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Vṛddheḥśvā kuvratam*. The commentators' interpretations of the passages describing the renunciation of kings in the *Raghuvamśa

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Abstract: At the end of their life, after transferring the kingdom to their grown-up sons, several kings of the *Sūryavamśa* chose to retire from the world and devoted their last years to asceticism and meditation. The verses of the *Raghuvamśa* describing these kings show considerable variation mainly along the lines of which *āśrama* (stage of life) the king enters at the end of his life. In many cases the commentators discuss these variants and argue pro and contra the availability of *saṃnyāsa* for people of royal status, thus participating in a larger mediaeval debate observable in texts on *dharmaśāstra*. This paper takes into consideration former studies on the subject by Tsuchida, Olivelle and Goodall, and most importantly discusses both published and unpublished commentaries on the *Raghuvamśa*, examining what authorities they quote to give support to their views on this *dharmaśāstric* issue, as well as the efforts they make to present the *Raghuvamśa* as being both internally consistent and in harmony with the teachings on *dharma* they consider valid.

Keywords: *āśrama*; commentaries; *Raghuvamśa*; renunciation; *saṃnyāsa*

1 Introduction

In his article *Die Weltentsagung der Ikṣvāku-Könige* Ryutaro Tsuchida examined those passages of the *Raghuvamśa* which describe kings who withdraw from the world at the end of their life. Tsuchida distinguished two groups: to the first belong those kings who in their old age transfer the kingdom to their worthy sons and retire to the forest to live as hermits and strive for liberation from the cycle of rebirths; the kings of the second group end their lives voluntarily at a sacred bathing place (*tīrtha*) and then are reborn in heaven among the gods. The custom

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that characterises the first group is said to be the “family vow”, *kulavrata*, of the Ikṣvāku dynasty in Kālidāsa’s epic (3:70). As Tsuchida pointed out, we find references to the same practice of the kings of this royal family already in the *Mahābhārata* (Parikṣit in 3.190:43)¹ and the *Harivaṃśa* (Trayyāruṇa in 9:94)². Moreover, it is not just the kings of the Solar line who ended their lives as forest hermits: the most famous examples from the *Mahābhārata* are Yayāti (1.81:10ff.), Pāṇḍu (1.110:29ff) and Dhṛtarāṣṭra (15.5:18ff).³

Tsuchida is of the view that the “forest life”, *vanavāsa*, of kings in their old age was an ancient custom that was probably independent of the development of the four *āśramas*, but in the course of time it was fitted into the frame of the *āśrama*-theory. Kālidāsa was already familiar with the system of the *āśramas* as consecutive life-stages and he also knew the *Manusmṛti* which describes the *āśramas* as such.⁴ The retiring kings of the *Raghuvamśa* were usually identified by the commentators as *vānaprasthas* (belonging to the third life-stage).⁵ But the picture is not that straightforward: certain verses in the *Raghuvamśa* could be, and indeed have been interpreted as making the fourth life-stage, *saṃnyāsa*, an available option for kings.

Tsuchida relied on Dwivedi’s (1993) and Nandargikar’s (1982) editions of the *Raghuvamśa* and on the whole followed the text known to Mallinātha, only rarely referring to variant readings. The present article is partly the outcome of the ongoing text-critical work on the first known commentary of the *Raghuvamśa*, that of Vallabhadeva (10th century, Kashmir), and will focus on the divergent interpretations and variant readings in the mediaeval commentaries of Kālidāsa’s epic. The commentators, as we will see, participated in the intellectual debates of their era on the problematic issues of *dharmaśāstra*, such as the availability of certain life-stages for certain *varṇas*.

Olivelle in his book *The Āśrama System* wrote in some detail about the different opinions we find in Sanskrit texts concerning the correlation between the four *varṇas* and the four *āśramas*.⁶ The *Vaikhānasa Dharmasūtra* (1.1)⁷ and the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (15.62–63)⁸ assert that only the *brāhmaṇas* are entitled to all four life-stages, which means that from the *kṣatriyas* down the fourth *āśrama*, *saṃnyāsa* was not an

1 Sukthankar et al. 1933–1966, Vol. III: 672.

2 Vaidya 1969: 78.

3 Tsuchida 1997: 142–143.

4 In *Raghuvamśa* 5:10 he refers to the second life-stage, *āśramaṃ dvitīyam*, and in 14:67 we find an explicit reference to Manu having prescribed for the *kṣatriyas* the protection of the *varṇas* and the *āśramas* as their *dharma*.

5 Tsuchida 1997: 141.

6 Olivelle 1993: pp. 190–192, 195–201.

7 Caland 1927: 112.

8 Gupta 1967: 109.

option. In the *Mahābhārata* Bhīma argues to Yudhiṣṭhira that a *kṣatriya*, unlike a *brāhmaṇa*, should not subsist on begging (*yācñā*, *bhaikṣacaryā*, 3.34.49–50).⁹ In the *Rāmāyaṇa* when Rāvaṇa appears as a wandering ascetic, *parivrājaka*, before Sītā, she immediately supposes that he is a *brāhmaṇa* (3.44.33, 3.45.1–2).¹⁰ In the mediaeval period the majority view seems to have been that only *brāhmaṇas* are entitled to enter the fourth *āśrama* and become wandering ascetics. This view is expressed by Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,¹¹ but interestingly Sureśvara in his subcommentary defends the position that *saṃnyāsa* is open to all three twice-born *varṇas*.¹² Most mediaeval authorities on *dharmaśāstra* held that only *brāhmaṇas* could become *saṃnyāsins*,¹³ but we also find examples of the view that did not limit access to the final *āśrama* to *brāhmaṇas*.¹⁴ For example the fourteenth-century digest, the *Madanapārijāta*, defends the position that the fourth *āśrama* is available for all three twice-born *varṇas*.¹⁵

As we are going to see, the mediaeval commentators of the *Raghuvamśa* also differed on the question whether the kings of the Solar Line could become *saṃnyāsins* at the end of their life. On the following pages I quote the following commentaries:

- Vallabhadeva's *Pañcikā* (10th century, Kashmir)¹⁶
- Mallinātha's *Samjivini* (14–15th century, Andhra)¹⁷
- Aruṇagirinātha's *Prakāśikā* (14–15th century, Kerala)¹⁸

9 Sukthankar et al. 1933–1966, Vol. III: 112.

10 Divanji 1963: 230–231.

11 Śaṅkara on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.5.1 (Śaṅkara 1910: 412): *brāhmaṇānām evādhikāro vyutthāne 'to brāhmaṇagrahaṇam*; on 4.5.15 (Śaṅkara 1910: 677): *na hi kṣatriyavaiśyayoḥ pārvīrjyapratipattir asti*.

12 Sureśvara on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4 (Āpte 1893: 758): *trayāṇām api varṇānām śrutau saṃnyāsadarśanāt | brāhmaṇasyaiva saṃnyāsa iti śrutyā virudhyate || 1651 ||*, on 3.5 (Āpte 1893: 1254): *trayāṇām aviśeṣeṇa saṃnyāsaḥ śrūyate śrutau | yadopalakṣaṇārthaṃ syād brāhmaṇagrahaṇam tadā || 59 ||*.

13 For example Sarvajñanārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra on *Manusmṛti* 6:38 (Mandlik 1992: 717–718), Medhātithi on *Manusmṛti* 6:97 (Mandlik 1992: 753), Viśvarūpa on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3:61 (Ganapati Sastri 1982: Part II, p. 27).

