I. Introduction

Among the several Sanskrit words which mean “death,” such as maraṇa, nīthana, parāsū, pṛāpta-pancatva, mṛtyu seems to occupy a unique position.

Being derived from the same verbal root ṁṛ- (to die), it shares the same semantic field with such words as maraṇa and māra, the latter being personified in the Pali Buddhist literature as Māra (-pāpiṃa). As a result, it is used synonymously with another abstract noun maraṇa, being freely replaced with each other, as is the case with maraṇa-bhaya and mṛtyu-bhaya, maraṇa-kāla and mṛtyu-kāla, etc. Yet, unlike maraṇa which is compounded with other abstract nouns such as duḥkha (maraṇa-duḥkha), dharma (maraṇa-dhamma) (Aṅguttara Nikāya.3.392), and jāti (jāti-maraṇassā pāraga [Suttanipāta 32]), mṛtyu is personified as is the case with Yama, the god of death, as is illustrated in the well-known story of Nāciketas, which is proclaimed by mṛtyu (nāciketam upākhyānam mṛtyu-proktam sanātanam in KU 1.3.16) and Sāvitrī-upākhyāna in MBh.3.281. As a matter of fact, in that Upaniṣad, Yama and Mṛtyu are used synonymously. When his father Vājaśravasa in anger gave Nāciketas to Yama, this god of death is also called by the name of Mṛtyu (mṛtyave tvādādāmi: 1.4d). The boy also addresses Yama by the name of Mṛtyu (mṛtyo!).

II. Personification (1) (mṛtyu’s emotion)

However, unlike Yama, who is merely the object of awe and fear, Mṛtyu is more anthropomorphically illustrated, having intelligence (buddhi) and emotions of various sorts like an ordinary human being.
(II-1) Emotion

Mṛtyu is furnished with emotion, negative as well as positive.

(II-1-1) Anger (*kruddha*)

When Abhimanyu was killed in the battle-field, Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked Saṃjaya what his father Arjuna looked like in rage.

*putra-ṣokābhisamāṃtaptam kruddhaṃ mṛtyum ivāntakam āyāntam puruṣa-vyāghram katham dadṛṣur āhave* (*MBh. 7.61.3*)

How did they (=warriors of the Duryodhana side) look at the tiger-like man, when he was advancing into the battle-field, who was like the all-destroying Mṛtyu himself in fury, being burnt with grief (caused by the death) of his son?\(^8\)

In praising Rāma, Śuka speaks as follows.

*yo bhindyād gaganam bāṇaiḥ parvatāṁś cāpi dārayet yasya mṛtyor iva krodhaḥ śakrasyeva parākramah* (*R.6.19.20*)

With his arrows he might rend the heavens and shatter the mountains.

His wrath is like that of Mṛtyu, and his valor like that of Śakra. (Goldman)\(^9\)

(II-1-2) Satisfaction (*tuṣṭa*)

Mṛtyu is satisfied with Naciketas.

*lōkādīm agnim tam uvāca tasmāi, yāṣṭakā, yāvatir vā, yathā vā sa cāpi tat pratyavadat yathoktam, athāsyā mṛtyuh punar evāha tuṣṭah* (*KU 1.1.15*)

(Yama) spoke to him about the fire(-sacrifice) which is the beginning of the world.

Also about bricks (to be used in building the sacrificial altar), their number and their manner.
And he (=Naciketas) repeated as it was told. Then, pleased with him, Mrtyu spoke again.10)

(II-2) Intelligence (*buddhi*)

He is furnished with intelligence. When Vālin, the chief of asuras, was defeated by Indra and deprived of his sovereignty, he remained unmoved. Seeing it, Indra wondered and addressed to him as follows.

\[\text{savajram udyatam bhum drśtvā pāśāṁ ca vāruṇān} \]
\[\text{kasyeha na vyathed buddhir mṛtyor api jighāmsataḥ (89)} \]
\[\text{sa te na vyathate buddhir acaḷā tattva-darśini} \]
\[\text{bruvaṇa na vyathase sa tvam vākyam satya-paraḵramam (MBh. 12.220.90)} \]

Beholding (my) arm with the thunderbolt upraised, and Varuṇa’s nooses, whose intelligence in this world would not be agitated, including that of (all) killing Mrtyu?
Your intelligence is unmoved and agitated even a little, seeing the truth.
Speaking only the word of true power, you are not agitated.

It is implied here that, seeing Indra in a rage, even the intelligence (*buddhi*) of Mrtyu is easily disquieted (vyath-).

(II-3) Mrtyu’s death (*mṛtyur mriyate*)

Even the god of death cannot escape death. He experiences death, as an ordinary human being. In Vāgiṣṭhakirti’s Mrtyu-vañcanopadesa, we read.

\[\text{koṭi-saṃkhyā bhaved yāvat tāvat dhīyānam idaṁ smaret} \]
\[\text{tataḥ sūkṣmātisūkṣmāntya-lokeśa-gata-cetasam (26)} \]
\[\text{drśtvā yogesvaram mṛtyur mriyate svayam eva hi} \]
\[\text{anye ’pi skandha-jā dośāḥ svayam ayanti nāśitām (MVU 4.27)} \]

When one would continue this meditative concentration to the number of ten million,
his mind becomes concentrated to the Lokeśa, the most subtle among
the subtle.
On seeing this lord of Yoga, mṛtyu dies by himself immediately.
Other evils which sprang out of materials also disappear by themselves.

(II-4) Other aspects of Mṛtyu

(II-4-1) Cruel (durātman, krūra)

In the story of Sudarśana who subdued mṛtyu (mṛtyunjaya) we read.

\[
\text{dhīṃ mṛtyum ca durātmānaṃ krūraṃ duḥkha-karaṃ satām} \\
\text{tvāṃ caivāham vedhīyāmi pāpaṃ pāpasya kāraṇam} \ (\text{MBh. 13.1.57})
\]

Fie upon Mṛtyu, the cruel and evil fellow, who brings about suffering to the good.
Here I shall kill you, the evil one and the cause of evil.

(II-4-2) Fearful (raudra-bhāva)

In the same story, we further read.

\[
\text{athedhmān samupādāya sa pāvakir upāgamat} \\
\text{mṛtyunā raudra-bhāvena nityaṃ bandhur ivānvitaḥ} \ (\text{MBh. 13.2.57})
\]

Meanwhile, the son of Agni came (back to his home), having collected his firewood,
constantly followed by Mṛtyu of the fierce nature as if a kinsman.

(II-4-3) Evil (pāpa)

The jester condemns Mṛtyu as an evil fellow. Pretending to be bitten by a poisonous snake, he says.

\[
(\text{Vidūṣaka)—aho, pāvena miccunā gahido mhi (aho, pāpena mṛtyunāgrhīto 'smi)} \ (\text{Mālavikāgnimitra 4.4 prose})
\]

Oh, I am grasped by the evil Mṛtyu.
**Mrtyu**

(II-4-4) **Disgusted (jugupsita)**

It becomes also the object of disgust jugupsā. In Brhaspati’s discourse to Vasumanas, we read.

\[ tasya sarvāṇi rakṣyāṇi dūratah parivarjayet \]
\[ mṛtyor iva jugupseta rāja-sva-haraṇān naraḥ \]

One should keep himself far from all that the king guards.
and abhor taking the king’s wealth, as he does from Mrtyu.

(II-4-5) **Enemy (sātru)**

Mrtyu is hated as an enemy. When Rāvana chose a boon from the god Brahmap, he said.

\[ bhagavan prāṁśināṁ nityaṁ nānyatra maraṇād bhayam \]
\[ nāsti mṛtyu-samaḥ sātru amaratvam aham vṛṇe \]

O Lord, the living beings ever have fear, of nothing else but of death (maraṇa):
there is no foe (sātru) equal to mṛtyu. Therefore, I choose immortality.

(II-4-6)

Thus, mṛtyu is contrasted to the eternal brahman.

\[ dvya-aksarās tu bhaven mṛtyus try-aksaram brahma śāśvatam \]
\[ mameti ca bhaven mṛtyur na mameti ca śāśvatam \]
\[ brahma-mṛtyu ca tau rājann ātmany eva samāśritau \]
\[ adṛṣyamānau bhūtāni yodhayetām asamśayam \]

Two-syllabled is Mrtyu, but three-syllabled is the eternal, Brahman. “Of mine” is Mrtyu,\(^1\) while “not of mine” is the eternal.
O king, Mrtyu and Brahman reside in one’s self and without being seen, they cause the living beings to fight with each other. There is no doubt about it.
III. Personification (2) (mrtyu’s outlook and belongings)

As we have seen above, Mrtyu is possessed of emotion, positive (tusṭa) as well as negative (krodha, kruddha), like an ordinary human being. However, we meet more often his pictures in rage than his satisfied ones, and when he gets angry, he is easily inclined to devour the living beings. It is because of this that this cruel god of death is furnished with a mouth (āṣya, mukha) to devour them.

(III-1) Outlook

(III-1-1) āṣya (mouth)

Mrtyu is furnished with a huge mouth to swallow. Once filled with rage, he swallows all the living beings with his huge mouth (āṣya).

Thus, we read in the description of the battle between Krpa and Śikhaṇḍin.

sa vicarmā mahā-rāja khānga-pāṇir upādravaṁ
kṛpasya vaśam āpanno mrtyor āṣyam ivāturaḥ (MBh.8.38.20)

Fallen into the sway of the powerful enemy Krpa and thus deprived of his shield, still he (Śikhaṇḍin) rushed (toward him) with his sword in hand, like a sick man towards the jaws of Mrtyu.

In Vāsudeva’s discourse, the presence and absence of mamatvā are contrasted with each other.

labdhaṁ piṛthiviṁ saṃvāṁ saha-sthāvara-jaṅgamāṁ
mamattvāṁ āṣya naiva syāt kiṃ tayā sa kariṣyati (6)
atha vā vasato pārtha vane vanyena jivatḥ
mamatā āṣya dravyeṣu mrtyor āṣye sa vartate (MBh.14.13.7)

Having obtained the entire earth with the mobile and immobile, what will he do with it, if he has no sense of self-possession? (6) On the other hand, living in the forest and subsisting upon vegetables, he still remains in the mouth of Mrtyu, if he has the sense of self-possession toward wealth. (7)
In the dialogue between Tulādharā and Jājali, the former speaks as follows.

\[ \text{yasmād udvijate lokah sarvo mṛtyu-mukhād iva} \]
\[ \text{vāk-krūrād daṇḍa-pārusyāt sa prāpnoti mahad-bhayam} \]

\[ \text{(MBh. 12.254.19)} \]

A man, of whom all the people tremble, as of the mouth of Mṛtyu, because of his harsh speech and severity of punishment, meets with a great danger.

