

**Buddhist values in the Pāli *Jātakas*, with particular
reference to the theme of renunciation**

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Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil)

Trinity term 2003

Acknowledgements

I am extremely thankful for the encouragement and advice given to me by my supervisor, Richard Gombrich, who has always urged me to have conviction in my work and allowed me the freedom to follow my interests.

I am enormously grateful to Louise Nelstrop for her immeasurable support over the last four years and her tireless help with proofreading. Her generosity and kindness has been overwhelming.

Thanks must also go to William Pruitt for his generous help with proofreading.

I would especially like to thank my parents for their support throughout my education and these last four years of research. Without their love, this thesis would never have been written.

Finally, I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Board for funding my research.

Abbreviations

All Pāli texts cited are Pāli Text Society editions, unless otherwise stated. For the *Jātakas*, I use the Pāli Text Society edition by Fausbøll (1877-1896), although I also refer to the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* for variant readings. For the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, I use the Poona and Baroda critical editions respectively, unless otherwise stated. All translations of the *Jātakas* are my own, except for the *Vessantara Jātaka*, for which I use Margaret Cone's translation in Cone and Gombrich 1977. I also cite (with occasional alterations) the Princeton translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Goldman (1984), Goldman and Goldman (1996), Lefebvre (1994) and Pollock (1986, 1991).

<i>A</i>	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
<i>Bv</i>	<i>Buddhavaṃsa</i>
<i>Cp</i>	<i>Cariyā-piṭaka</i>
<i>Cp-a</i>	<i>Cariyā-piṭaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>A dictionary of Pāli: Part I a-kh</i> by Margaret Cone (2001)
<i>Dhp-a</i>	<i>Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā</i>
<i>J</i>	<i>Jātaka</i> (meaning the verses and the <i>aṭṭhavaṇṇanā</i>)
<i>M</i>	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
<i>Mbh</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>MJ</i>	<i>Mātaṅga Jātaka</i>
<i>Mld</i>	<i>Milindapañha</i>
<i>Mp</i>	<i>Manorathapūraṇī (Aṅguttara-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
<i>Nidd-a</i>	<i>Niddesa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
<i>Patī-a</i>	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā</i>

<i>PED</i>	<i>The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary</i> by T.W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede (1921-5)
<i>Pj I</i>	<i>Paramatthajotikā I (Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
<i>Pj II</i>	<i>Paramatthajotikā II (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
<i>Ps</i>	<i>Papañcasūdanī (Majjhima-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
<i>PTS</i>	<i>Pāli Text Society</i>
<i>Rām</i>	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
<i>S</i>	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
<i>SJ</i>	<i>Sambulā Jātaka</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
<i>Spk</i>	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī (Samyutta-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
<i>Sv</i>	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā).</i>
<i>ThG-a</i>	<i>Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā</i>
<i>Utt</i>	<i>Uttarajjhāyana</i>
<i>VJ</i>	<i>Vessantara Jātaka</i>
<i>Vin</i>	<i>Vinaya</i>
<i>Vism</i>	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
<i>YA</i>	<i>Yasodharā Apadāna</i>

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the study of Hinduism, it would hardly be novel to insist on the fact that narratives are just as important as doctrinal or philosophical texts to our understanding of its intellectual history, as well as of its cultural and religious history more generally. [...] In the study of Buddhism, however, this suggestion might still appear to be something new.

Steven Collins 1998:121.

1.1 Aims of the thesis

This thesis sets out to explore the theme of renunciation in the *Jātakas*, or in Pāli the *Jātakatṭhavaṇṇanā*, one of the largest and most important collections of story literature in Theravāda Buddhism. Literally meaning ‘birth stories’, *jātakas* are narratives that depict the past lives of the Buddha when he was still a Bodhisatta (‘one who aspires to awakening’) or Mahāsatta (‘great being’).¹ Despite the vast popularity of the *Jātakas* in Theravāda Buddhism, as well as the quantity and diversity of their material, the thematic content of this corpus of texts has largely been neglected. Indeed, the paucity of thematically based research on the *Jātakas* reflects a general tendency in academia to overlook the importance of narrative texts as sources on Buddhist values. The present thesis hopes to contribute towards redressing this academic lacuna.

The focus of the thesis is on the theme of renunciation in the *Jātakas* and, in particular, on how renunciate values relate to the conventional world. Scholars have often noted that Buddhist renunciates have an ambiguous relationship with the society that they renounce, one that involves both conflict and unity. This thesis aims to explore that relationship

¹ *Bodhi-satta* is the same as Sanskrit *bodhi-sakta*. Buddhist Sanskrit texts, however, use the term *bodhi-sattva* (‘enlightenment being’), which appears to be a wrong back formation from the Prakrit. The term *mahāsatta* (Sanskrit *mahā-sattva*) may be an instance of a Buddhist appropriation of epic language (meaning ‘of great courage/spirit’) and could be better translated straightforwardly as ‘hero’. For *mahāsattva* in the *Rāmāyana*, see for example 2.3.11, 2.81.2, 3.16.6, 3.64.30, 5.7.17, 5.37.40, 5.44.18, 5.49.1. I am grateful to Richard Gombrich for this insight. Dayal (1932:9) argues that *satta* is related to the Vedic word *satvan* meaning ‘warrior’.

further. The main image of renunciation that will be examined is the figure of the ascetic, who leaves ordinary society in order to practise various forms of self-discipline, such as meditation or self-mortification. However, other images of renunciation will also be investigated. These include the gift made by a layperson to an ascetic (*dāna*) or the self-sacrifice performed by a woman for her husband. Indeed, one of the main themes of this thesis is that renunciate values operate on several different levels in the *Jātakas*, including both the ascetic and the lay.

I also aim to elucidate the values expressed in the *Jātakas* by comparing them with stories and motifs found in non-Buddhist narrative traditions. I especially concentrate on the Brahmanical epics, the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, but Jain material is also considered. On the premise that the *Jātakas* are closely related to such narratives, I argue that many of the stories become more meaningful when they are viewed within their broader narrative context.

1.2 Background to the *Jātakas*

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the *Jātakas* in Theravāda Buddhism. As John Garrett Jones has stated (1979:xii): ‘There is no doubting the fact that, throughout the Theravāda world, there is no part of the Pāli Buddhist tradition which can, as a whole, approach the *Jātaka* in its appeal to, and in its firmly entrenched position within, popular culture.’ Given the *Jātakas*’ status, it would be useful to begin by summarising the multi-faceted role of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* in particular and the *jātaka* genre in general within Buddhist culture.²

The history of the *jātaka* genre can be traced back to the Pāli canon. In addition to the verses of the *Jātakas*, which belong to the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, *jātakas* are found elsewhere

² See Skilling 2004 for a useful account of the widespread role of *jātakas* in Buddhist literature and Buddhist culture generally. I am grateful to Peter Skilling for allowing me to read his article in advance of publication.

in the canon in both the *Sutta-piṭaka* and *Vinaya-piṭaka*.³ The term *jātaka* is also used in the canon to refer to one of nine ‘classes’ of literature (*aṅga*).⁴ Other *jātaka*-related canonical texts include the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, which summarises 35 *jātaka* stories in order to illustrate the perfections (*pāramī*), and the *Apadāna*, which describes the past lives of people other than the Buddha.⁵ Such evidence suggests that the *jātaka* genre is of some antiquity. Nor is this surprising, given that the central premise of *jātaka* stories – namely, the notion of rebirth and the possibility of describing past lives – is itself contingent upon the claim expressed in several *suttas* that the Buddha acquired three knowledges after his enlightenment, the first two of which involved insight into his own and others’ past lives.⁶ The *jātaka* genre can therefore be seen as deriving from such core Buddhist concepts.

Jātaka stories are found in vast numbers throughout Theravāda literature. The *Jātakaṭṭhavaṇṇanā* itself contains 547 stories.⁷ Moreover, numerous *jātakas* were composed well after the *Jātakaṭṭhavaṇṇanā* was redacted in a form close to the one we have now in around the fifth century of the Christian Era (C.E.).⁸ A prominent example is

³ See the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (*D* 1.127ff.), *Mahāsudassana Sutta* (*D* 2.169f.), *Mahāgovinda Sutta* (*D* 2.220ff.), *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* (*M* 2.45ff.) and *Makhādeva Sutta* (*M* 2.74ff.). The *Mahāsudassana Sutta* is related to the *Mahāsudassana Jātaka* (95) and the *Makhādeva Sutta* to the *Makhādeva Jātaka* (9). See also *Vin* 4.203, which is related to the *Chavaka Jātaka* (309); Alsdorf (1974) has examined these two texts. *Vin* 4.4f is also a *jātaka* story, which is related to the *Nandivīsāla Jātaka* (28). *Vin* 2.183f. narrates a past life of Bhaddiya but does not link any character in the story with the Buddha, in contrast to the parallel version in the *Sukhavihāri Jātaka* (10). Similarly, *D* 2.348 is set in the past (*bhūtapubbaṃ...*) and forms the basis of the *Litta Jātaka* (91), but does not ascribe any role to the Bodhisatta. Other examples of such stories include: *Vin* 1.342ff., which forms the basis of the *Dīghitikosala Jātaka* (371); *Vin* 2.161f., which forms the basis of the *Tittira Jātaka* (37); *D* 2.342ff., which forms the basis of the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* (1); and *S* 1.224f., which forms the basis of the *Kulāvaka Jātaka* (31).

⁴ The ninefold classification is *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇaṃ gāthaṃ udānaṃ itivuttakaṃ jātakam abbhutadhammaṃ vedallaṃ*. See for example *M* 1.131. Skilling (2004) follows N.A. Jayawickrama in arguing that the *jātaka-aṅga* does not refer directly to the verses in the *Jātakas* but rather to the *jātaka* genre as a whole. See also Norman 1983:16.

⁵ See Mellick 1993; Tatelman 1996, 2000; and Skilling 2004 on the *apadānas/avadānas*. The *Cariyā-piṭaka* and *Apadāna* are usually regarded as late canonical texts; see Norman 1983:89ff., 94ff.

⁶ For example *D* 1.81f. See also Norman 1983:15f.

⁷ Rhys Davids (1880:iv) describes it as ‘the oldest, most complete, and most important collection of folklore extant’. For commentarial references to the collection containing either 500 or 550 stories, see von Hinüber 1998:114ff.

⁸ See p.14.

the *Paññāsa Jātaka*, which Peter Skilling (2004) has demonstrated is a generic term for several collections of *jātaka* stories composed in South-East Asia in both Pāli and vernacular languages.⁹ Dating these collections is fraught with problems and varies for each group of texts.¹⁰ However, in the case of a Burmese Pāli collection called the *Zimmè Paññāsa*, P.S. Jaini (1983:xli) gives 1589 C.E. as an upper limit for the compilation of some of the stories.¹¹ While not wanting to downplay the singularities of this collection, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the *Zimmè Paññāsa* derives its basic narrative structure, as well as several formulaic expressions and motifs, from the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*.¹²

Countless prose and verse versions of stories in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* have been composed in Pāli and vernacular languages up until the present day.¹³ Regarding Sinhalese literature, for example, C.E. Godakumbura observes (1955:99, 101): ‘*Jātaka* stories are related either briefly or fully in some of the oldest prose works written before the whole collection was translated into Sinhalese. [...] Many of the *jātaka* stories have been told in Sinhalese verse. They have provided the subject matter for ornate poetic compositions, the *Mahākāvya*.’ Similarly, Skilling (2004) notes that a manuscript survey in northern Thailand reveals ‘the *Mahachat* [*Vessantara Jātaka*] in 1,424 texts in more than eighty literary styles, and general *jātaka* stories in 907 texts, “many composed by local monks”’.

In non-Theravāda Buddhism, *jātaka* stories proliferate in texts such as the *Mahāvastu* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. They are also frequently found in Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* or the *Liu tu chi ching*, a Chinese translation (247 C.E.) of the **Ṣaṭpāramitā-saṅgraha-sūtra*, many of whose stories have been translated into French by Chavannes (1962).¹⁴ Other texts, such as the *Jātakamālā* collections of Āryaśūra, Haribhaṭṭa, and Gopadatta, are solely devoted to narrating *jātaka* stories.

⁹ See also von Hinüber 1996:198ff. for other *jātakas*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Collins (1998:xxiii) dates it between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries C.E.

¹² Jaini 1983:xi; Norman 1983:177.

¹³ Bode 1909:78ff., 92ff.; Godakumbura 1955:71, 74f., 98ff., 144ff., 277ff.

¹⁴ Skilling 2004.

Jātakas have also had a great impact on Buddhist art. Some of the earliest extant Buddhist art, found at Bhārhut and Sāñcī and dating approximately to the first century B.C.E. and first century C.E. respectively,¹⁵ abounds in sculptural depictions of *jātaka* stories, which have textual parallels in the *Jātakas*.¹⁶ Similarly, numerous *jātakas* are either painted or sculpted at sites as far apart as Ajañṭā in India,¹⁷ Borobodur in Indonesia, and Pagan in Burma. As these examples demonstrate, *jātaka* art is often found at *stūpa* sites, where it seems to have enhanced the Buddha's presence in his relics by representing images associated with his past lives. Textual evidence also documents this practice. For example, the *Mahāvamsa* (30.78ff.) describes how in the first century B.C.E. Duṭṭhagāmaṇi decorated the relic-chamber of the Mahāthūpa with scenes from the Buddha's life as well as from many (*yebhuyyena*) *jātakas*, which are said to 'arouse faith' (*pasādajanakāni*, 30.88).¹⁸

In close association with their role at *stūpa* sites, *jātakas* often have a prominent presence in sacred landscapes. The Chinese pilgrim Fa Xien recounts, for example, how he visited four *stūpas* in or near Gandhāra and Takṣaśilā, which were said to mark the spots where the Buddha performed four acts of self-sacrifice in his past lives.¹⁹ Similarly, Song Yun and Hiuen Tsang, in the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. respectively, visited several *jātaka*-sites in the Gandhāra area,²⁰ describing for example how events from the Buddha's past life as Viśvantara had become localised at sites such as mountains, caves, trees, and rocks, some of which were marked by *stūpas*.²¹ In Theravāda Buddhism, this intimate connection between narrative and landscape is expressed in a canonical *jātaka* called the *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* (*M* 2.45ff.). In this story, the Buddha arrives at a village and relates how

¹⁵ Huntington 1985:61ff.

¹⁶ Dehejia 1996:281f.; Lamotte 1958:444ff.; Lüders 1941.

¹⁷ According to Schlingloff (1988:1ff., 64ff.), cave number ten at Ajañṭā contains *jātaka* murals which can be dated to the second century B.C.E.

¹⁸ See also Skilling 2004.

¹⁹ Legge 1965:30ff.

²⁰ Lamotte (1958:365ff.) gives a summary of various sites in the area. See also Foucher 1901.

²¹ Foucher 1901:350ff.; Gombrich 1977:xxxvii.

he once lived there as a brahmin called Jotipāla. Moreover, he adds that the Buddha Kassapa also frequented the area. This leads Ānanda to ask the Buddha to sit on the same spot as Kassapa did, so that the ground will have been ‘used’ (*paribhutto*) by two Buddhas (*M* 2.45). In many ways, therefore, the landscape itself was considered to be permeated with multiple layers of narrative significance, which devotees could themselves access through worship and pilgrimage.

Jātakas have also been significant in other aspects of Buddhist culture. In countries such as Burma, Sri Lanka, and Tibet, they have been the subject of dramatic performance.²² In Thailand and Laos, the recitation of the *Vessantara Jātaka* has played (and still plays) an important role in ritual ceremonies.²³ *Jātakas* have been used in *paritta* chants;²⁴ they have been cited as authorities in law;²⁵ and they have been used to inspire movements in forest monasticism.²⁶ In brief, Mabel Bode’s comments (1909:60, 82) on the importance of *jātakas* in Burmese culture could well be applied to their role in Buddhism generally: ‘The *Jātaka* has found its way everywhere, from law codes and chronicles to popular plays. [...] To understand the literature, “serious” or popular, of Burma, we cannot know the Pali *Jātaka* too well.’

1.3 The character and development of the *Jātakas*

Even a brief survey of the 547 stories in the *Jātakas* would reveal a variety of narrative genres, ranging from moral fables to romances, folk-tales to mini-epics.²⁷ Such diversity was facilitated by the natural tendency of the *jātaka* genre to be inclusive and open-ended: by simply identifying the Bodhisatta with a particular character in any given tale, *jātaka*

²² Aung 1937:53ff.; Collins 1998:45; Godakumbura 1955:304ff.; Gombrich 1977:xl; Skilling 2004.

²³ Collins 1998:375ff.; Skilling 2004.

²⁴ See the *Chaddantaparittam*, *Moraparittam* and *Vaṭṭakaparittam* in the Thai royal chanting book edited by Bhikkhu Khantipālo and Bhikkhu Jotamano (1995:87ff.). See also Skilling 2004.

²⁵ Adam 1998; Bode 1909:87; Tatelman 2000:7.

²⁶ Carrithers 1983:94ff.

