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## From Ayodhyā to the Daṇḍaka: Rāma's journey in exile according to the Jain *Rāmāyaṇas*

Eva De Clercq

### Abstract

In this chapter, I compare the journey of Rāma from Ayodhyā to the forest in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* with the parallel episodes of the main Jain tradition of Rāma tellings. Whereas in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa spend 10 years visiting *āśramas* in the forest and protecting sages before settling in Pañcavaṭī, in the Jain accounts, the visits to *āśramas* are largely replaced with visits to cities, helping rulers in need and marrying princesses. I argue how these changes reflect the strategy of the Jain authors to bring the Jain Rāma narrative into line with the Jain universal history, how they allow a representation of Rāma and Sītā as the ideal lay couple and how they underscore the forest as the place for ascetics alone.

### Introduction: *Rāmāyaṇa* and the forest

In his introduction to the Aranyakāṇḍa, translator Sheldon Pollock (1991: 3–6) discusses some of the responses readers of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have had to the transition from the second book, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, to the third,

Aranyakāṇḍa—that is, the spatial shift from the city to the forest. Classical Indology scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning with Hermann Jacobi, experienced this transition as a rupture or a discontinuity in the narrative. They believed that the first part (that is, Ayodhyākāṇḍa) represents a work dealing with *dharmā* and that the narrative in the Aranyakāṇḍa is to be considered more as a ‘romance’, including various supernatural characters who were largely absent from the Ayodhyakāṇḍa. According to them, a possible reason for this discontinuity is the fact that the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* combines two originally distinct narratives into one. Other scholars, including Pollock, do not see anything problematic in this shift to the forest and emphasise the presence of similar episodes of forest exile in other examples of Indian narrative literature, including the *Mahābhārata*, the Nalopākhyāna and the *Vessantara Jātaka*, to name a few, suggesting that a forest exile is a popular motif of the Indian epic genre.

In this chapter, I explore the dramatically distinctive way in which the shift from Ayodhyā to the forest and beyond is dealt with in a different, ‘oppositional’ set of *Rāmāyaṇas*—more precisely, those by Jain authors—and how these changes can be explained within the overall Jain reframing of the narrative.

## ***Rāmāyaṇa* and Jainism**

In the past 25 centuries or so, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been told and retold thousands of times by authors who freely adapted the story to their own requirements. Jain authors also composed adaptations in many literary languages, from Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsha to vernaculars such as Kannada, Gujarati and classical Hindi.<sup>1</sup> Characteristic of these Jain retellings is the fact that they are sometimes highly critical of the ‘standard’ popular versions attributed to Vālmīki or Vyāsa—here, probably representing authoritative Brahmanical epic and purāṇic authorship in general, rather than the author of the *Mahābhārata* and its Rāma narrative in the Rāmopākhyāna, specifically. Some commence with a list of episodes from the ‘standard’ version that they claim to be false and for which they offer another, often far more logical, explanation (see De Clercq and Vekemans forthcoming).

1 For an overview of different traditions within the Jain, see Kulkarni (1990). Recent studies by Gregory Clines (2018) and Adrian Plau (2018) deal with later Jain reworkings in Sanskrit and classical Hindi.

The story that the Jain authors offer is in many ways more coherent and therefore often makes sense at times when Vālmīki's story does not. This is, of course, initially due to the different way in which these Jain versions came about—namely, as works composed by a single identifiable author at one point in time, whereas the text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki as we now have it, though more coherent than the *Mahābhārata*, is still a work of layers added on to a kernel over several centuries, as is accepted by most scholars. The basic Jain story is very similar to that of Vālmīki, narrating the life of Rāma, the Prince of Ayodhyā, whose wife, Sītā, is abducted by King Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā during their exile in the forest, and who, together with his brother Lakṣmaṇa, and with the help of the *vānaras*, vanquishes Rāvaṇa and is reunited with his beloved. Despite the existence of different Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* accounts and traditions (Kulkarni 1990), there appears to be a common Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* prototype that distinguishes itself in two features.

