” (*rāgagginā dosagginā mohagginā*), the goal being to extinguish those fires.<sup>31</sup> Quite close to our epic context seems to be a simile from the *Culla-Bodhi Jātaka* (No. 443, Jāt IV 22–27), where increasing wrath (*kodha*) was compared to a fire fed by fuel:

Jāt IV 26:

The fire will rise the higher, if the fuel be stirred and turned;  
 And because the fire uprises, the fuel itself is burned.  
 And thus in the mind of the foolish, the man who cannot discern,  
 From wrangling arises anger (*kodho*), and with it himself will burn.  
 Whose anger grows like fire with fuel and grass that blaze,  
 As the moon in the dark fortnight, so his honour (*yaso*) wanes and decays.  
 He who quiets his anger, like a fire that fuel has none,  
 As the moon in the light fortnight, his honour (*yaso*) waxes well grown. (Trans. by Rouse)

The final emphasis of Yudhiṣṭhira’s anti-war statement is his postulate of peace. In stanza 64 he refers to the previous stanzas affirming that peace cannot be reached by means of destruction of the enemy, but quite contrary.

<sup>29</sup> This kind of the fire simile as in MBh 5,70.63 with its meaning cannot be easily found in the *Mahābhārata*. For the fire similes used in the epic in general symbolise brilliance and prominence (cf. Sharma 1964: 30–32). As regards the epic heroes, the fire simile illustrates most often their courage, might and splendour, especially during the great battle. With the meaning contrary to *śloka* 5,70.63, heroes fighting in wrath (*krodha*) on the battlefield are sometimes compared to the blazing fire, sometimes to the fire devouring or fed by an oblation (see e.g.: 6,45.43; 50.63; 80.8; 90.6; 99.8; 7,16.13; 20.24; 71.23; 83.34; 93.35; 112.42; 120.38; 8,24.86; 65.40; 9,16.35,48; 20.33–35; 64.31). Sometimes powerful heroes desolating or dispersing the opponent’s troops are presented as consuming or burning them like a fire consuming a heap of cotton or dry grass, trees, or a forest (see 6,7.9; 45.56; 46.4; 50.107; 55.106; 71.31; 82.20,38; 91.7; 96.9; 98.7; 102.9; 105.33; 112.66,88,122; 7,13.1–2; 59.17; 61.46; 87.50; 120.36; 131.55,109; 171.3; 172.23,27; 8,39.27; 40.3; 9,11.2; 13.12,18–19; 23.60–62). In countless places, heroes’ weapons (arrows, lances, bows, swords, maces, or chariots) hurled or used against an enemy resemble blazing fire. Thus, the fire simile Yudhiṣṭhira refers to in MBh 5,70.63 is in disagreement with the typical epic fire similes.

<sup>30</sup> See Vin I 34–35.

<sup>31</sup> See also AN IV 43–44; DN III 217; It 93 (3.5.4; cf. also AN IV 41; Dhṛp 146). The number of the three fires is in all probability not accidental in the Buddha’s teaching, it makes a metaphorical allusion to the three sacrificial fires of the Vedic ritual (cf. Gombrich, 1990: 16–21; Gombrich, 1996: 65–66).

MBh 5,70.64:

*ato 'nyathā nāsti śāntir nityam antaram antataḥ /  
antaram lipsamānānām ayaṁ doṣo nirantarāḥ //*

(There is no way to appease a feud, in the end one always remains vulnerable: that is the inescapable flaw of those who seek their advantage. [Trans. by van Buitenen])

It seems that the interpretation of this stanza may be a challenge.<sup>32</sup> It also seems that Yudhiṣṭhira's words could be placed in a slightly broader context and confronted with the words of Kṛṣṇa appearing a little later, MBh 5,88.94–96. During his mission to the Kauravas (5,88), Kṛṣṇa also talks to Kuntī who is grieved over her thirteen-year separation from her sons. Expressing her regret, the mother gives advice to each of the Pāṇḍavas<sup>33</sup> and advocates for a military solution to the conflict. Kṛṣṇa assures her that the Pāṇḍavas bravely endure all adversities, seeking the pleasures worthy of heroes (*vīrasukhapriyāḥ*), not the pleasures of villagers (*grāmasukhāḥ*, 94). Kṛṣṇa then says:

MBh 5,88.95–96:

The steadfast seek the extreme (*antam*), while those that want the pleasures of villagers seek the mediocre (*madhyam*). The steadfast rejoice in the greatest human hardship and joys beyond the average; they delight in the extremes (*anteṣu*), not in the middle. They say that attaining the extreme is happiness, and that which lies between the extremes (*antaram antayoḥ*) is suffering.<sup>34</sup>

One might wonder if at the roots of this kind of statement there is, among other things, a polemical allusion to an attitude such as the Buddhist Middle Path. The Buddha begins his famous sermon, known as the *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta* (SN V 420–424; traditionally acknowledged as his first sermon) with the postulate of avoiding two extremes (*dve ante*, i.e. dedication to the indulgence of sense pleasures and to self-mortification), which leads to realisation of the Middle Path. What Yudhiṣṭhira postulates in MBh 5,70.64

<sup>32</sup> See other translations of this stanza:

Roy: “Therefore, there can be no peace without the annihilation of one party, for flaws may always be detected of which advantage may be taken by one side or other. They that are engaged in watching for flaws have this vice”.

Dutt: “There is no exception to this; and peace is ever only obtainable by total annihilation. Defects may always be found on either side, by which advantage is sought to be obtained”.

<sup>33</sup> Addressing Yudhiṣṭhira via Kṛṣṇa, Kuntī among others reproaches him for what he said in 5,70; cf. 5,88.72cd: “Your Law is dwindling fast, don't be a hypocrite, little son!” (*bhuuyāṁ te bhīyate dharmo mā putraka vṛttā kṛtāḥ //*).

<sup>34</sup> *antaṁ dbīrā niṣevante madhyaṁ grāmyasukhapriyāḥ / uttamāṁś ca parikleśān bhogaṁś cātīva mānuṣān //*

*anteṣu remire dbīrā na te madhyeṣu remire / antaprāptiṁ sukham ābur duḥkham antaram antayoḥ //*

can be taken as the opposite of Kṛṣṇa's words in 5,88.95–96. Considering the contrasting context of both Kṛṣṇa's and the Buddha's words, we can interpret Yudhiṣṭhira's words from our passage as follows: There is no path to peace other than that by relieving hostility (see 5,70.63); peace is always between extremes, i.e. away from extremes [in conflict resolution] (64b: *antaram antataḥ*; cf. 88.96d: *antaram antayoḥ*, "that which lies between the extremes"); for those who wish to achieve what is in between [= away from extremes], this [= extreme military solution] is the inescapable flaw.<sup>35</sup> Such a reading of this *śloka*, in the entire context of Yudhiṣṭhira's words, might suggest an echo of the (Buddhist-like) postulate of the middle path (i.e. avoiding extremes), in its ethical, anti-war aspect.

In the next stanza, Yudhiṣṭhira goes further and advocates the renunciation of the very idea of heroism that is characterised as a disease that torments the heart, while proposing serenity of mind, i.e. removing it from the military issues as a necessary condition for peace.

MBh 5,70.65:

For heroism is a powerful disease that eats up the heart, and peace is found only by giving it up or by serenity of mind.<sup>36</sup>

The two concluding stanzas of the passage discussed here (65–66; for 66 see below) create a recapitulation of the anti-war statement of Yudhiṣṭhira: whoever wishes to gain peace through military action and the subjugation of his enemy by force will not gain peace, will only plunge into the vicious circle of long mutual hostility and violence. The only way to peace is the one that avoids extremes and begins with your own mind.

The view expressed in stanza 65 finds parallel ideas in several Pāli passages. See e.g.:

SN I 222:

Whoso doth think the strength of fools is strength, / Will say of the strong man:  
A weakling he!

For the strong man whom righteous guard, / To bandy words comes not into his thought.  
Worse of the two is he who, when reviled, / Reviles again. Who doth not, when reviled,  
Revile again, a twofold victory wins. / Both of the other and himself he seeks

The good; for he the other's angry mood / Doth understand and groweth calm and still.  
(Trans. by Rhys Davids)<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> If we agree that *antaram* means "what is between" or "what is in the middle", then in the expression "*ayam doṣo nirantarāḥ* (64d)" we may also find the meaning: "this is the flaw of being away from what is between/distant from the extreme(s)".