14 E.g., Aparārka on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3:60 (quoted in Olivelle 1993: 200. n 59). Vijñāneśvara on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3: 56–7 (Acharya 1949: 365–366) discusses both views.

15 Smṛtiratna 1893: 365–373.

16 I quote Vallabhadeva's commentary on the basis of Goodall and Isaacson (2003) for the first six *sargas*, and I have relied on the draft of the critical edition being prepared by Dominic Goodall, Harunaga Isaacson, Csaba Kiss and myself for *sargas* 7–19.

17 I quote Mallinātha's commentary from Nandargikar 1982. On Mallinātha's date and place see Lalye 2002: 13–15.

18 I quote Aruṇagirinātha's commentary from Poduval and Nambiar 1964, n.d., 1959. On Aruṇagirinātha see Venkitasubramonia Iyer 1983.

- Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita's *Padārthadīpikā* (16th century, Kerala)¹⁹
- Hemādri's *Darpaṇa* (15th century?)²⁰
- Jinasamudra's *Ṭīkā* (15th century)²¹
- Śrīnātha's *Ṭīkā* (before 1473/4 CE)²²
- Vaidyaśrīgarbha's *Ṭīkā* (date unknown)²³

I am also going to refer to other unpublished commentaries, for instance that of Cāritravardhana, relying on Nandargikar's notes in his edition of Mallinātha's *Samjivinī*.

2 The *vanavāsa* of the kings of the Ikṣvāku dynasty in the *Raghuvaṃśa*

In the introductory portion of the *Raghuvaṃśa* the following verse describes the descendants of Ikṣvāku:

śaiśave 'bhyastavidyānām yauvane viṣayaīṣiṇām |
vārddhake munivṛttinām yogenānte tanutyajām || 1:8 ||

... studious in childhood, pursuing the pleasures of the senses in youth, living as sages in old age, renouncing their bodies by yoga at the end ...

The four characteristics of the way these kings lived their life could be projected on the four stages of life taught in the *dharmaśāstras*, but they could also be interpreted more or less independently from the four *āśramas*. Vallabhadeva identifies only the third *pāda* as describing an *āśrama*, namely that of a *vānaprastha*, but the fourth *pāda* he takes as referring only to the way of dying, not to the fourth life-stage.²⁴ Here he glosses *yoga* as *samādhi*, an early attestation of the usage of the

¹⁹ I quote Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita's commentary from Poduval and Nambiar 1964, n.d., 1959.

²⁰ I quote Hemādri's commentary from Dwivedī 1973.

²¹ I quote Jinasamudra's commentary from Nandi 1989.

²² I quote Śrīnātha's commentary on *sargas* 1–12 from the etext prepared by Csaba Kiss and Harunaga Isaacson on the basis of two manuscripts kept at the National Archives in Kathmandu: reel no. B 321/11 and A 22/3 (dated 1473/4 CE). For his commentary on *sargas* 18 and 19 I have relied on MS B 321/11.

²³ I quote Vaidyaśrīgarbha's commentary from the etext prepared by Dominic Goodall and Csaba Kiss on the basis of a manuscript kept at the National Archives in Kathmandu, reel no. A 23/7. The manuscript breaks off at 12:14.

²⁴ Vallabha on 1:8: *sthavirabhāve vānaprasthānām. samādhinā paryante utsṛṣṭadehānām*.

word *samādhi* in the sense of a yogic way of death through meditation.²⁵ Śrīnātha's interpretation is similar to Vallabhadeva's. Mallinātha also holds that the third *pāda* is about *vānaprasthāśrama*, and he says that the fourth *pāda* suggests the reaching of liberation, *mokṣa*.²⁶ Aruṇagirinātha thinks the verse indicates that the kings embraced the first three *āśramas* beginning with *brahmacarya*. He also regards the last *pāda* as a reference to *mokṣa*, but then he mentions and explicitly rejects the possibility that the fourth *pāda* could refer to the fourth *āśrama*, *saṁnyāsa*. He points out that only a *brāhmaṇa* has the right to enter the fourth *āśrama*, and quotes Dattātreyā as a supporting authority:

mukhajānām ayaṁ dharmo yad viṣṇor liṅgadhāraṇam |
bāhujātorujātānām ayaṁ dharmo na vidyate ||
 Those born from the mouth [of Puruṣa, i.e. *brāhmaṇas*] have the right to bear Viṣṇu's sign.
 Those born from the arms and the thighs [of Puruṣa, i.e. *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*] do not have this right.²⁷

Then he cites two verses from the eight *sarga*, 8:12 and 14, in which Kālidāsa himself affirms, at least in Aruṇagirinātha's view, that for a *kṣatriya* the last stage of life was the *vānaprasthāśrama*.²⁸

At the end of his life King Dilīpa retired to the forest together with his wife:

atha sa viṣayavyāvṛttātmā yathāvidhi sūnave
nṛpatikakudaṁ dattvā yūne sitātapavāraṇam |
munivanatarucchāyāṁ devyā tayā saha śīśriye
galitavayasām Ikṣvākūṇām idaṁ hi kulavratam || 3:70 ||

²⁵ On this subject see McLaughlin 2021: 9–13. See also *Raghuvamśa* 8:25, where Kālidāsa himself uses the term *yogasamādhi* in a similar context. On *yoga* as a *Sterbetechnik*, see Schreiner 1988 and more recently Gerety 2021.

²⁶ Mallinātha on 1:8: *tasmin vārdhake vayasi muninām vṛttir iva vṛttir yeṣāṁ teṣāṁ. etena vānaprasthāśramo vivakṣitaḥ. ante śarīratyāgakāle yogena paramātmadhyānena ... teṣāṁ dehatyāginām. etena mokṣabhāvo vivakṣitaḥ.*

²⁷ “Viṣṇu's sign” is the ascetic's triple staff, *tridaṇḍa*, or the single staff, *ekadaṇḍa* (cf. *Madanapārijāta* in *Smṛitiratna* 1893: 366, commenting on this verse; see also Olivelle 2011: pp. 234–235). Madhusūdana also quotes this verse in his commentary on *Bhagavadgītā* 3:20 (Paṇṣīkar 1992: 159), introducing it as *purāṇe 'pi*, and reading the last *pāda* as *nāyaṁ dharmāḥ praśasyate*. We also find this verse quoted in the *Yatidharmaprakāśa* (3.9–10, Olivelle 1976: 33) introduced as *smṛtyantaram*, but with a different reading of *pādas* cd.

²⁸ Aruṇagirinātha ad 1:8: *śaiśava ityādinā yathākālaṁ brahmacaryādyāśramatrayasvīkāras tadantaram viśiṣṭenopāyena svecchayā śarīratyāgāt paramātmaprāptiś ca. (...) nanu yogenetyādinā saṁnyāsāśramāḥ kiṁ neṣyate? ucyate. brāhmaṇasyaiva tatrādhikāraḥ yathāha dattātreyāḥ. “mukhajānām ayaṁ dharmo yad viṣṇor liṅgadhāraṇam | bāhujātorujātānām ayaṁ dharmo na vidyate ||” iti. kavir api “tam arāṇyasamāśrayonmukham (8:12)” ity uktvā “sa kilāśramam antyam āśrita (8:14)” ity anuvadiṣyati.*

Then, as his spirit turned away from sensory pleasures, he handed over the white parasol, emblem of kingship, to his young son in accordance with precept, and with his queen sought refuge in the shade of the trees of a sages' grove. For such was the family observance of the Ikṣvākus when their prime had passed.