First, the Jains adapted the story to Jain ideology and to the concept of what has been termed the Jain universal history—a framework that the Jains themselves term (*mahā*)*purāṇa*. According to this framework, in every period, *śalākā-puruṣas* or *mahāpuruṣas* ('great men') are born in succession—the standard list numbering 63 such heroes, each with a specific mythic-historical role. They include the 24 *Tīrthaṅkaras* or *Jinas*, the 'prophets' of Jainism, 12 *cakravartins* or 'universal emperors' and nine sets of a Baladeva, Vāsudeva and Prativāsudeva. The main characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa, are the eighth Baladeva, Vāsudeva and Prativāsudeva, respectively, of the current period, at the time of the fourteenth *Tīrthaṅkara*, Muni Suvrata. These categories of Baladevas, Vāsudevas and Prativāsudevas are sets of heroes and antiheroes who live simultaneously, their lives intertwined. As the names of these categories make clear, the biographies of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa (Vāsudeva) must have been the inspiration for the Baladeva, Vāsudeva and Prativāsudeva categories; the Baladeva is always the older half-brother to the Vāsudeva and the Vāsudeva ends up killing their mortal enemy, the Prativāsudeva. So, here, Lakṣmaṇa kills Rāvaṇa, not Rāma.

The second commonality concerns the characterisation of the *rākṣasas* and the *vānaras*. In the Jain narratives, they are not demons and monkeys, but humans belonging to two distinct branches of the Vidyādhara dynasty. How this Vidyādhara dynasty came into being is narrated in the biography of the first *Tīrthaṅkara*, Ṛṣabha, often included in the Jain *Rāmāyaṇas*. Ṛṣabha, the founder of the Ikṣvāku dynasty of Ayodhyā and thus direct forefather to Rāma at the time of his renunciation, divided the realm among his relatives.

Two relatives, Nami and Vinami, were absent on this occasion and, later, when Ṛṣabha was already immersed in meditation, approached him to claim their land. Their presence near Ṛṣabha and the possible disturbance they posed to his meditation alerted Dharaṇendra, the lord of the *nāgas*—in Jainism, a class of serpent deities. He appeared there and offered the two men *vidyās* and a territory comprising the two ranges of the Vaitāḍya mountains. Hence, their dynasty came to be known as that of the Vidyādhara (*‘vidyā-bearers’*). Generations later, the *rākṣasas* and *vānaras* rose as two closely allied branches within this dynasty.

These Jain *vidyās* are portrayed as a kind of supernatural female entity, sometimes translated as ‘genies’, granting the person who possesses them certain powers—for example, the power to change one’s appearance or size. These *vidyās* are inherited through one’s family, but they can also be gained through performing austerities. There are occasions when *vidyās* are simply donated by one person to another. The Jain Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, too, are described as possessing some *vidyās*, though they are not part of the Vidyādhara dynasty. As Vidyādhara, the *vānaras* were named *vānara* (*‘monkeys’*) because their ancestral island was Vānaradvīpa (*‘Monkey Island’*) and because they had a monkey as their emblem. On the explanation for the name *rākṣasa*, Jain authors disagree: some say they are named after an early ancestor called Rakṣas, others say the name is linked to a *vidyā* called Rākṣasī and an island called Rākṣasadvīpa, which were donated to Toyadavāhana, the first king of the *rākṣasa* dynasty. In the second, less widespread Jain Rāma tradition (of Guṇabhadra’s *Uttarapurāṇa*), however, the *vānaras* and *rākṣasas* do not manifest themselves as such until they are opposite each other on the battlefield in Lāṅkā; then, the Vidyādhara in Rāma’s camp take on the form of monkeys, while those in Rāvaṇa’s camp take on the form of demonic *rākṣasas*. This transformation of the *vānaras* and *rākṣasas* into humans is generally recognised as a tendency by the Jain authors to rationalise the story of Vālmīki.

For this chapter, I focus on the most authoritative tradition of Jain Rāma stories and its three closely related earliest texts—namely, the *Paūmacarīyaṃ*, in Māhārāṣṭrī by Vimalasūri (third–fifth centuries CE; hereinafter *PCV*), the *Padmapurāṇa* or *Padmacarita* in Sanskrit by Raviṣeṇa (678 CE; hereinafter *PCR*) and the Apabhramsha version, *Paūmacariu* (ninth–tenth centuries CE; hereinafter *PCS*), by Svayambhūdeva. Of these three authors, Svayambhūdeva is the only one to mimic Vālmīki’s division of the work into five *kāṇḍas*: 1) Vidyādharakāṇḍa, 2) Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 3) Sundarakāṇḍa,

4) Yuddhakāṇḍa and 5) Uttarakāṇḍa.<sup>2</sup> With an Aranyakāṇḍa not being part of the set, the events parallel to Vālmiki's Aranyakāṇḍa are here transferred to the Ayodhyākāṇḍa. I begin with a summary of Vālmiki's account, comparing it with these texts.