<sup>36</sup> *pauruṣeyo hi balavān ādbhir brdayabādhanaḥ / tasya tyāgena vā śāntir nivṛtṭyā manaso 'pi vā //*

<sup>37</sup> These are the words of Sakka (Skr. Śakra = Indra), the ruler of gods, who (in a parable said by the Buddha), after defeating the ruler of Asuras, during his discussion with his

Dhp 103:

If one man conquer in battle a thousand times thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors. (Trans. by Müller /SBE/)

Jāt V 142–143:

No royal force, however vast its might,  
Can win so great advantage in a fight  
As the good man by patience may secure:  
Strong patience is of fiercest feuds the cure.

Jāt. VI 214:

If the victorious king would cease to fight  
And live in peace with his friends and follow right,  
Conquering those passions which his bosom rend,  
What happy lives would all his subjects spend. (Trans. by Cowel & Rouse)

Th 875–876:

Let my enemies hear the doctrine from time to time from those who speak about forbearance and praise peaceableness, and let them act in conformity with it. For truly he would not harm me or anyone else; he would attain to the highest peace; he would protect creatures moving and unmoving. (Trans. by Norman)

In stanzas preceding and following MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66, Yudhiṣṭhira presents the concept of peace mainly in its external aspect, as a part and result of state policy (see stanzas 8, 42, 68, 90), or as a consequence of heroic attitude on the battlefield. Here, however, the idea of peace is put forth as a result of renunciation, restraining everything that may be related to struggle and violence. Individual, inner peace of mind leads to peace in its social and political dimensions.

The words of O.H. De A. Wijesekera from his paper on *The concept of peace and the central notion of Buddhist social philosophy*, can be treated almost as a commentary to the words of Yudhiṣṭhira from stanzas 64–66 and the idea of peace expressed there:

From the point of view of the Buddha's teaching it is clear that the peace of the community depends on the peace-mindedness or goodwill of the individual members of the community and the same holds good even if we enlarge the community to include the whole world. For Buddhism regards peace as a subjective quality having an individual centre and manifestation. It is because of this fact that the Buddha emphasised the subjective aspect of his social ethic more than the mere external social behaviour.

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charioteer, Mātali, persuades him that the true power and the measure of righteousness lies in patience and forbearance towards other's anger. The true victory and happiness are based on lack of anger, steadiness, and gentleness. The polemical meaning of this sutta (the *Vepacitti Sutta*, SN I 221–222) is more conspicuous when one realises that it is Indra himself there who advocates patience and forbearance (see Szczurek, 2020: 425–429).

A socio-moral act, according to Buddhism, gains the greater part of its practical validity from the purity of its source which is no other than the psychology of the individual responsible for its conception and execution.

[...]

In the ultimate analysis, therefore, peace is a psychological condition or attitude, a function of individual thought and feeling. Thus peace, in the general social sense, is only the end-result of the cultivation of peace-mindedness by the individual who is the ultimate unit of the social community (Wijesekera, 1994: 94–95).

In other stanzas of Yudhiṣṭhira's anti-war statement one can also find a reflection of notions close to early Buddhist ones, even if they do not parallel specific Pāli passages. For example stanza 56, where the king regrets the injustice of war because during it the heroes who are modest (*brīmantāḥ*), noble (*āryāḥ*), and compassionate (*karuṇavedinaḥ*) are killed while the villain escapes death.<sup>38</sup> The definition of heroes as *karuṇavedinaḥ* may be puzzling here. According to the epic "norms", such qualities as courage on the battlefield, military skills, or commitment to combat make up a warrior's good name, not virtues such as modesty or compassion. The reference to compassion (*karuṇā*) and univocally positive connotation of this cardinal Buddhist virtue allow us to see a parallel with Buddhist ethics.<sup>39</sup> One can also speculate that the term *āryāḥ* defining the compassionate warriors, in this place and context does not point to a tradition arising from the Vedic period and to the epic continuation of the idea of Indo-Aryan warriors, but rather brings us much closer to the tradition of taking over, adapting, and reinterpreting this term, as it happened in early Buddhism. This procedure was already reflected in the first Buddha's sermon on the Four Noble Truths (Pāl. *cattāri ariyasaccāni*, or "the four truths of the noble ones"), together with the Noble Eightfold Path (Pāl. *ariya atṭhaṅgika magga*) being its crucial part, as the essence of the Buddhist Middle Path. Of course, one can only talk here about allusions based on associations, which, however, may have their justification in the broader context of our epic passage.<sup>40</sup>