In the battle-field, Kṛṣṇa spoke to Arjuna as follows.

\[ \text{mṛtyor mukha-gatam manye kunṭi-putram yudhiṣṭhiram} \]
\[ \text{hutam agnau ca bhadrām te duryodhana-vaśāṃ gatam} \]

\[ \text{(MBh. 8.43.10)} \]

Methinks, once gone under the sway of Duryodhana, Kunṭi’s son Yudhiṣṭhira is within the mouth of Mṛtyu, and offered as an oblation to fire.14)

\[ \text{(III-1-3) daṃśtra (jaw)} \]

Mṛtyu’s mouth (āṣya, mukha) is furnished with a terrifying jaw (daṃśtra), by which he eats up all the living beings.15)

Seeing the approaching danger, both Bhīma and Droṇa suggested to Duryodhana to make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.

\[ \text{praśāmya bhārata-śreṣṭha bhrātybhīḥ saha pāṇḍavaīḥ} \]
\[ \text{rakṣemāṃ prthivim sarvāṃ mṛtyor daṃśtrāntaram gataṁ} \]

\[ \text{(MBh. 5.136.9)} \]

Oh, best of the Bhāratas, make peace with your brethren Pāṇḍavas, and save all the earth which is caught in the interior of Mṛtyu’s jaw!

When Kṛṣṇa saw the old king Dhṛtarāṣṭra in a rage, he dragged Bhīma away, who otherwise would be killed by him.

\[ \text{tvāṃ krodha-vaśam āpnanāṃ vidītāḥ bhatarṣaṅkha} \]
\[ \text{mayāpakṛṣṭaḥ kaunteyo mṛtyor daṃśtrāntaram gataḥ} \]

\[ \text{(MBh. 11.11.24)} \]
Seeing you filled with rage, O bull among the Bharata-race, the son of Kuntū who was in the interior of Mṛtyu’s jaws was drawn back by me.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{(III-1-4) \textit{hasta\textsuperscript{*}} (hand)}

Apparently, Mṛtyu has a hand, by which he grasps the hairs of human beings.

\textit{arjaye jñānam arthāṃ ca pumān amaravat sadā}
\textit{keśeṣu eva grhitah san mṛtyunādharmam ācaret (Cāṇakya Rāja-nīti śāstra 4.23)}

Man should ever acquire knowledge and wealth as if he were immortal.
He should practise righteousness (as if) being grasped by the hairs\textsuperscript{17} by Mṛtyu.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{saṅgam akṛtvā smayam api na kuryāt-evam aham devānām api prārthaniya iti//smayād ayaṃ susūtam anyatayā mṛtyunā keśeṣu grhitam ivātmānam na bhāvayisyati (Vyāsa ad Yoga-sūtra 3.51)}

Giving up attachment (to the objects of senses) let him not even take pride in thinking “it is he who is thus urgently desired even by gods.” Such a man, if in his pride he deems himself secure, will not feel as if he were one whom Death had gripped by the hair.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{(III-1-5) \textit{gras}- (swallow, devour)}

By his mouth furnished with jaws, Mṛtyu devours all the living beings. Thus we read in Parāśara’s discourse as follows.

\textit{ahorātra-maye loke jārā-rūpeṇa saṅcaran}
\textit{mṛtyur grasaṁ bhūtanī pavanāma pannago yathā (MBh. 12.287.27)}

Wandering in the form of old-age around the world, made up of days and night, Mṛtyu swallows the living beings, as a snake swallows wind.
(III-2) Belongings

In addition to his frightful mouth (āsya, mukha) furnished with the terrible jaws (damśṭra), by which Mr̥tyu swallows (gras-) the living beings, he often carries some tools to catch them.

(III-2-1) pāśa

Mr̥tyu carries a snare (pāśa), by which he enmeshes the stupefied people, as kāla and the god Yama do. Thus, Vidura taught the ignorant Duryodhana about the folly of fighting with kinsmen by illustrating an old story of foolish birds fighting with each other.

\[
\text{tau yudhyamānau saṃrabdhau mṛtyu-pāśa-vaśānugau}
\]
\[
\text{upāṣṭyēparijñāto jagrāha mṛgayus tadā (MBh.5.62.14)}
\]

While both of them were furiously fighting under the sway of the noose of Mr̥tyu, the fowler approached unnoticed, and seized them both.

When Kṛṣṇa departed to the front, the Kurus were talking to each other.

\[
\text{pramūḍhā prthīvī sarvā mṛtyu-pāśa-sītākṛtā}
\]
\[
\text{duryodhanasya bālīyān naitad astiti cābruvan (MBh.5.135.26)}
\]

All of the stupefied earth is enmeshed in the snares of Mr̥tyu. It comes to an end because of Duryodhana’s madness. (van Buitenen)

(III-2-2) daṇḍa

He carries also a rod, like Yama and Kāla. In describing the single combat between Droṇa and Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Saṁjaya says as follows.

\[
\text{ādade ca śaram ghoram pārṣatasya vadham prati}
\]
\[
\text{śakrāsani-samasparṣam mṛtyu-daṇḍam īvāparam (MBh.6.49.9)}
\]

He (Droṇa) took up a dreadful arrow for the slaughter of Prṣata’s son,
whose touch resembled that of Indra’s bolt and which was like the second rod of Mṛtyu.

Also in the single combat between Karṇa and Dhṛṣṭadyumna we read.

\[
\text{tasya karṇo mahā-rāja śaraṁ kanaka-bhuṣaṇaṁ} \\
\text{preṣayāṁ āsa saṃkruddho mṛtyu-daṇḍam aparam (MBh, 8.42.12)}
\]

Filled with rage, Karṇa then, O monarch, shot a gold-decked shaft that resembled the second rod of Mṛtyu.

**IV. Personification (3) (mṛtyu the awful)**

**(IV-1) bhaya**

Because of his awful appearance and powerful belongings, Mṛtyu becomes the object of fear for all living beings.

\[
\text{udyataṁ śastram ālokya viśādaṁ yāti vihvalaḥ} \\
\text{jīvanam prati saṃtrasto nāsti mṛtyu-saṃm bhayam (IS.1242)}
\]

On seeing his weapon raised, a timid man is discouraged and terrified for even life itself. There is no fear comparable to Mṛtyu.

\[
\text{saṃcintya saṃcintya tam ugra-daṇḍaṁ mṛtyum manusyaśya vicakṣaṇasya} \\
\text{varṣāmbu-siktā iva carma-bandhāḥ sarve prayatnāḥ sīśili-bhavanti (IS.6691)}
\]

Over and again, thinking of Mṛtyu with the awful rod, all the efforts of a wise man shrink like a leather bag wet with rain drops.25)

**(IV-2)**

Thus, it appears also in the context of threatening. When Śuka praised highly the enemy, Rāvaṇa in a rage threatened him as follows.

\[
\text{kim nu mṛtyor bhayaṁ nāsti māṁ vaktum paruṣam vacaḥ} \\
\text{yasya me śāsato jihvā prayacchati subhāsubham (R.6.20.9)}
\]
Have you no fear of death that you say such harsh words to me, your sovereign, whose tongue metes out rewards and punishments? (Goldman)

(IV-3) tras-

Under such circumstances, all the living beings tremble in front of Mrtyu.

\[ \text{janma-mrtyu-jarā-duḥkhair nityāṁ samsāra-sāgare} \]
\[ \text{kliśyante jantavo ghore martyas trasyanti mṛtyutaḥ (IS.2333)} \]

Though the mortals are constantly tormented in the dreadful ocean of transmigration by the pains of birth, death (mṛtyu) and old age, they tremble (particularly) in front of Mṛtyu.

While the first line describes a general and objective circumstance, the second line speaks of a serious subjective situation of man’s mind.

(IV-4) Its mercilessness

However, people fear mṛtyu, not because of his awful outlook and belongings, but more often because of the suddenness of his attack. Since mṛtyu attacks them unexpectedly and snatches them away (mṛtyur ādāya gacchati),26) regardless of their expectation and desire, he is always feared by all living beings. Thus, we read in the dialogue between a son and father (MBh.12.169), where the wise son Medhāvin teaches his father as follows.

\[ \text{mṛtyunābhyaḥato loko jarayā parivāritaḥ} \]
\[ \text{ahō-ṛaquḥ patanty ete nanu kasmān na budhyase (9)} \]
\[ \text{yadāham etad jānāmi na mṛtyus tiṣṭhati ti} \]
\[ \text{so ’ham katham pratikṣe jālenāpihitās caran (10)} \]

The world is assailed by Mṛtyu, and encompassed by old age. Days and nights are passing (constantly). Why do not you realize this? If I know that Mṛtyu does not stand still (but ever advances forward),
Being caught in a net (as it were), how do I remain in expectation?

\[
anavāptesu kāmesu mṛtyur abhyeti mānavam
śasāṇiva vicinvantam anyatra-gata-mānasam
vrkivoraṇam āsādyā mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (12)
\]

While man has not accomplished his desires, Mṛtyu approaches him and snatches him away, while his mind is still directed to something else, as a she-wolf assails a ram in the course of its plucking grass.

Thus, it is advised.

\[
adyaiva kuru yac chreyo mā tvā kālo 'tyagād ayam
akṛteṣe eva kāryeṣu mṛtyur vai saṃprakṣaṇati (13)
śvah-kāryam adya kurvita pūrvāhne cāpāḥnikam
na hi pratikṣate mṛtyuh kṛtām vāṣya na vākṛtām
ko hi jānāti kasyādyā mṛtyu-senā nivekṣyate (14)
\]

Do it now, for that is better! Let not the time pass!

Even the works have not been accomplished, Mṛtyu takes them away. (13)

One should do today what is to be done tomorrow and do in the morning what is to be done in the afternoon, for Mṛtyu does not wait, no matter whether it is done or not.