## From Ayodhyā to Citrakūṭa

Following the intrigues of Kaikeyī and receiving the news of Rāma's banishment, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa have set out on their journey towards a life as ascetics in the forest in the first part of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, in *Sarga* 35 of the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, as devastated family members and sympathisers trail after them. In *Sarga* 41, they leave the city in a chariot, still followed by a small group of aged brahmins, who eventually return to Ayodhyā after Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā leave their campsite in the chariot early in the morning before the brahmins are awake. They traverse the land of Kosala, which is strewn with forests and villages, where the news of Rāma's exile has already reached, and cross several streams, as Rāma reminisces about royal hunting parties in the area (42–43), until they reach the fortified town (*durga*; 46.59) of Śṛṅgaverapura on the bank of the River Gaṅgā, where Guha, King of the Niṣādas, rules. Guha offers them his hospitality and even rule over his kingdom, but Rāma refuses given his resolve to stay true to his father's word and live in the forest as an ascetic (44–45).

On the third day of their exile, before crossing the Gaṅgā in a boat, Rāma orders the charioteer Sumantra to go back to Ayodhyā so that he can take the news to Kaikeyī that Rāma has indeed gone into exile in the forest. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa put on the garb of ascetics, including matting their hair. With the aid of some Niṣāda boatmen, they cross the Gaṅgā, while Sītā pays obeisance to the sacred river (46). From this point, the three appear to be travelling through deep forest (48.2), as they head towards the confluence of the Gaṅgā with the River Yamunā (*prayāga*; 48.5), which is described as an isolated place (*avakāśo vivikto*; 48.20) where the sage Bharadvāja lives with his dependants. The three introduce themselves and Bharadvāja, who has heard of their plight, invites them to spend their exile in his hermitage. However, because the hermitage is near populated areas (*paura-jānapado*; 48.22),

<sup>2</sup> For convenience's sake, I give the Sanskrit form of names and terms rather than the Prakrit or Apabhramsha forms.

Rāma fears people will come to visit them. Bharadvāja then suggests that they create an *āśrama* of their own on the sacred Mount Citrakūṭa, 10 *krośas* (37 kilometres) away.

After a night in Bharadvāja's *āśrama*, the three leave for Citrakūṭa (47–48). Following Bharadvāja's instruction, they cross the River Yamunā on a self-made raft, pass the great banyan tree Śyāma and spend the night on the riverbank, steadily abandoning their sadness over the events in Ayodhyā (49). The next day, six days after leaving Ayodhyā, they continue their journey and soon reach Mount Citrakūṭa, where Lakṣmaṇa builds them a hut and they settle (50).

The narration now reverts to Ayodhyā, where the charioteer arrives without Rāma, the city is still immersed in grief and Daśaratha soon dies of sadness, recollecting to Rāma's mother, Kausalyā, the curse that a sage put on him for accidentally killing his son a long time ago (51–58). As the palace and city are immersed even deeper in sorrow (59–61), on the advice of Vasiṣṭha, messengers are sent to bring back Bharata (62–65), who is infuriated with his mother, Kaikeyī, when he hears what has happened (66–72), and together with an enormous retinue, which appears to comprise almost the entire city, he goes in pursuit of Rāma. After meeting Guha (79–82) and Bharadvāja (83–86), who are both initially suspicious of Bharata's motives but later give him and his retinue a warm welcome, Bharata reaches Citrakūṭa, 2.5 *yojanas* (about 35 kilometres) away (87). Rāma, meanwhile, has settled into a life of tranquillity in Citrakūṭa near the Mandākinī River (88–89). This Citrakūṭa mountain has been identified with different places, one of which developed into the pilgrimage site of Chitrakoot in Bundelkhand (Law 1954: 73–74, 313–14). Bharata and his retinue arrive, bringing the news of Daśaratha's death (90–94). After Rāma's performance of the funeral libation to Daśaratha (95), Bharata and some others repeatedly urge Rāma to return to Ayodhyā and take up the role of king, but Rāma is resolved to stay in the forest for 14 years, staying true to Daśaratha's word (96–103). Bharata takes back slippers as representative of Rāma and rules the kingdom from Nandigrāma, awaiting Rāma's return (104–7).

