

**Proposal of paper by N. Dejenne for the 14th World Sanskrit Conference
(Kyoto, September 2009)**

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Title of paper: The Story of Śivaśarman in the *Padma Purāṇa*: A unique compendium of controversial Epic “family matters”

Section of paper: Section 3 (Epics and Purāṇas)

Abstract:

The *Padma Purāṇa*, which presents peculiar retellings of several famous Epic and Purāṇic myths, as in the case of Yayāti (II. 66), displays in its 2nd section, in didactic as well as in narrative passages, a considerable interest for the question of devotion and obedience of children towards their parents. In this context, the initial story in this section (II. 1-5), the story of Brahmin Śivaśarman and his testing of the obedience of his 5 sons, deserves an in-depth analysis. Taking into account works by indologists like W. Doniger and R. Goldman, we will show how this story seems to gather and encapsulate motives and features that are important ones in many Epic and Purāṇic legends dealing with “family matters” and controversially showing to which lengths, in Hindu brahmanic worldview, sons’ filial devotion is supposed to go: acceptance of killing another member of the family to obey one’s father, beheading (followed by resurrection), offence against the mother and contest on the question of which one of the parents is the more venerable...The structure of the story itself also proves to be very typical of such stories, the “four plus one” structure in which the first four sons then the fifth one adopt different attitudes and as a consequence are diversely rewarded by their father. Eventually, we will underscore how, in spite of all these analogies, the story of Śivaśarman remains quite original and in some respects unique among these Epic and Purāṇic “family matters” stories.