Who knows whom Mṛtyu’s army will intend (to assail) now? (14)

\[
tam putra-pāsu-saṃmatam vyāsakta-manasaṃ naram
suptaṃ vyāghraṃ mahaugo vā mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (17)
samcinvānakam evaikaṃ kāmānāṃ avitrptakam
vyāghraḥ paśum ivādāya mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (18)
idam kṛtām idam kāryam idam anyat kṛtākṛtām
evam ihā-sukhāsaktakāṃ kṛtāntaḥ kurute vaśe (19)
kṛtāntaṃ phalam aprāptāṃ karmāṇaṃ phala-saṅginam
kṣetṛāpana-grhāsaktakāṃ mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (20)
mṛtyur jāra ca nyādhiś ca duḥkhāṃ cāneka-kāraṇaṃ
anuṣaktam yadā dehe kīṃ svastha iva tiṣṭhasi (MBh. 12. 169. 21)
\]

While a man is fond of his son and cattle and his mind is attached to
Mrtyu snatches him away, as the huge flood carries a sleeping tiger. (17)
Mrtyu snatches a man away, while a collector is unable to satisfy his desire,
as a tiger snatches cattle away. (18)
“This has been done, this is to be done, or it is half done,”
while one is thinking happily, death (kṛtānta) subjugates him. (19)²⁷
Before the result of the works which have been started is obtained,
Mrtyu snatches a man away, while he is thinking of its result, no mat-
ter whether it is of one’s field, shop or home, (20)
While mṛtyu, old age, disease and suffering of various causes
are attached to one’s body, how could you remain at ease (svastha)²⁸

Similarly, we read in Vyāsa’s discourse to his son Śuka.

\[
tiṣṭhantam ca šayānam ca mṛtyur anveṣate yadā
nirūṭtiṁ labhase kasmād ākasmān mṛtyunāśitah (18)
samceinvānakam evaināṁ kāmānāṁ avitrptakam
vṛkivoraṇām āśādyā mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (MBh.12.309.19)
\]

While Mrtyu (always) seeks you, standing or lying,
how do you obtain peace? Without any cause, you are devoured by
Mrtyu. (18)
Mrtyu snatches a man away, while a collector is unable to satisfy his desire,
as a she-wolf assailed a lamb. (19)²⁹

V. Expressions of dying and killing

Despite its cruelness and unexpectedness, sometimes human beings
can dispense with the interference of Mṛtyu. As a matter of fact, people
kill each other in the battle-field with no regard to Mṛtyu’s cruelness. In
the battle-field, warriors are willing to expose themselves to the danger
of life and death without fear and rather they prefer honorable death to
shameless survival. It is in this sense that we find the similarity of the de-
livered soul (mukta) and the heroic one, both standing beyond the duality
of life and death in the world of transmigration. Below, we shall see what
expressions are used in dying and killing, especially in the battle-field.

(V-1) Dying

(V-1-1) vaśa

However, since we have various constructions with the compound *mṛtyu-vaśa*, we shall classify them into several categories.\(^{30}\)

(V-1-1-1) *mṛtyu-vaśa* gaṁ-

Deploring the untimely death of a boy of five years old, an old man accused Rāma’s reign.

\begin{quote}
\textit{nedaśam drśta-pūrvaṃ me śrutaṃ vā ghora-darśanam mṛtyur aprāpta-kālāṃ rāmasya viśaye yathā (8)}
mṛyasya duṣkṛtam kiṃcīn mahad āsti na samśayaḥ tvam rājaḥ jīvayasvaināṁ bālama mṛtyu-vaśaṁ gatam (R. 7.64.9)
\end{quote}

I have never seen, nor heard of before, such an awful matter, as the untimely death (*mṛtyu*) of people in the realm of Rāma. Doubtlessly, Rāma must have done some wrong! O king, revive this boy who has gone to the will of death!\(^{31}\)

(V-1-1-2) *mṛtyu-vaśa* upe-

When the sun god Sūrya became aware of the approaching danger, he came in person to his son and advised him as follows.

\begin{quote}
yadi dāsyasi karna tvam sahaie kuṇḍale śubhe āyusah prakṣayaṁ gatvā mṛtyor vaśaṁ upesyasi (MBh. 3.284.18)
\end{quote}

O Karna, if you would give away a pair of the beautiful ear-rings born with you, you will come under the sway of *mṛtyu*, having reached the end of your life-span.
In his single combat with Akampana, Hanumān is described as follows.

\[ \text{tān mṛtyu-vāsam āpannān akampana-vāsam gatān} \]
\[ \text{samikṣyā hanumān jñātin upatathe mahābalaḥ (R.6.44.8)} \]

Now, when mighty Hanumān saw that his kin had come under the power of Akampana and indeed, the power of death, he rushed over. (Goldman)

When father, son or friend comes under the sway of death, the people of dull thought are afflicted vehemently by sorrow, striking their belly. But for the people of wisdom, separation simply strengthens detachment, while enhancing the happiness of tranquility in the sapless world of transmigration which results in tastelessness.

Prior to Arjuna’s depart for single combat with Karna, Krṣṇa says to Arjuna as follows.

\[ \text{tad evaṁ samare tāta vartamāne mahā-bhaye} \]
\[ \text{bhīmasenāṁ samāsādyā tvāṁ ca pāṇḍava kaуraṇāḥ} \]
\[ \text{sa-vājī-ratha-nagaś ca mṛtyu-lokaṁ ito gataḥ (MBh.8.51.25)} \]

In the course of the most fearful battle, o Pāṇḍu’s son, striking Bhīmasena and you, the Kauravas went from here to the world
of Mṛtyu, together with their steeds, horses, chariots and elephants.

(V-1-3) mṛtyu-deśaṃ yā-

Rāvaṇa addresses Laksmana as follows.

\begin{quote}
diṣṭyāṣi me rāghava dṛṣṭi-mārγam
prāpto 'nta-gāmī viparīta-buddhiḥ
asmin kṣaṇe yāṣyasi mṛtyu-deśaṃ
saṃśādyamāno mama bāṇa-jālaiḥ (R.6.47.91)
\end{quote}

How fortunate for me, Rāghava, that you, headed for destruction your wits disordered, have come into my sight. This very moment, stricken by my streams of arrows, you shall depart for the land of death. (Goldman)\textsuperscript{33}

(V-2) Killing

(V-2-1) mṛtyu-vaśaṃ nī-

Rāma refrained from killing his adversary Rāvaṇa, saying,

\begin{quote}
kṛtāṃ tvayā karma mahat subhimaṃ hata-praviraś ca kṛtas tvayāham
tasmā pariśrānta iti vyavasya na tvāṃ śarair mṛtyu-vaśaṃ nayāmi
(R.6.47.132)
\end{quote}

You have performed great and fearsome deeds and struck down my heroic warriors. Still, recognizing that you are exhausted from all that, I shall not bring you under the sway of death with my arrows. (Goldman)

(V-2-2) pradā- mṛtyave

In the description of the braveness of Aśvatthāman we read.

\begin{quote}
yuvānam indīvaradāma-varṇaṃ cedi-priyam yuvārājaṃ prahasya bāṇais tvāraśvān īvaśīgnī-kalpair viddhāvā pradān mṛtyave sāśva-sūtām
(MBh.7.171.65)
\end{quote}
Having smiled at the young prince of the hue of the dark lotus, the beloved of the Cedis, he pierced at great speed with many arrows, which resembled blazing flames, and handed him to Mrtyu together with his steed and charioteer.

(V-2-3) preṣaya- mṛtyave

Kṛṣṇa comforted his sister Subhadrā who lost her son in the battle.

jitvā subahuśaḥ satrūn preṣayitvāca mṛtyave
gataḥ punya-krīḍām lokān sarva-kāma-duho 'kṣayān (MBh. 7.54.15)

Having vanquished a number of foes and sent them to Mrtyu, he repaired to those eternal regions of the righteous, that grant the fruition of every wish.34)

(V-2-4) mṛtyu-locāya

(V-2-4-1) prahi-

In the description of Aśvatthāman’s night-attack, we read.

apeta-śastra-samnāhān samrabdhān pāṇḍu-śrījayaṁ
prāhiṇot mṛtyu-locāya draṇṛhi ṭrharatāṁ varaḥ (MBh. 10.8.74)

The son of Droṇa, the foremost of strikers, dispatched to the region of Mrtyu those agitated Pāṇḍus and Śrījayas, who were deprived of weapons and armour.35)

(V-2-4-2) preṣaya-

tato droṇaḥ kekayāṁś ca dhṛṣṭadyumnasya cātmajān
preṣayan mṛtyu-locāya sarvān isubhir āṣu-gaiḥ (MBh. 7.130.12)

Then, Droṇa, with his swift-going shafts, dispatched all the Kaikeyas and the sons of Dhrṣṭadyumna to the region of Mrtyu.
Meanwhile, O monarch, beholding the prowess of Karṇa, he (Arjuna) with the white steeds led four steeds of Karṇa to the region of Mrtyu, with four shafts shot from the bow-string, which was drawn to his ear.

VI. Mrtyu, Kāla, Yama, and Dharma

In the well-known story of the cheating of death which is related in the Kathā-sarit-sāgara 72, we read the dialogue between the rogue Simḥavikrāma and Citragupta, the secretary of Yama. 36)

(Simḥavikrama asked) “Holy one, please make it so that there would be no death (mṛtyu) for me.”

Then Citragupta said; “it is not possible to save anyone from death (mṛtyu), but I will devise a plan to save you; listen to it. (333)

Ever since kāla was consumed by Śiva in his rage on account of Śveta, but was created again in this world because he was needed, (334)

Since that time onward, in the place where Śveta dwells, there he (kāla) does not annoy other people under the god’s command,”
Then, Citragupta took him to the hermitage of Śveta on the other side of the river Tarāṅgini, where death (mṛtyu) cannot invade. But, just before leaving him there, Citragupta warned him not to return to this side of the river, saying,

\[
\text{āgatam vā pramādāt tvām mṛtyur bādhisyate yadi}
\]
\[
tad upāyam karisyāmi para-lokāgatasya te (338)
\]

If, however, out of carelessness you return, and death (mṛtyu) seizes you,
I will devise some way of escape for you, when you have come to the other world.

Immediately after Citragupta disappeared, kāla appeared and he tried to bring Simhavikrama to this side of the river, but his effort was in vain because Simhavikrama observed Citragupta’s warning. Yet, finally, having created a nymph (divyā strī), kāla succeeded in bringing him to this side. When Simhavikrama reached this side, kāla captured him by throwing his noose around his neck (tatra prāptam gala-kṣipta-pāsah kālas: 3348) and took him to the assembly hall of Yama (tato yama-sabhāṁ niṭam kālenaitāṁ pramādinam 349).

Here in this story, mṛtyu is personified as the god of death, who possesses his own territory and exercises his power over a mortal (332–333), but there exists the sacred place Śvetāśrama, where he cannot enter (anākramya) (337). As long as the mortal stays within that safe area, there is no fear of mṛtyu, but once they take a step over the boundary, they are exposed to his attack (bādhaya: 338). Likewise, kāla who has a strong wish to seduce the mortal (340–341) is anthropomorphised and finally succeeds in capturing him by throwing the noose around his neck (348). Yet, he remains simply as a servant of Yama, taking the dead person (preta) to his court for the final judgment. Yama, the king of the preta-loka, is also personified, being attended by his secretary (kāyastha), who prepares for his master the record of the acts of the dead person, while he was in this world. Though the three words, mṛtyu, kāla, and yama, have a different shade of meaning from each other, they are often translated by the single word of “death.” Under such circumstances, we are inclined to examine in more detail in what relation these three stand with each other. Though the problem is not so simple, we shall try to investigate it.
(VI-1) Kāla and Mṛtyu

(VI-1-1) Kāla, the almighty

As we have seen above, both mṛtyu and kāla, having similar outlooks and belongings, become the object of fear among all living beings, but there exists a hierarchy between the two, the former remaining under the sway of the latter.