The parallel Jain accounts are here considerably more condensed (about two chapters: *PCR*, 31.201–33.39; *PCV*, 31.112–33.11; *PCS*, 23–24) than the Sanskrit epic. On the evening of the day that they receive the news that Bharata will become the new king, and Rāma subsequently decides to live in exile somewhere in the south to facilitate his younger brother's early kingship, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā visit the Jina temple where they say goodbye to

their mothers and depart for their forest exile about midnight, observing the nightly (erotic) activities of Ayodhyā's inhabitants. A small group of soldiers, not brahmins, follows them, but when they realise that Rāma is not going back, they return to Ayodhyā one by one. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā first reach the area of Pāriyātra near the River Gambhīrā. Neither of these geographical names corresponds to a place in Vālmiki's account, nor are they common in other Jain narrative texts, though Pāriyātra is known from Hindu purāṇic sources as a mountain to the west of Mount Meru and has otherwise been identified with a western part of the Vindhya Range (Law 1954: 20, 326) corresponding to the River Gambhir, which flows through that region and joins the River Shipra in Ujjain, or with the more northerly River Gambhir, a tributary of the Yamunā. The description of the area is limited and generic, leaving no clues for further identification. Before crossing the River Gambhīrā (without a boat), Rāma sends the remainder of the soldiers back to Ayodhyā, some of whom, out of sadness and disgust with the world, decide to become renouncers. The Jain accounts revert to Ayodhyā at this point, before Rāma has set up a fixed forest abode. In Ayodhyā, Daśaratha prepares to renounce the material world. Seeing the grief of her co-wives at the loss of their husband to renunciation and their sons to voluntary exile, Kaikeyī remorsefully requests Bharata to go after Rāma and bring him back. She joins Bharata and they catch up with Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa near an unnamed lake after six days. Despite Bharata's request and Kaikeyī's regret, Rāma makes it clear that he cannot return to Ayodhyā out of respect for Daśaratha's truthfulness. Rāma ties the royal turban to Bharata's head. Bharata and Kaikeyī return to Ayodhyā, where Bharata reluctantly lives as a householder and king, resolved to hand over the kingdom to Rāma on his return and thereafter commence life as an ascetic. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa meanwhile travel through an area where there are *āśramas* with various types of (Brahmanical) hermits and other communities, until they reach Citrakūṭa, which is described as a place of pleasant, dense forest inhabited by wild animals. From the names of towns that follow, the Citrakūṭa imagined by the Jain texts is different from the one in the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa* and is identified with now-famous Chittorgarh in modern-day Rajasthan (Law 1954: 313–14). Thus, the journey from Ayodhyā is some 900 kilometres, making the four and a half months explicitly mentioned in all three texts a reasonable time for that distance. This identification of the Jain authors of Citrakūṭa with Chittorgarh parallels the historical shift westward of the Jain community, its interest and culture (see, for example, Dundas 2002: 113). This, in consequence, accounts for the later placement of Citrakūṭa on Rāma's travel route, compared with the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as the explicit mention of the 4.5-month period.

## From Citrakūṭa to Daṇḍaka

In the final chapters of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa in the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, sages flee the Citrakūṭa area, suffering attacks from *rākṣasas* (108), as do Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, who visit the ascetic couple Atri and Anasūyā. Sītā receives gifts from the female ascetic and tells her the story of her birth and wedding to Rāma (109–11). The Araṇyakāṇḍa begins with Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa entering the Daṇḍaka Forest, which is described as a vast jungle with many *āśramas* and ascetics. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are invited in by these sages and Rāma pledges to protect them from the *rākṣasas* (1). As they proceed, they encounter a huge demonic being, Virādha, who wants to make Sītā his wife. Struck down by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Virādha, as he lies dying, reveals himself to be a cursed *gandharva*, Tumburu, who can now return to Heaven (2–3). On the direction of Virādha, they go to the *āśrama* of the sage Śarabhaṅga, who directs them to the sage Sutīkṣṇa (4). On their way, they meet different kinds of ascetics, all of whom request the protection of Rāma (5). After their visit to Sutīkṣṇa's *āśrama*, they visit all the other sages in the Daṇḍaka Forest (6–7). Though Sītā expresses her worry about Rāma's pledge to protect the sages against the *rākṣasas*, Rāma remains firm in his promise (8–9). Thus, they spend 10 years of their exile staying in the different *āśramas* in the Daṇḍaka Forest (10). Returning to Sutīkṣṇa, Rāma asks him directions to the *āśrama* of the great sage Agastya, who conquered two demon brothers. Reaching Agastya, Rāma receives divine weapons from him, as well as directions to Pañcavaṭī, which is a suitable place 2 *yojanas* away where Rāma can settle in his own *āśrama* and stay in relative comfort for the rest of his exile (11–12). On their way to Pañcavaṭī, they encounter the vulture Jaṭāyus, who identifies himself as a friend of Daśaratha and offers to protect Sītā (13). Reaching Pañcavaṭī, Lakṣmaṇa builds them a hut and the trio settles there (14), until one day Rāvaṇa's sister Śūrpaṇakhā encounters them, setting in motion the events leading to Sītā's abduction and the eventual downfall of Rāvaṇa's rule.