Amidst considerations on the coming war, its causes and effects, roughly in the middle of chapter 5,70 of the *Mahābhārata*, Yudhiṣṭhira comes to the point where he *expressis verbis* opposes what is generally accepted in the epic and even glorified as the moral ideas of the *kṣatriyas*. The content and character of the speech show in MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66 a considerable resemblance to the ideas in Buddhist anti-war ethics.<sup>41</sup> It cannot be denied that Yudhiṣṭhira's

<sup>38</sup> MBh 5,70.56: *ye hy eva vīrā brīmantā āryāḥ karuṇavedinaḥ / ta eva yuddhe banyante yavīyān mucyate janāḥ //*

<sup>39</sup> On *karuṇā* see e.g.: Weiler, 1962; Wijesekera, 1994: 97; Harvey, 2000: 104, 124–125.

<sup>40</sup> On four categories of the noble (*ariyā*) persons in early Buddhist thought, see Harvey, 2000: 39–40.

<sup>41</sup> One cannot exclude the possibility that some of the Yudhiṣṭhira's stanzas belong to the so-called floating verses as they express thoughts so universal that they can find their place in



words refer to universal ethical values, based on the ideas of *ahimsā*. However, in ancient India this idea had its origin among the currents of ascetic renunciates. And before it was adapted by the Brahminic currents of thought, it was clearly formulated by the Jain and Buddhist communities, the latter much better represented in the oldest surviving texts. Yudhiṣṭhira's anti-war statement is at least an alternative (if not the opposite) to the concept of the warrior's ethos propagated in the epic. In over twenty *ślokas* there seems to be nothing that the Buddha himself and his followers might debate; however, there is much conflict with the *kṣatriyas* around Yudhiṣṭhira. Thus the Brahminic editors of the epic argue.

#### 4. EPIC/BRAHMINIC RESPONSE TO YUDHIṢṬHIRA'S ANTI-WAR STATEMENT

The last two stanzas of Yudhiṣṭhira's anti-war statement (65–66) seem to indicate something else as well. Whatever sources of inspiration lie at its bottom (including the Buddhist source as crucial), the whole thing has been adapted to the Brahminic way of argumentation. In these two stanzas we find a reference to two Brahminic and *Mahābhārata* labeled concepts: *nivṛtti* and, through a verbal allusion, *ānṛśamsya* “absence of cruelty, kindness, benevolence”.

MBh 5.70.65–66:

For heroism is a powerful disease that eats up the heart, and peace is found only by giving it up or by serenity of mind (*nivṛtṭyā*). On the other hand, if final tranquility were ignited by the total eradication of the enemy, that would be even crueller (*nṛśamsataram*), Madhusūdana.<sup>42</sup>

Summing up his remarks on *ānṛśamsya* in the *Mahābhārata*, Mukund Lath states:

*Abimsā* [...] is an ideal which is central to what is called *nivṛttimārga*, the *mārga* of *saṁnyāsa*. But the *Mahābhārata* is, if anything, a great text of the *pravṛttimārga*. It argues for the *pravṛttimārga*, though it is also very much attracted by *nivṛttimārga* and

literary works of various trends of Indian thought. From among the above-mentioned stanzas, MBh 5,70.59 sounds almost identical to those in the Pāli canon, and its universal meaning might presume its independent origin. It is worth remembering, however, that the Pāli version of this stanza was used as one of the illustrations of the mainstream of the Buddhist moral ethics, whereas in the *Mahābhārata* it is used in the passage which, on the one hand, does enrich the character of Yudhiṣṭhira, but also, on the other hand, it is discordant with the *kṣatriya* ethos of the great epic.

<sup>42</sup> MBh 5,70.65 — see above, fn. 36.