However, prior to entering into the main point, let us see the almightiness of Kāla as the god of destiny in the Great Epic.

\[ \text{kālaḥ pacati bhūtāni kālaḥ saṁharate praṇāḥ} \\
\text{kālaḥ supteṣu jāgartī kālo hi duratikramaḥ (IS.1688)} \]

Time ripens the beings, time destroys the creatures. Time awakes while others sleep. Indeed time is hard to pass over.\(^{37}\)

Time itself controls time.

\[ \text{kālaḥ srjati bhūtāni kālaḥ saṁharate praṇāḥ} \\
\text{saṁharantaḥ praṇāḥ kālaṁ kālaḥ śamayate punaḥ (IS.1696)} \]

Time creates (all) the living beings, time destroys them. Time pacifies time, which is destroying the creatures.\(^{38}\)

In Vidura’s discourse, we read.

\[ \text{na kālasya priyaḥ kaścin na dvesyāḥ kuru-sattama} \\
\text{na madhya-sthāḥ kvaicit kālaḥ sarvaṁ kālaḥ prakārsati (MBh.11.2.14)} \]

There is none dear to kāla, nor hateful to kāla, O best of the Kurus. Neither is kāla neutral to anybody; kāla drags them all (equally).

(VI-1-2) mṛtyu stands under kāla

mṛtyu apparently stands under kāla.\(^{39}\) As a matter of fact, yama, kāla, and mṛtyu make the trinity (tritaya) and appear in front of a Brahmin who recites Śāvitrī. After introducing themselves to the Brahmin, mṛtyu says as follows.
mṛtyum mā viddhi dharmajña rūpinam svayam āgatam
kālena coditaṁ vipra tvām ito netum adya vai (MBh.12.192.31)

Know me as mṛtyu, himself come to you taking form, o knower of righteousness,
being urged by kāla to take you from here now.

Indeed, he is under the command (codita) of kāla.⁴⁰

Similarly, in Sītā’s speech to Hanumān, mṛtyu simply works for kāla.⁴¹

mama pratipādanam hi rāvaṇasya na rocate
rāvaṇaṁ mārgate sanākhya mṛtyuḥ kāla-vaśaṁ gatam (R.5.35.10)

Rāvaṇa does not like me to be released from here (despite Vibhīṣaṇa’s advice).
But mṛtyu seeks after Rāvaṇa in battle, who is already under the sway of kāla.

Here Sītā is convinced that Rāvaṇa is destined to be killed (kāla-vaśaṁ gata) by the hand of her husband. His death is already determined by the god of destiny (kāla), and mṛtyu works as a forerunner of kāla.

(VI-2) mṛtyu, kāla, and karman (mṛtyu-gautamy-ādi-saṁvāda)

Yet, both mṛtyu and kāla stand under the sway of a more powerful category, that is, karman. The situation is best illustrated in the beginning of the Anuśāsana parvan (MBh.13.1), where we have a controversy among five, that is, a hunter named Arjunaka, a serpent, a lady called Gautami, mṛtyu and kāla. The story goes as follows.⁴²

When Gautami’s son was killed by a bite of a serpent, a hunter named Arjunaka came to her and promised to take revenge on the serpent in her place. She, however, did not agree to kill that serpent, saying that even when it is killed, her son will not come back to his life. Listening to their dialogue, the serpent speaks as follows.

ko nv arjunaka doso ’tra vidyate mama bāliśa
asvatantram hi māṁ mṛtyur vivaśaṁ yad acūcudat (28)
tasyāyaṁ vacanād daṣṭo na kopena na kāmyayā
O foolish Arjunaka, what is wrong (doṣa) with me in this matter, for mṛtyu urged (acīcudat) this helpless (vīvaṣa) me, regardless of my will (asvatantra)! (28)

By his order, this man was bitten by me, not out of anger or desire. If there is any sin (kilbiṣa) here, this is attributed to him (=mṛtyu). (29)

Despite this self-defense of the serpent, Arjunaka was not convinced and both of them did not stop quarrelling. At this moment, mṛtyu himself came up and said to the serpent.

O serpent, I urged you (to bite him), being myself driven by kāla. Neither you, nor I are the cause of the destruction of this boy. (42)

As the wind drags clouds here and there, so I dragged the serpent as a cloud, I myself follow the will (vaśānuga) of kāla. (43)

Despite Mrtyu’s explanation (kāla-pracodita: 60), the hunter Arjunaka was not convinced and tried to kill mṛtyu as the evil-doer. Mrtyu, then, said to him as follows.

Both (I and serpent) are helpless (vīvaṣa) and subject to kāla’s will, performing his order.

At this moment, kāla finally came up and said to the hunter.
Neither I myself, nor this mṛtyu, nor this serpent, O fowler, are guilty of the death of living creatures, for we are not the instigator (prayojaka). (63)

O Arjunaka, the karman that this man did (in the past) is the instigator (codaka) of us.

Nobody else is the cause of his destruction. This man was killed by his own karman. (64)

The karman which he has done (before), by this he died.
His karman is the cause of his destruction. All of us are under the sway of karman. (65)

Then, kāla concludes as follows.

“Thus, neither I, nor mṛtyu, nor the serpent, nor you yourself, nor this old Brahmin lady, but this boy himself is the cause in this matter.” (69)

While he was speaking thus, the Brahmin lady Gautamī thinking that (all)
the people depend upon their own karman, said to Arjunaka as follows. (70)

“Neither kāla, nor this serpent, nor mṛtyu is the cause here in this matter.
This boy died at the proper time (kālena) by his own deeds (in the past).” (71)

Hearing the words of his mother, they left that spot and returned to their own residence.43)

Here in this story of death of Gautamī’s son, which develops out of the accusation of the hunter Arjunaka and the self-defense of a serpent,
appear both *mṛtyu* and *kāla*, and finally *karman*. Since each succeeding one stands as superior to the preceding one, we get the impression that there exists a sort of hierarchy among these three, that is, *karman*, *kāla*, *mṛtyu*, who stand beyond the power of living beings such as a hunter and a serpent.

**(VI-3) Dharma, Kāla, Mṛtyu, and Yama (jāpakopākhyaṇa)**

By the side of these stories which speak of the powerful influence of *mṛtyu*, *kāla*, and *yama* over living beings, we have a story where these principles lose their power over a human being. In an episode called Jāpakopākhyaṇa (MBh.12.192), these three *kāla*, *mṛtyu*, and *yama* seem to be content with a meagre position to a devoted Brahmin reciter (jāpaka). In this story, *dharma* appeared first and advised this Brahmin to abandon his body in order to ascend to heaven. But his proposal is mercilessly rejected by him who says that he does not need heaven by abandoning his body. Then, *dharma* says as follows.

\[
yadi tvam necchasi tyaktum śariram paṣya vai dvija \\
esa kālas tathā mṛtyur yamaś ca tvām upāgatāḥ (MBh.12.192.27)
\]

If you do not wish to abandon your body, look, Brahmin, here come to you *kāla*, *mṛtyu*, and *yama*.

Then, Bhīṣma continues the story as follows.

\[
atha vaivasvataḥ kālo mṛtyus ca tritayaṃ vibho \\
brāhmaṇaṃ tam mahābhāgam upāgamyedam abruvān (28)
\]

Then, the trinity (*trītaya*), Vivasvat’s son (=*yama*), *kāla*, and *mṛtyu* came to this great Brahmin, and said.

Then these three introduced themselves to him one after another, saying *yamo ’ham* (29), *kālo ’ham* (30), *mṛtyuṃ mā viddhi* (31). It is here to be noted that these three are considered as a trinity (*trītaya*: 28). Upon this, that Brahmin welcomes these four, saying.

\[
svāgataṃ sūrya-putrāya kālāya ca mahātmene \\
mṛtyave cātha dharmāya kim kāryaṃ karavāni vah (32)
\]
Welcome to you, the son of the sun (=yama), the great kāla and mṛtyu and (finally) dharma, What shall I do for you?

At that time, the royal sage Ikṣvāku happened to pass the place, and this Brahmin and the royal sage exchanged greetings. Then both of them insisted to give each other what he has, but finally the king conceded to the brahmin and agreed to accept his offer of giving half the fruit of his recitation,⁴⁴) saying.

\[
\begin{align*}
kṛtāṁ sarvaṇaḥ bhadrāṁ te jāpyaṁ yad yācitaṁ mayā \\
svasti te 'stu gamisyāmi kim ca tasya phalam dada (50)
\end{align*}
\]

Dear sir, enough of all this! What I wanted was (just the half fruit of) your recitation. I am going now, but what is the fruit of this (recitation of yours)? Give it to me!

Upon this the Brahmin answers.

\[
\begin{align*}
 phala-prāptim na jānāmi dattāṁ yaj jāpitam mayā \\
ayāṁ dharmaś ca kālaś ca yamo mṛtyuś ca sākṣīnaḥ (51)
\end{align*}
\]

I have never thought of the acquisition of fruit. But what I have recited is given!
Here, dharma, kāla, yama, and mṛtyu are our witnesses.

The Brahmin was perplexed, when it was demanded that he show his merit of recitation in a concrete form, for he had never thought of any particular aim (abhisamdhi) of his recitation.

\[
\begin{align*}
nābhīsāṃdhir mayā jāpye kṛṭa-pūrvaḥ katham ca na \\
dayasāya rāja-sārdūla katham jnāsyāmy aham phalam (54) \\
dadasveti tvayā coktaṁ dadāmiti tathā mayā \\
na vācaṁ duśayisyāmi satyaṁ rakṣa sthiro bhava (MBh.12.192.55)
\end{align*}
\]

I have never thought of some special purpose (abhisamdhī) in recitation. How shall I know the fruit of recitation, oh lion among the kings?
Since you said “give me,” I said “I give.”
I will not defile my speech. Protect true speech and be steadfast.