In the Jain texts, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa ultimately also enter the Daṇḍaka Forest, but only after a long series of adventures that breaks with the narrative of the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*. This passage, amounting to about one-tenth of the entire text (in *PCS*, more than nine chapters, 24–34; in *PCV* and *PCR*, more than seven chapters, 33–40), is an innovation by the Jain authors, describing visits to various cities, most of which are not known from other Jain narrative literature.

After passing Citrakūṭa, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa reach the area of Avantī and settle under a tree to rest. On Rāma's instruction, Lakṣmaṇa goes in search of a village or city where they can get some food. Lakṣmaṇa sees an abandoned city and hears from a passer-by that it is Daśapura (*PCR*: Daśāṅgapura), which is identified by Law (1954: 280–81) as the modern city of Mandsaur in Malwa. The city is under siege from Siṃhodara, king of nearby Ujjayinī (Ujjain), because Daśapura's ruler, Vajrakarṇa, has taken a vow to not bow to anyone but the Jina. After the trio receives a meal from cordial Vajrakarṇa, Lakṣmaṇa goes to Siṃhodara pretending to be a messenger from Bharata, threatening war on Siṃhodara if he does not stop the siege of Daśapura. After a battle with Lakṣmaṇa, Siṃhodara is defeated and brought before Rāma. Vajrakarṇa and Siṃhodara become friends and each rules half the land, and they, as well as some other kings, offer their daughters in marriage to Lakṣmaṇa.

Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa then proceed towards the city of Kūbara, where they meet its ruler princess, Kalyāṇamālā, who has reigned over the city disguised as a man since her father, Vālikhilya, was taken prisoner by a Mleccha king, Rudrabhūti (*PCR*: Raudrabhūti), in the Vindhya Range. Crossing the River Narmadā, they encounter and subdue the army of Mlecchas and request Rudrabhūti to release Vālikhilya. Vālikhilya returns to his city and Rudrabhūti becomes his subject.

Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa head further south, crossing the River Tāpī and, in the village of Aruṇagrāma, entering the house of a brahmin, Kapila, who forces them to leave. They take shelter from the monsoon rains under a banyan tree. The *yakṣa* of the tree alerts his king, Pūtana, to the presence of the three strangers. Using his clairvoyance (*avadhi*), Pūtana builds them a beautiful city, Rāmapuri, as they sleep.<sup>3</sup> The next day, Kapila hears of the riches in this new city, which can be entered only by those who have received instruction in the Jain teachings. Wanting to also profit from this new wealth, Kapila immediately goes to a Jain temple, where he becomes a devout Jain layman and his greed vanishes. Together with his wife, he now enters the city of Rāmapuri, only to discover that the people for whom the *yakṣa* king built the city were those whom he had so brutally cast out of his home. He apologises for his former ignorance and receives many gifts from Rāma.

3 Note that K.R. Chandra (1970: 512) identifies this Rāmapuri, because of its association with *yakṣas*, with Rāmagiri or contemporary Ramtek, the place where the *yakṣa* from Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* sent his message. I prefer to follow Mirashi (1968) in identifying the city of Rāmagiri that is mentioned later and was equally built for Rāma, as contemporary Ramtek, due to its location just north of the Daṇḍaka Forest.

Eventually, he renounces the material world and becomes an ascetic. When the monsoon season is at an end, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa bid farewell to Pūtana, who makes the city disappear again.

They travel further and reach the city of Vijayapura (*PCR*: Vaijayantapura; *PCS*: Jīvanta)—another unidentified city—where the king's daughter, Vanamālā, had fallen deeply in love with Lakṣmaṇa after hearing of his many qualities. When her father, Pṛthivīdhara (*PCS*: Mahīdhara), hears that Lakṣmaṇa has left Ayodhyā to live in the forest, he decides to give his daughter to another man. Vanamālā thereupon plans to commit suicide. That night, Lakṣmaṇa observes her as she prepares to hang herself from a banyan tree and makes himself known. The next morning, she, together with Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, enters the city in celebration.