²⁷ Rhys Davids (1880:iii) describes the *Jātakas* as ‘fairy tales, parables, fables, riddles, and comic and moral stories’. See Winternitz 1933:113ff. for a useful overview of the diversity of the *Jātakas*.

stories provided an ideal medium for the incorporation and adaptation of narratives from various contexts. This is illustrated, for example, by the *Tittira Jātaka* (31), which, as Oskar von Hinüber has shown (1998:188), transforms a passage from the *Vinaya* (*Vin* 2.161f.) into a *jātaka* by identifying a character in the story with the Bodhisatta.²⁸ This propensity for adaptation is also seen in the *Jātakas*' relationship with non-Buddhist narratives, which will be discussed in §1.5. Indeed, many of the stories may have been incorporated from general Indian folklore and were then adapted to a Buddhist context.²⁹

The Bodhisatta takes on many forms of existence in the *Jātakas*, including, amongst others, rebirth as a deity, king, brahmin, animal, merchant, outcaste and ascetic, although significantly he is never reborn as a female.³⁰ Some stories also describe more than one past life.³¹ Although the Bodhisatta usually plays the protagonist, he is sometimes a marginal figure and occasionally only a witness to the narrative events. The *Jātakas* also depict the past lives of people other than the Buddha – for example, Ānanda, Devadatta, and Yasodharā – whose interactions with the Bodhisatta through various lives create a complex web of relationships. In addition to these birth-stories, the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* is prefaced by the *Jātakanidāna*, which describes the Bodhisatta's career from his life as Sumedha to his enlightenment as Gotama Buddha. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the *Jātakanidāna* in any detail.³²

One of the most intriguing aspects of the *Jātakas* is that they are set in a time when there is no Buddhist *sāsana*.³³ This allows the *Jātakas* to incorporate various non-Buddhist images into a Buddhist framework; for example, the Bodhisatta is frequently depicted as a

²⁸ See also *Vin* 2.109f. and *A* 2.72f., which form the basis of the *Khandavatta Jātaka* (203); and *S* 1.142ff., which forms the basis of the *Bakabrahma Jātaka* (405). Unlike *Vin* 2.161f., however, these stories are not set in the past.

²⁹ Winternitz argues (1933:125) that 'far more than half of the *Jātakas*, if we omit the commentary, is not of Buddhist origin'.

³⁰ Jones 1979:15ff.

³¹ For example, the *Cittasambuta Jātaka* (498), *Hatthipāla Jātaka* (509), and *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* (538).

³² Aronoff (1982) has attempted to reveal various thematic links between the two texts.

³³ See however the *Mahākāṇha Jātaka* (469), which is set in the time of Kassapa Buddha.

Brahmanical ascetic, sometimes performing Brahmanical practices such as fire worship.³⁴ Advanced Buddhist doctrines such as the concept of no-self (*anattā*) and the theory of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) are also largely absent from the *Jātakas*. Indeed, the values expressed in the stories are often not specific to Buddhism but are shared by various religious traditions (this by no means, however, diminishing their Buddhist significance). That said, some *jātakas* are distinctly Buddhist in tone. The *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka* (479), for example, describes worship of the *bodhi* tree; the *Mahākaṇha Jātaka* (469) depicts the moral decline of the *saṅgha*; the *Nimi Jātaka* (541) eulogises the performance of the *uposatha* vow and the benefits of giving to the *saṅgha*; the *Araka Jātaka* (169) describes the cultivation of the *brahmavihāras*; and several stories attack Vedic sacrifice, including the *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (543) which contains a lengthy diatribe against Brahmā. Many *jātakas* also portray *paccekabuddhas* – people who become enlightened when there is no *sammāsaṃbuddha* but who cannot establish a *sāsana* – and cite canonical texts such as the *Dhammapada*.³⁵ Similarly, the *Jātakas* often employ Buddhist terminology such as the five precepts, the *tilakkhaṇa*, the *samāpattis*, and the *jhānas*. In addition, all of the stories are ‘Buddhicised’ by the fact that they describe the exploits of the Bodhisatta, which are narrated by the Buddha in the present.

Regarding the structure of the *Jātakas*, all of the 547 stories are divided into 22 *nipātas* (‘groups’), depending on the number of verses they contain.³⁶ Thus, stories with one verse belong to the *eka-nipāta*, whereas those with six verses to the *cha-nipāta*. In practice, however, several stories contain more verses than the amount indicated by their *nipāta*.³⁷ This discrepancy implies that some stories expanded their verses after they had been placed within their particular *nipāta*. It also suggests that the *nipāta* framework dates back

³⁴ See for example the *Asātamanta Jātaka* (61) and *Vessantara Jātaka* (547). See also the *Kuṇḍakapūva Jātaka* (109), in which an offering to a tree-deity in the past is compared to a gift to the Buddha in the present, thereby interrelating tree-worship with Buddhism.

³⁵ For *paccekabuddhas*, see Gombrich 1979; Kloppenborg 1974; and Norman 1991d. For examples of verses being cited from the *Dhammapada*, see *J* nos. 151, 221, 258, 269, 321, 325, 355, 363, 367, 371, 376, 388. Similarly, the *Guttila Jātaka* (243, *J* 2.255) cites verses from the *Vimānavatthu* (42).

³⁶ See von Hinüber 1998 for a detailed analysis of the structure and development of the *Jātakas*.

³⁷ For example *J* nos. 220, 240, 243, 276, 352, 354, 358, 372, 374, 375, 376, 380, 382, 383, 385, 389, 391, 402, 405, 411, 415, 440, etc.

to an earlier period than the final redaction of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, although an exact date is difficult to establish since we do not know when the tradition first started to compile the collection.³⁸

Each story in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* has a basic threefold structure: a story in the present, the *paccuppannavatthu*; a story in the past, the *atītavatthu*; and an exposition of links between the present and the past, the *samodhāna* (‘connection’). The *paccuppannavatthu* begins by citing the first *pāda* of the first verse, which acts as a title for the *jātaka*. Interestingly, this type of title is also recorded at Bhārhut (approximately first century B.C.E.), where a sculpture of the *Aṇḍabhūta Jātaka* (62) is inscribed with the story’s first *pāda*.³⁹ After the citation of the first *pāda*, the *paccuppannavatthu* continues with a phrase giving the general topic of the *jātaka*; for example, the topic of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) is ‘the great renunciation’ (*mahānekkhamma*, *J* 6.30.15f.). The *paccuppannavatthu* then goes on to describe an event in the present which leads the Buddha to tell a story about a similar event in the past (the *atītavatthu*). After the *atītavatthu*, the narrative returns to the present, where the Buddha reveals various connections between characters in the past and the present. The only essential connection that the Buddha has to make is between himself and the Bodhisatta, which he reveals by stating, ‘It was I who was X’ (*X aham eva* or *X aham eva ahoṣim*). Through this framing device, the past is thus constantly brought into relation with the present.

In addition to this threefold structure, every story consists of a mixture of verse and prose. The verses (*gāthā*) alone are canonical, whereas the prose is considered to be commentarial (*aṭṭhakathā*), although there are rare examples of canonical prose, especially in the *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536).⁴⁰ As a result of their canonical status, the verses are accompanied by a word-commentary (*veyyākaraṇa*). It is not, however, always easy to

³⁸ On these issues, see von Hinüber 1998:110ff. Winternitz 1933:118f. regards these accretions as occurring after the formation of the canon.

³⁹ Luders 1941:139.

⁴⁰ Bollée 1970.

distinguish between the prose narrative and the *veyyākaraṇa*, since the latter sometimes contains large narrative sections.⁴¹ According to the tradition, both the word-commentary and the prose narrative are based on an earlier Sinhalese commentary (the *Jātakatṭhakathā*), which itself is said to be a translation of a Pāli original.⁴² The author of the prose-commentary is said to be Buddhaghosa, but the validity of this ascription is dubious,⁴³ not least because the statement in the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* (1) that Buddha-recollection (*buddhānussati*) can lead directly to nirvana (*J* 1.97.18ff.) conflicts with the *Visuddhimagga*'s appraisal that *buddhānussati* leads only to the first *jhāna* (212ff.).

The relationship between the verse and prose is complex. The verses are often elliptical, and even unintelligible, without the accompanying prose, which in the majority of cases forms the bulk of the narrative. Indeed, as Peter Skilling has pointed out (2004), this interdependency between verse and prose raises problematic questions concerning notions of canonicity. On the other hand, the tradition accords a certain primacy to the verses. This is illustrated by manuscripts which list only the verses,⁴⁴ and by the fact that the *Jātakas* are ordered according to the number of *gāthās* they contain and not under any chronological or thematic framework. Thus, the first 150 stories contain only one verse, whereas the last story contains 786 verses.

One of the most important theories to have been posited about the composition of the *Jātakas* was developed by Hermann Oldenberg (1910-12, 1918), who argued that the *Jātakas* belong to a form of narrative called *ākhyāna*. According to the *ākhyāna* theory, the verses of the *Jātakas* are fixed, whereas the prose is flexible and subject to improvisation (although it presumably became more fixed over time). The prose's propensity for change and adaptation is highlighted by the fact it sometimes seems to

⁴¹ Fausbøll 1877: preliminary remarks; 1896: preliminary remarks 7. Lüders (1941:144) has argued that the word commentary and prose story (of both the *atītavatthu* and *paccuppannavatthu*) are the work of the same composer.

⁴² Norman 1983:118f. Von Hinüber (1998: especially 178ff.) has recently attempted to reconstruct some of the characteristics of the *Jātakatṭhakathā*.

⁴³ Malasekera 1928:123f.; Norman 1983:121.

⁴⁴ Bollée 1970:vii.

conflict with the verses.⁴⁵ This is for example illustrated by the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526), in which, as Heinrich Lüders has shown (1897), the verses recall a story which has been forgotten by the prose but which is paralleled by a passage in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 3.110ff.). A further significant difference between the verse and prose strata is that references to the Bodhisatta and Mahāsatta are invariably found in the latter and not the former. Indeed, scholars such as Ludwig Alsdorf (1957a:61) have used this fact to argue that some of the stories were once not intended to depict the Buddha’s past lives.⁴⁶ Other Buddhist terminology – such as the cultivation of the *samāpattis* and *jhānas* – is also usually (but not always) restricted to the prose.⁴⁷ A striking example of this is the term *pāramī*, which refers to the ten perfections cultivated by the Bodhisatta during his past lives and which occurs in the verses of only one story.⁴⁸ That said, the prose itself does not mention the perfections nearly as often as one might expect. On the contrary, the *pāramīs* are far more central to the exegetical agenda of texts such as the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, and its commentary the *Cariyā-piṭaka-aṭṭhakathā*, than they are to the *Jātakatṭhavaṇṇanā*.

Although the *ākhyāna* model is now generally accepted in academia, it has been the subject of much debate,⁴⁹ and, while this is not the place for a proper analysis of the theory, it should be noted that it is not without its problems. One issue is that, if the *Jātakas* are composed in the *ākhyāna* style, then there are also several types of *ākhyāna*.

⁴⁵ Gombrich 1977:xxxiiif.; Lüders 1941: especially 139; Norman 1983:80; Winternitz 1933:120.

⁴⁶ There are only two occurrences of the word Bodhisatta in the verses: v.193 of the *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544); and the last verse of the *Catuposathiya Jātaka* (441) in the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* edition of the *gāthā*-only text. Both of these are in the *samodhāna*.

It is, however, noteworthy that the words Bodhisatta or Mahāsatta are also not used in the canonical *jātakas*. Indeed, their absence in the verses may simply be because their usage as terms referring to the Buddha’s past lives is late.

⁴⁷ See Lüders 1904:707f., Norman 1983:79, and von Hinüber 1996:55 on how specifically Buddhist language is usually found in the prose. See however v.1 of the *Jhānasodhana Jātaka* (134), which refers to the formless meditation *nevasaññānāsaññā*; and v.1 of the *Candābha Jātaka* (135), which refers to the *jhāna* state that is *avitakka*.

⁴⁸ *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), vv.460, 462. The ten perfections are: giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), effort (*viriyā*), patience (*khanti*), truth (*sacca*), resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). See *Bv* 16ff. (II, vv.117ff.). The *Jātakanidāna* (*J* 1.45ff.) cites various *jātaka* stories in order to illustrate these perfections. The *Cp* only illustrates seven of the perfections, which suggests that the text is incomplete.

⁴⁹ Alsdorf (1964) summarises the debate. See also Keith 1911, 1912; Winternitz 1928, 1933:124, especially n.3.

Jātaka stories which contain, for example, a single aphoristic verse surrounded by an explanatory prose story represent a very different type of *ākhyāna* from those which contain verse-dialogues intersected by prose. More problematically, however, several *jātakas* contain long passages of verse which could almost be considered as self-contained stories in their own right.⁵⁰ Even if these stories contain some prose, they clearly differ from the *ākhyāna* model, which requires verse and prose to be mutually interdependent. Indeed, the possibility that some *jātaka* stories may originally have been composed in verse is supported by the various correlations that exist between the *Jātakas* and the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* (see §1.5).⁵¹ Oldenberg does refer to the existence of such verse-based stories, but he argues that they belong to a later period which witnessed a gradual move towards versification (1918:429ff.). There is, however, a certain circularity to this argument: we know that a text is early if it is in the *ākhyāna* style and, because the *ākhyāna* style is early, any passage with a high density of verse must therefore be late. That said, verse-based stories do not form the majority of the *Jātakas*, and although the *ākhyāna* theory does not explain every story in the collection, it is still the most plausible argument that has been put forward about their compositional structure.

Dating the *Jātakas* is problematic, since both the verse and prose developed over centuries of oral composition and each story has its own particular history. Some of the verses contain archaic forms, which suggests that they were fixed at a relatively early date.⁵² It is this aspect which leads Richard Gombrich (1985:428) to estimate that the verses of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) are no later than the third century B.C.E. Maurice Winternitz (1933:121f.), on the other hand, speculates that the majority of the verses in the *Jātakas* cannot be dated earlier than the third century B.C.E., although he concedes that some *gāthās* may go back to the time of the Buddha, while others may even belong to ‘pre-

⁵⁰ For example, the *Gijjha Jātaka* (427), *Mahākapi Jātaka* (516), *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), and *Samkhapāla Jātaka* (524).

⁵¹ Describing the last 50 stories of the *Jātakaṭṭhavaṇṇanā* as ‘small epics long enough to be understood without the help of a prose text’, von Hinüber (1996:57) suggests that the *Jātakas* may be ‘a composite collection consisting of 500 sets of verses plus 50 small epics’.

⁵² Fausbøll 1897:ivff. (*Jātaka* vol.7); Malalasekera 1928:122.

Buddhist ascetic poetry’. Other scholars have also contended that some of the *Jātakas* have pre-Buddhist origins.⁵³

Ludwig Alsdorf (1957a), for example, has asserted that this is the case for the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), which, he states (1957a:70), is ‘as completely un-Buddhist or rather pre-Buddhist as the vast majority of other *jātakas*’. Alsdorf’s reasons for this assertion are that all the verses in the story are non-Buddhist except for a few *gāthās*, which he contends are later interpolations.⁵⁴ Alsdorf makes an important point by drawing attention to the lack of specifically Buddhist material in the verses of the *Vessantara Jātaka*, a situation which is also mirrored in several other *jātakas*. However, he seems to conflate the argument that the verses are non-Buddhist with the conclusion that they are therefore pre-Buddhist, thereby disallowing the possibility that they may have been adopted from a contemporary non-Buddhist tradition. He also seems to conflate the fact that the verses are not *specifically* Buddhist with the assumption that they are therefore *not* Buddhist, a viewpoint which denies that Buddhist texts may contain values which are common to several religious traditions. Moreover, it is important to stress that, even if the *Vessantara Jātaka* has pre-Buddhist origins, this in no way reduces its Buddhist significance. On the contrary, the vast popularity of the *Vessantara Jātaka* in Theravāda Buddhism illustrates how the story engages in issues which are fundamentally relevant to Buddhist values (see Chapters 6 and 7). We will return to this issue of Buddhist identity later.

With regard to a terminal date for the verses, one can assert with reasonable certainty that most of the *gāthās* were fixed by the first century B.C.E., which was when the Pāli canon was written down in Ceylon in the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (*Dīpavaṃsa* 20.20f.).⁵⁵ This date is further supported by the inscription at Bhārhut mentioned above, which cites the first *pāda* of the *Aṇḍabhūta Jātaka* (62). It is not inconceivable that some verses could have been added or changed after the first century B.C.E, since, as Steven

⁵³ For example, Lüders 1897. See also Lüders’ comments cited in Alsdorf 1957a:1961f.

⁵⁴ Gombrich (1985:428) disagrees with Alsdorf that the *Vessantara Jātaka* is pre-Buddhist.

⁵⁵ Collins 1990:95; Norman 1983:10f.

Collins observes (1990:95f.), we do not know the exact nature of the canon at this time. Indeed, the fact that some stories contain more verses than the number designated by their *nipāta* shows that it was possible for *gāthās* to be interpolated into a fixed structure (although the canon may be a different issue). However, while taking this caveat into account, the likelihood that most of the verses (and indeed the stories as a whole) were fixed by the first century B.C.E. is corroborated both by the *jātaka* summaries found in the *Cariyā-piṭaka* and by the sculptures at Bhārhut. In addition, many of the *gāthās* are paralleled by verses in the *Mahāvastu*, which, according to J.J. Jones (1949:xi), may date as early as the second century B.C.E.,⁵⁶ although it was not completed until the third or fourth century C.E.⁵⁷

In its present form, the prose can be given a terminal date of around the fifth century C.E.⁵⁸ However, although the commentarial language of the prose is noticeably different from the archaic forms found in the verses, the content of the prose often recalls much earlier material than the fifth century C.E.⁵⁹ This is shown by the fact that it is often paralleled by related passages in the *Mahāvastu*, and by the fact that the *Cariyā-piṭaka* sometimes describes events which are only narrated in the prose of the *Jātakas*.⁶⁰

Finally, it is important to address the issue of who listened to the *Jātakas*, although little information is available for answering this question. Scholars have tended to view the *Jātakas* as predominantly lay-orientated.⁶¹ However, while I do not deny that the *Jātakas* played a significant role amongst the laity, it seems to me unlikely that their audience did not also consist of monks and nuns. Certainly, the *saṅgha* must have been involved in composing and developing the *Jātakas*. Not only are the stories composed in (or translated

⁵⁶ Nakamura (1980:130) states that the *Mahāvastu* may ‘perhaps’ be dated to the second century B.C.E.