It is clear that this reciter (jāpaka) practises recitation simply for the sake of recitation. His practice reminds us of the teaching of the Bhagavad-gītā which extols practice for the sake of practice with no regard for its result. One should not act for its result or fruit, leaving everything to the theistic god (bhakti) with no regard to the egoticism (nirahāmkrāra). In front of such serious practitioners, such deities as dharma, kāla, and mṛtyu could not exercise their influence, and simply remain as witnesses (sākṣī) of jāpaka.45

VII. Mṛtyu, a girl

However, unlike kāla and yama, Mṛtyu appears in the form of an innocent girl (abalā) in the great Epic. This story of Mṛtyu as a young girl is related in the Śanti-parvan by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira who, being annoyed by the grief over the death of his friends and relatives in battle, raised the following question.

atha ceme mahā-prājñā śerate hi gatāsavah
mṛtā iti ca śabdo 'yam vartaty eṣu gatāsasu (4)
ime mṛtā nṛpatayah praśaśo bhima-vikramāḥ
atra me saṁśayo jātaḥ kutah samyñā mṛtā iti (5)
kasya mṛtyuḥ kuto mṛtyuḥ kena mṛtyur iha praśaḥ
haraty amara-saṁkāsa tan me brūhi pitāmaha (MBh.12.248.6)

Those men of great wisdom who are lying (on the bare ground), being deprived of life;
To them deprived of their life, the word “dead (mṛta)” is applied. (4)
These kings who were mostly men of awful prowess are now “dead.”
Here on this subject a doubt has arisen in me; Whence comes the naming “dead”? (5)
To whom does death (mṛtyu) belong? Whence does it come? Why does it take away living beings? O grand sire, who resembles a celestial, answer me to this question! (6)46

Then Bhīṣma started a story of the great king Avikampaka in kṛta-yuga, who lost his son Hari in battle and himself was captured by his enemy.
Then the king devoted himself to the life of tranquility (śānti-para). But once he met with the sage Nārada, he told the sage of the sad history of his own. At that time, the sage told a story (ākhyāna 11, samākhyāna 12) which dispelled his grief. It goes as follows.47)

A long time ago, when the Grand sire (pitāmahā) created abundantly the living beings, they never came to death (13). Then the whole world (traī-lokya) swelled with them and was crowded to such an extent that there was no space and people could not breathe any more. He thought of their withdrawal (saṃhāra) (15), but being unable to find a suitable means (hetu-kāraṇa), he became irritated (roṣa). Then, a fire issued out of apertures of his body (khebhyah) and it began to burn all the quarters (16). Seeing this, Śthāṇu, filled with compassion, sought to gratify the Grand sire, who was much pleased with him and granted a boon (vara) to him. (MBh.12.248.21)

Śthāṇu (Śiva) told him that the fire (tejo-'gni) raised by his anger (kup) was going to burn all the creatures that he had created. To this, the Grand sire explained that he was not angry, nor himself wanted (kāma) to annihilate the creatures, but, seeing the goddess-earth being annoyed by the heavy burden of overpopulation, he wanted to lighten her burden (laghavārtham dharanyās) which was otherwise sunk into the water. It was due to his irritation at not finding a suitable means of withdrawal, that anger possessed him (mām krodha āviṣat: MBh.12.249.5). Śthāṇu, then, chose a boon and asked him not to give way to wrath (krodha), but to neutralise the fire (tejas) by his own energy (sva-tejas) (9). Upon this the god Prajāpati suppressed that energy (tejas) within himself (13), but when he was withdrawing the fire which originated from irritation (agni roṣajā), a woman (nari) came out of all of his pores (viśvebhyaḥ khebhyah: 15).

krṣṇā raktāmbara-dhārā rakta-netra-talāntāra
divya-kunḍala-sampānā divyābhāraṇa-bhūṣitā (16)
sā viniḥṣṛtyā vai khebhyo dakaśīnam aśrita diśam (MBh.12.249.17ab)

She was black-coloured, wearing a red robe, with red eyes and palms of hand (tala), furnished with divine ear-rings and adorned with divine ornaments. (16)

Having issued out of the apertures (kha), she resorted to the southern quarter.48)
While both of the foremost deities looked at this girl (kanyā), the Grand Sire addressed her as follows.

\[ \text{mrtyo iti mahipāla jahi cemāh prajā iti (18cd)} \]
\[ \text{tvam hi samhāra-buddhyā me cintitā ruṣītena ca} \]
\[ \text{tasmāt samhara sarvās tvam prajāḥ sa-jaṭa-paṇḍītāh (19)} \]
\[ \text{aviśeṣena caiva tvam prajāḥ samhara bhāmini} \]
\[ \text{mama tvam hi niyogena śreyah param avāpsyasi (20)} \]

Addressing (her) “o Mrtyu,” (he said,) slay these creatures!
Since you were (born), while I was thinking of the thought of withdrawal (samhāra-buddhi), withdraw all the creatures, foolish and learned as well.
With no discrimination, withdraw these creatures!
By (performing) my command, you will acquire the best.

Thus addressed, the goddess death (devī mrtyu), who was an innocent girl (bālā), began to reflect sorrowfully and shed tears in abundance (21), whereupon the god took these tears with both his hands (22a).

The large-eyed woman (abalā), impelled by the desire of doing good to mankind (mānavānāṃ hitārthāya) and suppressing the grief of her own, besought the Grand sire with joined hands (MBh.12.249.22b-250-1) to exempt her from such dreadful work (raudra-karman). Though she was created by him, she was much afraid of such an evil act (adharma) as killing human beings, for the tears of grief (kṛpanāśru) of those deprived of their kinsmen would burn her for many hundreds of years. Finally, she asked permission to devote herself to severe asceticism (tapas).

Yet, Grand sire would not change his mind; repeating that she was born out of his thought (samkalpita) to destroy the creatures (prajā-samhāra-hetu), he requested her to perform his order without hesitation (12.250.10). Hearing this repeated request of the god, she became silent and finally became as if deprived of her life (gata-sattvā). Then, the god Brahmā was soothed (prasasāda) and smilingly (smayamāna) he looked at all the worlds. Meanwhile, she left his side without promising the destruction of creatures (apratisṛtya prajā-samharaṇam) and went in a hurry to the holy places of asceticism (15). She devoted herself to severe self-tortures (16) in Dhenuka, in the rivers Kauśuki and Ganges, and in the Mt. Meru and Himavat simply for the sake of gratifying the god (23).
uttered the same order, she begged him once again to exempt her from
the task, being much afraid of the sin (adharma-bhaya) (25). Then Brahmā,
restraining (nigrāhya) his words, promised her that there would be no sin
whatsoever to her (adharma nāsti te), even if she performed the destruction
(27) and the everlasting merit (dharma sanātana) would be with her (28)
instead. When Mrtyu refused again, the god said as follows.

Those fallen tear-drops which I saw and which have been held by
both my hands in front of you
shall torment people in the form of terrible diseases, when their hours
come. (33)
Furthermore, at the last moment (anta-kāla) of all the living beings,
you shall appoint both desire and wrath (kāma-krodhau).
In so doing, immeasurable merit (dharma) will come to you, and
you will incur no sin (adharma), yourself being neutral in behaviour
(tulya-vṛttī). (34)

Being thus persuaded, Mrtyu finally said “Yes” (bādhām). As a matter of
fact, she was afraid of his curse (śāpa). From that time onward, she began
to dispatch desire (kāma) and wrath (krodha) to living beings at the last mo-
ment, and through their agency, she put an end to their lives (36).50) In
this way, the innocent girl becomes exempt from the cruel act of killing,
and is herself free of adharma. Speaking thus, the sage Nārada concludes
the story of Mrtyu and consoled Yudhiṣṭhira in his distress.

Here in this story Mrtyu appears as a girl (kanyā, abalā, nārī), who
is also called a goddess (devī). Originally, she was born of the apertures
(khaś) of Brahmā in his irritation, when he was unable to find a suitable
way of lightening the burden of the earth by destroying (saṁhāra) the liv-
ing beings he himself had once created.

When she was born, she was black-skinned (krśna) with red eyes
(rakta-netra), wearing a red robe (raktāmbara) and a divine earring (divya-
kundala), and adorned also with divine ornaments (divyābharana-bhūṣita)
(MBh.12.249.15–16). But when she was going to leave the place for the
southern quarter (daksīna dīś) (17), she was stopped from going and ordered by Brahmā to perform the dreadful act of killing all living beings. Naturally, she refused to accept this order, shedding tears in abundance, but when she found it impossible to resist the god’s request, she asked him to prepare kāma and krodha as her assistants in addition to the various diseases (vyādhi) which were originally transformed out of her tear-drops (aśru-bindu). In this way, she was exempt from the sin (adharma) of killing the creatures.

VIII. Conquest of Death (mṛtyu jaya)\(^{51}\)

We started our discussion from the cruel and merciless mṛtyu and ascertained its irresistibility from the side of human beings. Indeed, next to kāla and Yama, mṛtyu exercises the powerful influence on all living beings, yet on the other hand, born out of the anger of Brahmā, it becomes a feeble girl and with the help of disease (vyādhi) she could somehow accomplish the cruel act of killing. This weakening of mṛtyu culminates in its being subdued by human beings (mṛtyu-jaya). This aspect of mṛtyu distinguishes itself from kāla and Yama, for we never meet the concept of the subjugation in the case of kāla and Yama. Now, we shall discuss this negative aspect of mṛtyu.

(VIII-1) satya

It is only through the power of truth (satya), that one can encounter Mṛtyu and defeat it. As a matter of fact, both satya and mṛtyu stand in contrast.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{na mṛtyu-senām āyāntim jātu kaś c it prabādhate} \\
\text{ṛte satyaṁ asamtyājyaṁ satye hy amṛtam āśritam (26)} \\
\text{tasmāt satya-vaśatacāraḥ satya-yoga-parāyanaḥ} \\
\text{satyārāmah samo dāntaḥ satyenaivāntakam jayet (27)} \\
\text{amṛtam caiva mṛtyuś ca dvayaḥ dehe pratiśhitam} \\
\text{mṛtyur āpadyate mohāt satyenāpadyate 'mṛtam (28)} \\
\text{so 'ham hy ahiṃsraḥ satyārthi kāma-krodho-bahiśkytaḥ} \\
\text{sama-duḥkha-suṣkhaḥ kṣemi mṛtyuṁ hāsyaṁ amāryavat (MBh.12.169.29)}
\end{align*}
\]

Nobody can get over the approaching mṛtyu’s army except the truth. One should never renounce it, for it is in the truth that the immortal-
ity (amṛta) dwells. (26)
Therefore, ever mindful of the vow of truth, devoted to the yoga of
truth and delightful in truth,
one should conquer death (antaka) by means of truth. (27)
Immortality (amṛta) and mṛtyu, the two are both established in (one’s)
body.
Mṛtyu comes from folly (moha) and immortality from the truth (satya).
(28)
So, I shall abandon mṛtyu like an immortal, abstaining from injury,
seeking after the truth, free of desire and wrath, equal in suffering and
happiness, and ever enduring. (29)^52

We notice here that mṛtyu is almost the same as mṛta as contrasted to amṛta.
Since satya is established in amṛta, one can conquer mṛtyu by means of
satya.