66: *atha vā mūlagbhātena dviṣatām madhusūdana / phalanivṛttir idbhā syāt tan nṛśamsataram bhavet //*

*abimsā*. But total *abimsā* cannot be practiced, because the human condition is such that some *himsā* has to be there for the practice of both the *gr̥bhas̥tbadharma* and the *rājadharmā*. Therefore, what the *Mahābhārata* preaches is not *abimsā* but *ānṛśamsya*. This latter is one of the most outstanding moral concepts in the epic. *Ānṛśamsya* is *abimsā* adapted to the *pravṛttimārga* (Lath, 1990: 118–119).<sup>43</sup>

Alf Hiltebeitel (Hiltebeitel, 2001: 202–214), referring to Lath’s analysis and generally approving of its accuracy, makes some additional comments. Based on analysis of many places in the great epic, he suggests that the emphasis should be shifted somewhat to a proper understanding of the general attitude of the *Mahābhārata* redactors towards the concept of *abimsā*, on the one hand, and *ānṛśamsya*, on the other. *Abimsā*, as part of the absolute *nivṛtti* approach, can be related to *nivṛtti* currents competing with the epic values, such as Jainism and Buddhism. And the Brahminic redactors of the *Mahābhārata* generally show its relative value in some narrative contexts and do not hesitate at times to criticise it as an absolute value. The value of *ānṛśamsya*, illustrated in various stories, is highlighted as an element that accepts and supports dharma from the position of the so-called Brahminic orthodoxy.<sup>44</sup>

The first reaction to the absolute peaceful attitude of Yudhiṣṭhira comes from Yudhiṣṭhira himself and is placed in the following part of chapter 5,70, as the king’s self-reflection. Stanza 67 looks like the antithesis to 65, because Yudhiṣṭhira recognises there his own postulate of peace by renouncing the martial approach (65: *tyāga, nivṛtti manasaḥ*) as a destructive, impossible solution. In the next stanza, 68, he considers the possibility of gaining peace in a diplomatic way, by surrender (*praṇipāta*) to the will of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It could be a more valuable way than complete renunciation (68 is the opposite of the solution expressed in 64–65) and the war that causes destruction of the family line (68b is the opposite of 66, but also of Yudhiṣṭhira’s earlier reflections, like 44–45, see also 29–33). But in the end, he finds even such a solution unrealistic in the face of the hostile attitude of his main rival, Duryodhana, and the paternal attachment of Dhṛtarāṣṭra (74–75). In 69 Yudhiṣṭhira admits that when peaceful means fail, war can be the only solution, even for those who do not want it.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Lath (Lath, 1990: 113) draws attention to the fact that *ānṛśamsya* is a new word in the epic; both the concept and the term of *ānṛśamsya* were created together with the creation of the *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Hiltebeitel, 2001: 211: “If the epic’s Brahmin poets regard any dharma as supreme from their highest point of view, it would be their slippery concept of ‘truth’, in which *ānṛśamsya* [...] and *abimsā* [...] are both rooted, and which they relativize — one might even say narrativize or fictionalize — at every turn. *Ānṛśamsya* is a ‘highest dharma’ as a teaching for the king and must be looked at in its narrative contexts”.

<sup>45</sup> 5,70.69: “Those who strive at all (*sarvathā*) do not want war; only if their peaceful overtures are rebuffed is war inevitable”. *Sarvathā* that begins this stanza looks like a polemical allusion to 53a: *sarvathā vṛjinam yuddham* (“war is disastrous in every way”).

The main and more explicit answer to Yudhiṣṭhira's pacifism comes from Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī. Kṛṣṇa in the next chapter (5,71.1–24) recognises unequivocally the idea of resolving the conflict without use of force as impossible under the existing circumstances. Among other things, he appeals to Yudhiṣṭhira not to follow the path of mendicant renouncer (*naiṣṭhika*, 3). Refraining from using force in such a situation, showing kindness, is merely a sign of cowardice, unworthy of *kṣatriya*. Duryodhana as a villain should be killed (4–10). Reminding Yudhiṣṭhira of the wickedness committed by his enemies and of the humiliation suffered by the Pāṇḍavas from the side of the Kauravas, Kṛṣṇa convinces him that he should not be kind or compassionate in claiming his rights, and he should not show any scruples in his endeavours (11–23).<sup>46</sup>