This verse makes it clear that according to the family custom of the Sūryavaṃśa its kings spent their last years in a forest hermitage. Dilīpa was accompanied by his wife, which calls to mind the words of Kaṇva in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, when he reassures Śakuntalā that they will meet again when she and her husband move to the sage's āśrama at the end of their life.²⁹ Vallabhadeva in his commentary on the above verse calls the "family observance" *tapovanasevana*, "living in a penance grove". This time it is Hemādri who explicitly identifies Dilīpa's life in the forest as *vānaprasthāśrama*, and quotes *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3:44 for corroboration.³⁰

Another reference to this "family observance" of the Ikṣvāku kings is in 12:20:

rāmo 'pi saha vaidehyā vane vanyena vartayan |
cacāra sānujaḥ śānto vṛddheṣvākuvrataṃ yuvā ||

As for Rāma, together with Vaidehī and with Lakṣmaṇa, living on what the forest yielded, he kept, though still a youth, the observance of the Ikṣvākus when old.

Both Mallinātha and Hemādri gloss *vṛddheṣvākuvrata* with *vanavāsa*, "living in the forest". In verse 12:8 Rāma is described as donning bark garments (*cīre ca parigrhṇataḥ* in Vallabhadeva's, Śrīnātha's and Vaidyaśrīgarbha's versions, *vasānasya ca valkale* in the other commentaries),³¹ in preparation for life in the forest (*vanavāsārthe*), as the Keralan commentators point out.

In the 18th *sarga*, a catalogue of kings, we read about a couple of rulers who ended their lives as forest hermits. King Nala, after transferring the kingdom to his son, "kept company, taught by old age, with the deer, so that he may not take a

²⁹ Vasudeva 2006: 4.176 (p. 212).

³⁰ Hemādri ad 3:70: *vānaprastho babhūvety arthaḥ. arthāntaram āha—hi yasmād galitavayasāṃ vṛddhānām Ikṣvākūṇām idaṃ kulavratam. "sutavinyastapatnīkas tayā vānugato 'pi san | vānaprastho brahmacārī sāgniḥ so 'pāvrajet" iti Yājñavalkyaḥ.*

³¹ Cf. *Rāmāyaṇa* (Vaidya 1962) 2.10:28 (*cīrājinajaṭādhārī*); 2.16:25 (*jaṭācīradharo*); 2.16:28 (*jaṭācīradharo*); 2.16:30 (*cīrajaṭādharaḥ*); 2.19:11 (*cīrājinadhare*); 2.25:8 (*valkalāmbaradhārīṇā*); 2.33:7 (*cīre, munivastrāṇi*); 2.67:8 (*cīravalkalavāsasam*); 2.93:25 (*cīravalkalavāsasam*); 2.97:20 (*valkalavāsasā*); 2.107:20 (*valkalaḥjaṭādhārī muniveśadharah*). It seems possible that in *Raghuvamśa* 12:8 *cīre parigrhṇataḥ* was replaced in the course of the transmission on the grounds that *cīre* is typically taken to refer to garments of rags, rather than of bark, and it is bark that is clearly intended (for Vallabhadeva this was evidently not a problem, since he glosses *cīre* with *valkale*). The *Manusmṛti* prescribes for *vānaprasthas* a garment made of leather or *cīra* (6:6), the latter being either a tattered garment made of cloth (so Medhātithi), or a garment made of strips of bark or grass (thus Nārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra); other commentators give both possibilities; see Olivelle 2005: 288.

bodily form again” (18:7: *mṛgair ajaryam jarasopadiṣṭam adehabandhāya punar babandha*). Vallabhadeva comments that Nala “moved to a penance grove” (*tapovanam yayāv ity arthaḥ*); Mallinātha similarly says that “he went to the forest for the sake of liberation” (*mokṣārtham vanam gata ity arthaḥ*). King Viśvasaha chose to end his life in the same way:

*pitā pitṛṇām anṛnas tam ante vayasy anantāni sukhāni lipsuḥ |
rājānam ājānuvilambibāhuṃ kṛtvā kṛtī valkadharo babhūva ||*³²

[Hiraṇyanābha’s] father, once he was free from the debt to his ancestors, wishing to obtain endless pleasures, at the end of his life made him, whose arms reached down to his knees, king, and being satisfied, he donned bark-garments.

Vallabhadeva glosses *valkadharo babhūva* with *tapasḥ cacāra*, “he performed asceticism”, and adds: *yato mokṣāptyānantāni sukhāni labdhukāmaḥ*, “since he wished to obtain endless pleasures by attaining liberation”. Jinasamudra says that Viśvasaha became an ascetic (*tapasvī*), while Śrīnātha identifies him as a *muni*, whose “endless pleasures arise from the state of liberation” (*anantāni sukhāni muktidaśotpannāni*).³³ Mallinātha also thinks that the king became a *mumukṣu*, “one who strives after liberation”, and he “went to the forest”, *vanam gataḥ*. Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita identifies the last years of the king with *vānaprasthāśrama*.

King Kausalya (or Kauśalya) is said to have reached the state of becoming one with *brahman* (*brahmabhūyam gatiṃ ājagāma*),³⁴ which the commentators identify with liberation from *saṃsāra*. This time Kālidāsa does not allude to the king becoming a forest hermit. Another king, Brahmiṣṭha (or Puṣya according to Mallinātha and Jinasamudra) also strove for *mokṣa* in his final years:

*mahīm mahecchaḥ parikīrya sūnau manīṣiṇe jaiminaye ’rpitātmā |
tasmāt sayogād adhigamya yogam ajanmane ’kalpata janmabhīruḥ ||*³⁵

Having handed over the earth to his son, the magnanimous king devoted himself to the sage Jaimini, and having mastered yoga from him, who possessed yoga, he partook of no rebirth, afraid as he was of being born again.

In Vallabhadeva’s understanding of the verse the king became the disciple of the sage Jaimini (whom he identifies with Yājñavalkya), and in the end he attained

³² 18:28 in the texts of Vallabhadeva, Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Jinasamudra, 18:27 in Hemādri’s text, 18:26 in Mallinātha’s, 18:25 in Śrīnātha’s; *valkadharo* is Vallabhadeva’s reading, the other commentators read *valkalavān*.

³³ MS B 321/11, fol. 273v.

³⁴ 18:30 in Vallabhadeva, Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Jinasamudra, 18:28 in Mallinātha, 18:29 in Hemādri, 18:27 in Śrīnātha.

³⁵ 18:34 in Vallabhadeva and Hemādri, 18:33 in Mallinātha, 18:35 in Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Jinasamudra, 18:32 in Śrīnātha.

mokṣa.³⁶ The other commentators interpret the verse along the same lines, and although Kālidāsa does not make it explicit, one might suppose that the old king moved to Jaimini's *āśrama* in the forest.