⁵⁷ For discussions of parallel stories in the *Jātakas* and the *Mahāvastu*, see Chopra 1966, Cicak-Chand 1974, and Oberlies 2002.

⁵⁸ Von Hinüber 1998:1; Jones 1979:6.

⁵⁹ Norman 1983:78.

⁶⁰ For example, *Cp* 88f. describes a section of the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), which in its present form is only in the prose (*J* 4.388.7 – *J* 4.389.12).

⁶¹ See for example Jones 1979:xiff., 80, 116; Lamotte 1958:756ff. Gombrich (1977:xxi) has suggested that the audience of the *Vessantara Jātaka* consisted largely of women.

into) Pāli, they also exhibit a great deal of commentarial redaction. Exegetical texts such as the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Milinda-pañha* are also far from reluctant to discuss *jātaka* stories.⁶² Moreover, in the *Jātakas* themselves, the *paccuppannavatthu* frequently depicts monks as the audience of the Buddha’s narration.⁶³

The notion that the *Jātakas* were a mainly lay concern runs the risks of assuming what Joel Tatelman (2000:32f.) has described as a ‘misinformed distinction between an ignorant, if faithful, laity and a learned, philosophically-critical *saṅgha*, the former who practise “Buddhism as a religion”, the latter “Buddhism as a philosophy”.’ Such strict demarcations between the *saṅgha* and the laity have been subverted by scholars such as Gregory Schopen (1997:23ff., 99ff.), who has illustrated that monks and nuns were equally as involved in practices such as relic worship and devotional ritual as laypeople. Indeed, the fact that there are numerous *jātaka* sculptures at the *stūpa* sites of Sāñcī and Bhārhut, where, as Schopen demonstrates (1997:30ff.), monks and nuns were major donors, strongly suggests that the *Jātakas* were enjoyed by members of the *saṅgha* as much as they were by the laity. Rather than viewing the *Jātakas* as belonging to lay Buddhism, I would therefore prefer to use the term ‘popular’ Buddhism, without however intending the word to contain any connotations of ‘low’ as against ‘high’ culture.

1.4 Reading the *Jātakas* as narrative

Most academic studies of the *Jātakas* have been dominated by philological and text-historical forms of analysis. In particular, they have concentrated on revealing various historical strata within the texts. The most common form of stratification that is made is between the verses and the prose. However, attempts have also been made to discover layers of development within the verses. One of the most prolific proponents of this approach is Ludwig Alsdorf, who frequently rearranges the verses of *jātaka* stories in

⁶² *Vism* 302ff.; *Mld* 119ff., 200ff., 217ff., 221ff., 274ff.

⁶³ See also Carrithers 1983:94ff., who describes how forest monks in modern Sri Lanka refer to the *Temiya Jātaka* (538) as an authority.

order to restore what he conceives to be a more intelligible and earlier order.⁶⁴ Alsdorf also uses metrical grounds to distinguish between verse strata. Regarding the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), for example, he argues (1968) that the verses have combined two separate stories, each of which is composed in a different metre (*triṣṭubh/jagatī* and *anuṣṭubh*), the former being earlier than the latter. Alsdorf (1977) makes a similar case concerning the *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (543), which, he contends, contains an earlier self-contained story in *triṣṭubh* metre, which can be revealed by removing the verses in *anuṣṭubh* metre.⁶⁵

Although valid in itself, this philological focus on textual stratification has meant that there has been little thematic or literary analysis of the *Jātakas*. Rarely have the *Jātakas* been treated for what they are: stories, and ones which have been enjoyed as such for several centuries. There are, however, exceptions to this lack of research into the narrative content of the *Jātakas*. Steven Collins (1998) has, for example, examined several of the *Jātakas* in his recent book *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*, a work which I will refer to frequently. In addition, Richard Gombrich (1977, 1985) has interpreted various themes in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547).

Other thematic studies of the *Jātakas* include a book by John Garrett Jones (1979), who compares the ethics of the *Jātakas* with those of the four main *nikāyas*. Jones offers a useful introduction to many of the themes in the *Jātakas*, but he does not study individual stories in any great detail nor how they relate cyclically.⁶⁶ Furthermore, while pinpointing various differences between the *Jātakas* and the four *nikāyas*, Jones also seems to over-emphasise their opposition. Regarding the act of truth (*saccakiriyā*), for example, he states (1979:143):

⁶⁴ For example, Alsdorf 1957a, 1957b, 1962. Although few would doubt that the verses have changed their order during their centuries of oral composition, Alsdorf's amendments are often extremely complex and his approach is heavily dependent on subjective taste. In addition, his arguments are rarely based upon variant manuscript readings. See also Oberlies 2002.

⁶⁵ See also Alsdorf 1971 and Oberlies 2002.

⁶⁶ Jones is also overly reliant on the PTS translation, which, although originally an important contribution to Buddhist studies, often does not reflect the actual Pāli.

There is really nothing Buddhist about this idea at all. It is pure Indian folk religion. It is far, far away from the lofty canonical concept of truth as that which corresponds with ‘things as they are’ (*yathābhūtam*) and respect for which is therefore the necessary prerequisite for any aspirant to enlightenment.

Although acts of truth are common in the *Jātakas*, Jones ignores the fact that the *locus classicus* for this practice is a passage in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (*M* 2.103), in which Aṅgulimāla cures a woman by means of a *saccakiriya*. Not only that, motivated by his apparent distaste for this seemingly non-canonical concept, Jones attempts to devalue the role of the *saccakiriya* within Buddhism by describing it as a product of ‘Indian folk religion’. While I agree that the *saccakiriya* is found in several Indian traditions and is not *specific* to Buddhism,⁶⁷ Jones’s use of limited criteria to determine what is or is not Buddhist threatens to divest the *saccakiriya* of any Buddhist significance at all, a patently problematic suggestion given the popularity of the concept in Theravāda Buddhism.

One of Jones’ central arguments about the difference between the *Jātakas* and the four *nikāyas* is that the *Jātakas* ignore the doctrine of no-self (*anattā*) by connecting characters in the present with those in the past, thereby implying a continuity of personality.⁶⁸ However, while it is true that the *Jātakas* are not particularly concerned with the intricacies of *anattā* (just as they are not concerned with the theory of dependent origination), the concept of no-self does not necessarily have to conflict with the idea of connecting lives. Instead, when the Buddha states ‘it is I who was X’, this can be explained as an instance of conventional language being used to express what is, in reality, a changing process involving two causally related phenomena.⁶⁹ It could be counter-argued that, although this is doctrinally correct, in practice the *Jātakas* portray the Buddha and the Bodhisatta as essentially the same person. Indeed, when in the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* (*M* 1.256ff.) the monk Sāti expounds the wrong view that an

⁶⁷ See Brown 1972; Burlingame 1917; Hopkins 1932; Wayman 1968.

⁶⁸ Jones 1979:24, 39f., 162. Jones further suggests (1979:99) that, whereas the *nikāyas* use the *anattā* doctrine to discourage men from marrying, the *Jātakas* – because of their disregard for the concept of no-self – have to emphasise the fickle nature of women in order to achieve the same end. This is deeply problematic, not least because the *anattā* doctrine does not seem to be used for this purpose in the *nikāyas*.

⁶⁹ See Gombrich 1977:xvii on this issue.

unchanging consciousness transmigrates through *samsāra*, the commentary states (*Ps* 2.305) that Sāti derives this misperception from listening to the *jātaka* expression ‘I was X’. However, the same passage also makes it clear that Sāti’s viewpoint represents a misunderstanding of this *jātaka* expression and is not inherently implied by it.

It is also important to mention a Ph.D thesis by Arnold Aronoff (1982), who argues that the *Jātakas* systematically portray the effects of moral action in terms of bodily and natural imagery (for example food, physical beauty, or vegetative fertility), a discourse which he describes as ‘rupalogical’ as opposed to ‘dhammalogical’. Aronoff (1982:130ff.) instructively shows how the *Jātakas* employ various forms of kataphatic imagery to describe moral values, a theme which is pertinent to this thesis; for example, good actions result in life and food, whereas bad actions result in death and lack of food. However, his central argument is that this ‘rupalogical’ discourse accounts for the classification of the *jātaka* prose as commentarial rather than canonical (1982: especially 195ff.). This seems to me unlikely. Not only is there no external evidence that the Theravāda tradition employed these criteria for its textual classification, there are also numerous canonical texts which employ ‘rupalogical’ imagery, including the *jātaka* verses themselves. Aronoff (1982:215ff.) concedes that ‘rupalogical’ imagery is also found in canonical texts such as the *Buddhavamsa*, but he contends that it has been systematised to a far greater degree in the *jātaka* prose. It seems to me more plausible, and indeed simpler, to posit that the prose is treated as commentarial because it was fixed at a later date than the verses.

The *Jātakas* are not the only narrative texts to have been neglected in Buddhist studies. In general, academic discussions of Buddhist values have concentrated on philosophical or systematic thought, whereas narrative thought has been accorded a secondary position, a bias which, according to Joel Tatelman (2000:31f.), may be influenced by Protestant presuppositions, which ‘take the form of a privileging of the “historical”, “rational” and

“philosophical” over “story”, “legend” and “myth””.⁷⁰ This neglect is all the more conspicuous given that, as Mark Woodward has shown (1997:43ff.), Buddhist texts frequently treat narrative and systematic thought in a complementary rather than oppositional manner.⁷¹ A prime example is the *suttas*, which are invariably set within a narrative context and employ numerous narrative techniques, such as allegory, metaphor, and character portrayal. Similarly, the *Visuddhimagga* – the archetypal exegetical text in Theravāda Buddhism – refers to the Buddha’s biography as well as the *Jātakas* as part of its analysis.⁷²

This tendency to overlook the value of narrative has, however, been changing. Indeed, there has been a growing awareness among Western scholars that narrative provides an important medium for the expression and discussion of Buddhist values.⁷³ As Charles Hallisey (1996) points out, stories act as ‘discursive sites where Buddhists debated the scope and validity of the different ethical theories which they knew’. This is partly due to narrative’s propensity to emphasise qualities such as ambiguity and multi-vocality. As Joel Tatelman states (2000:173f.): ‘While a philosophical work typically seeks to eliminate polysemy in order to establish one determinate meaning, a narrative work typically exploits polysemy in order to establish the richest possible texture of meaning.’ This texture of meaning is achieved internally through narrative devices – for example

⁷⁰ Jones (1979:xiii) suggests that the lack of research into the *Jātakas* may be due to a tendency among Asian Buddhists ‘exporting’ Buddhism to emphasise ‘the cool rationality and the intellectual candour of their founder’ and due to a tendency in Western scholarship to concentrate on recovering the origins of Buddhism.

⁷¹ Collins (1998:283f.) suggests that imagery acts as a bridge between narrative and systematic thought.

⁷² *Vism* 198ff., 302ff.; Woodward 1997:46ff.

⁷³ See for example the articles in Schober 1997. See also Ohnuma 1998, 2000; Strong 1979, 1992; and Tatelman 2000. For a general account of the role of biography in Buddhist literature, see Reynolds 1976 and 1997. Scholars such as Jonathan Walters (1997:160ff.) have shown that narrative texts often provide valuable information on Buddhist practices such as relic worship. This is also noted by Tatelman, who states (2000:32): ‘The epigraphical data which [Gregory] Schopen has used to such good advantage frequently suggests a picture of living Indian Buddhism which resembles the *avadānas* far more than the *sūtras* and *śāstras*.’ However, while Tatelman’s general point is well taken, I am wary of drawing too direct a correlation between narrative texts and ‘living Indian Buddhism’, since narratives are themselves – like epigraphical data – textual constructs with their own ideological agenda. Furthermore, *sūtras* contain more material on such practices than is often appreciated. Tatelman’s language mirrors that of Gregory Schopen, who posits a problematic dichotomy between how Buddhists actually practice, as represented in sources such as epigraphy and archaeology, and how they should practice, as represented in doctrinal texts (1997: 1ff., 56, 114 *inter alia*). See Arnold 1997 on this issue.

metaphor, allusion, or plot – and externally through the text’s interaction with other stories as well as with various narrative motifs and conventions (in other words, context).

In this thesis, I will make general observations about the theme of renunciation in the *Jātakas*, but I will also examine in detail a few select stories in order to explore how individual narratives operate on their own integral level. I thus hope to achieve a compromise between what Tatelman (2000:30ff.), following Robert Alter, has described as top-down and bottom-up forms of analysis, the former concentrating on common elements between stories and the latter on their singularities. In addition, I will be concerned with how narratives interact with each other by reshaping various interrelated motifs, thereby offering multiple nuances to the theme of renunciation.

Although I occasionally consider historical strata in order to discuss various strands and tensions within a text, my main approach is to explore the *Jātakas* from a synchronic point of view, a method not dissimilar to the way in which scholars have investigated other composite works of oral literature such as Homer. Regarding the verse and prose strata, the fact that the verses are often unintelligible without their accompanying prose means that such a synchronic approach is not only convenient but often necessary. Moreover, I am wary of a historicist tendency to treat what is early as somehow more true or essential to a narrative than what is late.⁷⁴ It is not my intention here to rediscover an original, core story (as represented mostly by the verses), which has supposedly been obscured by later strands extraneous to it (as represented mostly by the prose). Instead, I aim to explore the *Jātakas* in their present redacted form as complex integrated narratives.

⁷⁴ For the attitude that the prose is aesthetically inferior to the verses, see Alsdorf 1957a:70, who states that the non-Buddhist nature of the verses in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) stands in ‘sharp contradiction to the prose which, with its excess of Buddhist piety, its boundless exaggerations, and its exuberance of sometimes rather insipid miracles breathes a totally different spirit of much later centuries’. Compare Winternitz 1933:119, who describes the prose as ‘the miserable performance of a very late period’. Similarly, Alsdorf (1971: 413) privileges the earlier verses of the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545) over its later ones, saying: ‘The result was an *ākhyāna* of about 150 stanzas in the old metres *triṣṭubh* and *vaitāliya* – less than half of the present text, whose analysis shows that most, if not all of its *ślokas* are insertions and accretions often contrasting in style and spirit with the vigorous, naïve old ballad as products of a later, more sentimental time and of poets of lesser grade.’

1.5 The *Jātakas* and non-Buddhist narrative traditions

As mentioned in §1.1, a major aspect of this thesis is to examine the *Jātakas* in relation to themes and motifs found in non-Buddhist narrative traditions. The main texts that I compare the *Jātakas* with are the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh*) and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Rām*). The sheer volume and diversity of these epics makes it impossible to offer an exhaustive analysis of their relationship with the *Jātakas*. However, it is worth summarising some of the links that exist between these Sanskrit epics and the *Jātakas*.

Given the encyclopedic nature of the *Mbh*, with its mixture of martial epic, moral fables, and didactic passages, as well as the fact that it developed over an approximately similar period to the *Jātakas*,⁷⁵ it is not surprising to find that it contains stories that are related to the *Jātakas*. Heinrich Lüders (1897), for example, has shown that the verse-story of the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526) is closely related to *Mbh* 3.110ff.⁷⁶ Both texts describe how, on Indra's orders, a forest ascetic called Isisiṅga/Rṣyaśṅga is seduced by a woman disguised as an ascetic, and both reveal several verbal correspondences in their verses.⁷⁷ Other *jātakas* that are related to the *Mbh* include: the *Hatthipāla Jātaka* (509), which is linked to *Mbh* 12.169;⁷⁸ the *Bhisa Jātaka* (488), which is linked to *Mbh* 13.94f. and 13.96;⁷⁹ the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* (537), which is linked to *Mbh* 1.165ff.;⁸⁰ the *Vighāsa Jātaka* (393), which is linked to *Mbh* 12.11; the *Devadhamma Jātaka*, which is linked to *Mbh* 3.296f.;

⁷⁵ Van Buitenen (1973:xxiiiiff.) dates it roughly between 400 B.C.E. to 400 C.E. See Brockington 1998a:130ff. for a summary of research concerning the dating of the *Mbh*.

⁷⁶ Lüders also discusses other versions, including *Rām* 1.8ff. See also O'Flaherty 1973:42ff. Lüders (1904) also compares the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* (454) with the Kṛṣṇa legend, as represented in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Mausalaparvan* of the *Mbh*. In addition, he cites several parallels between the *Jātakas* and the *Mbh* concerning the theme of the vanity of grieving for the dead.

