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Vṛddhekṣvākuvratam. The commentators' interpretations of the passages describing the renunciation of kings in the Raghuvaṃśa

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Abstract: At the end of their life, after transferring the kingdom to their grown-up sons, several kings of the Sūryavaṃśa chose to retire from the world and devoted their last years to asceticism and meditation. The verses of the *Raghuvaṃśa* 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former studies on the subject by Tsuchida, Olivelle and Goodall, and most importantly discusses both published and unpublished commentaries on the Raghuvaṃśa, examining what authorities they quote to give support to their views on this dharmaśāstric issue, as well as the efforts they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 Raghuvaṃśa as being both internally consistent and in harmony with the teachings on dharma they consider valid.

Keywords: āśrama; commentaries; Raghuvamśa; renunciation; samnyāsa

1 Introduction

In his article *Die Weltentsagung der Ikṣvāku-Könige* Ryutaro Tsuchida examined those passages of the *Raghuvaṃśa* 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 *āśrama*s, 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 *āśrama*s as consecutive life-stages and he also knew the *Manusṃrti* which describes the *āśrama*s as such. The retiring kings of the *Raghuvaṃśa* were usually identified by the commentators as *vānaprasthas* (belonging to the third life-stage). But the picture is not that straightforward: certain verses in the *Raghuvaṃśa* 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 *Raghuvaṃśa* 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 *Raghuvaṃśa*, 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 \bar{a} śramas. The *Vaikhānasa Dharmasūtra* (1.1) and the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (15.62–63) assert that only the *brāhmaṇas* are entitled to all four life-stages, which means that from the *kṣatriyas* down the fourth \bar{a} śrama, saṃnyāsa was not an

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

² Vaidya 1969: 78.

³ Tsuchida 1997: 142-143.

⁴ In *Raghuvaṃśa* 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 *kṣatriya*s the protection of the *varṇa*s and the *āśrama*s 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). 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). 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*, but interestingly Sureśvara in his subcommentary defends the position that *saṃnyāṣa* is open to all three twice-born *varṇas*. Most mediaeval authorities on *dharmaṣāstra* held that only *brāhmaṇas* could become *saṃnyāṣins*, but we also find examples of the view that did not limit access to the final *āśrama* to *brāhmaṇas*. For example the fourteenth-century digest, the *Madanapārijāta*, defends the position that the fourth *āśrama* is available for all three twice-born *varṇas*.

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 $samny\bar{a}sins$ at the end of their life. On the following pages I quote the following commentaries:

- Vallabhadeva's Pañcikā (10th century, Kashmir)¹⁶
- Mallinātha's Samjīvinī (14–15th century, Andhra)¹⁷
- Arunagirinātha'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 pārivrājyapratipattir asti.

¹² Sureśvara on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4 (Āpṭe 1893: 758): trayāṇām api varṇānāṃ śrutau saṃnyāsadarśanāt | brāhmaṇasyaiva saṃnyāsa iti śrutyā virudhyate || 1651 ||, on 3.5 (Āpṭe 1893: 1254): trayāṇām aviśeṣeṇa saṃnyāsaḥ śrūyate śrutau | yadopalakṣaṇārthaṃ syād brāhmaṇagrahaṇaṃ 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 $Y\bar{a}j\tilde{n}avalkyasmṛti$ 3:60 (quoted in Olivelle 1993: 200. n 59). Vij \tilde{n} āneśvara on $Y\bar{a}j\tilde{n}avalkyasm̞rti$ 3: 56–7 (Acharya 1949: 365–366) discusses both views.

¹⁵ Smritiratna 1893: 365-373.

¹⁶ I quote Vallabhadeva's commentary on the basis of Goodall and Isaacson (2003) for the first six *sarga*s, 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 Arunagirinātha see Venkitasubramonia Iyer 1983.

- Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita's Padārthadīpikā (16th century, Kerala)¹⁹
- Hemādri's Darpaṇa (15th century?)²⁰
- Jinasamudra's $Tik\bar{a}$ (15th century)²¹
- Śrīnātha's $T\bar{i}k\bar{a}$ (before 1473/4 CE)²²
- Vaidyaśrīgarbha's Ţīkā (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 *Saṃjīvinī*.