Finally Sudarśana, having consecrated Agnivarṇa as king, is said to have moved to the Naimiṣa forest in his last years (*śīśriye ... paścime vayasi naimiṣam*, 19:1). Vallabhadeva interprets Sudarśana's attribute, *śrutavatām apaścimaḥ*, "first among the learned", as follows: *etad eva hi pāṇḍityam yad vārddhake tapovanāśrayaṇam*, "for this is exactly what his erudition was, namely resorting to a penance grove in old age". Aruṇagirinātha thinks that Kālidāsa refers to Sudarśana as "the descendant of Raghu", *rāghava*, to suggest the figure of substantiation (*arthāntaranyāsa*), for the epithet hints at the fact that retiring to the forest was the *dharma* of those born in Raghu's lineage. Sudarśana lived the life of a forest hermit, accumulating ascetic merit, without longing for any fruit or result (*saṃcikāya phalaniḥspṛhas tapah*, 19:2), which the commentators take to mean that he did not long for heaven but strove to attain liberation.

As we have seen in the above discussed verses, the "observance of the old Ikṣvāku kings" (*vṛddhekṣvākuvratam*) consisted in donning bark garments and retiring to the forest after entrusting the kingdom to a worthy son. The kings who chose this way of life lived as forest hermits and practiced *tapas* and *yoga* in order to attain liberation from the cycle of rebirths. Some commentators identified the last years of these kings with the third life-stage, *vānaprasthāśrama*.

3 King Raghu's renunciation

The above quoted verses of the *Raghuvamśa* have been transmitted without much variation and we have not seen major differences in the commentators' interpretations either. Quite different is the case concerning the last years of king Raghu, described in the eight *sarga* of the epic: here we come across significant variant readings and the commentators often disagree. *Sarga* 7 ends with Raghu wishing to put down the burden of kingship:

*prathamaparigatārthas taṃ raghuḥ saṃnivṛttaṃ
vijayinam abhinandya ślāghyajāyāsametam |
tadupahitakuṭumbaś cīram ādātum aicchat
na hi sati kuladhurye sūryavaṃśyā gṛhāya || 7:71 ||*

³⁶ Vallabhadeva *ad loc.*: *tacchiṣyatvaṃ prāpety arthaḥ. mokṣāya samapadyata mokṣam āpa. jaiminiśabdenātra tacchiṣyo yājñavalkyo 'bhipretaḥ.*

Raghu, who had already learnt all that had happened, shared Aja's joy when he returned victorious in the company of his praiseworthy wife. He handed over to the prince the cares of the household and was eager to put on bast garments; for, when a son is ready to support the family, kings of the solar line will not remain householders.

The scene is familiar: the old king entrusts the kingdom to his worthy son and retires from worldly life. The fourth *pāda* refers to the “family observance” of the descendants of Ikṣvāku: this is how Śrīnātha understands the expression *na gṛhāya* when he adds: *vanam gacchanti*, “they move to the forest”. The word *gṛhāya* stands for *gṛhasthāśrama* according to Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita (verse 68 in their text), which means that these kings left the second life-stage behind. In the third *pāda* the reading *cīram ādātum aicchat* is that of Vallabhadeva, Śrīnātha (verse 69 in his text) and probably Vaidyaśrīgarbha (verse 62); Hemādri also mentions this reading as a *pāṭhāntara* (with *ādhātum* instead of *ādātum*). Vallabhadeva and Hemādri gloss *cīra* with *valkala*, “bark-cloth”, Śrīnātha with *munivastra*, “a holy man's garment”, Vaidyaśrīgarbha with *yatinām vāsaḥ*, “the garment of ascetics”. In Vallabhadeva's interpretation the text implies that Raghu wanted to retire to the forest.³⁷ Mallinātha, the two Keralan commentators, Hemādri and Jinasamudra read the third *pāda* as *śāntimārgotsuko 'bhūt*, “became eager to join the path to peace” (in the place of *cīram ādātum aicchat*). Mallinātha glosses *śāntimārga* with *mokṣamārga*, “the path to liberation”, while Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita says that Raghu “was ready to move to the forest” (*vanam gantum udyukto 'bhūd ity arthaḥ*). Jinasamudra also understands *śāntimārga* as *vanavāsa*, “living in the forest”.

The last verse of the 7th *sarga* shows us Raghu handing over the kingdom to prince Aja and wishing to retire from the life-stage of a householder. Both readings of *pāda* c can and have been interpreted by the commentators as a preparation for *vanavāsa*, dwelling in the forest, though *cīra*, “bark garment” is perhaps a clearer indicator than the more general *śāntimārga*, “path to peace”. The latter reading could be taken, in theory, as pointing to the fourth *āśrama*, *saṃnyāsa*, though none of the commentators have chosen this interpretation.

The 10th verse of the next *sarga* repeats the same idea with different words. The following is the reading known to Vallabhadeva (and probably also to Vaidyaśrīgarbha):

atha vīkṣya guṇaiḥ pratiṣṭhitam prakṛtiṣv ajam ābhigāmikaiḥ |
padaviṃ pariṇāmadeśitām raghur ādatta vanāntagāminīm || 8:10 ||

When he saw Aja firmly established among his subjects, thanks to the virtues that made him approachable, Raghu took the path old age dictated that leads to the forest.

³⁷ *valkalaṃ grahitum iyeṣa, vanam ajigamiṣad ity arthaḥ.*

As Vallabhadeva points out, the verse clearly indicates that Raghu “wanted to betake himself to a penance grove” (*tapovanam āśrayitum aicchat*). The fact that this decision was “dictated by old age” hints at the “family custom” of the kings of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. In Vallabhadeva’s version of the text this verse and the last verse of *sarga* 7 state the same thing: Raghu wanted to live his final years as a forest-dweller.

Mallinātha, however, knew a different reading of 8:10:

*atha vīkṣya raghuḥ pratiṣṭhitam prakṛtiṣv ātmajam ātmavittayā |
viṣayeṣu vināśadharmasu tridivastheṣv api niḥspṛho ’bhavat || 8:10 ||*

When Raghu saw that his son was well established among his subjects, he became indifferent even towards heavenly enjoyments, which are perishable, because he knew the Self.

Hemādri, Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita comment on a similar version with the variant reading *ātmavattayā*, “because he was self-possessed”;³⁸ Hemādri takes this word to refer to Aja, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita connects it with Raghu, while Aruṇagirinātha is not clear on this point. In this version of the verse, instead of a reference to *vanavāsa*, Raghu is presented as striving for a goal higher than the pleasures of heaven. His aim is an imperishable state, which we can safely identify with *mokṣa*, liberation from *saṃsāra*. Raghu’s turning away from impermanent pleasures matches the reading *śāntimārgotsuko ’bhūt*, “became eager to join the path to peace”, in the last verse of *sarga* 7, a reading also supported by the South Indian commentaries. From Nandargikar’s notes on 8:10 we know that the commentator Cāritravardhana knew both versions, but called the one known to Vallabhadeva the *mūlapāṭha*, “original reading”. Śrīnātha also commented on both versions of the verse, first on the one transmitted by Hemādri and then on Vallabhadeva’s text.

The following verse also has significant variant readings. This is Vallabhadeva’s version:

*guṇavatsv adhiropitaśriyaḥ pariṇāme hi dilīpavaṃśajāḥ |
padaviṃ taruvalkavāsasām yadi vā saṃyaminām prapedire || 8:11 ||*

For in old age the scions of Dilīpa’s line would transfer their royal majesty to the worthy and take the path of bark-clad hermits, or of ascetics.

In his commentary Vallabhadeva says, “in their old age the kings of Dilīpa’s line took the path of bark-clad forest-dwellers, belonging to the third *āśrama*, or the parth of ascetics (*yatinām*), mendicants (*bhikṣūnām*)”.³⁹ Śrīnātha probably read *avaropitaśriyaḥ*, but the rest of his version seems to agree with Vallabhadeva’s. He

³⁸ In addition the Keralan commentators read *vināśadharmiṣu*.