⁷⁷ According to Lüders (1897:125), the *Mbh* passage is younger than the *Naḷinikā Jātaka*. His argument is based on a single verse in *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (v.56), all of whose *pādas* appear to have been expanded into four verses in the *Mbh* (3.113.1ff.). This, however, seems to me to be inconclusive evidence, since *pādas* and verses were constantly being added and removed in the oral tradition, and it is problematic to view the *Mbh* as somehow directly drawing upon a fixed verse. One could equally argue that the verse in the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* is a contracted version of what we have now in the *Mbh*.

⁷⁸ Winternitz 1927:417ff.

⁷⁹ Klein-Terrada 1980, who also discusses other versions of the story.

⁸⁰ Watanabe 1909, who also discusses other versions of the story, including *Rām* 7.57.

the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) and *Sīlavīmamsa Jātaka* (330), which are linked to *Mbh* 12.178 (Bombay edition); and the *Rājovāda Jātaka* (151), which is linked to *Mbh* 3.194 (Bombay edition).⁸¹ The *jātaka* story of king Sivi's gift of flesh to a dove, which is extant only in Chinese translation but whose popularity in Indian Buddhism is shown by its depiction at sites such as Amarāvati,⁸² is also paralleled by *Mbh* 3.131. In addition, characters from the *Mbh*, such as Yudhiṣṭhira (Pali Yudhiṭṭhila) and Vidhura, are portrayed in stories such as the *Dhūmakāri Jātaka* (413), *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka* (495) and *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545).⁸³

The *Rām* is also closely associated with the *Jātakas*. Most famously, the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (461) portrays a version of Rāma's exile and Daśaratha's death (especially *Rām* 2.93ff.). In addition, the *Sāma Jātaka* (540) is paralleled by a passage in *Rām* 2.57f., which describes how Daśaratha wounded a young ascetic in the forest. These parallels will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, where I compare the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) with the *Rām*. I have also drawn up a preliminary table of linguistic and thematic correspondences between the *Rām* and the *Jātakas* in Appendix A.

The *Jātakas* are also connected with Jain narratives, especially ones found in the *Uttarajjhāyana* (*Utt*). Thus the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497) is linked to *Utt* 12,⁸⁴ the *Cittasambhūta Jātaka* (498) to *Utt* 13,⁸⁵ and the *Hatthipāla Jātaka* (509) to *Utt* 14.⁸⁶ In addition, K.R. Norman (1991d) has analysed the evolution of the term *pacceka-buddha* by comparing related verses in the *Uttarajjhāyana* and the *Kumbhakāra Jātaka* (408).

⁸¹ For these last parallels, see Franke 1906, who also discusses several other verbal correspondences. See also Bollée 1970:117ff. and Gombrich 1977:xxviii for further correspondences.

⁸² Schlingloff 1987:86ff. and Meisig 1991. For Amarāvati art, see Knox 1992:64, 115, 130, 148, 149.

⁸³ The *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545) contains a scene in which a king loses his servant Vidhura in a game of dice, a motif which is related to the famous dice scene in the *Mbh*, in which Yudhiṣṭhira loses his kingdom to Duryodhana.

⁸⁴ Charpentier 1909, Alsdorf 1962.

⁸⁵ Alsdorf 1957b.

⁸⁶ Charpentier 1908.

The extent to which the above *jātakas* and Brahmanical narratives directly parallel one another varies. Sometimes the narrative content is extremely similar. For example, the *Rājovāda Jātaka* (151) and *Mbh* 3.194 (Bombay edition) both depict a confrontation between two kings who meet on a road and refuse to make way for each other, and both eulogise the king who eschews a morality of reciprocity and instead conquers badness through goodness.⁸⁷ Similarly, *Mbh* 12.178 (Bombay edition) refers to major motifs found in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) and *Sīlavīmamsa Jātaka* (330), and contains a verse which is also found in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*. As discussed above, the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526) is also very similar to *Mbh* 3.110ff. in plot. However, the two stories differ in that in the prose of the *jātaka* the seduced ascetic Isisiṅga decides to return to ascetic life in the forest and not follow his lover into the city, whereas in the *Mbh* passage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga only returns to the forest after he has married the princess Śāntā in the city and she has given birth to a son.

Just as the *Jātakas* are depicted within a Buddhist framework, so parallel passages in the Brahmanical epics are often adapted to a Brahmanical context. *Mbh* 12.169, for example, parallels the *Hatthipāla Jātaka* (509) in describing a debate between a brahmin youth, who stresses the importance of becoming an ascetic immediately, and his father, who argues that one should learn the *Vedas* and rear a family before entering the forest in old age. However, unlike in the *Hatthipāla Jātaka*, the son goes on to declare his intention to realise Brahman by practising the internal sacrifices of self-restraint and meditation: *śāntiyajña, brahmayajña, vān-manaḥ-karma-yajña* (*Mbh* 12.169.30ff.). Similarly, in both the *Bhisa Jātaka* (488) and *Mbh* (13.96), a group of ascetics make a series of curses to show that they have not stolen a bunch of lotus-stalks which Indra has in fact taken in order to test them. In contrast to the *Bhisa Jātaka*, however, many of the curses in the *Mbh* are coloured with specifically Brahmanical language. Vasiṣṭha for example curses whoever stole the lotus-stalks with not studying the *Vedas* (*Mbh* 13.96.17), and Jamadagni curses them with eating at the *śrāddha* of a *śūdra* (*Mbh* 13.96.25).

⁸⁷ Franke (1906:323) notes that it is *Mbh* 5.39.58 which parallels v.2 of the *Rājovāda Jātaka* most closely.

Sometimes *jātaka* versions differ fundamentally from their epic counterparts in their adaptation of a story. In *Mbh* 1.165ff., a king is cursed by a brahmin to become a man-eater and is finally released from his curse by an exorcism. In the related story in the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* (537), however, the king’s desire for human flesh is portrayed as being due to bad karma rather than a curse. Moreover, the king is cured of his cannibalism by hearing the Bodhisatta preach the *dhamma* and not through an exorcism. A further illustration of this reinvention of narrative motifs is provided by *Rām* 2.57f. and the *Sāma Jātaka* (540).⁸⁸ Whereas in the *Rām* version, a king is cursed when he accidentally kills a young ascetic in the forest, in the parallel passage in the *Sāma Jātaka* the king is forgiven, even though there he kills the ascetic on purpose.

In the case of the *Vighāsa Jātaka* (393), a similar narrative is treated in a diametrically opposite manner to the parallel version in *Mbh* 12.11. In the *Mbh* story a group of young brahmins, who are described as ‘dim-witted’ (*mandāḥ*, *Mbh* 12.11.2), become forest ascetics, whereupon Indra goes to preach to them in the disguise of a bird. Praising those who ‘eat remnants’ (*vighasāśinah*), Indra attacks the young ascetics for eating mere leftovers (*ucchiṣṭabhojino*, *Mbh* 12.11.7). ‘Remnant eaters’, Indra tells them, are those who eat the leftovers (*avaśiṣṭāni*) of food that has been given to guests, gods, ancestors and kinsmen (*Mbh* 12.11.24), and the highest form of austerity (*tapas*) is achieved not by leaving society but by perfecting the life of the householder (*Mbh* 12.11.20f.). This anti-ascetic tone is accentuated by the conclusion to the story, in which the young brahmins re-adopt the household life. In the *Vighāsa Jātaka*, however, although the verses echo those found in the *Mbh*,⁸⁹ the prose gives an entirely different interpretation to the story (albeit one which jars with the *gāthās*). There, a group of youths also decide to become ascetics, but their fault lies not in adopting asceticism but rather in being uncommitted ascetics. It is because of their lack of ascetic discipline that Sakka (Indra) approaches them in the

⁸⁸ For a more detailed account, see Chapter 7, pp.262ff.

⁸⁹ Franke 1906:336ff.

disguise of a bird in order to shame them. This pro-ascetic stance is, however, counter-balanced by the verses, which criticise the ascetics for eating the leftovers of wild animals (v.5) and praise ‘remnant-eaters’ (*vighāsādino*) as those who eat ‘the remnants’ (*sesa*) of food given to a brahmin or ascetic (v.6). It seems therefore that the prose has attempted to give a pro-ascetic gloss to anti-ascetic verses.

This propensity for reinterpretation can also involve pointed attacks against material found in the Brahmanical epics. In the *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536), for example, Draupadī’s marriage to the five Pāṇḍava princes is considered to be an epitome of female wickedness, a sharp contrast to her heroic depiction in the *Mbh*. Not only is she said to marry her husbands out of lust, her insatiable passion for sex also drives her to be unfaithful with a hunch-backed slave (*J* 6.424ff.). Similarly, the *Bhīmasena Jātaka* (80) may represent a satire of the Pāṇḍava hero Bhīmasena, in which Bhīmasena is portrayed as a strong but unintelligent character, whose martial vaunts are ridiculed when he defecates through fear on entering battle.

However, despite such instances, I am wary of seeing the *Jātakas* simply as Buddhist responses to Brahmanical narratives, or vice versa. The oral culture within which these stories were composed was a complex system, with both traditions overlapping and employing similar motifs. Moreover, it is often misleading to construct too strict an opposition between the *Jātakas* as Buddhist on the one hand and the Sanskrit epics as Brahmanical on the other. The blurring of such sectarian distinctions is illustrated, for example, by the *Hatthipāla Jātaka* (509). In this story, the Bodhisatta’s rejection of his father’s advice to study the Vedas and rear a family before becoming an ascetic may be construed as a Buddhist attack on the Brahmanical *āśrama* system. Indeed, this is the position taken by Jones (1979:92f.), who views the story as a Buddhist response to the ‘Hindu’ emphasis on the householder life. However, irrespective of whether the story originated within a Buddhist context (or perhaps a Jain context, as a version is also found in *Utt* 14), the fact that there is a version of the story in the *Mbh* (12.169) shows that it

could be adapted to the ascetic tradition within Brahmanism, thereby demonstrating the need for caution when discussing essentialised notions of Buddhist or Brahmanical values or texts.⁹⁰

Scholars have generally compared the *Jātakas* with non-Buddhist narratives from a text-historical viewpoint, often seeking to recover an original Ur story underlying the extant versions by rearranging some verses and removing others.⁹¹ As discussed in §1.4, this thesis takes a more synchronic approach, treating the *Jātakas* and the Brahmanical epics as largely co-extensive and cross-fertilising traditions. Indeed, the notion of a static Ur story seems to me highly problematic when dealing with the complex flux of oral literature, which, by its very nature, is subject to constant improvisation and reinvention. Rather than homogeneity, I am more concerned with how individual narratives reflect and refract one another by adapting interrelated motifs. Furthermore, a synchronic approach is better suited than historical analysis to examining how texts interact on the more general and implicit level of themes and motifs, rather than solely focusing on passages which are explicitly linked through linguistic parallels. This thesis aims to explore that interaction, concentrating on how the *Jātakas* adopt and reshape motifs which are also found in the Brahmanical epics.

1.6 Renunciation in the *Jātakas*

As mentioned in §1.1, the main form of renunciation examined in this thesis is asceticism. The *Jātakas* do not confine themselves to a single image of asceticism, but explore various combinations of ascetic types, which interact through various stories and motifs.

⁹⁰ Winternitz states of the *Mbh* passage (1927:417): ‘It would be premature to declare the dialogue [...] or even single verses of it, to be “Buddhistic” or “borrowed from the Buddhists”.’ See also Lüders (1904: 702ff.), who shows that *jātaka* stories which depict the vanity of grieving for the dead are not essentially Buddhist, as opposed to Brahmanical, because there are several parallel passages in the Brahmanical epics. Similarly, the argument that the Śibi story in *Mbh* 3.131 is of Buddhist origin because of its emphasis on generosity is challenged by van Buitenen (1975:198), who states: ‘We find the same high value placed upon generous giving in Hinduism too, and it is more prudent to say that this value is all-Indian, irrespective of religious persuasion.’

⁹¹ See for example Lüders 1897; Charpentier 1908, 1909; Alsdorf 1957b, 1962.

In some stories the Bodhisatta is portrayed as a solitary ascetic, in others he belongs to a group of ascetics; sometimes he enters the forest with his wife, other times he deliberately leaves her behind; sometimes he is a royal ascetic (*rājisi*), other times a brahmin ascetic; sometimes he is clothed in rags, other times in the Brahmanical dress of an antelope skin and matted hair.

One of the central concerns of the *Jātakas* is with situating asceticism in relation to the world around it, whether this be ordinary society or realms such as the heavens. No straightforward answer is given to this problem. Instead the *Jātakas* explore the issue by presenting multiple forms of interaction between asceticism and the ordinary world, or – stated differently – between the transcendent (*lokuttara*) and conventional (*lokika*) spheres.

The ascetic realm is generally portrayed as the forest. Evoking mixed connotations of fear and awe, danger and beauty, the forest is above all conceived as being outside ordinary society, an opposition accentuated by the common distinction between the forest and the ‘human realm’ (*manussapatha*). By implication, the ascetic realm is therefore beyond human and even non-human, a notion developed in stories such as the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), in which the abnormal nature of the ascetic protagonist is highlighted by the fact that he is born from a deer.

However, while portrayed in terms of its otherness, the forest also engages in a complex dialectic with ordinary society. Indeed, several stories seem to depict this dialectic as inevitable. As Steven Collins observes (1998:34), this is illustrated by the motif of the ascetic who leaves the forest for the ‘human realm’ in order to acquire salt and citrus fruit.⁹² The *Kassapamandiya Jātaka* (312) further informs us that in the rainy season ascetics are forced to live in the human realm because of the impossibility of finding roots

⁹² For example, *J* nos. 66, 76, 81, 99, 149, 174, 180, 213, 235, 246, 251, 281, 299, 313, 319, 323, 328, 337, 376, 403, 497, etc. In stories such as the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539), however, the forest and ‘human realm’ are kept separate, and ascetics simply disappear from ordinary society; see Chapter 6, pp.204ff.

or wild fruit (*J* 3.37). When such ascetics leave the forest they often beg in a city for alms and reside in a royal park, which then serves as an arena for asceticism to confront society (especially kingship).⁹³ An example of this is the *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528), in which the ascetic protagonist of the story treads a thin line between advising the king of Benares – even judging law-suits, although he himself asserts that this is not an ascetic’s business (*kamma*, *J* 5.229.15) – and maintaining a renunciate distance by returning to the forest after he has aided the king.

This interaction between the forest and the human realm is also necessary for narrative momentum, which requires some form of tension for the story to progress. Hence the following pattern is adopted by several *jātakas*: characters in a forest (such as an ascetic or animal) come into conflict with characters from society (such as a king or hunter); the conflict is resolved (often through the virtue of the Bodhisatta); the characters return to their original realms. Many stories seem to play on the inevitability of these confrontations by making them arise from chance events that border on the absurd. For example, in the *Saccaṃkira Jātaka* (73) a series of events, including a failed assassination attempt and a violent storm, result in a prince being carried up a river on a log with three animals and washed up outside an ascetic’s hermitage. Similarly in the *Mahākapi Jātaka* (407), despite the attempts of monkeys to protect a mango tree from the outside world, a mango floats down a river to a king, who becomes so captivated by its taste that he enters the forest with an army in order to acquire more of the same fruit.

A similar dialectic has often been observed for the *saṅgha*’s relationship with society.⁹⁴ On the one hand, the *saṅgha* is a community of renunciates, which defines itself in opposition to ordinary society through practices such as celibacy and the refusal to engage in agriculture. On the other hand the *saṅgha* maintains close links with ordinary society, most obviously through its dependence on lay support. An important recent examination

⁹³ See *J* nos. 66, 87, 149, 235, 251, 281, 313, 323, 328, 337, 376, 378, 403, 497, etc.

⁹⁴ See for example Ali 1998; Carrithers 1983: especially chapters 8 and 9; Chakravarti 1987; Tambiah 1976; Wijayaratna 1990.

of the relationship between Buddhist asceticism and society has been made by Steven Collins (1998). Following Ernest Gellner's analysis of the nature of ideology, Collins argues (1998:38ff.) that asceticism presupposes the world against which it 'offends' – a word which is used in the Kierkegaardian sense of being both threatening and promising, alarming and thrilling – since asceticism's very ability to be 'offensive' requires another wider world for it to 'offend' against. Describing Buddhist ideology as both 'at the top of and outside social hierarchy' (1998:40), Collins illustrates how nirvana is both beyond the ordinary world and at the same time an ultimate form of happiness which structures and informs relative forms of happiness in the ordinary world (such as wealth, beauty, fertile paradises, or utopian kingdoms). He states (1998:116f.):

I want to recenter nirvana in our view of Buddhism "in practice" [...]. It need not be relegated to the margins of Buddhist culture, in a view which says "yes, nirvana, doctrinally, should be the aim of all Buddhists, but in practice it is irrelevant to most of them." [...] Manifest, conscious, immediate concern with nirvana must always be a specialist matter. But the syntactic value of nirvana – as both that which structures and systematises the cosmology of imagined felicities, and provides a sense of an ending in the Buddhist master-text – is available to all, and in fact ubiquitous. [...] It is in this sense, as the implicit culmination and unification of the entire spectrum of well-being, that nirvana is central to any and every expression of felicity in the Pali imaginaire.

