CHAPTER FIVE

STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATION

While the previous chapters described the conceptual background to the ideas found in the diverse texts of the ĀDhP, this chapter is concerned with the actual method of the combination of these texts, that is to say, with their mode of presentation. As such, it is a prequel to the commentaries on the ĀDhP that follow in subsequent chapters. If the ĀDhP is indeed a collection of texts, as I think it must be viewed, then how has it been put together? What strategies of integration did the ĀDhP’s authorial/redactorial agents employ in fashioning the collection into a whole that exhibits, in some sense of the word, coherence? These questions shall be approached from two angles. First, by investigating the ways in which the ĀDhP is integrated into its broader narrative contexts, i.e., of the ŚP and the Mbh. And second, by identifying the means by which the ĀDhP’s diverse texts are integrated into the ĀDhP itself. Much of this chapter will be concerned with particular aspects of the framing and interlocutory system of the ĀDhP, since it is primarily this system that fashions the ĀDhP’s texts into a whole. Firstly, however, I will make mention of some other narrative strategies through which the ĀDhP’s texts, and hence the ĀDhP itself, are integrated into the ĀDhP’s encompassing narrative frameworks.

5.1 Integrative agents and transitional texts

The first of these narrative strategies takes the form of allusions or references to characters of the Mbh, or events that have occurred elsewhere in the Mbh. Such intertextual ‘epic allusions’, which demonstratively evoke the characters and deeds of the Mbh, are found throughout śāstric literature (indeed in most Sanskrit literatures), yet they acquire particular resonance when referred to in the course of the ‘text’ (broadly conceived) to which they belong. The ĀDhP’s physical and thematic framing by the Mbh thereby takes on added significance, since it is a framing explicitly foregrounded by certain texts of the ĀDhP itself, demanding that they be read against its background. Even the particular characters who take part in the dialogues which
make up the ĀdhP function to integrate these texts into their broader narrative context. The most important and self-evident examples of this are Bhiṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira, the key participants in the ĀdhP’s primary interlocutory frame. What is perhaps more intriguing, however, is that some texts of the ĀdhP also refer to or feature other central Mbh characters. Two minor examples refer to epic characters as exemplars (or anti-exemplars) for a particular virtue being given focus. In the first, Arjuna’s defeat of the eleven Kaurava aksauhinī armies is offered as an example of someone who ‘relied upon his might in battle’ (balam āsthāya ... mṛdhe), since the eighteen armies of the war were not the equal of him in might (151.32-3). The second evokes the epic’s anti-heroes, the Dhṛtarāṣtras (‘sons of Dhrtaśtra’), as exemplars of the vices described in SU 23, vices that Yudhiṣṭhira is being warned off (157.18).1

More substantial cases occur in two of the closing texts of the ĀdhP (SUs 26 and 27),2 in each of which epic characters other than Bhiṣma or Yudhiṣṭhira play substantial roles. Nakula assumes Yudhiṣṭhira’s position as Bhiṣma’s co-interlocutor in SU 26 (ĀdhP 160), and all the Pāṇḍava heroes, along with Vidura (one of Yudhiṣṭhira’s advisors3), engage in a six part dialogue called the ṣaḍgītā in SU 27 (ĀdhP 161). Detailed analyses of these texts are presented below. The feature to be noted for the time being is that, along with the two briefer instances already noted, these are not merely casual occurrences, but are governed by a logic of character in which the specific traits and deeds of each hero resonate beyond their citation. As such, they are agents of integration, their narrative significance lying in their capacity to draw the audience out of the immediate confines of their citation or narrative circumstance into the broader frameworks of the ŚP and the Mbh.

A second narrative feature that belies the supposedly amorphous character of texts like the ĀdhP is the presence of transitional texts, which effect the movement from one sub-parvan to the next. I am thinking here especially of RDhp 128 (SU 1), and ĀdhP 152-167 (SUs 18-27). Belvalkar’s brief and dismissive discussion of the latter set of texts is typical of the disregard for such attributes: “The rest of the Āpaddharma contains some abstract discussions on merit and de-

1 See also below, p.354.
2 Below, pp.372ff. and 382ff. respectively.
3 Especially in political affairs, see below p.166 n.41.