³⁹ *dilīpavaṃśajā rājāno vṛddhatve vṛkṣatvakparidhānānām vānaprasthānām tṛtīyāśramiṇām, yadi vā yatinām bhikṣūnām mārgam śīśriyuh.*

also identifies the bark-clad hermits as *vānaprasthas* and the ascetics as members of the fourth *āśrama*. Vaidyaśrīgarbha's commentary contains the words *vānaprasthānām* and *bhikṣūṇām*, but it is not clear if in his reading the verse contained the two alternatives connected with *yadi vā*.

The other commentators read the verse differently, without the words *yadi vā* in the last *pāda*. This is Mallinātha's, Hemādri's and the two Keralan commentators' version:

gunavatsutaropitaśriyaḥ pariṇāme hi dilīpavaṃśajāḥ |

padavīm taruvalkavāsasām prayatāḥ saṃyaminām prapedire || 8:11 ||

For in old age the scions of Dilīpa's line would transfer their royal majesty to worthy sons and, restrained, take the path of bark-clad ascetics.

Nandargikar in his footnote to the verse points out that the commentators Cāritravardhana, Dinakara and Sumativijaya read *yaminaḥ* instead of *prayatāḥ*, and the same is probably true about Jinasamudra.⁴⁰ Both Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita are emphatic that the Ikṣvāku-kings became *vānaprasthas* in their old age, because *kṣatriyas* do not have the right to become *saṃnyāsins*. Therefore, instead of interpreting *saṃyaminām* as *yatinām* or *bhikṣūṇām*, Aruṇagirinātha glosses the word with *śāntiparāṇām*, "devoted to peace", while Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita with *jitendriyāṇām*, "those who have conquered their senses".⁴¹ Hemādri also takes the bark-clad *saṃyamins* to be *vānaprasthas*. Mallinātha, on the other hand, glosses *saṃyaminām* with *yatinām*, which usually is a synonym of *saṃnyāsin*.⁴²

This verse appears to be another reference to the "family observance" of the Raghu-dynasty, but the two versions show two different scenarios. The one containing the words *yadi vā* presents two alternative ways in which the kings spent their last years: they became either forest-dwellers (bark garments have been the sign of this group in previous verses) or *saṃnyāsins*. The version without *yadi vā* refers to only one way of life, which most of the commentaries equate with *vānaprasthāśrama*. The fact that there are two variant readings of *yadi vā* suggests that perhaps the verse was altered in order to eliminate the option and especially the alternative of the fourth *āśrama*, and both *prayatāḥ* and *yaminaḥ* were independent attempts in this direction.

⁴⁰ His commentary contains the lemma *saṃyaminaḥ*, but that would make the verse unmetrical.

⁴¹ Aruṇagirinātha *ad loc.*: *vānaprasthānām, saṃnyāse 'nadhikārāt. saṃyaminām śāntiparāṇām. Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita ad loc.*: *saṃyaminām jitendriyāṇām ity arthaḥ, na tu kāṣāyavāsasām saṃyaminām, kṣatriyāṇām tatrānadhikārāt.*

⁴² Cf. *Manusmṛti* 6:86–87.

In the following verse (8:12) Raghu is “about to retire to the forest” (*araṇyasamāśrayanmukha*, a reading shared by all commentators), but Aja beseeches his father not to abandon him. Hemādri quotes here *Manusmṛti* 6:2 concerning the qualification to become a *vānaprastha*:

gr̥hasthas tu yadā paśyed valīpalitam ātmanaḥ |
sāpatyo nirapatyo vā tadāraṇyaṃ samāśrayet ||

When a householder sees his skin wrinkled, his hair turned gray, whether he has children or is childless,⁴³ he should take to the wilderness. (tr. Olivelle, modified)

Kālidāsa’s expression seems to echo the phrasing of this *Manusmṛti*-verse. Mallinātha avoids naming the third *āśrama* explicitly, his gloss is *vanavāsodyukta*, “ready for dwelling in the forest”. In verse 13 we read that Raghu accepted his son’s request, which means, according to Vallabhadeva, that he “agreed to turn back from dwelling in the forest” (*vanavāsān nirvṛttim aṅgīcakāra*). On the other hand Raghu did not resume his royal majesty again. As Hemādri says, “he remained there in the state of indifference” (*audāsīnyena tatra sthitaḥ*). We can thus conclude that Raghu, though he wanted to follow the “family observance” of the Ikṣvāku-kings, in the end did not adopt *vanavāsa*, but stayed close to his son. If we follow the interpretation of those commentators who identify the kings’ forest life with the third *āśrama*, we can say that Raghu did not become a *vānaprastha*.

The first half of the next verse is transmitted in two different versions. Vallabhadeva, Śrīnātha and Vaidyaśrīgarbha commented on the following text:

sa bahiḥ kṣitipālaveśmano nivasann āvasathe yativrataḥ |
samupāsyata putrabhogayā snuṣayevāvīkṛtendriyaḥ śrīyā || 8:14 ||

He lived in a dwelling outside the palace, keeping the vows of an ascetic. There Royal Fortune waited on him like a daughter-in-law, but she was now enjoyed by his son, and he remained indifferent to her attractions.

Vallabhadeva glosses *yativrataḥ* with *niyamadhārī*, “keeping observances”, while in Śrīnātha’s interpretation it means “one whose vow is like that of the ascetics” (*yatinām iva vrato yasya*). Vaidyaśrīgarbha takes the expression to mean “one who has adopted celibacy” (*gr̥hītabrahmacaryaḥ*). It seems all three of them avoid identifying *yati* as *saṃnyāsin* in one way or another. As for the dwelling where Raghu settled, Śrīnātha takes it to be a *yajñasālā*, “sacrificial hall”, while Vaidyaśrīgarbha uses the word *agnigr̥ha*, “a house for keeping the sacred fire”. If this implies that Raghu continued to perform fire-sacrifices, then this means that he did not live as a true *saṃnyāsin*. Wandering about and begging for food are also characteristic marks of the fourth *āśrama*, but Raghu did not practise either of those.

⁴³ Olivelle’s critical edition reads *apatyasyaiva cāpatyaṃ* in *pāda c*.

Mallinātha, Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita, Hemādri and Jinasamudra all read the first two *pādas* as follows:

sa kilāśramam antyam āśrito nivasann āvasathe purād bahiḥ |

Resorting to the last stage of life, they say he lived in a dwelling outside the city.