In a slightly later part, MBh 5,130, Kuntī more sharply and directly attacks his son's attitude determined by the principles of compassion and non-violence.<sup>47</sup> Her speech is based on the view that the traditionally established order of society is the right and only acceptable one, while Yudhiṣṭhira, when approaching this criticism and denying his dharma, is acting inappropriately. Kuntī refers to the mythological genesis of *kṣatriyas* as born from the breast of the Self-existing Creator (*svayambhū*), which should motivate the *kṣatriya* to use his strength, to be merciless when defending the kingdom and its subjects. The king is the architect of his time and circumstances, and by the strict exercise of power he becomes the creator of *kṛtayuga*, the best era of mankind. Contradicting what her son said, Kuntī strongly defends the four-*varṇa* division of society, which assigns everyone their duties. Highlighting the *kṣatriyadharmā*, she reminds Yudhiṣṭhira that he, born as a *kṣatriya*, cannot give up the duties of his class, even if he considers them wrong.<sup>48</sup> Since he

<sup>46</sup> In the second part of this *adhyāya* (5,71.25–34) Kṛṣṇa sketches out the strategy of his ambassadorial trip to the Kauravas, in so much demonstrating his intention to use the opportunity that some of Duryodhana's allies have doubts as to which part of the conflict they should support. He wants to convince them to support the Pāṇḍavas (cf. van Buitenen, 1978: 134–138). Concluding, Kṛṣṇa declares oneself as an advocate of solving this conflict by means of war and describes portents pointing at war.

<sup>47</sup> Kuntī finds the opportunity to express her fierce reprimand when speaking to Kṛṣṇa as a mediator during his peaceful mission to the Kauravas (she has been separated from her sons for 13 years, living in the court of the Kauravas).

<sup>48</sup> In 5,130.12–13, 19, 25–29, Kuntī directly reacts to Yudhiṣṭhira's blaming *kṣatriyadharmā*, from 5,70.46–48, almost trying to crush his arguments. In 12 and 13 she reverses terminology used by Yudhiṣṭhira, by calling *dharmā* what he called *adharmā* and vice versa.

See e.g., on the one hand, Yudhiṣṭhira's statement (MBh 5,70.46–47):

"It is the evil Law of the barons (*pāpāḥ kṣbhatriyadharmo'yaṁ*), and we have been born in the baronage. It is our Law, be it Lawless (*adharmā*); any other way of life is forbidden to us. The śūdra obeys, the *vaiśya* lives by trade, we live of killing, the Brahmin prefers his begging bowl".

And, on the other hand, Kuntī's reply (MBh 5,130.25, 28–29):

"Whether it be Law or not (*etad dharmam adharmam vā*), you are born to it by the very fact of birth. You are knowledgeable and high-born, but a victim of your failure in living,

is the king, he should not follow the principles of kindness and compassion, but he should refer to unscrupulous power and political methods to regain the lost part of the kingdom. Therefore, he should be infected neither by cowardice (21) nor by the behaviour of begging ascetics (29, *bhāikṣa*). Finally, Kunti appeals to Yudhiṣṭhira to fight in accordance with his royal dharma (32, *rājadharmena*).

In addition to these direct references, a polemic with Yudhiṣṭhira's approach from MBh 5,70.(44–45)46–66 can be found in several other passages of the epic, where it is expressed less directly by various heroes. Time and time again, emphasis is put on the fulfillment of people's dharmic duties, the teachings of *rājadharmā* and *kṣatriyadharmā* are repeated to kings and warriors, praise of the heroic attitude of warriors and justifications of righteous war are multiplied, etc. This propaganda of the *kṣatriya*'s ethos, which also aims at protecting the high status of Brahmins (whose prosperity, including material prosperity, was dependent on the favour of rulers, their patrons), culminates in the *Rājadharmaparvan*, the subparvan of the 12th MBh parvan, called *Śāntiparvan*, *The book of peace* (MBh 12,1–128), which, among other things, appears as a paean to the dharma of *kṣatriyas* and kings. At the beginning of this long and multilayered book (MBh 12,7; 12,9), Yudhiṣṭhira provides further opportunities to remind him of his status, responsibilities, and once again admonish him to act like a king and *kṣatriya*. In this time after the end of the great battle, pondering over its tragic consequences and destruction of his relatives (grieving especially over the death of Karṇa, his older brother), the king shows his desperation, doubts, and dilemmas, even wanting to abandon his royal status and become a begging monk. One could concisely, though emphatically, sum up the current of polemical disputes with Yudhiṣṭhira with the words of Vyāsa. The legendary author of the *Mahābhārata*, summerising a parable that also includes an element of Dharmarāja's royal education, gives his concluding remark:

MBh 12,24.30cd:

the duty of *kṣhatriya*, o lord of kings, is to take the rod [= the symbol of strength and authority — P.Sz.] and not to shave the head.<sup>49</sup>

It is interesting to note that a similar way of arguing and expressing the propagated ideology can be seen in many other epic episodes concerning similar dilemmas. One could even speak of a certain pattern around which individual

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son. [...] A Brahmin should live on alms, a baron (*kṣatriya*) should protect, the commoner (*vaiśya*) should acquire wealth, the serf (*śūdra*) should serve them all. Begging is forbidden you, farming is unseemly — you are a baron, the saviour from wounds, living by the strength of your arms!"

<sup>49</sup> *daṇḍa eva hi rājendra kṣatradharmo na muṇḍanam //*

episodes are built.<sup>50</sup> As if all the defenders of the *kṣatriyadharma* similarly repeat: What seems to you to be mercy and compassion, I myself call weakness of mind, poorness of spirit, faintheartedness, unmasculinity. The critique of the compassionate attitude of a hero becomes at the same time the critique of this value that plays an extremely important role in the Buddhist moral ethics. The attitude of *karuṇā* (its synonyms being in Skr. and Pāli *anukampā* or *dayā*, or also Skr. *krpā*, *anukrośa*, *ghṛṇitva*, translated as “compassion, sympathy, kindness, pity, mercy”) makes one of the basic virtues in the Theravādā Buddhism while the Mahāyāna gives it pre-eminent place. When noticed in the epic heroes, however, it becomes the great fault and as such is blamed, trivialised, ridiculed.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is not excluded that in MBh 5,70 some traces of a broader polemical dispute can be discerned. Such disputes must have taken place for at least several centuries since the fourth century B.C. (the most-often dated period for the origin of the *Mahābhārata*), when society was significantly influenced by heterodox religious and ethical currents that threatened, also materially, the values of Brahminism which competed with them for the patronage of ruling class (Bailey, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2021). Among the heterodox currents, Buddhism must be regarded as having primary influence and importance. Moreover, the *Mahābhārata* text itself does not reject the so-called internal contestation that promotes the “theology of renunciation”. An important part of the debates held in the epic were, as mentioned above, two competing ideologies, *pravṛtti* (involvement in the social problems of this world) and *nivṛtti* (detachment from social problems of the world, renunciation of the world). The first of them is highlighted both in the parts of the epic narrative and in the didactic parts (Klaes, 1975: 108–130; Bailey, 2005). Most probably, the relatively big social support for the second ideology meant that there are in the great epic numerous parts indicating traces of interest with this path. Yudhiṣṭhira himself is the best example of a ruler whose duty is to follow the path of

<sup>50</sup> This paper does not discuss other episodes to show this repetitive argumentation. Let us mention only a few of the most characteristic: MBh 2,14–15 (before Yudhiṣṭhira’s *rājasūya*, Yudhiṣṭhira’s dilemmas and Kṛṣṇa’s answer); MBh 3,30–34 (Yudhiṣṭhira’s peaceful attitude in forest exile and his postulates of patience and forbearance meeting the polemical discussion of Draupadī and Bhīma; see Szczurek, 2020); MBh 5,72–73 (Bhīma’s reference to compassion and Kṛṣṇa’s answer and reproach); MBh 6,23–24.38 (= BhG 2.1–2.38; Arjuna’s moral dilemmas before the great war and Kṛṣṇa’s reply in BhG 2.1–38); MBh 7,167–168 (Arjuna’s words of compassion after the insidious death of Droṇa and Bhīma’s polemical reaction to them); MBh 12,76 (Yudhiṣṭhira’s moral dilemmas after the war with his postulates of renunciation and Bhīma’s appeal to his warrior’s and royal dharma).