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 'bhyastavidyānāṃ yauvane viṣayaiṣiṇām | vārddhake munivṛttīnāṃ 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 \bar{a} sramas. Vallabhadeva identifies only the third $p\bar{a}da$ as describing an \bar{a} srama, namely that of a $v\bar{a}$ naprastha, but the fourth $p\bar{a}da$ he takes as referring only to the way of dying, not to the fourth lifestage. Here he glosses yoga as $sam\bar{a}dhi$, 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 $p\bar{a}da$ as a reference to moksa, but then he mentions and explicitly rejects the possibility that the fourth pāda could refer to the fourth āśrama, saṃnyāsa. He points out that only a brāhmaṇa has the right to enter the fourth āśrama, and quotes Dattatreya as a supporting authority:

mukhajānām ayam dharmo yad viṣṇor lingadhāraṇam | bāhujātorujātānām ayam 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 Arunagirinātha's view, that for a ksatriya the last stage of life was the *vānaprasthāśrama*.²⁸

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

atha sa vişayavyāvṛttātmā yathāvidhi sūnave nṛpatikakudaṃ dattvā yūne sitātapavāraṇam | munivanatarucchāyām devyā tayā saha śiśriye galitavayasām Ikṣvākūṇām idaṃ 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 munīnām vṛttir iva vṛttir yeṣām teṣām. etena vānaprasthāśramo vivakṣitaḥ. ante śarīratyāgakāle yogena paramātmadhyānena ... teṣām dehatyāginām. etena mokṣabhāvo vivakṣitaḥ.

^{27 &}quot;Viṣṇu's sign" is the ascetic's triple staff, tridaṇḍa, or the single staff, ekadaṇḍa (cf. Madanapārijāta in Smritiratna 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 (Pansîkar 1992: 159), introducing it as purāṇe 'pi, and reading the last pāda as nāyam dharmah 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 Aruņagirinātha ad 1:8: śaiśava ityādinā yathākālam brahmacaryādyāśramatrayasvīkāras tadantaram viśişţenopāyena svecchayā śarīratyāgāt paramātmaprāptiś ca. (...) nanu yogenetyādinā saṃnyāsāśramaḥ kiṃ neṣyate? ucyate. brāhmaṇasyaiva tatrādhikāraḥ yathāha dattātreyaḥ. "mukhajānām ayaṃ dharmo yad viṣṇor liṅgadhāraṇam | bāhujātorujātānām ayaṃ dharmo na vidyate ||" iti. kavir api "tam araṇyasamāśrayonmukham (8:12)" ity uktvā "sa kilāśramam antyam āśrita (8:14)" ity anuvadişyati.

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 \bar{a} śrama 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 $v\bar{a}$ naprasthāśrama, and quotes $Y\bar{a}$ jñavalkyasmṛti 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 vṛddhekṣvākuvrataṃ 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 *vṛddhekṣvākuvrata* with *vanavāsa*, "living in the forest". In verse 12:8 Rāma is described as donning bark garments (*cīre ca parigṛḥṇataḥ* 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 (valkalāmbaradhāriṇā); 2. 33:7 (cīre, munivastrāṇi); 2.67:8 (cīravalkalavāsasam); 2.93:25 (cīravalkalavāsasam); 2.97:20 (valkalavāsasā); 2.107:20 (valkalajaṭādhārī muniveṣadharaḥ). It seems possible that in Raghuvaṃśa 12:8 cīre parigṛhṇataḥ 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 ajaryaṃ jarasopadiṣṭam adehabandhāya punar babandha). Vallabhadeva comments that Nala "moved to a penance grove" (tapovanaṃ yayāv ity arthaḥ); Mallinātha similarly says that "he went to the forest for the sake of liberation" (mokṣārthaṃ vanaṃ gata ity arthaḥ). King Viśvasaha chose to end his life in the same way:

pitā pitṛṇām anṛnas tam ante vayasy anantāni sukhāni lipsuḥ | $r\bar{a}j\bar{a}nam \; \bar{a}j\bar{a}nuvilambib\bar{a}huṃ kṛtvā kṛtī valkadharo babhūva ||^{32}$ [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 *tapaś 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 identfies 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", *vanaṃ 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* (*brahmabhūyaṃ 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:

 $mah\bar{n}m$ mahecchah $parik\bar{n}rya$ $s\bar{u}nau$ $man\bar{s}ine$ jaiminaye ' $rpit\bar{a}tm\bar{a}$ | $tasm\bar{a}t$ $sayog\bar{a}d$ adhigamya yogam ajanmane 'kalpata $janmabh\bar{n}ruh$ $||^{35}$ 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 (śiśriye ... paścime vayasi naimiṣaṃ, 19:1). Vallabhadeva interprets Sudarśana's attribute, śrutavatām apaścimaḥ, "first among the learned", as follows: etad eva hi pāṇḍityaṃ 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 tapaḥ, 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 *Raghuvaṃśa* 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.: tacchişyatvaṃ 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: vanaṃ gacchanti, "they move to the forest". The word gṛhāya stands for grhasthāśrama according to Arunagirinātha and Nārāyanapandita (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 yatīnām *vāsah*, "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 Nārāyanapandita 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 $p\bar{a}da$ c can and have been interpreted by the commentators as a preparation for $vanav\bar{a}sa$, dwelling in the forest, though $c\bar{i}ra$, "bark garment" is perhaps a clearer indicator than the more general $s\bar{a}ntim\bar{a}rga$, "path to peace". The latter reading could be taken, in theory, as pointing to the fourth $\bar{a}srama$, $samny\bar{a}sa$, 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 pratiṣṭhitaṃ prakṛtiṣv ajam ābhigāmikaiḥ | padavīṃ pariṇāmadeśitāṃ 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 valkalam grahītum iyeşa, vanam ajigamişad ity arthah.