(VIII-2)

It is not limited to an abstract concept like truth, but is extended to
human beings who are able to conquer mṛtyu. There is a group of people
who have no fear of mṛtyu.^53

(VIII-2-1) Man of Honour

First, the heroic warrior does not fear mṛtyu, rather he fears the loss
of honour (kṛttī). Kṛṣṇa rejected the advice of his father Sūrya who was
aware of the approaching death of his son.

bibhemi na tathā mṛtyor yathā bibhye 'nṛtād aham
viśeṣaṇa dvijātināṃ sarveṣāṃ sarvadā satām
pradāne jīvitasyaapi na me 'trāsti vicāraṇā (MBh.3.286.6)

I do not fear mṛtyu so much as I fear falsehood (anṛta)
ever (in front) of the good people (in general) and of the twice-born
in particular
even in giving life (jīvita), I have no hesitation about it.54)
(VIII-2-2) Man of wisdom

The man of wisdom who realizes truth through serene eyes is not affected by fear of Mṛtyu.

\[
\text{mṛtyor bibheṣi kim bāla na sa bhitaṃ vimuṇcati} \\
\text{adya vābdā-śatānte vā mṛtyur vai prāṇināṃ dhruvah (IS.4958)}
\]

O idiot, why are you afraid of mṛtyu? It does not excuse a man, even when he has fear (of it). Mṛtyu is certain for every living being, whether it comes today, or at the end of a hundred years.\(^{55}\)

(VIII-2-3) Man of detachment

When Indra vanished Namuci, he asked Namuci who remained peaceful, despite his complete loss of sovereignty. Namuci who became a complete determinist said to him as follows.

\[
yad evam anujātasya dhātaro vidadhuḥ purā \\
tad evaūnubhāvisyāmi kim me mṛtyuḥ kariṣyati (MBh.12.219.21)
\]

I shall simply experience what the primordial creators formerly ordained for (the creature) who was born later. What could mṛtyu do for me?

(VIII-2-4) Man of duty (sudarśanopākhyaṇa)

The conquest of mṛtyu is more concretely described in MBh.13.2.\(^{56}\) The story goes as follows.

King Sudarśana in Kurukṣetra, who married Oghavatī, the daughter of king Oghavat, took the vow (pratijñā) of conquering mṛtyu while leading the life of a householder (grha-stha).  

\[
grha-sthaś cāvajeyāmi mṛtyum ity eva sa prabhō \\
pratijñām akarod dhimān dipta-tejā viśāṃ pate (40)
\]

This mindful and illustrious man made a vow that he would prevail over mṛtyu, while staying in the stage of a house-
He always instructed the duty of a householder (grhastra-dharma) to his wife Oghavatī and ordered her to observe attendance to a guest (ātithya, athithi-pujā).

\[ \text{jigisamana tu grhe tadā mṛtyuḥ sudarśanam} \]
\[ \text{prṣṭhato 'nvagmad rājan randhrāvesi tadā sadā} \]

At that time, o king, mṛtyu followed behind Sudarśana, who wanted to prevail over him (while staying) in the house, with the intention of finding his flaws.

One day, however, when Sudarśana went out to fetch firewood, an illustrious Brahmin came to Oghavatī and requested her service to such extent as to offer her own person (ātma-pradāna: 53–54). In her strict observance of her husband’s order, she bashfully presented herself to that Brahmin. At that time, Sudarśana came back.

\[ \text{athedhmān samupādāya sa pāvakir upāgamat} \]
\[ \text{mṛtyunā raudra-bhāvena nityaṁ bandhr ivānvitaḥ} \]

Now he, the son of Agni, came back with the firewood, being followed as ever as if a kinsman by mṛtyu of violent nature (raudra-bhāva).

He called her name repeatedly, but she did not answer him, being held in the arms of that Brahmin (59).

\[ \text{ucchisṭāsmiti manvānā lajjitā bhartur eva ca} \]
\[ \text{tuṣṇim-bhutābhavat sadkōi na covācatha kimcana} \]

That pious woman thought of herself as abandoned and, being ashamed (of her deed) to her husband, remained silent, and said nothing. (60)

While Sudarśana was wondering where she was gone, the Brahmin answered him in her place from within the hut (uṭajastha).
O son of Agni, know me as a Brahmin who has come as a guest. (63)

O the best of men, I am satisfied by your wife with various entertainments to a guest.

Her mind is firm in sincerity (ārjava). (64)

It is expected that a husband would become filled by rage, seeing his wife violated by an other man, and thus mrtyu was ready to kill him at the moment when he got enraged.

Mrtyu with his iron club in his hand pursued him, thinking “I will kill him here as soon as he abandons his vow.”

But, contrary to his expectation,

But Sudarśana with jealousy and anger cast off in mind, action, eyes, and voice as well, smilingly said as follows. (67)

“He said that it was the vow (vrata) of the householder to offer to the guest anything he possesses (vasu), including his life (prāṇa) and his wife (dārā) (70). Upon this, the Brahmin came out of the hut and revealed himself as Dharma.

\[
dharmo 'ham asmi bhadrāṃ te jijñāsārthaṃ tavānagha
\]
“I am Dharma, glory to you! I came here in order to test you, o sinless one!
Having ascertained the truth (satya) about you, I am highly pleased with you.\(^{(57)}\) (78) You have subdued \textit{mṛtyu} who had ever been following after you, constantly trying to find your flaws (\textit{randhrānveśin}). You have subdued him by means of steadfastness (\textit{dhrtī}).\(^{(58)}\) (79)

Dharma further assured that this chaste woman should follow her husband with half of her body, and with the other half become the celebrated river Oghavat\(^{\text{𝜗}}\) for the purification of the world (82).\(^{(59)}\)

As for the husband, he continues.

\begin{verbatim}
  anena caiva dehena lokāṁs tvam abhipatsyase
  jitaṁ ca tvayā mṛtyur aīśvaryaṁ ca tavottamam (85)
\end{verbatim}

You will attain the (eternal) worlds with this corporeal body. You have conquered \textit{mṛtyu}, and the highest sovereignty is now with you.\(^{(60)}\)

Dharma praised Sudarśana, saying that he had risen above the five elements (\textit{panca-bhūta}), subdued passion (\textit{manobhava}), desire (\textit{kāma}) and anger (\textit{krodha}) by performing \textit{grhastha-dharma} (86).

As for Oghavatī, Dharma said that she conquered affection (\textit{sneha}), passion (\textit{rāga}), drowsiness (\textit{tandrī}), illusion (\textit{moha}), and malice (\textit{droha}) by means of obedience to her husband (\textit{śūrusā}) (87).

\textbf{(VIII-3) Gods}

We have seen above in (MBh.12.169.29) that the man who subdues \textit{mṛtyu} becomes immortal (\textit{amṛta}) like an immortal (\textit{amartyavat}). Here it seems to be presupposed that the immortal (\textit{amartya}) is the conquerer of \textit{mṛtyu}. It is true that we have passages which testify to the fact that gods are above \textit{mṛtyu}. 
The compound \textit{mṛtyumjaya} appears as one of the epithets of the god Śiva. Thus we read in the Amara-kośa.

\begin{quote}
śambhur iṣa ṗaśuपatiḥ śivah śu-li maheśvarah (25)
iśvarah sarva iśānah śaṃkaraś candra-šekharah
bhūteśaḥ khaṇḍa-paraśur giriśo giriśo mṛđaḥ (26)
mṛtyumjayaḥ kṛtī-vasāḥ pīnāki pramathādhipah
ugraḥ kapardī śri-kaṇṭḥaḥ 'śita-kaṇṭḥaḥ kapāla-bhṛt (Amarakośa 1.1.27)
\end{quote}

We see that Śiva as the immortal (\textit{amṛta}) becomes naturally the subduer of mṛtyu.\textsuperscript{61}

\(\text{(VIII-3-2) Yama}\)

\textit{mṛtyumjaya} is an epithet of Yama. In the Bādhāyana Dharma-sūtra it appears among the ten names of Yama.

\begin{quote}
ōṁ yamam tarpayāmi/ōṁ yama-rājaṁ... / dharmam... / dharma-rājam... / kālam... / nilam... / mṛtyum... / mṛtyumjayaṁ... / vaivasvatam... / citram... / citraguptaṁ... / audumbaram... (Bādhāyana Dharma-sūtra 2.5.9.11)\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

\(\text{(VIII-3-3) Lokesvāra/Avalokiteśvara}\)

In the Mṛtyu-vāñcanopadeśa, attributed to the Buddhist abbot Vāgīśvarakirti of the eleventh century, the compound \textit{mṛtyumjaya} is used as the epithet of Lokesvara.

\begin{quote}
jaṭīṛa daśāksarām mantraṁ taṁ mṛtyumjayaṁ-saṃjñinam
daśa-laksāṁ tato homaṁ kurvita kusumaiḥ sitaiḥ (60)
ghṛṭāktair lakṣa-saṃkhyātair lokēswara-guroh pūraḥ
mantra-śaktes tato 'vaśyaṁ jāyate mṛtyu-vāñcanam (61)
ōṁ ādau tata āṁ-kāraḥ syād iṁ-kāraḥ tataḥ param
ūṁ oṁ mṛtyumjaya oṁ syād ayām mantra daśāksaraḥ (3.60–62)
\end{quote}

Having recited the ten-syllabled \textit{mantra} which is named “conquerer of death” one million times, he should make a fire-sacrifice with white flowers (60), which are besmeared one hundred-thousand times by
ghee in front of Guru Lokeśvara. Due to the power of the mantra, one can surely avoid death. (61)

In the beginning om, then the syllable ām, next im and ūm mṛtyumjaya om. This makes a mantra of ten syllables.⁶³)

IX. Others

Since we meet some curious compounds in addition to a neutral and ordinary one mṛtyu-kāla (the time of death), below we shall list some of them.

(IX-1) mṛtyu-senā

As we have seen above, Mrtyu has an army (senā) to attack the living beings.⁶⁴)

śvah kāryam adya kurvita pūrvāhne cāparāhnikam
ko hi tad vedā kasyādya mṛtyu-senā niveksyate (MBh. 12.309.72)

One should do today what he intends to do tomorrow, and in the morning what to be done in the afternoon, for who knows whom Mrtyu’s army aims (to attack) today?²⁶⁵)

(IX-2) mṛtyu-grha

Two āśrama-s, grhastha and vānaprastha, are contrasted with each other.

mṛtyor vā grham evaitad yā grāme vasato ratiḥ
devānāṁ eṣa vai goṣṭho yad aranyam iti śrutiḥ (MBh. 12.169.23)

It is nothing but Mrtyu’s house, that is the pleasure in living in the town.
It is the abode of gods, that is the forest. Thus it is traditionally said.⁶⁶)

(IX-3) mṛtyu-dvāra

Apparently, Mrtyu’s house is furnished with the entrances through which all the living beings enter.
Undertaking of the unaccustomed work, conflict with kinsmen, rivalry with the stronger trust in the careless people; these are the four doors (leading to) death.

The entrance (leading) to Mrtyu is opened for self-destruction, by whom Sitā was carried away and my wrath was kindled vehemently.67) (IX-4) mṛtyu-yāna

Yudhiṣṭhira was tormented, reflecting the great slaughter in battle.