Both Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita identify, somewhat counter-intuitively, “the last stage of life” as *vānaprasthāśrama*, as does Hemādri, who also adds a reason for this interpretation: “because it is taught that *saṃnyāsa* is only for brahmins” (*brāhmaṇasyaiva saṃnyāsa ity uktatvāt*). The “dwelling” to which Raghu moved was a “leaf-hut” (*uṭaja*) according to the Keralan commentators.⁴⁴ Most interesting is Mallinātha’s long commentary on this verse, in which he argues that “the last stage of life” means, as one would expect, the fourth *āśrama*. First he quotes *śruti* and *smṛti* passages that some people adduce to prove that only brahmins have the right to become *saṃnyāsins*.⁴⁵ Then he quotes *Jābāla Upaniṣad* 4:⁴⁶ *yad ahar eva virajet tad ahar eva pravrajat*, “let him become a mendicant ascetic on the very day that he becomes detached”, and adds that this *śruti* passage applies to all three upper *varṇas*. Then he quotes the proposition of a *sūtrakāra*: *trayāṇām varṇānām vedam adhitya catvāra āśramāḥ*, “after studying the Veda, the four *āśramas* are available for the three *varṇas*”,⁴⁷ and then he cites a *smṛti* passage: *brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatriyo vāpi vaiśya vā pravrajed gṛhāt*, “a brahmin, a *kṣatriya*, or a *vaiśya* may go forth from home [i.e. they may become *saṃnyāsins*]”.⁴⁸ Mallinātha then argues that the prohibition expressed in the verse of Dattātreyā actually only concerns the carrying of the tripple staff, and not *saṃnyāsa tout court*. On the basis of these passages, and because in some texts the word *brāhmaṇa* has a synecdochical meaning, some people hold that all the upper three *varṇas* have the right to enter the fourth *āśrama*. In Mallinātha’s view, Kālidāsa’s position was precisely this, which is shown by the words “resorting to the last stage of life” (*sa kilāśramam antyam āśrito*). If we were to interpret this *pāda* as referring to the third *āśrama*, continues

44 Cf. the meaning “dwelling for ascetics” in <https://nws.uzi.uni-halle.de/search?utf8=✓&q=āvasatha&lang=de>.

45 Mallinātha quotes here *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22 (*brāhmaṇaḥ pravrajanti*), *Manusmṛti* 6:38 (*ātmany agnīn samāropya brāhmaṇaḥ pravrajed gṛhāt*), and the verse attributed to Dattātreyā that Aruṇagirinātha cited in his commentary on 1:8 (see above).

46 Schrader 1912: 64.

47 This *sūtrakāravacana* is also quoted by other authors who variously identify the *sūtrakāra*. The *Yatidharmaprakāśa* (3.21, Olivelle 1976: 34) identifies the source of the verse as *Chandogasūtra*. Cf. Olivelle 1993: 158. n. 73.

48 The same *smṛti* passage is quoted in the *Aparārka* commentary on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3:60, and also in *Yatidharmaprakāśa* 3.22–23 (Olivelle 1976: 34); cf. Olivelle 1993: 200.

Mallinātha, we would be in trouble to explain why Raghu's last rites were performed without fire, as it is normal in the case of *saṃnyāsins*.

Nandargikar in his note to this verse gives Cāritravardhana's version of the first two *pādas* as follows:

sa kila kṣitipālaveśmano nivasann āvasathe yatipriyaḥ |

They say he lived, devoted to ascetics, in a dwelling of the palace.

This reading seems to go back to Vallabhadeva's version, with the change from *yativrataḥ* to *yatipriyaḥ* avoiding the possibility of regarding Raghu himself as a *yati*, that is a *saṃnyāsin*. The word *bahiḥ* is replaced by *kila*, a word we also find in the version of Mallinātha et al. This way Raghu's dwelling place becomes part of the palace, and the word *āvasatha* might refer to a reception room for brahmins at a sacrificial feast.⁴⁹ My impression is that Vallabhadeva's version might be primary, which was first tweaked to get the text known to Cāritravardhana, and perhaps from these two versions a third was produced that was transmitted to Mallinātha and others.

In the following verses of the *Raghuvamśa* we read a parallel description of the lives of the retired old king, Raghu, and the new king, Aja. In verse 8:16 they are said to be *yatipārthivaliṅgadhārīṇau*, "[Raghu] bearing the insignia of an ascetic and [Aja] those of a king". Vallabhadeva and Mallinātha gloss *yati* with *bhikṣu(ka)*, another synonym of *saṃnyāsin*. Śrīnātha understands it as *muni*, a more general term meaning "ascetic, hermit". On the other hand, Aruṇagirinātha and Hemādri both quote the *Amarakośa* (2.7.43)⁵⁰ for a definition of *yati* as *nirjitendriyagrāma*, "one who has conquered the collection of his senses", and Hemādri adds: *jiten-driyatvenātra yatiśabdaprayogaḥ, rājñāṃ saṃnyāsābhāvāt*, "here the word *yati* is used in the meaning of 'one who has conquered his senses', because there is no *saṃnyāsa* for kings". These two commentators clearly reject the possibility that a king could enter the fourth *āśrama*. As for the "insignia of an ascetic", both Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita interpret them to be such things as *yogapaṭṭa*, a band of cloth used during yogic practice.

Not everyone shared the view that Raghu could not possibly become a *yati* in the sense of *saṃnyāsin*. Nandargikar quotes in his endnote to the verse Cāritravardhana's commentary,⁵¹ in which he discusses how Raghu can "bear the insignia of ascetics" if only brahmins are allowed to take up *saṃnyāsa*. Cāritravardhana points out that Sureśvara (in his subcommentary on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*

49 <https://nws.uzi.uni-halle.de/search?utf8=✓&q=āvasatha&lang=de>.

50 Ramanathan 1989: 475.

51 Nandargikar 1982: 149.

on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*) has proved that all three upper *varṇas* have the right to become *saṃnyāsins*, and so did Raghu.

In 8:17cd we find Raghu in the company of *yogins*. The following is Vallabhadeva's version:

ajitādhigamāya mantribhir yuyuḥ nītiviśārādair ajah |
anapāyīpadopalabdhave raghur āptaiḥ samiyāya yogibhiḥ || 8:17 ||
 Aja conferred with his ministers, who were skilled in politics, to attain what he had not yet conquered. Raghu joined trustworthy yogis to reach the never-waning state.

Most commentators also knew another verse which is a variant on the same theme.⁵² The following is Hemādri's version (he calls it a *pāṭhāntara*, just as Vallabhadeva):

samadr̥śyata bhūpatir yuvā sacivaiḥ pratyaham arthasiddhaye |
apunarjananopapattaye pravayāḥ saṃyuyuḥ manīṣibhiḥ ||
 The young king was daily seen by his ministers to settle affairs of state; the older one frequented wise men so that he might never be reborn again.

Vallabhadeva (together with Cāritravardhana and others according to Nandargikar's note to the verse) read *samapṛcya* in the first *pāda*, while Śrīnātha read *samayujyata*, and Jinasamudra *samapṛcchyata*. Instead of *saṃyuyuḥ* in *pāda* d, Śrīnātha, Jinasamudra, as well as Cāritravardhana et al. read *saṃyamibhiḥ* (it is not clear what Vallabhadeva read at this point). Vaidyaśrīgarbha read *vinetṛbhiḥ* in the place of *manīṣibhiḥ*.

The following verse has also been transmitted in two versions. First here is the text known to Vallabhadeva and Cāritravardhana (the latter is quoted from Nandargikar's footnote):

anurañjayitum prajāḥ prabhur vyavahārāsanam ādade navaḥ |
aparaḥ śuciviśtarāśrayaḥ paricetum yatate sma dhāraṇāḥ || 8:18 ||
 The new king occupied the seat of judgment to serve his subjects; the other, seated upon a cushion of pure grass, strove to master the techniques of meditation.

Śrīnātha comments on the same version but seems to read *prathamah* instead of *aparaḥ* and *yatati sma* in *pāda* d. Jinasamudra also knew this verse (8:19 in his text), he also read *prathamah*, just as Vaidyaśrīgarbha, who read *dhāraṇām* in the last *pāda*. All the printed commentaries, however, comment on a different verse at this point:

⁵² Vallabhadeva and Hemādri call it a *pāṭhāntara*, while Cāritravardhana, according to Nandargikar's note to the verse, calls it *kṣepaka*.