This notion of nirvana 'as a latent but necessary syntactic element of all Buddhist aspirations to well-being' (Collins 1998:564) is for example expressed by a group of verses in the *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta* of the *Khuddakapāṭha* (7), also cited in the *Siri Jātaka* (284, *J* 2.414), which depicts nirvana as one among many 'attainments of merit' (*puññasampadā*), including beauty, kingship, friendship, and heaven.⁹⁵

Collins' concept of nirvana as being both beyond the conditioned existence of *samsāra* and an ultimate form of felicity structuring other forms of felicity within *samsāra* could be described in terms of the difference between apophatic and kataphatic expression, the former being a negative mode of expression and the latter positive. Regarding the

⁹⁵ Collins 1998:290.

apophatic mode, Collins points out that nirvana, in being a timeless and unconditioned state, cannot be directly represented in narrative texts. Elucidating some of the differences between systematic and narrative thought, he states (1998:122):

Items of systematic thought are related to each other logically rather than sequentially, albeit that the embodiment of them in overt speech, thought or writing will necessarily be in some order. Narrative thought on the contrary requires a specific sequential ordering of its constituents, not merely as a practical necessity, but as an intrinsic part of the particular way in which it produces meaning.

He continues (1998:126):

In systematic thought, the idea of nirvana as the Unconditioned, timeless complement of conditioned life-in-time takes its place in a logically structured matrix of concepts [...]. In narrative thought, whose production of meaning requires the sequential ordering of its constituents, one must ask: how can timelessness, eternity, be narrated? The simple answer is that it cannot, in so far as all narrative has temporality as an ultimate referent. But timelessness can play the syntactic role of the full stop (period), bringing closure to a temporally extended narrative sequence.

Collins (1998:234ff.) then goes on to describe various ways in which this ‘full stop’, or sense of ending, is brought about. From the viewpoint of performance this is achieved by the end of a text’s recitation. From the viewpoint of the narrative itself, nirvana plays an implicit ‘syntactic role’ in, for example, the concept of a karmically conditioned sequence of lives, which ‘finds its own resolution, its own avoidance of meaningless chronology, in the possibility of Release’ (1998:241).

The apophatic expression of nirvana as an ending or silence is further seen in the image of nirvana as the blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion. However, kataphatic imagery is also used of nirvana. For example, as Collins points out (1998:207ff., 224ff.), nirvana is often depicted as a state of happiness (*sukha*) or as a city. Similarly, an

enlightened person is often described as an ocean,⁹⁶ and the Buddha is often referred to as a type of king.⁹⁷ In the *Jātakas*, kataphatic imagery is used of asceticism in a variety of different ways. Ascetics are, for example, frequently surrounded by idyllic pictures of fertility and beauty.⁹⁸ In the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), the Buddha Vipassin is linked with reproductive fertility when Yasodharā in a past life makes an aspiration in front of him to be the mother of a future Buddha (*J* 6.480.15ff.). Similarly, renunciate actions frequently result in the attainment of various felicities such as food, wealth, beauty, kingship, and – the ultimate kataphatic value – life.⁹⁹ This is especially seen in the context of giving (*dāna*), in which the fruit of a gift is often portrayed as a refined version of the object given away, a process which ultimately leads to the gift of life resulting in a purified form of life (see Chapters 4 and 5).

This kataphatic way of expressing renunciate values is also seen in the connection between the *paccuppannavatthu* and the *atītavatthu*, which frequently serves to relate aspects of Buddhist monasticism to images associated with the conventional world. For example, the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* (1) links the act of taking refuge in the Buddha with the *atītavatthu*, in which a convoy of people is saved from death by the Bodhisatta; followers of Devadatta on the other hand are not saved. Similarly the *Guttila Jātaka* (243) compares soteriological values with music by linking the Buddha's superiority to Devadatta in the present with the Bodhisatta's superior talent as a musician in the past. In the *Alīnacitta Jātaka* (156), *Samgāmāvacara Jātaka* (182), and *Khurappa Jātaka* (265) monastic effort in the *paccuppannavatthu* is associated with the courage to sacrifice oneself in battle in the *atītavatthu*; and in the *Mahāsīlava Jātaka* (51) and *Pañcāvudha Jātaka* (55), it is linked with the attainment of kingship. Similarly, in the *Tittha Jātaka* (25) the Buddha's ability to teach monks how to attain arahantship is connected with knowledge about horses, and in the *Kañcanakkhandha Jātaka* (56) it is

⁹⁶ Collins 1998:221f.

⁹⁷ For example *Sn* v.554.

⁹⁸ See §2.5.2.

⁹⁹ For example, *J* nos. 12, 31, 51, 326, 371, 385, 527, 533.

linked with the mundane knowledge that splitting up gold makes it easier to transport. Likewise, in the *Ummagga Jātaka* (546), the Buddha’s wisdom (*paññā*), with which he converts people such as Kūṭadanta and Aṅgulimālā, is linked to the Bodhisatta’s political cunning as a *purohita*, which he uses to help a king conquer every surrounding kingdom. This notion that *paññā* incorporates various levels of wisdom, both ‘spiritual’ and conventional, reflects Collins’ concept of nirvana unifying a variety of Buddhist felicities, and is neatly summed up by the *Mūsika Jātaka* (373), which states (v.5): ‘One should learn every form of knowledge, whether low, medium, or high. One should understand the meaning of everything, although one might not use it all. The time will come when knowledge reaps benefit.’¹⁰⁰

However, renunciate values in the *paccuppannavatthu* can also conflict with conventional values in the *atītavatthu*. In the *Kusa Jātaka* (531), for example, the *paccuppannavatthu* states that desire for women is an obstacle to monastic development and that, as a result of such desire, ‘wise men in the past shamefully came to misfortune and destruction’ (*J* 5.278.20).¹⁰¹ Although this reference to misfortune and destruction may be a humorous allusion to the humiliating tactics that the Bodhisatta has to employ in order to win over the headstrong female of the story, the *atītavatthu* is far from concerned with the danger posed by women to spiritual progress. On the contrary, the Bodhisatta’s height of achievement is to attain the beautiful woman for his wife. It seems, therefore, that the *paccuppannavatthu*’s gloss represents an attempt to reinterpret what is in effect a love-story.¹⁰²

Such a contrast between renunciate and conventional morality is also seen in the theme of friendship, which is central to many *jātakas*. On the one hand, several stories expound the

¹⁰⁰ *sabbam sutam adhīyetha hīnamukkaṭṭhamajjhimaṃ /*
sabbassa atthaṃ jāneyya na ca sabbam payojaye /
hoti tādisako kālo yattha atthāvahaṃ sutan ti //5//

¹⁰¹ *porāṇakapaṇḍitā nittejā hutvā anayavyasanaṃ pāpunimsū ti.*

¹⁰² Similarly, in the *Kānavilāpa Jātaka* (290) and *Sussondī Jātaka* (360), verses about love are interpreted by the prose as signifying negative attachments.

conventional ethic that one should help one's friends and harm one's enemies;¹⁰³ in some cases, this even leads the Bodhisatta to be involved in killing.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, many stories express the renunciate ethic that one should be non-violent to one's enemies and even feel friendship towards them.¹⁰⁵ However, renunciate values can also complement the conventional ethic of helping one's friends against one's enemies. In the *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa Jātaka* (389), for example, a crab's decision to help the Bodhisatta when he is attacked by a crow and snake is portrayed as a renunciate act of self-sacrifice (*jīvitapariccāga*, *J* 3.293.8) for a friend which goes beyond material concerns for food (vv.3f.) and which is paralleled by Ānanda's devotion to the Buddha.

This thesis aims to explore how this dialectic between opposition and complementarity, the apophatic and the kataphatic, informs other such complex interactions between renunciate values and the conventional world in the *Jātakas*.

1.7 Summary of chapters

My examination of the theme of renunciation is spread over six chapters (Chapters 2-7). In Chapter 2, I investigate the *Jātakas*' portrayal of the relationship between ascetics and gods (especially the god Sakka), and compare it with related stories and motifs in the Sanskrit epics. In Chapter 3, I investigate the relationship between brahmins and ascetics and explore the theme of 'taming' (conversion) in the context of asceticism. In particular,

¹⁰³ See for example the *Sakuṇagghi Jātaka* (168) and *Kakkaṭā Jātaka* (267), in which the Bodhisatta rejoices at killing his enemy. For the notion that one should only make friends with one's own type and not with a natural enemy, see the *Veluka Jātaka* (43), *Godha Jātaka* (143), and *Palāsa Jātaka* (370). Similarly, several stories express the notion that misfortune arises from stepping beyond one's natural limits; for example, the *Vissāsabhojana Jātaka* (93), *Sakuṇagghi Jātaka* (168), and *Gijjha Jātaka* (427). Compare the *Virocana Jātaka* (143) and *Jambuka Jātaka* (335), in which a jackal suffers misfortune because it does not realise its natural difference from a lion, a motif which is linked to Devadatta's doomed attempt at imitating the Buddha. For the theme that one should only befriend the wise or good and not a villain, see *J* nos. 150, 256, 279, 370, 184, 186, 190, 321, 348, 365, 544.

¹⁰⁴ Jones 1979:61ff.

¹⁰⁵ In the *Mahāsīlava Jātaka* (51) and *Seyya Jātaka* (282), the Bodhisatta is imprisoned by a rival king, but is released when his enemy is impressed by the Bodhisatta's *mettā*, whereupon they become friends. In the *Uraga Jātaka* (154) and *Nakula Jātaka* (165), animals that are natural enemies become friends after hearing the Bodhisatta preach on *mettā* and non-violence. See also the *Cullaḥaṃsa Jātaka* (533) and *Mahāḥaṃsa Jātaka* (534), in which geese become reconciled with a hunter.

I concentrate on the *Mātāṅga Jātaka* (497), in which the Bodhisatta is an outcaste ascetic who attacks Brahmanical values. I argue that the ‘taming’ methods used by the Bodhisatta are connected to motifs associated with the figure of the wrathful ascetic in the *Mbh* and *Rām*.

In the remaining four chapters, I concentrate on the theme of giving (*dāna*). In Chapter 4, I examine *dāna* in terms of two different categories, individualist and relational giving, and explore how *dāna* acts as a bridge between the ascetic and social spheres. In Chapter 5, I investigate giving in the context of friendship and love, focusing especially on the theme of self-sacrifice to another person. I also argue that the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519) is linked to Sītā’s abduction and testing in the *Rām*. Chapters 6 and 7 concentrate on the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), in which I argue that the Bodhisatta’s fulfilment of the perfection of giving – which fundamentally grates against social values – is significantly complemented by his wife’s self-sacrifice to him. I attempt to elucidate the *Vessantara Jātaka*’s complex portrayal of ascetic and social values by comparing it with related motifs found in the *Rām*.

Chapter 2

Gods and ascetics

2.1 Introduction

Gods play a crucial role in defining human identity in ancient Indian literature. As John Smith observes (1989:176), ‘The nature of mankind’s relationship to the gods is the theme of a great many Indian myths and it turns out to be a fundamental concern of the various Indian epic traditions.’ The same is also true of the *Jātakas*, where it is often the ascetic who mediates between gods and humans. This chapter explores the ambiguities involved in the relationship between gods and ascetics in the *Jātakas*. It especially focuses on the god Sakka (Sanskrit: Śakra), who is also called Inda (Sanskrit: Indra) or Vāsava. One of the most striking aspects of Sakka’s relationship with ascetics is its inconsistency. In some stories he is antagonistic towards ascetics and in others he supports them (as he invariably supports the Buddha in the *suttas*). This chapter analyses Sakka’s development from anti-ascetic to pro-ascetic god and compares it with similar themes found in the Brahmanical epics. Other tensions between gods and ascetics are also investigated, such as the relationship between divine happiness and the ethic of renunciation. Before examining these issues, however, it would be useful to offer a brief summary of the Buddhist heavens.

In standard formulations of Theravādin cosmology, there are 26 heavens.¹ These include: four heavens in the formless realm (*arūpāvacara*), which correspond to the four formless meditations; sixteen heavens in the form realm (*rūpāvacara*), which are categorised according to the four *jhānas*; and six heavens in the desire realm (*kāmāvacara*). As Steven Collins points out (1998:299f.), although the word *deva* can describe any god that inhabits these 26 heavens, it normally refers to the gods in the *kāmāvacara*, while the word

¹ I follow the scheme given by Gethin 1997:194 and Collins 1998:297ff. For a general survey of Buddhist gods in the *nikāyas*, see Marasinghe 1974.

Brahmā is used for gods in the other 20 heavens. Similarly, *sagga* (‘heaven’) can refer to all 26 heavens, but is most often used of the heavens in the *kāmāvacara*, while Brahmāloka usually refers to the other 20 heavens. In addition to these gods, there are also ‘earth deities’ such as *nāgas*, tree-deities (*rukkha-devatā*), and *yakkhas*, which enjoy heaven-like pleasures on or below the human realm. *Asuras* (quasi-demons who oppose gods) also have an anomalous role in enjoying divine pleasures but representing a bad rebirth (*duggati*).

According to the *Parosahassa Jātaka* (99), the Bodhisatta is never reborn in the formless realm, even if he has attained one of the formless meditations (*J* 1.406).² He is however frequently reborn in the form realm. Since the form realm corresponds to the four *jhānas*, the Bodhisatta is usually reborn there if he has become an ascetic and cultivated meditative attainments such as the four *brahmavihāras* or the eight *samāpattis* (the latter referring to the four *jhānas* plus the four formless meditations).³ By contrast, good laypeople are usually reborn in the desire realm – especially the Tāvātimsa heaven – if they have performed meritorious deeds such as giving (*dāna*).⁴

As Collins observes (1998:311ff.), the heavens of the desire realm are often depicted in rich and sensual terms, including motifs of brightness, precious stones, palaces, music, dance, gardens, trees, and lakes. Collins emphasises, however, that these pleasures are normally of a ‘sensual’ rather than ‘sexual’ kind, ‘aesthetic’ rather than ‘erotic’ (1998:315). This refined type of pleasure also generally holds true for the *Jātakas*, but there are exceptions: for example, the motif of nymphs seducing ascetics with sexual enjoyment (see §2.3).⁵

² In this story the Bodhisatta is a Brahmanical ascetic who reaches the formless sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcañña*), but is reborn in the *rūpāvacara* as an Ābhassara deity. Interestingly, the text uses the Brahmanical term *gūṇa* to describe the Bodhisatta’s meditative attainment (*J* 1.406.15).

³ For example *J* nos. 134, 135, 169, 538, 539, 540.

⁴ Gethin 1997:188. For example, the *Guttīla Jātaka* (243) and *Nimi Jātaka* (541, especially *J* 6.116ff.). There are exceptions: for example, in the *Sudhābhojana Jātaka* (535) an ascetic is reborn in the Tāvātimsa heaven.

⁵ Collins (1998:315f.) also gives possible exceptions.

Brahmā deities, on the other hand, do not enjoy such external pleasures, but experience the subtler internal joys of meditation.⁶ As Collins points out, this results in Brahmā heavens being less suited to narrative than *kāmāvacara* heavens. He states (1998:311):

The absence of stories taking place in the Brahma-worlds is due to the fact that experience there is internal and mental. [...] The pleasures of the Deva-worlds, on the other hand, being external and sensory, presuppose a shared external world; and so it is possible to tell stories of events taking place in them.

Consequently, although a few stories do portray Brahmā deities (especially when they descend to the human realm),⁷ it is the gods in the desire realm that are most commonly depicted in the *Jātakas*. Of the six heavens in the desire realm, the Tāvātimsa heaven receives by far the most attention and the king of this heaven, Sakka, plays a prominent role in several stories. This chapter therefore concentrates on Sakka and his relationship with ascetics, although other gods are occasionally also discussed.

As stated above, Sakka's attitude towards ascetics in the *Jātakas* can be described as twofold: in some stories he is anti-ascetic and in others he is pro-ascetic. In order to provide a comparative context for these diverging viewpoints, let us examine how they are represented in Hindu literature.

2.2 Gods and ascetics in Hindu myth

A useful framework for examining the role of gods in the *Jātakas* is provided by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1976), who describes three stages of alignment between gods, demons, and men in Hindu myth. They are: Vedic, post-Vedic, and *bhakti* (devotional).

⁶ Collins 1998:303ff. Brahmā deities are also different from *devas* in that they are ungendered, which accords with the fact that they are beyond the realm of desire (*ibid.*).

⁷ Collins (1998:310) refers to the *Cullapalobhana Jātaka* (263), *Mahāpalobhana Jātaka* (507), and *Sāma Jātaka* (540, especially *J* 6.72ff.); in all of these stories Brahmā deities are reborn as humans and are characterised by their disdain for sex. See also the *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544), in which a god descends from a Brahmāloka in order to convert a king from his wayward views.

O’Flaherty emphasises that these categories refer to ideological tendencies rather than specific texts (1976:78f.): ‘In designating these three periods [...], one is referring not to three discrete strata of texts but rather to three attitudes, each one a reaction to the one preceding it and thus “later” in the ideological sense, though not necessarily in a chronological sense.’ Nevertheless, she roughly correlates the Vedic period with the *R̥g Veda*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*, as well as certain parts of the epics and *Purāṇas*; the post-Vedic period mainly with the epics and *Purāṇas*, although also parts of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*; and the *bhakti* period with the same texts as the post-Vedic period as well as the *Tantras*.

O’Flaherty describes the Vedic period thus (1976:79):

In the first, the Vedic period, gods and demons are clearly opposed to one another, and gods unite with men against the demons. [...] Though men served merely as pawns in the cosmic battle, it was in their interest to serve the gods, for the demons would try to kill them (in order to divert the sacrifice from the gods) – unless men were protected by gods sated by sacrificial offerings. [...] In this period, sacrifice is power.