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 pratiṣṭhitaṃ 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 | padavīṃ taruvalkavāsasāṃ yadi vā saṃyamināṃ 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 $\bar{a}\dot{s}rama$, or the parth of ascetics ($yat\bar{n}am$), mendicants ($bhiks\bar{u}n\bar{a}m$)". Srīnātha probably read $avaropita\dot{s}riyah$, but the rest of his version seems to agree with Vallabhadeva's. He

³⁸ In addition the Keralan commentators read *vināśadharmişu*.

³⁹ dilīpavaṃśajā rājāno vṛddhatve vṛkṣatvakparidhānānāṃ vānaprasthānāṃ tṛtīyāśramiṇāṃ, yadi vā yatīnāṃ bhikṣūṇāṃ mārgaṃ śiśriyuḥ.

also identifies the bark-clad hermits as $v\bar{a}naprasthas$ and the ascetics as members of the fourth $\bar{a}\acute{s}rama$. Vaidyaśrīgarbha's commentary contains the words $v\bar{a}naprasth\bar{a}n\bar{a}m$ and $bhikṣ\bar{u}n\bar{a}m$, but it is not clear if in his reading the verse contained the two alternatives connected with $yadi\ v\bar{a}$.

The other commentators read the verse differently, without the words $yadi \ v\bar{a}$ in the last $p\bar{a}da$. This is Mallinātha's, Hemādri's and the two Keralan commentators' version:

gunavatsutaropitaśriyaḥ pariṇāme hi dilīpavaṃśajāḥ | padavīṃ taruvalkavāsasāṃ prayatāḥ saṃyamināṃ 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. 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 *saṃyamināṃ* as *yatīnāṃ* or *bhikṣūṇāṃ*, Aruṇagirinātha glosses the word with *śāntiparāṇāṃ*, "devoted to peace", while Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita with *jitendriyāṇāṃ*, "those who have conquered their senses". Hemādri also takes the bark-clad *saṃyamins* to be *vānaprasthas*. Mallinātha, on the other hand, glosses *saṃyamināṃ* with *yatīnāṃ*, which usually is a synonym of *saṃnyāsin*. de

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 $yadi\ v\bar{a}$ 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 $samny\bar{a}sins$. The version without $yadi\ v\bar{a}$ refers to only one way of life, which most of the commentaries equate with $v\bar{a}naprasth\bar{a}\dot{s}rama$. The fact that there are two variant readings of $yadi\ v\bar{a}$ suggests that perhaps the verse was altered in order to eliminate the option and especially the alternative of the fourth $\bar{a}\dot{s}rama$, and both $prayat\bar{a}\dot{h}$ and $yamina\dot{h}$ 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, sannyāse 'nadhikārāt. saṃyaminām śāntiparāṇām. Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita ad loc.: saṃyaminām jitendriyāṇām ity arthaḥ, na tu kāṣāyavāsasāṃ saṃyaminām, kṣatriyāṇām tatrānadhikārāt.

⁴² Cf. Manusmṛti 6:86-87.

In the following verse (8:12) Raghu is "about to retire to the forest" (*aranyasamāśrayonmukha*, 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*:

gṛhasthas 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 putrabhogyayā snuṣayevāvikṛtendriyaḥ śriyā || 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" (yatīnām iva vrato yasya). Vaidyaśrīgarbha takes the expression to mean "one who has adopted celibacy" (gṛhītabrahmacaryaḥ). It seems all three of them avoid identifying yatī as saṃnyāsin in one way or another. As for the dwelling where Raghu settled, Śrīnātha takes it to be a yajñaśālā, "sacrificial hall", while Vaidyaśrīgarbha uses the word agnigṛha, "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 Arunagirinātha 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" (utaja) 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 samnyāsins. 45 Then he quotes Jābāla Upaniṣad 4:46 yad ahar eva virajet tad ahar eva pravrajet, "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: trayāṇāṃ varṇānāṃ vedam adhītya catvāra āśramāḥ, "after studying the Veda, the four āśramas are available for the three varnas", 47 and then he cites a smrti passage: brāhmaṇah kṣatriyo vāpi vaiśyo vā pravrajed gṛhāt, "a brahmin, a kṣatriya, or a vaiśya may go forth from home [i.e. they may become samnyāsins]". 48 Mallinātha then argues that the prohibition expressed in the verse of Dattatreya actually only concerns the carrying of the tripple staff, and not samnyāsa 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 varnas 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 (*brāhmaṇāḥ pravrajanti*), *Manusmṛti* 6:38 (*ātmany agnīn samāropya brāhmaṇaḥ pravrajed gṛhāt*), and the verse attributed to Dattātreya 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 *pāda*s 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 *Raghuvaṃśa* 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 *yatipārthivalingadhāriṇau*, "[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: *jitendriyatvenātra 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 insigina 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 *varṇa*s 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:

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ajitādhigamāya mantribhir yuyuje nītiviśāradair ajaḥ | anapāyipadopalabdhaye 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.
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Most commentators also knew another verse which is a variant on the same theme. The following is Hemādri's version (he calls it a $p\bar{a}th\bar{a}ntara$, just as Vallabhadeva):

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samadṛśyata bhūpatir yuvā sacivaiḥ pratyaham arthasiddhaye | apunarjananopapattaye pravayāḥ saṃyuyuje 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.
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Vallabhadeva (together with Cāritravardhana and others according to Nandargi-kar's note to the verse) read *samapṛcyata* in the first *pāda*, while Śrīnātha read *samayujyata*, and Jinasamudra *samapṛcchyata*. Instead of *saṃyuyuje* 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):

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anurañjayituṃ prajāḥ prabhur vyavahārāsanam ādade navaḥ | aparaḥ śuciviṣṭarāśrayaḥ paricetuṃ 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.
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Śrīnātha comments on the same version but seems to read prathamah instead of aparah and yatati sma in $p\bar{a}da$ d. Jinasamudra also knew this verse (8:19 in his text), he also read prathamah, just as Vaidyaśrīgarbha, who read $dh\bar{a}ran\bar{a}m$ in the last $p\bar{a}da$. 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 prakṛtīr avekṣitum vyavahārāsanam ādade yuvā | paricetum upāṃśu dhāraṇāṃ kuśapūtaṃ 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 saṃyuyuje 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 samaprcyata was not wholly parallel with the $\bar{a}tmanepada$ form samyuyuje, 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 $yuv\bar{a}$ and $pravay\bar{a}h$. The revision of 18 resulted in a neater parallelism between the two halves of the verse and in a figure $(d\bar{i}paka)$ 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 (praṇidhāna, 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 (prakṛtisthaṃ, 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: tamasaḥ param āpad avyayaṃ puruṣaṃ yogasamādhinā). The term yogasamādhi is an important early attestation of samādhi as a practice of "death through meditation". 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:

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śrutadehavisarjanaḥ pituś ciram asrūṇi visṛjya<sup>56</sup> rāghavaḥ | vitatāna samaṃ purodhasā kratum antyaṃ pṛthivīśatakratoḥ ||
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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 sārdham 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:

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sarvasanganivṛttasya dhyānayogaratasya ca |
na tasya dahanam kāryam naiva piṇḍodakakriyāḥ ||
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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 *vasudhātalasthāpanarūpo vidhiḥ* (em.: *vasudhātalasthāpanarūpaṃ vidhi* Nandargikar). On burying the bodies of *saṃnyāsins*, see also McLaughlin 2021: 13–15.

⁵⁹ yathā saṃnyāsinām antestir 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 | prokṣaṇaṃ khananaṃ caiva sarvaṃ tenaiva kārayet || Let him place the corpse of a mendicant in a grave with the sacred Oḍ 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 saṃnyāsin, and do not try to resolve the contradiction. Mallinātha, on the other hand, refered 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 saṃnyāsin.

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 amṛtaṃ 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 paraṃ yatīnāṃ anteṣṭiṃ cakre kiṃ tu gārhasthocitam 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 house-holders. *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: <code>padavī</code> and <code>pariṇāma</code>. On the other hand, it might appear a bit strange that after the last verse of <code>sarga</code> 7 and after the expression <code>pariṇāmadeśitāṃ</code> 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 <code>either</code> bark-clad hermits, <code>or</code> ascetics. This statement, however, does not tally with what we read in the other parts of the <code>Raghuvaṃśa</code>, where living in the forest as bark-clad hermits seems to be the lifestyle followed by the old kings of the Sūryavaṃśa.

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 $\bar{a}\acute{s}rama$, meaning $samny\bar{a}sa$ (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 $vanav\bar{a}sa$, he chose the second option, that of the samyamin, that is $samny\bar{a}sin$. 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 transfered 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. Anuṇagirinātha, 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 *kṣatriya*s 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 *Raghuvaṃśa* was also adduced as confirming evidence: the seventeenth-century *Yatidharmaprakāśa* (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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