Combined with desire and anger, and accompanied with indignation and impetuosity, they, riding upon Mrtyu’s wagon, went to the house of Yama Vaivasvata. (Fitzgerald) (IX-5) mṛtyu-maṇḍana

Oh heart! enough of this feeling of happiness that this greatness has come to you. How shall I free myself now? Or perhaps this itself may prove to be my funeral decoration.
(IX-6) aprākṛta mṛtyu (noble death)

āpanne tūttarām kāṣṭhām sūrye yo nidhanām vrajet
nakṣatre ca muhūre ca punye rājan sa punya-kṛt (23)
ayojaityāvā klesena janaṁ pāvya ca duṣkṛtam
mṛtyunāprākṛteneha karma kṛtvāma-śaktitāḥ (MBh.12.286.24)

He is the man of good deed (punya-kṛt), who meets with death (nidhana),
when the sun is in the northern declension, and at an auspicious constellation and an auspicious moment (23)
Without tormenting anybody, having cleansed himself of (all the) sins
by noble death, and having done all his best.

(IX-7) His family

(IX-7-1) Mṛtyu’s sons

Prior to the battle, Śūka described to his lord Rāvana about Rāma’s army who came to Lāṅkā to fight with them. In praising the valour of Sugrīva’s attendants, Sumukha and Vimukha are called mṛtyu-putra.

yāv etāv etayoh pārśve sthitau parvata-samaññibhau
sumukho vimukhaś caiva mṛtyu-putrau pituh samau (R.6.19.8)

And those two whom you see standing beside them, looking like mountains, are Sumukha and Vimukha
They are the sons of Mṛtyu, and they are just like their father. (Goldman)

(IX-7-2) Mṛtyu’s sister (svaśr)

tām vai śaktim lelihānām pradīptām
pāśair yuktām antakasyeva rātrim
mṛtyoh svasāram jvalitām ivolkām
vaikartanaḥ prāhiṇod rākṣasāya (MBh.7.154.54)

He (Karna) hurled at the Rākṣasa (Ghaṭotkaca) the dart (śakti),
thirsty (for blood) (kelifahāna) and effulgent, twined with strings, which seems to be the night of death (antaka), the sister of Mṛtyu, and the blazing meteor.

X. Conclusion

So far we have discussed several aspects of mṛtyu. Though it shares the same semantic field with other words expressive of death like maraṇa, nidhana etc., the ancient Hindus attributed to mṛtyu various kinds of emotion and action comparable to ordinary human beings.

Being furnished with emotion, it becomes the object of fear (bhaya) as a cruel and merciless being, particularly when it becomes angry (krodha). It has a hand to catch a man’s hair (kēṣa-grahaṇa) and also a mouth (āśya, mukha) furnished with a sharp jaw (daṃṣṭra) to swallow (gras) the living beings. It holds a stick (dāṇḍa) and snares (pāśa) to capture them. It has its own world (loka) where people are destined to go after death.

Its powerfulness is compared to that of kāla (time, destiny) and yama (the god of death). Yet, among these concepts of destruction, mṛtyu remains under the sway of kāla the almighty, but all these three, mṛtyu, kāla, yama become powerless in the face of karman, the act of human beings in previous existences which determines the destiny of their own.

A concession to the other concepts of destruction further leads mṛtyu to a feeble innocent girl. Born out of the god Brahmā’s anger, she accomplishes her duty of killing imposed by the god with the help of diseases (vyādhi) which were originally transformed out of her tears (aśru-bindu) held in the hands of the god Brahmā. Finally, it becomes the object of subjugation (jaya). Furthermore, mṛtyu itself is said to be destined to die (mṛtyur mṛiyate).

Surveying what we have discussed, it becomes clear that, from the merciless enemy (sātrur) down to the miserable object of defeat, the ancient Hindu imagined the uniquely personified god of death in the form of mṛtyu.

Notes

1) Cf. anto nāśo (dvayor) mṛtyur maraṇam nidhano (‘striyām)
parāśu-prāptapañcatava-paśa-preta-saṃsthitā (Amara-kośa 8.2.85)

2) As is elucidated by Windisch (195), the predecessor of Māra pāpimā who
attacked the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment is the Vedic epithet पाप्मा mṛtyu in AV.VI.26, 93 and XVII.29, and also mṛtyu pāpman, which appears in TS.7.4.21, SB.8.4.2.1–2, BAU.1.5.23.

3) Ordinarily, maraṇa is enumerated in the Buddhist list of the eight kinds of suffering (aṣṭā-duḥkha), that is, jāti, jāra, vyāḍhi, maraṇa, priya-viprayoga, aprīya-samprayoga, yad apičchāyāparyesamāno na labhate, sangṣṭepaṇa pañcopādānaskandha, but occasionally mṛtyu appears in place of maraṇa (MBh.12.169.21). Cf. also MBh.3.200.33 (jāti-mṛtyu-jāra-duḥkhaḥ), MBh.6.36.8, 12.208.2 (jāma-mṛtyu-jāra-duḥkhaḥ), MBh.13.135.116 (jāma-mṛtyu-jāra-ātīgāh). As regards, the four kinds of duḥkha, cf.

\[\text{jāma-mṛtyu-jāra-vyāḍhi-duḥkha-dosānudarśanam} (\text{MBh.6.35.8})
\]
\[\text{jāma-mṛtyu-jāra-vyāḍhi-vedanābhir upadrutam} (\text{MBh.12.9.33})
\]
\[\text{jāma-mṛtyu-jāra-vyāḍhi-bhayam vāpy upajāyate} (\text{MBh.13.135.131})
\]

4) It is interesting to notice that, when Nāciketā asked Yama about maraṇa, Yama prohibited him from asking about it (nāciketo, maraṇam māṇuprākṣih), and suggested to him to enjoy sensual pleasures instead (KU.1.1.25). Cf. also KU.2.2.6 (yatha ca maraṇam prāpya atma bhavatvam). It is also to be noted that the concept of re-death is always expressed by punar-mṛtyu, but not punar maraṇa, and vimṛtyu (ChU.8.1.5, KU.2.3.18 and MU.6.4 and 25 virāja vimṛtyu), but not vimaraṇa.

5) Here Yama is described as follows.

\begin{quote}
muhūrtād iva cāpaśyat puruṣam pita-vāsasam
buddha-maulim va[p]u[m]mantam āditya-sama-tejasam (8)
śyāmāvādātam raktākṣam pāśa-hastam bhayāvaham (MBh.3.281.9ab)
\end{quote}

All of a sudden she saw a man, wearing a yellow garment and a turban. He was handsome, like to the sun in brilliance. His skin was clear, yet dark; his eyes red; in his hand he held a noose; he was terrifying (Brough).

6) In Nāciketā's reflection it is said: kim svād yamasya kartavyam (1.5).

7) KU.1.10, 1.13, 1.22, 1.29.

8) Cf. MBh.7.66.40 which has tyajantam tumule prāṇān samnaddham citra-yodhim in the second line. Cf. also MBh.7.24.6b (kruddho mṛtyum ivāhāve).


10) However, in the Nāciketopākhyaṇa as related in MBh.13.70, there is no word mṛtyu, but simply yama and vatevāvata only.


12) For their variants, cf.

\begin{quote}
labdhaṃviḥ pṛthivim kṛtsnāṃ saha-sthāvarājagamām
na bhunkte yo nṛpaḥ samyam nisphalam tasya jīvitam (9)
atha va vasato rājan vane vaneṣa jīvataḥ
\end{quote}
dravyeṣu yasya mamataṁ mṛtyor āṣye sa vartate (MBh. 12.13.10)

For further references to mṛtyor āṣya-... cf. MBh.6.101.32, 8.42.41 (mṛtyor āṣya-gatam yathā), MBh.12.170.11 (mṛtyor āṣya-goto yathā), MBh.6.82.3, 7.145.28 (mṛtyor āṣyam anuprāptam), MBh.8.47.10 (mṛtyor āṣyam vyāttaṁ ivānvaṇāyaṇaṁ), and MBh.7.157.39 (mṛtyor āṣyāntarān muktam).

13) For mṛtyu-mukha, cf. KU.1.11 and 1.3.15. Cf. also Rau p. 161 and 167 (Rachen des Todes).


15) For the jaws of Yama, cf. MBh.7.69.17 (yama-dāntām s.t.r ntaram. pṛpta) and 7.85.18 (yama-dāṃṣṭrāntaram gata).

16) Cf. also,

tam āpattantāṁ samprkṣya matta-vāraṇa-vikramam
tāvākānāṁ rathaḥ sapta samantāḥ paryavārayan
madra-rājaṁ pārīpanto mṛtyor daṃṣṭrāntaram gatam (MBh.6.45.46)


18) Cf. also,

ajarāmaravat prājñō vidyām arthaṁ ca cintayet
gṛhitā iva keśeṣu mṛtyunā dharmaṁ ācet (Hitopadeśa 1.3)


20) For mṛtyu-pāśa, cf. KU.1.1.18 and for mṛtyor yanti vitatasya pāṣam, cf. KU.2.1.2.

21) For the snare of kāla (kāla-pāśa), cf. MBh.8.63.69 (kāla-pāśopanāsī), 16.6.10 (kāla-pāśa-graha), and 12.220.81 (niyataṁ kāla-pāṣena buddham) and for that of Yama, cf. MBh.3.281.9 (śyāmāvadātaṁ raktākṣaṁ pāṣa-haśtaṁ bhavāvaham) and KSS.66.25. Cf. also Scheftelowitz 20. As regards Pali maccu-pāsa cf. Suttanipāta 166 and J.5.367.6.

22) Cf. also,

tato 'ham abruvaṁ kṛṣya tadā duryodhanaṁ nṛpaṁ
mṛtyu-pāśa-parikṣiptam śakunīṁ putra varjaya (MBh.11.18.23)
mohito daśa-yogena mṛtyu-pāśa-puraskṛtaḥ
na veda kṛṣṇaṁ dāśāḥram arjunaṁ caitra pāṇḍavaṁ (MBh.7.10.40)

Cf. also R.3.17.18, 3.22.25. 3.25.11.


24) For the rod of Time (kāla-dāndā), cf. R.3.17.18, 3.22.25, 3.25.11 and Scheftelowitz 19.

25) ātmāupamyena gantavyaṁ buddhiṁ abhāvitarān mahātmabhiṁ
mṛtyuto bhayam astiṁ viḍuṣaṁ bhūtim īcchatāṁ (MBh.13.116.22)

Cf. also MBh.8.59.39 (mṛtyor bhītiṁ bhārata), MBh.9.35.30 (mṛtyor bhīto hy
asomapaḥ), and MBh.11.5.4 (mṛtyor api bhaya-pradam).