Turning to the post-Vedic period, she states (1976:79f.):

This straightforward alignment of forces – men and gods vs. demons – changed radically in the second period, the post-Vedic period, when sacrificial power came largely to be replaced by ascetic and meditative power. [...] The Brahmin authors of these texts felt that men and demons might threaten the gods with ascetic virtue; jealous gods treated good men as their enemies, while ascetic demons were more dangerous to the gods than were “demonic” demons. These were the first myths to attempt to explain the problems and evils of men, and they did so simply by applying to men the role that had originally been taken by demons [...]: the gods corrupt and destroy men because they treat men as they treated demons.

According to O’Flaherty, two types of humans challenged the status of the gods in the post-Vedic period: ascetics and sacrificial brahmins. Regarding the second type she states (1976:80): ‘Within the ritual tradition, the Brahmins maintained that they alone, by performing the sacrifice, could ensure the achievement of the ends for which the sacrifice

was being performed, without the participation of the gods at all [...]; they called themselves “gods on earth” or “human gods”.⁸ This conflicted with the ascetic viewpoint, as propounded in texts such as the *Upaniṣads*, ‘which maintained that, without participation in ritual, a man could achieve a kind of immortality equal or indeed superior to that of the gods, through his own individual efforts’ (*ibid.*). One might supplement O’Flaherty’s remarks by pointing out that the *Upaniṣads* were not disengaged from sacrificial discourse, but rather reinterpreted it. By emphasising practices such as the internalisation of the sacrificial fires, which allowed direct access to Brahmā, they challenged the need for external ritual and priestly intermediaries.⁹ Ultimately, this process of internalisation resulted in karma being extended beyond the ritual sphere – where it simply meant ‘sacrificial act’ – to the generalised concept that every act affects one’s situation in the cosmos, as is the case in Buddhist doctrine.¹⁰

O’Flaherty goes on to argue that, because most mythological texts were composed by brahmin priests, Hindu mythology is ‘generally anti-ascetic’ (*ibid.*). Hence, Hindu myths often portray the gods overcoming an ascetic ‘by placing some form of evil in him’ (*ibid.*). She also states (1976:81) that the absolute values suggested by ascetic ideology, according to which every individual can overcome evil and gain release (*mokṣa*), conflict with the relative values of *svadharma*, according to which some individuals have to perform evil if their station in society or the cosmos requires it, as is illustrated for example by the *svadharma* of a butcher or a demon. The first is a universalised notion of goodness, corresponding to the term *sādhāraṇa-dharma* (‘common morality’), while the second is a contextualised notion of goodness corresponding to the term *svadharma* (‘individual morality’).¹¹ She adds (1976:82):

⁸ For the concept of brahmins being gods, see also Brockington 1981:36f., who refers to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.2.2.6.

⁹ Biardeau and Malamoud 1976:57ff.; Collins 1982:53ff. For example, the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (2.5) describes how the internalisation of the *agnihotra* sacrifice through breath and speech results in external ritual becoming inferior and even irrelevant. Collins (1982:57) discusses this passage.

¹⁰ Collins 1982:56ff.

¹¹ O’Flaherty 1976:94ff.

The ascetic violated this relativistic order by attempting to create a non-sacrificial, antisocial form of power. Asceticism introduces ambiguities into the post-Vedic alignment of loyalties: while Vedic gods want men to be good (sacrificial), post-Vedic gods do not want men to be good (ascetic). The sacrifice helps the gods, creating mutual dependence; asceticism hurts the gods, producing a challenge from men which breaches the basic Vedic relationship of human dependence on the gods or demonic inferiority to the gods. Asceticism negates the distinction between the categories of gods, demons, and men, producing a problem which can be resolved in either of two ways: one can negate the negation (destroy the ascetic power of the man or demon) or negate the categories (make the ascetic man or demon into a god). The first solution is usually adopted by post-Vedic mythology; the second occurs in the devotional mythology of the third period, the *bhakti* period.

This brings us to the *bhakti* period, which O’Flaherty (1976:82) describes thus:

Bhakti resolves the conflict between gods and good men or demons by reintroducing the Vedic concept of dependence on the gods; thus devoted (*bhakta*) men and devoted demons are protected by the gods, who encourage virtue in men – and (unlike the Vedic corpus) in demons too. In the Vedic age, gods and men are complementary, while demons are antagonistic to both; in the post-Vedic age, men and demons are complementary, in that often they are both antagonistic to the gods; and in the *bhakti* age, men and good demons are complementary to each other and to the gods, who oppose only evil demons and evil men. Against the élitist, Establishment view, the *bhakti* texts set the alternative which the priests had previously obscured, that the gods might be willing to make good men or demons into gods. This view eliminates the need for any priests at all, for men and gods are now joined in a mutual dependence, which is direct and personal, unlike the Vedic dependence, which relied on priestly mediation. Thus *bhakti* mythology displays an increasingly cynical attitude to the now logically superfluous but nevertheless persistent figure of the priest of the demons or gods.

In this chapter, I would like to show how the transition between O’Flaherty’s post-Vedic and *bhakti* stages is reflected in the *Jātakas*. I will follow O’Flaherty in treating these stages not as chronologically ordered categories but rather as ideological tendencies, which may even overlap in the same text. In a similar manner to the post-Vedic stage, many *jātakas* portray Sakka as antagonistic towards ascetics. This conflict is often resolved by the adoption of a universalistic ideology, similar to that expressed in the *bhakti* stage, whereby rebirth as a god is possible for everyone, both good human and

good demon.¹² As in *bhakti* myths, gods encourage humans to be virtuous and have a direct relationship with mankind, while the brahmin priest is often viewed cynically. Indeed, in contrast to the anti-ascetic attitude that O’Flaherty notes in many Hindu myths, the *Jātakas* are generally pro-ascetic. The word *bhakti* is not, however, appropriate to the *Jātakas*. Although, as we shall see, devotion to the Bodhisatta and Buddha plays an important role in these stories, there is no concept of a creator God bestowing grace (*prasāda*) on his devotees. The role of the absolute is instead taken over by the concept of nirvana. I would therefore prefer to use the word *dharma* or *karma* to express the notion of a universalistic principle underlying the relationship between gods and humans.¹³

Let us now examine Sakka’s relationship with ascetics in the *Jātakas* and how it compares with the epics.

2.3 The anti-ascetic Sakka

2.3.1 The epics

In the *Mbh* and *Rām*, Indra often has an antagonistic relationship with ascetics, as well as with other powerful humans such as kings.¹⁴ Frequently Indra attempts to overpower ascetics by sending nymphs to seduce them and thereby obstruct their austerities. For example, in *Mbh* 1.65 he sends Menakā to seduce Viśvāmitra, and in *Mbh* 9.50 he sends Alambusā to seduce Dadhīca. In other stories this conflict extends to physical violence. For example, in *Mbh* 3.122ff., Indra attacks the ascetic Cyavana with his thunderbolt (*vajra*), and in *Mbh* 5.9 he uses the same weapon to kill the ascetic Triśiras. The main reason for Indra’s aggression is his fear of ascetic power (*tapas* or *tejas*), which he worries

¹² See O’Flaherty 1976:94ff. for the relationship between *bhakti* and the absolute values of *sādhāraṇa-dharma*.

¹³ This is not, however, entirely appropriate since the word *dharma* can also refer to relativistic concepts of morality in the *Jātakas*. See for example the *Udapānadūsaka Jātaka* (271), in which a jackal tries to justify the fact that he has fouled a well by saying that it is his nature (*dhamma*) to do so (v.2).

¹⁴ Hara (1979:473ff.) lists four different ways in which Indra reacts to an ascetic’s *tapas*. I use many of his examples. Hopkins (1915:122ff.) provides a useful summary of Indra’s role in the *Mbh* and *Rām*.

will topple him from his divine position. Closely connected with notions of heat, such *tapas* is often said to torment the god, literally burning him. For example, *Mbh* 1.65.20ff. tells us:

It is said that in the past Viśvāmitra cultivated such great *tapas* that he intensely agitated Śakra, lord of the host of gods. Fearing that Viśvāmitra, his energy ablaze with *tapas*, would topple him from his position, the destroyer of cities [Indra] therefore said to Menakā: ‘[...] Go and seduce him so that he does not topple me from my position. Obstruct his austerities; do me this ultimate kindness.’¹⁵

That ascetics have the power to threaten the gods is shown by their ability to reorder the divine world. In *Mbh* 3.122ff., for example, the ascetic Cyavana attempts to promote the Aśvins to the status of *soma* recipients, an act which would change the sacrificial structure.¹⁶ This naturally meets with opposition from Indra, who argues that the Aśvins, in being mere healers (*cikitsakau*) and servants (*karmakarau*) who wander the world of mortals (*loke carantau martyānām*), are not worthy of *soma* (*Mbh* 3.124.12). Cyavana, however, claims he has the authority to determine what constitutes divine nature, saying (*Mbh* 3.124.11): ‘Know, king of the gods and destroyer of cities, that the Aśvins are also gods.’¹⁷ When Indra hurls his thunderbolt at him, Cyavana humiliates the god by simply paralysing his arm (*Mbh* 3.124.17). Furthermore, Cyavana lets loose a demon called Mada, who terrifies the gods and *asuras* until Indra finally assents to the Aśvins’ desired status (*Mbh* 3.124.19-125.7). Cyavana then destroys the demon by distributing it between liquor, women, dice and the hunt (*Mbh* 3.125.8), an act normally performed by gods such as Indra himself, who rids himself of the pollution of Brahminicide (*brahmahatyā*) by

¹⁵ *saṃbhṛṣaṃ tāpayām āsa śakraṃ suragaṇeśvaram /*
tapasā dīptavīryo ’yaṃ sthānān māṃ cyāvayed iti //21//
bhītaḥ puraṇḍaras tasmān menakāṃ idam abravīt /
 [...] *sa māṃ na cyāvayet sthānāt taṃ vai gatvā pralobhaya /*
cara tasya tapoviḥnaṃ kuru me priyam uttamaṃ //25//

¹⁶ However, although Cyavana restructures sacrificial ritual, the tale in fact explains the present *status quo* of Brahmanical sacrifice, in which Aśvins are recipients of soma. Cyavana’s role as a dangerous ascetic has thus become subsumed within a Brahmanical context.

¹⁷ *aśvināv api devendra devau viddhi puraṇḍara //11//*

distributing it through the human world (*Mbh* 5.13.17f.).¹⁸ By elevating the Aśvins and distributing the demon, Cyavana thus reveals his own self-created god-like status.

Another example of an ascetic's ability to undermine and reshape divine hierarchies is provided by Viśvāmitra, who helps king Triśaṅku fulfil his wish of entering heaven in his bodily form through a sacrificial ritual (*Rām* 1.56ff.). This abnormal request had previously been refused by the brahmin Vasiṣṭha (Viśvāmitra's enemy), whose sons become so irate at Triśaṅku that they curse him to be an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*). One of the main reasons for their anger is that Triśaṅku says he will take his request elsewhere to another 'recourse' (*gati*, *Rām* 1.57.7). This recourse is Viśvāmitra, who describes himself as Triśaṅku's refuge (*śaraṇaṃ*, *Rām* 1.58.2). The story thus sets up a contest between an ascetic on one side and gods and brahmins on the other.

The notion of entering heaven in human form is itself a startlingly subversive concept; doing so as a *caṇḍāla* threatens to pollute even more radically the purity of the gods and sacrifice itself. Furthermore, as a *kṣatriya*, Viśvāmitra is unqualified to perform such a ritual. This is pointed out by Vasiṣṭha's sons (*Rām* 1.58.14f.):

How can the gods and seers in a sacrificial assembly partake of the offerings of a man whose sacrificial priest is a *kṣatriya*, especially when he himself is a *caṇḍāla*? How can the great brahmins eat the food of a *caṇḍāla* and go to heaven under Viśvāmitra's protection?¹⁹

Viśvāmitra himself points out the danger that he poses to the gods when he tells Triśaṅku that he has control over heaven (*Rām* 1.58.5): 'In that you have taken refuge in Kauśika [Viśvāmitra], who is a worthy refuge, I consider that you already have heaven in your

¹⁸ O'Flaherty 1976:153f.

¹⁹ *kṣatriyo yājako yasya caṇḍālasya viśeṣataḥ /
kathaṃ sadasi bhoktāro havis tasya suraṣayah //14//
brāhmaṇā vā mahātmāno bhuktvā caṇḍālabhojanaṃ /
kathaṃ svargaṃ gamiṣyanti viśvāmitreṇa pālitaḥ //15//*

hands, O lord of men.’²⁰ His conflict with the gods becomes physical when, enraged that the gods do not attend his sacrifice, Viśvāmitra raises Triśaṅku up into the heavens while Indra forces him back down. Finally, Viśvāmitra defeats the gods when he reorders the cosmos by creating seven new planets in order to place Triśaṅku among them (*Rām* 1.59.20). His control over the cosmos is highlighted by a simile likening him to Prajāpati (*ibid.*). Indeed he even starts to recreate the gods themselves (*Rām* 1.59.22):

‘I will create another Indra or perhaps the world should be without an Indra.’ And in his wrath he began to create even gods.²¹

This is however stopped when the gods finally consent to Viśvāmitra’s new heaven.

Ascetics in epic literature are therefore often engaged in a power struggle with the gods. Although some stories stress the idea that the greatest power derives from non-violence (Viśvāmitra himself attains brahminhood in this way in *Rām* 1.64), and although *tapas* is cultivated through practices of self-restraint, ascetics frequently fulfil their goals by releasing their *tapas* in a fit of anger; they then restore this *tapas* through further austerities. This close connection between asceticism and wrathful violence is evoked by Menakā in her description of Viśvāmitra in *Mbh* 1.65.27ff. Expressing her fear of Viśvāmitra’s power, she describes the ascetic mostly in terms of anger, fire, *tapas*, and *tejas*. Even Viśvāmitra’s attainment of brahminhood is said to have been achieved ‘by force’ (*balāt*, *Mbh* 1.65.29). That is not to suggest, however, that Viśvāmitra is devoid of moral concerns. In the *Rām* episode discussed above, Viśvāmitra is said to help Triśaṅku out of compassion (*kāruṇyāt*, *Rām* 1.57.13), and Triśaṅku is described as a worthy supplicant because he is ‘righteous’ (*sudhārmikam*, *Rām* 1.58.2), has never told a lie (*Rām* 1.57.18), has protected his people (*Rām* 1.57.19), and has satisfied his *gurus* with ‘virtuous conduct’ (*śīlavṛttena*, *ibid.*). Nevertheless, *tapas* itself is often viewed amorally

²⁰ *hastaprāptam ahaṃ manye svargaṃ tava nareśvara /
yas tvam kauśikam āgamyā śaraṇyaṃ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ //5//*

²¹ *anyam indraṃ kariṣyāmi loko vā syād anindrakaḥ /
daivatāny api sa krodhāt sraṣṭuṃ samupacakrame //22//*

as an instrument of magic and power. Indeed, as a weapon of violence, it is frequently connected with martial ideology. For example, Arjuna (*Mbh* 3.39) and Śaradvat (*Mbh* 1.120) practise self-mortification in order to acquire weapons; the ascetic Gautama is said to be adept at weaponry (*Mbh* 1.120); and the brahmin ascetic Rāma Jāmadagnya destroys the entire *kṣatriya* race twenty-one times over in battle (*Mbh* 3.117). The amoral connotations of *tapas* have been noted by O’Flaherty, who states (1976:97):

Asceticism is morally neutral; it may be used for good or evil purposes, and so its *dharma* varies accordingly. Moreover, the code that asceticism challenged – sacrifice – is also morally neutral; there are good and bad sacrifices, depending on the intention of the sacrificer. For both of these religious activities are forms of power, and power is amoral.

This association between asceticism and sacrifice is also noted by Hara (1979:506f.), who observes that, in the *Mbh*, *tapas* often occurs alongside words such as *yajña* and *homa*. Indeed, the idea that sacrifice, like *tapas*, can involve violence is conveyed by the *Sauptikaparvan* of the *Mbh*, in which Aśvatthāman – himself a martial brahmin – massacres the Pāṇḍava army in a rage of vengeance which is described in sacrificial terms.²²

2.3.2 The *Jātakas*

Like the epic stories discussed above, the *Jātakas* often portray Sakka reacting aggressively when he is disturbed by an ascetic’s power. In the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), for example, Sakka’s realm shakes as a result of the virtuous power (*sīlatejena*) of an ascetic called Isisiṅga, who practices fierce austerities (*ghoratapo*)²³ in the Himālayas (*J* 5.152.23). In similar language to the *Mbh* passage quoted above, Sakka fears that Isisiṅga will topple him from his position (*ayaṃ maṃ Sakkattā cāveyyā ti*, *J* 5.152.25). He resolves to ‘break’ the ascetic’s virtue (*sīlam assa bhindāpessāmī ti*, *J* 5.152.26) by sending a

²² Johnson 1998:xxxvff. See also p.252.

²³ Compare *Mbh* 1.65.23, in which Viśvāmitra performs *tapo ghoram*.

nymph called Alambusā to seduce him.²⁴ Interestingly, this nymph bears the same name as the one sent by Indra to seduce Dadhīca in *Mbh* 9.50.