About the same time, Pṛthivīdhara receives a letter from Ativīrya (*PCS*: Anantavīrya), the King of Nandāvarta,<sup>4</sup> asking him to become an ally in a war against Bharata of Ayodhyā, who had refused to submit to Ativīrya. Rāma thinks of a plan and joins with Lakṣmaṇa and Pṛthivīdhara's sons and sons-in-law to enter Nandāvarta disguised as female dancers. Brought before the king, the dancers perform a play about the lives of the Tīrthaṅkaras, and Rāma sings the praises of Bharata, much to the irritation of Ativīrya. A battle ensues and Ativīrya is captured and made to accept Bharata's suzerainty. Ativīrya decides to renounce the world, leaving the throne to his son, who marries one of his sisters to Lakṣmaṇa and another to Bharata. Bharata goes to visit and praise Ativīrya.

In due course, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā leave Vijayapura and head towards the city of Kṣemāñjali, ruled by Śatrudamana (*PCS*: Aridamana). As Rāma and Sītā rest in a park nearby, Lakṣmaṇa enters the city, where he hears that Princess Jitapadmā is destined to marry the man who can stop the five *śaktis* of her father. Lakṣmaṇa enters the palace to take on the challenge and wins the hand of Jitapadmā. Rāma and Sītā are also brought into the city and, after celebrations, the trio continues their journey.

4 Chandra (1970: 513) believes that because of its relative proximity to Ramtek (as Rāmagiri or Rāmapuri), this Nandāvarta (or Nandāvarta) could refer to the Vākāṭaka capital, Nandivardhana. It is interesting that, like Ativīrya, who forged an alliance through marriage with Bharata in 'imperial' Ayodhyā, the Vākāṭakas and the imperial Guptas, under whose rule the identification of Śāketa/Ayodhyā with the city of Rāma developed, also forged marriage alliances.

Moving further, they reach a city, Vaṃśasthala (*PCR*: Vaṃśasthadyuti), near a mountain, Vaṃśagiri (*PCR*: Vaṃśadhara), whose inhabitants are fleeing calamities caused by a vengeful god to disturb the austerities of two ascetics on the mountain. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa go towards the seers, chasing away the calamity by twanging their bows, and stand guard. The ascetics, Kulabhūṣaṇa and Deśavibhūṣaṇa, achieve *kevala* ('omniscience') and Indra and his retinue come to honour them. Rāma asks to hear the cause of this calamity and Kulabhūṣaṇa explains how their lives and that of the vengeful god had been entwined in previous existences. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā stay on this mountain and a city is built for them, Rāmagiri, with many temples to the Jinas.<sup>5</sup>

After this sequence of adventures, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā enter the Daṇḍaka Forest and rest near the River Kaṇṇaravā. One day, two ascetics, Gupti and Sugupti, arrive there and Sītā serves them a meal, whereupon all kinds of divine phenomena occur, including a rain of gemstones. A vulture, Jaṭāyīn, sees the gems and, on remembering his previous life as King Daṇḍaka, falls at the feet of the ascetics. The seer Sugupti tells Jaṭāyīn's previous birth story, as well as how he became a Jain ascetic himself. Sītā vows to protect the bird. The ascetics leave and Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa proceed on their journey through the forest in a chariot they received from the gods for giving food to the ascetics, until they reach the River Krauñcā, where they settle and, during autumn, encounter Rāvaṇa's sister, here named Candraṇakhā.<sup>6</sup>

## Discussion

### Ayodhyā: Ever close

In the Jain accounts, Rāma's visits to various *āśramas* and sages in the forest have been replaced with visits to cities—and twice, the construction of cities for them (Rāmapuri and Rāmagiri). In these cities, they experience various adventures. In two cases, they restore peace between warring rulers (Vajrakarṇa and Siṃhodara; Vālikhilya and Rudrabhūti). The initiative and agency in these chapters come more from the warrior-like Lakṣmaṇa than from Rāma, but it is Rāma to whom these rulers, as well as Lakṣmaṇa,

<sup>5</sup> The building of Rāmagiri is absent from the *PCS*.