*nṛpatiḥ prakṛtī avekṣitum vyavahārāsanam ādāde yuvā |
paricetum upāṁśu dhāraṇām kuśapūtaṁ pravayās tu viṣṭaram ||*

The young king occupied the seat of judgement to inspect his subjects, but the older one occupied a seat purified by kuśa-grass to master meditation in private.

Nandargikar's footnote to this verse reveals that several hitherto unprinted commentaries transmit both verses, as does Jinasamudra. Dominic Goodall has written in detail about the possible evolution in transmission of verses 17 and 18.⁵³ In his view verse 17 was changed first, and its oldest version was the following:

*samapṛcyata bhūpatir yuvā sacivaiḥ pratyaham arthasiddhaye |
apunarjananopapattaye pravayāḥ saṁyuyuje manīṣibhiḥ ||*

This was rewritten and the version accepted by Vallabhadeva as primary was the result. The reason for the rewriting might have been, as Goodall proposes, that the passive form *samapṛcyata* was not wholly parallel with the *ātmanepada* form *saṁyuyuje*, used in an active sense. In Vallabhadeva's time, no change had yet been made to verse 18, and verse 17 seems to have been transmitted in several sources (including Vallabhadeva's commentary) in two versions. This meant that two of the words in the primary version, now rejected but still circulating, were available for reuse when some transmitter came to revise verse 18, namely the words *yuvā* and *pravayāḥ*.⁵⁴ The revision of 18 resulted in a neater parallelism between the two halves of the verse and in a figure (*dīpaka*) that was different from the one in 17 (*prativastu*).

In the following verses Raghu's yogic practice is described: he subdued the five breaths by the practice of meditation (*prañidhāna*, 8:19), focused his mind in his heart to perceive the supreme light (8:20 in Vallabhadeva's version, this verse is omitted by the Keralan commentators and Mallinātha), worked to burn up his karma with the fire of gnosis (8:21, *jñānamayena vahninā*, or *dhyānamayena* in a variant reading), recognised the three *guṇas* as abiding in primal matter (*prakṛtisthaṁ*, 8:22), and practiced equanimity (*ibid.*). "The old king, steadfast in thought, did not cease from the practice of yoga before seeing the ultimate truth", says Kālidāsa in verse 23 (*na ca yogavidher navetaraḥ sthitadhīr [virarāma] ā paramārthadarśanāt* in Vallabhadeva's reading, the printed commentaries read *sthiradhīr*). Raghu attained success in the domain of liberation,

⁵³ Goodall 2009: 71–72.

⁵⁴ For the reasons why these verses were rewritten, see Goodall's study.

apavarga (8:24), and in the end he “joined the eternal soul beyond darkness by means of yogic meditation” (8:25: *tamasah param āpad avyayaṃ puruṣaṃ yogasamādhinā*). The term *yogasamādhī* is an important early attestation of *samādhī* as a practice of “death through meditation”.⁵⁵ Thus Raghu followed the example of the Ikṣvāku-kings, who “renounced their bodies by yoga in the end” (1:8).

The verse describing Raghu’s last rites has been transmitted in two versions. First let us see the version commented upon by Vallabhadeva, Śrīnātha and Vaidyaśrīgarbha:

śrutadehavisarjanaḥ pituś ciraṃ asrūṇi viśṛjya⁵⁶ rāghavaḥ |
vitātāna samaṃ purodhasā kratum antyaṃ pṛthivīśatakratoḥ ||

Upon hearing that he had shed his body, Raghu’s son long shed tears; then arranged, with his chaplain, the final sacrifice for his father, who thus became an “Indra of a hundred sacrifices” on earth.

Śrīnātha understands *kratum antyaṃ*, “final sacrifice”, as *agnidānaśrāddhādi*, “cremation, *śrāddha*, etc.”. All printed commentaries read the second half of this verse differently:

vidadhe vidhim asya naiṣṭhikaṃ yatibhiḥ sārddham anagnim agnicit
Then, himself a keeper of the Vedic fire, he arranged his father’s last rites, which were without fire, together with ascetics.

According to Nandargikar’s note,⁵⁷ Cāritravardhana knew both readings. He marked the version known to Vallabhadeva as *pāṭhaḥ*, and the other version as *kavipāṭhaḥ*, “authorial reading”. He observes: “the ritual has the form of placing [the corpse] in the ground”,⁵⁸ and then adds: “the meaning is that in which way the last rite of *saṃnyāsins* is taught, in that way he performed it together with exactly those people”.⁵⁹ To support his position, Cāritravardhana quotes a verse:

sarvasaṅganivṛttasya dhyānayogaratasya ca |
na tasya dahanam kāryam naiva piṇḍodakakriyāḥ ||
Neither cremation nor the rites of rice balls and water should be performed for someone who has given up all attachments and has been devoted to the practice of meditation.

⁵⁵ Cf. McLaughlin 2021: 9–13.

⁵⁶ Śrīnātha seems to read *vimucya* here.

⁵⁷ Nandargikar 1982: 151.

⁵⁸ *vasudhātalaṣṭhāpanarūpo vidhiḥ* (em.: *vasudhātalaṣṭhāpanarūpaṃ vidhi* Nandargikar). On burying the bodies of *saṃnyāsins*, see also McLaughlin 2021: 13–15.

⁵⁹ *yathā saṃnyāsinaṃ anteṣṭir abhihitā tathā tair eva samaṃ vihitavān iti bhāvaḥ*.

The same verse is also quoted (with some variation) by Hemādri and the Keralan commentators, who attribute it to Śaunaka. Aruṇagirinātha and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita quote one more verse of the same authoritative text:

*nidadhyāt praṇavenaiva bile bhikṣoḥ kalevaram |
prokṣaṇaṁ khaṇanaṁ caiva sarvaṁ tenaiva kārayet ||*

Let him place the corpse of a mendicant in a grave with the sacred OM mantra. Let him have everything—sprinkling, digging—performed with the same [mantra].

We have seen above that Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Hemādri held the position that Raghu could only enter the third *āśrama* and not the fourth, which was open only for brahmins in their view. Yet when they comment on the verse that describes Raghu's last rites, they confirm with an authoritative quotation that he was treated as a *saṁnyāsin*, and do not try to resolve the contradiction. Mallinātha, on the other hand, referred forward precisely to this verse in his commentary on 8:14, saying that the fact that Raghu was not cremated shows that he died as a *saṁnyāsin*.

The following verse (8:27 in Vallabhadeva's text, 8:26 in Mallinātha's) says that Aja performed the rites for the deceased out of love for his father, even though "those who quit the body by such a path do not need a son's food-offerings" (*na hi tena pathā tanutyajas tanayāvarjitapiṇḍakāṅkṣiṇaḥ*). Vallabhadeva takes the "path" to be "the method of yoga" (*yogavidhi*), and he adds: "for they are forever satisfied, having reached the eternal, imperishable state" (*ajam amṛtaṁ hi te padam āptā nityatṛptāḥ*). Mallinātha, Hemādri, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Śrīnātha also understand the "path" to be the path of yoga. Cāritravardhana remarks that Aja "performed not only the last rite of ascetics but also the rites suitable for the householders' life-stage" (*na paraṁ yatīnāṁ anteṣṭiṁ cakre kiṁ tu gārhaṣṭhacitam apy ācacāra*).⁶⁰ Interestingly Aruṇagirinātha seems not to have commented on this verse.