In other stories Sakka is disturbed when his throne is heated up by an ascetic’s power.²⁵ As Hopkins notes (1915:139),²⁶ this humorous motif, which plays on the notion of *tapas* as heat, is absent in epic literature. The *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440) lists four situations in which Sakka’s throne may grow hot (*J* 4.8f.): ‘It is said that it grows hot either because Sakka’s life-span is dwindling, or because his merit is exhausted, or because a powerful being desires his position, or because of the virtuous power [*sīlatejena*] of righteous and powerful ascetics and brahmins.’²⁷

It is noticeable that in many stories, including the *Alambusā Jātaka*, the word *tejas* is compounded with the word *sīla*.²⁸ This emphasis on virtue contrasts with strands in epic literature in which the moral connotations of *tejas/tapas* are less developed.²⁹ In epic stories, ascetics often curse nymphs for seducing them; Viśvāmitra for example curses Rambhā in *Rām* 1.63. The *Alambusā Jātaka* also addresses this theme, but its ascetic protagonist responds differently. When Isisiṅga regrets being seduced and returns to his ascetic practices, Alambusā fears that she will be cursed. She begs Isisiṅga not to give way to anger (v.42): ‘Don’t be angry with me, great hero. Don’t be angry with me, great sage.’³⁰ However, rather than the conventional curse, Isisiṅga does exactly the opposite by

²⁴ Like Menakā in *Mbh* 1.65f., Alambusā is praised by Sakka for her superior qualities and is reluctant to seduce the ascetic. Both stories also contain the motif that a long period of sexual enjoyment appears to take a short time (*Mbh* 1.66.7; *Alambusā Jātaka* v.32).

²⁵ For example, *J* 4.8.27f.: ‘By the virtuous power of this ascetic, who was completely content in his austerities, Sakka’s yellow-stoned throne grew hot.’ *evaṃ paramasantuṭṭhassa tassa sīlatejena Sakkassa paṇḍukambalasilāsanam uṇhākāraṃ dassesi*.

²⁶ Hopkins states (1915:139): ‘The epics have no such absurd figure. The saints disturb Indra and shake his throne, but they heat, i.e. torment, only Indra, the gods, or the worlds (*tāpayati* is not applied to the throne but to the sitter, who is heated, disturbed, ‘all het up’).’

²⁷ *taṃ kira Sakkassa āyukkhayena vā uṇhaṃ hoti puññakkhayena vā aññasmiṃ vā mahānubhāvasatte taṃ thānaṃ patthente dhammikānaṃ vā mahiddhiyasamaṇabrāhmaṇānaṃ sīlatejena uṇham ahoṣi*. Rouse translates *aññasmiṃ vā mahānubhāvasatte taṃ thānaṃ patthente* as ‘or when some mighty Being prays’; this cannot be right.

²⁸ E.g. *J* 2.394.14, 3.53.8, 4.7.7. Cf. *J* 3.515.10: *tapatejena*.

²⁹ See Meisig 1991 on this difference.

³⁰ *mā me kujjhi mahāvīra, mā me kujjhi mahāsi /*

blessing not only Alambusā but also Sakka himself (v.43): ‘May the Tāvatiṃsa gods, and Vāsava, king of the thirty, and you, good lady, be happy. Go in happiness, young lady.’³¹ The story therefore offers a glimpse of a possible resolution between gods and ascetics. Indeed, this harmony is partly realised when Alambusā embraces Isisiṅga’s feet and circumambulates him (v.44).

This potential shift from the post-Vedic mode is highlighted by the conclusion to the story, in which Sakka offers Alambusā a boon for her services. Her request undermines the very thing for which she is being rewarded: she asks never to have to tempt another ascetic (v.47). Alambusā’s plea may partly be motivated by her fear of being cursed; in *Mbh* 1.65 Menakā is reluctant to seduce Viśvāmitra for the same reason. It may also signify her fear of going to hell, a concern already expressed in v.10. Most importantly, however, it expresses her respect for Isisiṅga and her reluctance to destroy his virtue. The story thus concludes with the sense that Sakka’s attacks against ascetics are unjust, that ascetics have the ability to endure such aggression, and that a resolution to this conflict can be obtained through a code of virtue followed by gods and humans alike.

The *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526) is closely related to the *Alambusā Jātaka*, except that it has Sakka persuade a king to send his daughter, Naḷinikā, to seduce Isisiṅga, which she does by disguising herself as a male ascetic.³² In the *Naḷinikā Jātaka*, therefore, it is not only gods that oppose ascetics but also ordinary humans.³³ One of the ways in which the story exposes this tension between asceticism and ordinary society is by satirising Isisiṅga’s naivety about women: even after he has been seduced, he believes that Naḷinikā is a man. This ignorance about women is especially expressed by a passage – considered by Francis (1895) to be too bawdy to translate – in which Isisiṅga asks Naḷinikā why she has a dark hole between her thighs (v.13), to which Naḷinikā responds that it is a wound caused by a

³¹ *tāvatiṃsā ca ye devā tidasānañ ca Vāsavo /
tvañ ca bhaddo sukhī hohi gaccha kaññe yathāsukhan ti //43//*

³² See O’Flaherty 1973:42ff. for an analysis of these two stories.

³³ The relationship between gods and ordinary humans is however asymmetrical, as is shown by the fact that Sakka causes a drought for three years in order to persuade the king to reduce Isisiṅga’s power.

bear pulling off her penis (v.14) and that she wants Isisiṅga to stop it itching. The ‘cure’ for this itch turns out to be sex. This antagonism between the forest and society is further evoked by the aggressive way in which Naḷinikā’s attendants surround Isisiṅga’s hermitage and guard it (*assamaṃ parivāretvā ārakkhaṃ ṭhapetvā*, *J* 5.195.27f.). Isisiṅga is said to be afraid (*bhīto*, v.7) when he sees Naḷinikā, and her disguise is itself pregnant with sinister connotations.³⁴ This use of deception is further developed in the *Mbh* version of the story, in which the king builds a fake hermitage on a raft in order to lure the ascetic back to the city (*Mbh* 3.111.1ff.).³⁵

In both the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* and *Alambusā Jātaka*, Isisiṅga is not identified with the Bodhisatta, even though he is the protagonist of the story. Instead the Bodhisatta is identified with Isisiṅga’s father, who warns his son of the danger posed by women. This is in contrast to the *Mahāvastu* version of the *Naḷinikā Jātaka*, in which the Bodhisatta not only plays the seduced ascetic (Ekaśṛṅga), but also marries and even becomes king (3.142ff.).³⁶ Perhaps the (prose-)composers of the Pāli *Jātakas* felt uncomfortable with the Bodhisatta as a seduced ascetic and therefore identified him with Isisiṅga’s father. This is made more plausible by the fact that in the *Lomasakassapa Jātaka* (433) the Bodhisatta is identified with an ascetic who resists Sakka’s attempts to corrupt him.³⁷

In the *Lomasakassapa Jātaka*, gods and ordinary humans again act together against an ascetic called Lomasakassapa. This alliance is noted by Sakka, who states (*J* 3.515.12f.): ‘Together with the king of Benares, I will break his [Lomasakassapa’s] *tapas*.’³⁸ Moreover, in return for his help, Sakka offers the king immortality and a divine status

³⁴ In a related story called the *Cullanārada Jātaka* (477), the city is described by an ascetic as a place of poison, precipices, mud and snakes (vv.5ff.).

³⁵ The motif of humans in society creating threatening replicas of the forest is also found in stories like the *Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka* (534), in which hunters construct an artificial lake in order to lure a flock of golden geese from their idyllic abode.

³⁶ In the Pāli version, although the prose states that Isisiṅga stays in the forest, the verses finish abruptly, and it is possible that they once told a story similar to the *Mbh* and *Mahāvastu* versions in which the ascetic is brought to the city.

³⁷ In the *Cullanārada Jātaka* (477) the same pattern occurs. However, in the *Mahāpalobhana Jātaka* (507) the Bodhisatta is an ascetic who is seduced.

³⁸ *Bārāṇasiraññā saddhim ekato hutvā tapam assa bhindissāmī ti.*

equal to his own (*Inda-samo*, v.1). As in the previous stories, the ascetic's *tapas* shakes Sakka's realm, and again Sakka fears that he will be toppled from his position (*J* 3.515.11f.). However, rather than tempting Lomasakassapa with sex, Sakka instead tries to destroy the ascetic's *tapas* by persuading him to perform a sacrifice. The story thus denigrates Brahmanical sacrifice by associating it with the motif of ruining an ascetic through lust. This anti-sacrificial bias develops when Lomasakassapa condemns sacrifice as an immoral practice (*adhamma*, v.3) concerned with glory and profit (*yasalābha*, v.3). He praises the life of the non-violent ascetic, who carries a bowl and is homeless (vv.4f.). Moreover, the previously implicit association between sacrifice and lust becomes explicit when the king's daughter is told to use her sexual charms to persuade Lomasakassapa to perform a sacrifice. Although this plan initially succeeds, Lomasakassapa experiences a sudden realisation (*saṃvega*) at the very moment when he raises his knife to sacrifice an elephant.³⁹ The story concludes with the ascetic's rejection of desire (*kāma*) and greed (*lobha*) as the underlying causes of sacrifice (v.8). Resolving to cut out passion (*rāga*, v.8), he praises the cultivation of *tapas* instead (v.9).

2.4 The pro-ascetic Sakka

2.4.1 The *Jātakas*

The transition from post-Vedic ideology to the adoption of a universal ethical code is illustrated by the *Visayha Jātaka* (340). In this story the Bodhisatta is a layman called Visayha, whose virtue in giving (*dāna*) causes Sakka's realm to shake and his throne to grow hot. This parallels O'Flaherty's observation (1976:86ff.) that in Hindu myths excessive Vedic sacrifice can disrupt the cosmic balance and aggravate the gods.⁴⁰ Acting

³⁹ The experience of *saṃvega* (shock) is an important concept in many *jātaka* stories. In Lomasakassapa's case, it is followed by a passage in which he reflects on his matted hair and beard, which in themselves help to convince him of the error of his ways. This is related to the motif of a sign sparking off a religious insight; see the discussion of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) in §6.2.1.

⁴⁰ See also Malamoud 1996:195ff., who states that the gods' role as sacrificial recipients is a reluctant one, since they once had control over heaven by being both sacrificers and recipients and only allowed humans to sacrifice to them after much struggle.

in his post-Vedic role, Sakka fears that Visayha will take over his position (*J* 3.129.11). He reacts aggressively by destroying Visayha’s wealth in order to stop his donations. Visayha perseveres by giving whatever he has left, but after a week collapses on the ground from starvation. Sakka responds by descending from his heaven and urging Visayha to be moderate (v.1): ‘Visayha, your ruin is because of the gifts you gave in the past. From now on you should not give donations; your wealth would endure if you had self-restraint.’⁴¹ Sakka thus uses the pragmatic argument that the more one gives, the less one has left. Visayha’s answer, however, appeals to a different logic (vv.2ff.):

[2] Thousand-eyed one, they say the noble should not act ignobly, even if they are in great difficulty. O king, may I not have the kind of wealth which would, in my enjoyment of it, cause me to renounce my faith [in giving]. [3] One chariot goes the same way as the other. My old store has been increased; let it go on being increased, Vāsava. [4] If I have wealth, I will give. If I do not have it, what can I give? Even if I am in that [destitute] state, I will still give. Let me not be negligent in giving.⁴²

From Visayha’s point of view, the more he gives the more he should be rewarded (v.3), although he is wary of the kind of reward which would distract him from further acts of giving (v.2). Far from obstructing his *dāna*, Visayha thinks that Sakka should support it. Indeed, the notion that Sakka should follow the same moral values as Visayha is highlighted when Visayha accuses Sakka of hypocrisy. He argues that Sakka’s divine position is itself determined by similar virtuous practices (*J* 3.131.4ff.): ‘Sakka himself attained Sakkahood by giving donations, practising virtue, keeping the *uposatha*, and

⁴¹ *adāsi dānāni pure Visayha dadato ca te khayadhammo ahosi /
ito parañ ce na dadeyya dānaṃ tiṭṭheyyuṃ te saññamantassa bhogā ti //1//.*

The commentary (*J* 3.130.25ff.) paraphrases this as meaning that, if Visayha promises not to give from then on, Sakka will give him wealth.

⁴² *anariyam ariyena sahasanetta suduggatenāpi akiccam āhu /
mā vo dhanan tam ahuvā janinda yambhogahetu vijahemu saddham //2//
yena eko ratho yāti yāti tenāparo ratho /
porānaṃ nihītaṃ vaḍḍhaṃ vaḍḍhatam ñeva Vāsava //3//
yadi hessati dassāma, asante kiṃ dadāmase /
evambhūtāpi dassāma, mā dānaṃ pamadamhase ti //4//*

The commentary states that *vo* in v.2 is only a particle (*nipātamattam*, *J* 3.131.20). It could be a mistake for *no*; that this is the sense of the passage is also suggested by the commentary (*J* 3.131.22).

fulfilling the seven vows. You are obstructing my giving, which itself is the cause of your own power. You are acting ignobly.’⁴³

Realising that he is unable to stop Visayha, Sakka asks the Bodhisatta why he gives gifts, to which he responds (*J* 3.132.5f.): ‘I give seeking neither Sakkahood nor Brahmahood but aspiring to omniscience.’⁴⁴ Sakka’s joyful reaction to these words is perhaps partly determined by the fact that Visayha has no intention of deposing him but rather of going beyond him. More importantly, however, it signals a change in his outlook. In active support of Visayha’s renunciation, Sakka now rewards the Bodhisatta for his virtue by giving him countless wealth so that he can continue to offer large donations. Rather than fearing that extreme giving will rupture the cosmic balance, Sakka supports a new moral code whereby the more one renounces the better. This shift reflects the difference between a relativist form of morality (*svadharmā*), in which the goodness of an act is determined by an individual’s station, and a universalist form of morality, in which the goodness of an act is determined by uniform criteria to be followed by everyone.

In the post-Vedic mode, gods often worry about overpopulation in the heavens.⁴⁵ This notion is expressed in the *Kulāvaka Jātaka* (31), in which Sakka expels the *asuras* from the Tāvātimsa heaven with the following motive (*J* 1.202.10): ‘Why should I share my kingdom?’⁴⁶ According to this ideology, heaven is a finite object to be possessed and fought over by a select few. As O’Flaherty states (1976:80): ‘Gods were competing against men and demons for a limited quantity of what both sides desired – power, immortality, heaven.’ However, when this outlook changes to a universalistic approach, whereby virtue is a quantifiable quality to be cultivated by everyone, heaven becomes accessible to all. Consequently, Sakka now aspires to fill the heavens and empty the hells. This is illustrated in the *Mahākāṇha Jātaka* (469, *J* 4.181.16ff.): ‘When Sakka, king of the

⁴³ *Sakko nāma sayam dānaṃ datvā sīlaṃ samādiyivvā uposathakammaṃ katvā satta vatapadāni pūretvā Sakkattaṃ patto. tvaṃ pana attano issariyakāraṃ dānaṃ vāresi. anariyaṃ vata karosī ti.*

⁴⁴ *n’eva Sakkattaṃ na Brahmattaṃ patthayamāno sabbaññutaṃ patthento panāhaṃ dadāmi ti.*

⁴⁵ O’Flaherty 1976:248ff.

⁴⁶ *kiṃ no sādharmaṇena rajjena ti.*

gods, did not see any new young deities, and when he surveyed the human world and realised that men were being reborn in the hells and saw that the Teacher's religion had declined, he thought: "What should I do?"⁴⁷

In this new ethicised role, the motif of Sakka's abode shaking, or his throne heating up, assumes a different significance. Instead of being a threat, it acts as a way of attracting the god's attention so that he can help the virtuous person in question. For example the *Suruci Jātaka* (489) states (*J* 4.318.8ff.): 'By the power of Sumedhā's virtue, Sakka's realm shook. Sakka, turning his attention to the matter, pondered, "Sumedhā wants a son. I will give her a son [...]"⁴⁸ Indeed in other stories, such as the *Kaccāni Jātaka* (417), Sakka vigilantly surveys the world and descends to promote virtue wherever it is needed,⁴⁹ a motif which recalls the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, in which the Buddha scans the world in order to see if there are people who are ready to hear his doctrine (*D* 2.38).

The motif of Sakka's disguise also undergoes a change in significance. In the epics, Indra often uses disguise as a way of defeating his enemies; for example it is as a brahmin that he stops Yavakṛita from practising austerities (*Mbh* 3.135.29ff.) and tricks Karna into surrendering his life-protecting earrings and armour (*Mbh* 3.284ff.).⁵⁰ He also seduces women such as Ahalyā by means of disguise (*Rām* 1.47.17ff.).⁵¹ In the *Jātakas*, however, Sakka normally disguises himself in order to test a person's virtue, as occurs for example in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499) and *Sasa Jātaka* (316). In addition, he often rewards virtue by

⁴⁷ *tadā Sakko devarājā nave devaputte apassanto manussalokam oloketvā manussānam apāyesu nibbattiṃ ṇatvā Satthu sāsanaṃ osakkitaṃ disvā kin nu karissāmi ti cintento [...]*. See also the *Keḷisīla Jātaka* (202, *J* 2.143) and *Dhajaviheṭṭha Jātaka* (391, *J* 3.304).

⁴⁸ *Sumedhāya silatejena Sakkabhavanam kampi. Sakko āvajjivā Sumedhā puttam pattheti, puttam assā dassāma [...]* ti upadhārento [...].