26) Curiously enough, this recurring phrase of the Mahābhārata does not occur in the Rāmāyana. Another recurring phrase in the great Epic which contains the word mṛtyu is mṛtyum kṛtvā nivartanam (making death the place of retreat), which illustrates the brave warriors in the battle-field. Cf. MBh.6.53.2, 7.127.20, 8.26.32, 8.32.9, 8.41.7, 7.55.73, 8.56.47, 9.7.5, 9.7.59, 9.10.8, 9.20.4, 9.27.21.

27) A similar action is also ascribed to kāla.

\[
\text{idam adya karisyāmi śvaḥ kartāsmīti vādinam}
\]

\[
kālo harati sanprāpto nadi-vega ivodupam (MBh.12.220.98)
\]


29) Cf. also,

\[
\text{samścinvānakam evainām kāmānām avitṛptakam}
\]

\[
vāyāghraḥ paśūm iūṣādyā mṛtyur ādāya gacchati (MBh.12.317.24)
\]

Cf. also MBh.12.169.18 quoted above, which, however, has evaikam for evainam.

30) For Pali maccu-vasa, cf. Suttanipāta 587 and 1100.

31) Cf. also,

\[
\text{mama putrā durātmānāḥ sarve mṛtyu-vaśāṃ gatāḥ}
\]

\[
yeṣām yuddham durādharṣaṁ pāndavaṁ pratyūpāsthitam (MBh.3.46.7)
\]

\[
rājānaś ca maḥātmāno nānā-janapadedvarāḥ
\]

\[
āgāmya mama putrārthe sarve mṛtyu-vaśāṃ gatāḥ (MBh.15.36.28)
\]


33) lectio varia read for mṛtyu-deśa, mṛtyu-loka, and mṛtyu-śoka.

34) Cf. also,

\[
\text{preṣayisyāmi mṛtyave (MBh.7.77.34, 8.42.23)}
\]

\[
\text{preṣayām āsa mṛtyave (MBh.6.60.28, 6.73.66, 6.85.27, 6.92.36, 6.110.24,}
\]

\[
\]

35) Cf. MBh.6.50.74, 6.84.22, 6.109.13, 7.27.30, 7.29.6, 7.68.50, 7.132.23, 7.132.25, 7.136.3, 7.136.5, 8.58.2,

36) For this story, cf. also Scherman pp. 202ff.

37) Cf.also IS.1695 and MBh.12.231.25 which reads.

\[
kālaḥ pacati bhūtāṇi sarvāṇy evātmanātmanti
\]

\[
yasmīṃ tu pacyate kālas taṁ na vedha kaścana (MBh.12.231.25)
\]

38) Cf. MBh.1.1.188 which reads nirdahantam prajāḥ kālam kālaḥ śamayate punah in the second line.
39) Scheftelowitz 18–19.
40) Scheftelowitz 19.
41) Cf. Scheftelowitz 9 and 18 note 1.
43) Mṛtyu is enumerated together with kāla among the witnesses (sākṣin) of human deeds in this world. It is said that, without being seen, they watch their good and evil deeds.

\[
atah \text{ param pravaksyāmi lokānāṃ karma-sākṣinah (40) }
\]
\[
apī yajñasya vettāro dattasya sukṛtasya ca
\]
\[
adrśyāḥ sarva-bhūteṣu paśyanti trīdaśeṣvarah
\]
\[
śubḥāśubhāni karmāṇi mṛtyuḥ kālaḥ ca sarvaśaḥ
\]
\[
vīśvedevāḥ pitṛgaṇā mūrtimantaś tapodhanāḥ
\]
\[
munayaś caiva siddhāḥ ca tapo-mokṣa-parāyanaḥ (45)
\]
\[
\]

Cf. also Scheftelowitz 29 note 2. Furthermore, Mṛtyu is mentioned as one of various epithets of Yama. Cf. Scheftelowitz 30 note 1.

45) Three deities, kāla, dharma, and mṛtyu, later appear again together with kāma and krodha (MBh.12.192.115). Other occurrences of these deities in groups are as follows.

\[
agastyo 'tha mataṅgaś ca kālo mṛtyus tathaiva ca
\]
\[
yajñāṇaś caiva siddhāś ca ye ca yoga-sarīrināḥ (MBh.2.8.26)
\]
\[
dharmāś ca bhagavān devaḥ samājagmur hi samgataḥ
\]
\[
kālo yamaś ca mṛtyus ca yamasyaścaraś ca ye (MBh.9.44.15)
\]

46) It is told twice in MBh., once in the Droṇa-parvan and again in the Śāntipavan. It is established now that the story in the Droṇa-parvan is a later addition, and thus the Critical Edition put it (MBh.7.48–50 [in Bombay edition]) into the Appendix I,8 23–265 (pp. 1071–1084). Thus, we here depend upon the version given in MBh.12.248–50. The remarkable differences between the two are, for example, in MBh.7.48, the cause of Yudhisṭhira’s grief as particularized by the death of his nephew Abhimanyu.

47) In the Droṇa-parvan, the reciter is Vyāsa, instead of Bhīṣma, and the name of the king is Akampana.

48) In MBh.7, she is further furnished with a red tongue and face, and she smilingly looked at those two gods (smayamāṇeva cāvaiksad devau vīśeṣvarāv ubhau: 122) before leaving for the southern quarter.

49) Cf. tvam hi samhāra-buddhyātha prādūr-bhūtā rūṣo mama in MBh.7 (125) (You appeared out of me in wrath, which I cherished for the destruction [of the universe]).

50) In the Droṇa-parvan, the god Brahman said to her that Yama and various diseases (vyādhi) will be her helpmates (sahāya) (200). Upon this, she further
requested to have the following eight vices as her forerunners.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lobhāḥ krodho 'bhyasīyasyā droho mohas ca dehinām} \\
ahṛś cānynyā-paruṣā dehaṁ bhindyuḥ pṛthag-vidhāḥ (206–7)
\end{align*}
\]

Let covetousness, wrath, malice, jealousy, quarrel, folly, shamelessness and other abusive (speech) tear the bodies of all embodied creatures.


52) In Vyāsa’s discourse to his son Śuka, it is said that one can cross over all the difficulties including mṛtyu by the raft of dṛṣṭi and the carriage of dharma

\[
\begin{align*}
kāmāṁ krodhaṁ ca mṛtyum ca pañcendriya-jalāṁ nadīn \\
nāvaṁ dṛṣṭī-mayim kṛtva janma-durgāṇi saṃtāra (16) \\
mṛtyunābhīyāhate loke jarāyā pāripidite \\
amoghāsu paṭantiṣu dharma-yāṇena saṃtāra (MBh.12.309.17)
\end{align*}
\]

53) For Pali maccu-hāyin (leaving death behind, victorious over death), cf.

\[
\begin{align*}
ye ca rūpe pariṇāya arūpesu susaṅghitā \\
nirodhe ye vimuccanti te janā maccu-hāyino
\end{align*}
\]

(Suttanipāta 755=Itivuttaka pp. 45–46)

But those who comprehend the fine-material realm and do not stand firm in the formless (realms), these people leave death behind. (Norman)

\[
\begin{align*}
api ce hoti tevijjo maccuhāyī anāsavo \\
appanāṇāto 'ti nam bālā avojāṇanti ajānata (Thera-gāthā129)
\end{align*}
\]

Even if one has the triple knowledge, has left death behind, and is without āsava, ignorant fools despise him as being unknown. (Norman)

54) It is supposed that mṛtyu could not touch the great hero. Deploring the death of Karna, Dhṛtarāṣṭra wondered.

\[
\begin{align*}
karnaṁ tv asyantam astrāṇt divyāni ca bahūni ca \\
katham indropamaṁ viraṁ mṛtyur yuddhe samaspṛṣat (MBh.8.5.64)
\end{align*}
\]

How could mṛtyu have touched Karna, the hero equal to Indra, while he was shooting his manifold celestial arrows in the battle field?

55) Cf. also,

\[
\begin{align*}
mṛtyur janmavatāṁ vīra dehenā saha jāyate \\
adya vābdha-śatānte vā mṛtyur vai prāṇināṁ dhruvah (IS.4954) \\
jālasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvāṁ janma mṝṣaya ca
\end{align*}
\]
tasmād aparīhāre 'rthe na tvam śocitum arhasi (ŚS.2383)

56) It is called also by the name mṛtyum-jaye sudarśanopākhyāna in some manuscripts. Cf. the Critical Edition vol. 17 part I p. 26.
57) For satya, cf. MBh.12.169 26ff. as quoted above.
58) For dhṛti, cf. MBh.12.309.16 quoted above.
59) One is reminded of the story of Ambā, as related in MBh.5.187.39–40.
60) The word mṛtyu appears also in 89 and 93.
61) Similarly, we read in Śiva-sahasra-nāma which appears in the Padma-purāṇa.

viśveśvarāya sūryāya gauriśāya varāya ca
mṛtyum-jayāya vīrāya vira-bhadraśya te namaḥ

63) Cf. also, Schneider p. 60.
64) For the army of Māra (māra-senā), cf. Lalitavistara 21 and 13 18ff., as elucidated by Windisch.
65) Cf. also,

na hi pratikṣate mṛtyuḥ kṛtaṁ vāsya na vākṛtaṁ
ko hi jānāti kasyādyā mṛtyu-senā niveksyate (MBh. 12.169.14)
na mṛtyu-senām āyāntiṁ jātu kaścit prabādhaṁ
ṛte satyam asamtyājyam satye hy amṛtam aśritam (MBh. 12.169.26)

Cf. also kāla-sainya in MBh.217.44.
66) For Māra-manḍala, cf. LV.300.7 and Māra-bhavana LV.300.9.
67) Cf. also,

kas tveṣay sukhinā rājan nābhīnandati pāpa-kṛt
kenedam upaśītam te mṛtyu-duḥkram uḍāyaśatal (R.3.39.3)

68) As for the southern declension, cf.

kāla-cakraṁ ca sākṣāc ca bhagavān havya-vāhanaṁ
narā duskṛtya-karmāno daksīṇāya-mṛtyavaḥ (MBh. 2.8.28)

The Wheel of Time and the blessed lord Fire himself
men of evil deeds and those who have died during the sun’s southern course. (van Buitenen)
Abbreviations

AS. : Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques (Bern).
AV. : Atharva-veda-saṁhitā.
BAU. : Brhad-Ārañyaka Upaniṣad.
ChU. : Chāndogya Upaniṣad.
IIJ. : Indo-Iranian Journal (Dortrecht, Leiden).
KSS. : Kathā-sarit-sāgara of Somadeva-bhaṭṭa, (Bombay 1930).
KU. : Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad.
MU. : Maitri Upaniṣad.
MBh. : Mahābhārata (Poona Critical Edition).
RV. : Rg-veda-saṁhitā.
SB. : Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.
TS. : Taṇḍiriya Saṁhitā.

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