Let us summarise what we have learnt about Raghu's final years. As it is customary in the family of the Ikṣvākus, he entrusted the responsibilities of kingship to his son Aja, and wished to move forth from the life-stage of householders. *Pāda* c of the last verse of *sarga* 7 has been transmitted in two versions: Raghu was either "eager to put on bast garments" or "eager to join the path to peace". The former reading alludes to *vanavāsa*, while the latter is more vague concerning the lifestyle and emphasises that Raghu was striving for liberation, *mokṣa*. In verse 10 of the next *sarga* we can observe a similar variation. The reading known to Vallabhadeva expresses clearly that "Raghu took the path old age dictated that leads to the forest", while the other variant does not tell us about the lifestyle chosen by the old king but rather foregrounds his aspirations to achieve *mokṣa*.

⁶⁰ Nandargikar 1982: 151.

Verse 11 contains two words that are also found in the version of verse 10 known to Vallabhadeva: *padavī* and *pariṇāma*. On the other hand, it might appear a bit strange that after the last verse of *sarga* 7 and after the expression *pariṇāmadeśitām* in verse 8:10, Kālidāsa devotes a whole verse to talk about the “family observance” of the Ikṣvāku-kings again, unless this verse contains some new information. The verse as known to Vallabhadeva and Śrīnātha (and possibly Vaidyaśrīgarbha) does contain new information: in their old age those born in Dilīpa’s line became *either* bark-clad hermits, *or* ascetics. This statement, however, does not tally with what we read in the other parts of the *Raghuvamśa*, where living in the forest as bark-clad hermits seems to be the lifestyle followed by the old kings of the Sūryavamśa.

One might outline the following scenario for the changes that took place during the transmission of the three above mentioned verses. First, verses 7:71 and 8:10 as known to Vallabhadeva were changed in a way that the direct reference to *vanavāsa* was replaced by allusions to the king’s endeavour to reach *mokṣa*, thus opening the possibility of the way of life of a *saṃnyāsin*. We have seen that the old version of 8:10 was still around—Cāritravardhana and Śrīnātha commented on both variants—and verse 8:11 was written reusing two words from this old version (Vallabhadeva comments on a contaminated version which contains the old variants of 7:71 and 8:10 *and* the new verse 8:11). Why was 8:11 composed? Perhaps to account for the way of life Raghu actually lived after he gave up the idea of *vanavāsa*: he kept company with *yogins*, himself practiced *yoga* and bore the insignia of *yatis*, in other words he lived as a *saṃnyāsin*, except for begging and wandering. As a next step we might suppose that 8:11 was modified by those who could not accept that *kṣatriyas* could become *saṃnyāsins*, and the variant without *yadi vā* was created.

Another possible scenario could be summarised as follows: Vallabhadeva’s version of verses 8:10 and 8:11 is primary, and the repetition of *padavī* and *pariṇāma* is a case of Verschränkung or concatenation, a poetic device observed in Kālidāsa’s works by Schubring (1955) and more recently by Salomon (2016). Later, in the course of transmission such a repetition was considered disturbing and 8:10 was rewritten, the result being the version known to Mallinātha and others. Another motivation behind altering both 8:10 and 7:71 might have been, as we have pointed out above, to exchange the direct reference to *vanavāsa* with a more general statement of the old king stepping on the path leading towards liberation. These new readings tallied better with the alternatives set forth in 8:11.

The older version of the verse that describes the place where Raghu lived as an ascetic was perhaps the one known to Vallabhadeva, Śrīnātha and Vaidyaśrīgarbha, in which we see the old king living outside the palace, keeping the vows of a *yati*. This was slightly modified to get the reading known to Cāritravardhana, and

then, using these two versions, a third was created, the one commented on by Mallinātha et al., which moved Raghu outside the city and made him explicitly adopt the last *āśrama*, meaning *saṃnyāsa* (pace the interpretations of Hemādri and the Keralan commentators). This reading is in harmony with the older version of verse 11: since Raghu could not take up *vanavāsa*, he chose the second option, that of the *saṃyamin*, that is *saṃnyāsin*. This would mean that verse 11 was still unchanged when verse 14 (in Vallabhadeva's numbering) was modified.

From the following verses it becomes clear that Raghu bore the signs of *yatis*, that is *saṃnyāsins* (again pace Hemādri and Aruṇagirinātha), joined yogis and himself practised yogic meditation. As for the verse describing Raghu's last rites, again we might suppose that the version known to Vallabhadeva, Śrīnātha and Vaidyaśrīgarbha might be primary, and it was modified to match the ritual with the *saṃnyāsin* status of the deceased king. Again, this scenario presupposes that verse 11 still had the *yadi vā* option.

Raghu's renunciation was unique, and fitting it into the *āśrama* system was not an easy task. We might picture the older version of his story as follows: having transferred the kingdom to Aja, Raghu prepared for *vanavāsa*, following the "family observance". Aja besought his father to stay close to him, so Raghu settled near the palace, perhaps at a dwelling for brahmins invited for sacrifice. He stayed there in the company of yogis and lived like a yogi himself, but did not become a mendicant. When he died, his son together with Vasiṣṭha, the royal chaplain, performed his last rites, which was probably cremation. Aja also performed the post-crematory ritual, though, as Kālidāsa says, Raghu did not need them, presumably because he reached liberation through yoga.

4 Conclusions

We have seen that the commentators were divided on the issue of renunciation. The oldest commentator, Vallabhadeva read 8:11 as containing an alternative: the Raghu kings in their old age adopted either the third *āśrama* and became *vānaprasthas*, or they became *yatis/bhikṣus*. The case of Raghu was a special one: he practiced *yoga* in the company of *yogins*, bearing the insignia of *yatis/bhikṣus*, yet he did not become a wandering mendicant. Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita and Hemādri shared the view that *kṣatriyas* did not have the right to become mendicant ascetics, *saṃnyāsins*, and the fourth life-stage was only available to brahmins. In some cases they resorted to tendentious exegesis, for instance when they avoided understanding the word *yati* as a synonym of *saṃnyāsin*, or when they interpreted the expression "last life-stage" as *vānaprasthāśrama*. On the other hand, when they were commenting on a reading that clearly stated that the dead

king's body was treated just like the body of a *saṃnyāsin*, they did not (or could not) resolve the contradiction between the verse and their position in the matter of renunciation.

Mallinātha and, as far as we can see from the snippets quoted by Nandargikar, Cāritravardhana represent the other side in the debate. In their view Kālidāsa accepted the possibility of *kṣatriyas* becoming *saṃnyāsins*. They were conversant with the debate as it appears in *dharmaśāstra* literature, and quoted those *śruti* and *smṛti* passages that the authors of *dharmaśāstra* works or the commentators of sacred or philosophical texts also quoted to give support to their viewpoints. Interestingly, the text of the *Raghuvamśa* was also adduced as confirming evidence: the seventeenth-century *Yatidharmaparakāśa* (3.36–45, Olivelle 1976: 34) quotes 8:16 to give support to the view that *kṣatriyas* (and *vaiśyas*) can also adopt the fourth stage of life, and *saṃnyāsa* is open not just for brahmins.

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