<sup>6</sup> I discuss the story of Jaṭāyīn and his previous birth as Daṇḍaka in De Clercq (2010) and have dealt with the Jain versions of Śūrpaṇakhā, including the integration of the Śambūka story here, in De Clercq (2015).

ultimately bow. In most cases, the city visits end in—and sometimes even revolve around—the marriage of Lakṣmaṇa (and sometimes Rāma) to the cities' princess(es) (for example, Vanamālā and Jitapadmā). Marriages are tried and tested measures of forging political alliances and it appears that in these episodes, too, the visited kings seek to seal their new friendship with an alliance with Lakṣmaṇa and Rāma and, through them, Bharata. In some cases (in the *PCS*, in fact, in almost every visit), the poets explicitly state that Rāma subjected the kings to a *sandhi* ('alliance') with Bharata and Ayodhyā. The underlying presence of Bharata and Ayodhyā in this part of the narrative is the most explicit in the episode of Ativīrya, who initially wants to force Bharata to accept his overlordship, but after the rather comical intervention staged by Rāma of a troupe of crossdressing performers as a kind of 'trojan horse', is forced to accept Bharata's suzerainty. Here, too, an alliance is forged by the marriage of Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata to Ativīrya's daughters. A consequence of this presence of Bharata and Ayodhyā in the background is that, at least in this part of the story, there is barely a sense of separation or distance from Ayodhyā or Bharata, who are somehow always near. The Jain Rāma does not periodically succumb to episodes of sadness, melancholy and sometimes distrust, the way Vālmiki's Rāma does, but is resolute and determined in his mission to protect his father's *satya* ('truthfulness'), strengthening Ayodhyā's long-held supreme political position along the way. According to the Jain universal history, as told in the very first chapters of the three Jain *Rāmāyaṇas*, Ayodhyā was originally built by Kubera for the first Tīrthaṅkara Rṣabha, the founding father of the Ikṣvāku dynasty (PCV, 3–4; PCR, 3–4; PCS, 2–4). Along this line, this part of Rāma's journey is faintly reminiscent of the *digvijaya* ('world conquest') held by the first Cakravartin, Bharata, the son of Rṣabha, which established Ayodhyā as the primary political centre and capital of Bhāratavarṣa.

## Ardhacakravartins

Though as a *digvijaya* Rāma's journey from Ayodhyā to the Daṇḍaka Forest lacks some vital features—not in the least the presence of the sacred *cakra* Sudarśana—it could nevertheless have been part of a strategy by the Jain poets to bring their Rāma stories more in line with other narratives of *śalākāpuruṣas*. One characteristic of every Baladeva, Vāsudeva and Prativāsudeva is that they are considered Ardhacakravartins ('half-universal emperors')—great political leaders who each conquer three of the six regions of Bhāratavarṣa. Rāvaṇa's rise to Ardhacakravartin, including his conquest of half of Bhāratavarṣa, is elaborately described before the beginning of the Rāma

narrative proper (*PCV*, 7–14; *PCR*, 7–14; *PCS*, 9–18). When in the ultimate duel Rāvaṇa tries to kill Lakṣmaṇa with his *cakra* Sudarśana, the *cakra* is caught by Lakṣmaṇa, who throws it back, killing Rāvaṇa and subsequently heralding the rise of the new Ardhaçakravartin (*PCV*, 72–73; *PCR*, 75–76; *PCS*, 75). When the threesome later returns to Ayodhyā, and after Bharata's renunciation, the city leaders approach Rāma to be consecrated and he suggests that they also consecrate Lakṣmaṇa. Both brothers are then crowned king (*PCV*, 85; *PCR*, 88). A war with the Vidyādhara King Ratnaratha over his rejection of Lakṣmaṇa as a proper bridegroom for his daughter leads to the *digvijaya* of Lakṣmaṇa, again with Rāma present in the background (*PCV*, 90–91; *PCR*, 93–94). The *PCS* (79) deviates from this account: here, Rāma alone is consecrated as king. Yet, the very last line of the chapter (14.9) reads that, as Rāma is consecrated and the royal turban is tied to his head, Lakṣmaṇa rules (lit., 'enjoys') the Earth, endowed with the *cakra*, also indicating some form of joint governance. Moreover, Svayambhū omits the episode of Lakṣmaṇa's rejection as bridegroom, as well as the *digvijaya*. This omission can be explained as one to merely suit the Apabhramsha poetic style, reducing episodes in favour of the poetic elaboration of others, but it could also be an indication of the fact that, for this later poet, it was hard to conceive of a Rāma story in which Rāma shared the kingship with Lakṣmaṇa.