*pravṛtti*, who, however, is also infected with the path of *nivṛtti*. Thus, the epic ruler Dharmarāja, from time to time, comes close to the ideas represented by Dhammarāja, the utopian ruler idealised in early Buddhist texts (Szczurek, 2020: esp. 434–435).

Looking for the reasons for including in MBh 5,70 a passage representing the ideals of *nivṛtti*, which do not deviate from those represented by the early Buddhism, we come to a supposition similar to that expressed in the first paper of this mini-series, where the attitude of Yudhiṣṭhira from MBh 3,30 was analysed (essentially no different from the one represented in 5,70.44–66) (Szczurek, 2020: 439). Perhaps also in this part one can see traces of assimilation of the heterodox ideas spreading in India, most probably for some time already when the great epic was being composed. One cannot exclude a kind of admiration of some Brahminic authors for the attitude represented by Yudhiṣṭhira, which was inspired by the concepts of the king and royal power, also utopian concepts, so often referred to in the Pāli Canon, based on the ideal of *ahimsā* as preached in Buddhism and Jainism. One must consider especially the material support which since the times of Aśoka, not only Brahmins, but also Buddhist or Jain communities could count on, which is confirmed by some of the Aśokan Edicts (Sutton, 1997: 340).<sup>51</sup>

Let us add one more concluding supposition. The words put into the mouth of Yudhiṣṭhira that deviate from the norm of an epic king and warrior, or even condemn it, could also be considered a kind of ethical provocation necessary

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<sup>51</sup> Some of the *Mahābhārata* researchers (see e.g. Bailey, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2021) point out that Brahminic reactions to the success of early Buddhism, including material successes, lie at the heart of religious polemics in the epic. Sutton in his paper (Sutton, 1997) came up with the hypothesis that the character of Yudhiṣṭhira — portrayed in the epic as the king advocating non-violence and thus deviating from the traditional dharma-*śāstric* view of warrior ethos and the idea of kingship — was modelled on the emperor Aśoka as a ruler who underwent a conversion from a ruthless king conquering new lands into a man of virtue and religion, with enormous inclination towards the Buddhist dharma. In the margins of these considerations, let us quote Aśoka's Twelfth Rock Edict: "King Priyadarśi honors men of all faiths, members of religious orders and laymen alike, with gifts and various marks of esteem. Yet he does not value either gifts or honors as much as growth in the qualities essential to religion in men of all faiths. This growth may take many forms, but its root is in guarding one's speech to avoid extolling one's own faith and disparaging the faith of others improperly or, when the occasion is appropriate, immoderately. The faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. By acting otherwise, one injures one's own faith and does disservice to that of others. For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith. Therefore, concord alone is commendable, for through concord men may learn and respect the conception of Dharma accepted by others. King Priyadarśi desires men of all faiths to know each other's doctrines and to acquire sound doctrines" (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 51–52).



to conduct a polemical dispute. The character of Yudhiṣṭhira was well suited to this purpose. A sensitive and compassionate king expresses his condemnation of injustices, iniquities, and atrocities resulting from the realisation of his dharma. The deepening and enrichment of Yudhiṣṭhira's character in this way also becomes a starting point to introduce and highlight all arguments in favour of *rājadharmā* and *ṣatriyadharmā*, in defence of *pravṛtti* ideology. In the great epic medium subject to the multi-stage process of growth, multi-layered, and ultimately subject to Brahminic edits, one also notices, apart from the main epic story, evolving religious and philosophical views, concepts and ideas at various stages of formulation, traces of adaptation of different trends and currents to the mainstream of Brahminic thought. No wonder that ethical disputes on the dharma of the warrior and the king also appeared against this background.

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<sup>52</sup> The references, citations and translations of the Pāli Canon texts follow the Pāli Text Society editions (unless stated otherwise).



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Abbreviations

AN	<i>Āṅguttaranikāya</i>
BhG	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>
BṛhU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad</i>
Cp	<i>Cariyāpīṭaka</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapāda</i>
DN	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
Jāt	<i>Jātaka</i>
MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MN	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
Pāl.	Pāli
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
Ṛv	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
Skr.	Sanskrit
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
SN	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Vin	<i>Vināyapīṭaka</i>