## Forest versus city

Coming back to the relative absence of the forest in Rāma's exile, this does not mean that forests were of less importance to the Jains. Jain poets imagined the forest in many ways, as did authors and artists of other South Asian traditions, from paradisiacal to a dangerous wilderness inhabited by fierce, man-eating beasts (Thapar 2015; Parkhill 1980; Falk 1973). In the vein of the latter, the Jain *Rāmāyaṇas* contain ample descriptions of the forest as a place of danger—for instance, in the famous story of Añjanā, who is cast out by her parents and her in-laws and gives birth to her son Hanumān in the forest (*PCV*, 17; *PCR*, 17; *PCS*, 19), or in the perception of Sītā as she is banished from the kingdom (*PCV*, 94; *PCR*, 97; *PCS*, 81). For Jains, the deep forest is the place of ascetics. The image of Jain ascetics—for instance, Rṣabha's giant son, Bāhubali, standing upright in *kāyotsarga* meditation, his limbs covered by creepers and insects—is well known. Also illustrative of this is the account of Lakṣmaṇa's wife Viśalyā, who in a previous life, as Anaṅgaśarā, was abducted and fell from a celestial chariot into the dense forest. With no prospect of being rescued, she does the only thing imaginable in a Jain context as suitable: commits to practising austerities. After thousands of years of

asceticism, she dies in *sallekhanā* (PCS, 68; PCR, 64; PCV, 63).<sup>7</sup> Contrary to the Brahmanical ascetics mentioned in the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, Jain ascetics did not live in *āśramas* or monasteries, but were itinerant, except during the monsoon, and often solitary. Nevertheless, echoing Vālmiki's description of the Daṇḍaka Forest, Rāma, too, has two encounters with ascetics—the first with Kulabhūṣaṇa and Deśavibhūṣaṇa on a mountain near Vaṃśasthala, just north of the Daṇḍaka Forest, and the second with Gupti and Sugupti in the Daṇḍaka Forest. Paralleling the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa come to the aid of the first pair of ascetics, by driving away the calamities caused by a vengeful god. The second pair, who pass by while Sītā is preparing food, receive a meal from her. Both occasions are accompanied by supernatural occurrences: the first is a visit from the gods after the ascetics become omniscient and the second is a rain of gemstones. Other than this, the episodes with the ascetics form the occasion for the narration of previous birth stories (of the sages themselves, as well as of the vulture Jaṭāyin), illustrating Jain karma theory and some elementary doctrinal teachings. These two encounters summarise the ideal pragmatic relationship between the Jain ascetic and lay communities: the lay community's main task is to facilitate ascetics in their spiritual endeavours by providing subsistence, especially food (*āhāra-dāna*), in exchange for teaching. The first encounter underscores the duty of political leaders to provide security to ascetics. Though the ascetics' omniscience is not directly the result of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa's intervention, they are rewarded by a god for their benevolence. In this way, these two episodes clearly illustrate the role of Rāma and Sītā as the ideal Jain layman and laywoman, respectively, and serve as instruction for the Jain lay audiences of these texts. That the city or at least the cultivated world, as opposed to the wild forest, is regarded as the only suitable habitat for the lay community also helps in understanding the relative absence of the forest on Rāma's journey. Though Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa settle in the Daṇḍaka Forest near the River Krauñcā for the monsoon, their stay is short-lived. After they encounter Candraṇakhā and Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are taken by Virādhita—a clear echo of the *gandharva*-turned-demon Virādhā in the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*—to his ancestral city, subterranean Pātālāṅkārapura, the entrance to which is half a *yojana* below in the Daṇḍaka Forest (variants Pātālapura, Alaṃkārapura, Tamalāṅkāra, Pātālāṅkā, etcetera: PCV, 45; PCR, 45; PCS, 40). It is while residing there that they receive a request for help from Sugrīva of Kiṣkindhā and eventually join forces with the *vānara* people to attack Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā.

7 In PCS, she is devoured by a snake.

In the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, the journey of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to and through the forest has a transformative function, changing them from pampered young princes into hardened grownups, fit not just to battle the *nākṣasas*, but also, for Rama, to eventually excel as a ruler in Ayodhyā, and for Sita, to survive a second exile. The Jain poets, on the other hand, in their retellings, emphasise the identity of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as Baladeva and Vāsudeva, both ‘half-universal emperors’, and, more importantly, of Rāma and Sītā as ideal Jain laypeople. As laypeople, their habitat is the cultivated world—cities, in particular.

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