The *Uruga Jātaka* (354) acts as a type of bridge-text, in which Sakka initially thinks his heated throne indicates a threat but then realises that it signals a person's virtue, whereupon he goes to reward them.

⁴⁹ See also the *Ambacora Jātaka* (344). The *Mahānārada-kassapa Jātaka* (544) states (*J* 6.242.4ff.): 'Bodhisattas, through the cultivation of love, and out of their compassion and magnificence, survey the world time and again in order to observe the good and the wicked.' *Bodhisattā ca nāma attano mettābhāvanāya anuddayāya mahantabhāvena suppaṭipannaduppaṭipanne satte dassanattamaṃ kālānukālam lokam olokenī*. In this story, the Bodhisatta is a Brahmā deity.

⁵⁰ Karna himself obtains the Brahmāstra weapon by deceiving the ascetic Rāma Jāmadagnya (*Mbh* 5.61).

⁵¹ See also *Mbh* 13.41, in which he attempts but fails to seduce Ruci. See Hopkins 1915:135.

giving boons.⁵² This contrasts with passages such as *Mbh* 9.50.6, in which Indra tries to reduce the *tapas* of the ascetic Dadhīca by tempting him with ‘various kinds of fruits’ (*phalair bahuvidhair apī*). In the latter context Sakka aims to undermine an ascetic by arousing their desire, in the former context he aims to reward their virtue.

Such reinterpretations of Sakka are also found in the *suttas*. In *S* 1.229 Sakka’s name is said to derive from the fact that he gave generously as a human (*sakkaccaṃ dānam adāsi*), a clear distortion of its original meaning as ‘powerful’ (*śakra*). Sakka’s epithet *purandara* (‘destroyer of fortresses’) is found in Pāli in the form *purindada*, and this too is reinterpreted to mean that he gave gifts from town to town (*pure pure dānam adāsi*). Similarly, his epithet Vāsava, originally meaning ‘chief of the Vasus’, is said to signify that he gave dwellings (*āvasatham adāsi*). Sakka’s reformed role is also conveyed by the fact that, in contrast to his aggressive character in post-Vedic myth, Sakka now criticises the evils of anger (*S* 1.239f.). Moreover, he differentiates himself from demons on the basis of ethics (*S* 1.224): ‘The verses spoken by Vepacitti, king of the *asuras*, belong to the sphere of force and violence, of quarrel, strife, and conflict. The verses spoken by Sakka, king of the gods, belong to the sphere of mildness and non-violence, of peace, concord, and harmony.’⁵³

This ethical distinction between gods and demons marks a significant shift from the Vedic and post-Vedic stages, which O’Flaherty describes as follows (1976:64):

The opposition between the gods and demons is purely structural; they are alike in all ways except that, by definition, they are opposed. The two groups are functionally but not essentially opposed, in conflict over the acquisition of power – the same power, but utilized differently in each case. Our allegiance to the gods is based not on moral factors but on agonistic ones: the gods always win, and so we are always on their side.

⁵² For example, the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440) and *Akitti Jātaka* (480).

⁵³ *bhāsītā kho Vepacittinā asurindena gāthāyo, tā ca kho sadaṇḍāvacarā satthāvacarā iti bhaṇḍanam iti viggaho iti kalaho ti. bhāsītā kho Sakkena devānam indena gāthāyo, tā ca kho adaṇḍāvacarā asatthāvacarā iti abhaṇḍanam iti aviggaho iti akalaho.*

The transformation from this amoral outlook to the moral one expressed above is strikingly illustrated in *the Kulāvaka Jātaka* (31). At the beginning of this story Sakka acts in a typically post-Vedic manner by tricking the *asuras* into getting drunk and evicting them from heaven. The only motive he gives for his action is that he is unwilling to share his kingdom.⁵⁴ In accord with O’Flaherty’s remarks above, the *asuras* are depicted with essentially the same characteristics as the gods, the only difference being that they are on the losing side. Their homogeneity is shown by the fact that the demons originally inhabit the same realm as the gods. Indeed, they justify a counterattack against Sakka on the grounds of reappropriating their divine city (*amhākaṃ devanagaram eva gaṇhissāmā ti, J 1.202.19f.*). Furthermore, the realm inhabited by the exiled *asuras* closely resembles the *deva* realm. The same size as the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, it has a tree similar to the gods’ coral-tree, although it bears different blossoms (*J 1.202*). However, this amoral struggle between gods and demons assumes a different tone when the *asuras* make a counterattack and Sakka flees with his charioteer (Mātali). Fearing that the chariot will destroy the nests of some *garuḷa* chicks, Sakka decides to sacrifice his life for the fledglings (v.1):

Mātali, let the nests in the silk-cotton tree escape the mouth of the chariot-pole.
Though I give up my life to the demons, these birds must not lose their nests.⁵⁵

Sakka’s extreme display of compassionate non-violence clearly conflicts with the martial context of a cosmic battle. Indeed, martial values are further undermined when Sakka turns around in order to surrender but the demons retreat out of fear that he has regrouped his forces. Such self-surrender would normally bring defeat, but here it leads, ironically, to victory. Martial imagery is thus not abandoned but is instead redefined by being fused

⁵⁴ See O’Flaherty 1976:66: ‘The gods are usually the ones who make the demons into demons, because of the divine disinclination to share heaven.’

In the parallel story in the *Jātakamālā* (no.11, 77ff.), Śakra does not instigate the battle with the *asuras* and he is depicted in a more reformed light.

⁵⁵ *kulāvakā Mātali simbalismim isāmukhena parivaḷḷayassu /
kāmaṃ caḷāma asuresu pānaṃ, mā-y-ime diḷā vikulavā ahesun ti //1//*

with morality.⁵⁶ Just as the Buddha is often described as *jina* ('conqueror'), so Sakka's victory is based upon non-violent virtue.

2.4.2 The epics

The Hindu epics also express the notion that Indra's divine position is based on virtue. In *Mbh* 13.36, for example, Indra gains his kingship over the gods by worshipping brahmins. Furthermore, Indra's benign attitude towards ascetics is illustrated by passages such as *Mbh* 9.47, in which he tells a female ascetic that she can reach heaven through *tapas* (vv.13ff.) and offers her a boon for her austerities. As in stories like the *Sasa Jātaka* (316), Indra disguises himself in order to test a person's virtue and not out of any aggressive intent. Indeed the similarities between this passage and the *Sasa Jātaka* are particularly close since in both contexts the virtuous protagonist joyfully and painlessly enters a fire out of devotion to a brahmin (who is Sakka in disguise), and in both contexts the fire feels cold.⁵⁷

The notion that Indra owes his position to virtuous conduct is also illustrated by *Mbh* 12.124. In this story, Prahlāda attains Indra's sovereignty over the three worlds because of his virtue (*śīla*, v.19), which consists of qualities such as worship of brahmins, absence of anger, and self-restraint (vv.33ff.) The ousted Indra goes to Prahlāda in the disguise of a brahmin in order to ascertain how he can retrieve his position. By venerating Prahlāda as his teacher, Indra finally wrests from him the secret of his success. When Prahlāda offers Indra a boon for his devoted service, Indra asks for Prahlāda's *śīla*. Forced by his promise, Prahlāda reluctantly grants the request, whereupon different virtuous qualities substantiate themselves and leave his body. After *śīla* comes *dharma*, then *satya*, *vṛtti*, *bala*, and finally *śrī*. This passage is interesting for its stress on virtue, but also because it is still

⁵⁶ For a similar example of how Sakka's battle against the demons is ethicised, see the *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528), which states that a king who rules without anger makes the world tremble 'like Inda, conqueror of demons' (*indo va asurādhipo*, v.59).

⁵⁷ Similarly, in *Mbh* 3.131, Indra disguises himself as a hawk in order to test king Śibi's ability to sacrifice himself for those under his protection.

portrayed within a largely post-Vedic context. Although Indra accepts that virtue determines divine status, he acquires it through the same aggressive and deceitful tactics that he uses in his Vedic and post-Vedic roles. Indeed Indra's theft of Prahāda's *śīla* recalls the motif of stealing and possessing sacrifice (or *soma*) as a form of material property. This reified notion of *śīla* is in turn linked to the idea that *tapas* can be transferred from one individual to another.⁵⁸ For example in *Mbh* 9.51, a female ascetic declares that she will give half of her *tapas* to whoever accepts her hand in marriage (v.13). The notion of transferring merit is far from absent in the *Jātakas*.⁵⁹ However the *Jātakas* never, as far as I know, express the idea that merit can be stolen from another person, as it is in the Prahāda story.

2.5 Daiva and karma

In this section I explore further conflicts and resolutions between humans and gods by examining the relationship between karma and divine will and between renunciation and divine happiness.

2.5.1 The triumph of human effort

In an article entitled *Scapegoats of the gods: The ideology of the Indian epics*, John Smith (1989) has described how in epic literature the gods cause carnage on earth in order to secure their position in heaven and 'man's options are limited to being either a willing slave or unwilling slave [of the gods' will]' (1989:177).⁶⁰ On an abstract level, the will of the gods is often described as a form of fate (*kāla*, *daiva*, *vidhi*, *diṣṭa*, *ḥṛtānta* etc.). A tragic example of man's inability to conquer such divine will is provided by Karna in the *Mbh*, who is both heroic and pathetic in his attempt at championing human effort

⁵⁸ Hara 1979:425ff.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 4, n.23.

⁶⁰ O'Flaherty (1976) also shows how, in Hindu mythology, the evils that humans suffer are often caused by gods, and the human world is often depicted 'as a convenient dump for celestial moral garbage' (1976:141). See for example 1976:146ff. for how gods transfer impurity onto humans in the form of evil.

(*puruṣakāra*) over the inexorability of fate. This is observed by Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*Mbh* 7.110.1): ‘It is, I believe, fate that is supreme. How useless is human action [*pauruṣa*], given that the son of Adhiratha [Karna], despite his effort, was unable to conquer the Pāṇḍava in battle.’⁶¹ That said, the *Mbh* offers a far more complex portrayal of the relationship between human action and divine will/fate than is represented by this single quote; indeed several passages propound the importance of human effort.⁶² As J. Bruce Long states (1983:44):

The most striking feature of those passages in the *Mbh* which discuss the relative merits and demerits of human action is the lack of agreement concerning the effectiveness of human action in producing results. The belief that human actions are effective stands in an unresolved tension with the claims that the acts of god or the machinations of blind fate are the primary causative forces at work in the world.

Nevertheless, for our present purposes, it suffices to note that humans are often described as being powerless against fate. This is also the case in the *Rām*, in which Rāma frequently states that fate is the ultimate cause of his sufferings and that he has no choice but to yield to it.⁶³ Although characters such as Lakṣmaṇa (e.g. *Rām* 2.20.11ff.) criticise this submissive attitude, claiming that fate can be thwarted by human effort, they are often, as Sheldon Pollock remarks (1986:35), ‘only foils, supplying a pretext for Rāma to advance his uncompromising position’.

The *Jātakas* have a different emphasis. Although gods such as Sakka sometimes harass humans, humans tend to control their own destiny and occasionally the gods as well. Rather than fate, the ultimate agent of causation is generally karma. Two stories particularly illustrate the superiority of human effort over divine will. The first is the *Cullakālīṅga Jātaka* (301) and the second the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539).

⁶¹ *daivam eva paraṃ manye dhik pauruṣaṃ anarhakaṃ /
yatrādhirathir āyasto nātarat pāṇḍavaṃ raṇe //1//*

Long 1983:48.

⁶² See Brockington 1998:244ff, 451ff.; Hopkins 1915:73ff.; Long 1983:42ff.; Smith 1980:61ff., 1989:185ff.

⁶³ See Pollock 1986:33ff.

The *Cullakāliṅga Jātaka* depicts a battle between two kings, Kāliṅga and Assaka. Sakka predicts that Kāliṅga will win and that the kings' protective deities (*ārakkhadevatā*) will fight their own battle; Kāliṅga's deity is a white bull and Assaka's a black bull. The outcome of the battle is that Kāliṅga's white bull is defeated by Assaka's soldiers. The colour of the bulls is significant. The *Jātakas* often play on discrepancies between appearance and reality; for example in the *Kaṇhajātaka* (440, vv.1f.) a black ascetic is revealed to be white in virtue. The *Cullakāliṅga Jātaka* expresses a similar concern with subverting normal expectations. What one expects will be the case – that the white deity will win, and that deities are killed by other deities and not by humans – turns out to be otherwise. More significantly, Sakka himself is shown to be mistaken. Outraged at Sakka's false prediction, Kāliṅga berates the brahmin who communicated the god's words, asking him whether it is appropriate for the upright (*ujjubhūtā*) to lie (v.2).⁶⁴ The brahmin in turn reproaches Sakka, saying (v.3):

Gods are beyond lying. Truth is their highest wealth, Sakka. Why did you tell this lie, Maghavant, great king of the gods?⁶⁵

Sakka replies that he was simply proved wrong by Assaka's effort (*virīya*) and human courage (*purisaparakkama*). He states (v.4):

Have you not heard, brahmin, that the gods do not envy human courage? Self-control and unbreakable concentration of mind, lack of confusion and exertion at the right time, firm effort and human courage – it is through these qualities that Assaka and his followers gained victory.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Compare Gombrich 1985:434ff., who observes that in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (461) a prophecy by brahmins is revealed as insubstantial. In the *Nakkhatta Jātaka* (49) predictions by stars are ridiculed.

⁶⁵ *devā musāvādam upātivattā saccan dhanam paraman tesu Sakka /
tan te musā bhāsitaṃ devarāja kiṃ vā paṭicca Maghavā mahindā ti //3//*

See Hopkins 1915:66 for the notion in epic literature that gods speak truth.

⁶⁶ *nanu te sutam brāhmaṇa bhaññamāne devā na issanti purisaparakkamassa /
damo samādhi manaso adejjho avyaggatā nikkamanañ ca kāle /
dalhañ ca virīyaṃ purisaparakkamo ca ten' eva āsi vijayo Assakānan ti //4//*

The commentary glosses *issanti* as *usūyanti* ('feel envy'), the corresponding verb in Sanskrit being *√īṣy*. However, it may derive from *īṣati* (Sanskrit *√īś*), meaning to 'have power over'. If so, the verse would mean that the gods have no control over human valour, which may make more sense in this context.

Sakka's reference to divine envy highlights how his outlook has changed from the post-Vedic mode. Rather than envying human courage, the gods now stand in awe of it. Humans are not governed by the gods, but are able to surpass them.

In the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) the gods again submit to the power of human effort. In this story the Bodhisatta (Mahājanaka) is shipwrecked and, unlike his fellow-travellers who pray to their gods but die unhelped, he relies on himself and resolves to swim until he reaches safety. The story's satire of those who rely on divine help is accentuated by the fickle and unreliable nature of the goddess Maṇimekhalā, whose duty it is to protect virtuous people who are shipwrecked. Maṇimekhalā is so distracted by her enjoyment of divine pleasure that she does not notice the Bodhisatta's misfortune for a whole week (*J* 6.35.5ff.).⁶⁷ When she does finally notice, her reasons for aiding the Bodhisatta are largely selfish (*J* 6.35.9ff.): 'If Mahājanaka were to perish in the sea, I would lose my entry into the divine assembly.'⁶⁸

When Maṇimekhalā goes to save the Bodhisatta, she first tests his perseverance. In an exchange of verses, the goddess taunts the Bodhisatta with the vanity of human action (vv.1, 3, 5):

[1] Who are you, striving in the middle of the sea out of sight of the shore? What reason do you see to persevere so mightily? [...] [3] In the deep and limitless sea, the shore is unseen. Your human effort is in vain and you will die without even reaching the shore [...] [5] What is the point in effort when the act is unachievable, fruitless and tiring, and when its result will be death?⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See the *Sāma Jātaka* (540), where a protective deity is so distracted by divine pleasure that she does not notice that Sāma has been pierced by an arrow (*J* 6.83.22ff.). In the *Udaya Jātaka* (458), the same reason causes Sakka to forget for a week his pledge to return to the human world.

⁶⁸ *sace Mahājanakakumāro samudde nassissa devasamāgame pavesanam na labhissan ti*. I follow the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana na labhissan* rather than the PTS *alabhissan*.

⁶⁹ *ko 'yaṃ majjhe samuddasmim apassan tīram āyuhe /
kaṃ tvam atthavaṣaṃ ñatvā evaṃ vāyāmase bhusan ti //1//
gambhīre appameyyasmim tīram yassa na dissati /
mogho te purisavāyāmo appatvā va marissasi ti //3//
apāraṇeyyaṃ yaṃ kammam aphalaṃ kilamathuddayaṃ /
tattha ko vāyāmen' attho maccu yassābhinippatan ti //5//*

The Bodhisatta's response eulogises human effort and the importance of karma (vv.2, 4, 6-9):

[2] Realising my duty to make an effort in the world, goddess, I strive in the middle of the sea, even though I do not see the shore. [...] [4] Free of debts to relatives, gods and ancestors, those who do what should be done have no regrets afterwards. [...] [6] Goddess, those who think an act is forever unachievable will not protect their life. They will know [this], if they give up. [7] In this world, goddess, individuals perform deeds which bear fruit according to their intention; such deeds prosper or they do not. [8] Do you not see the visible fruit of my act, goddess? The others are drowned, while I am crossing; and I see you before me. [9] I am a man who will strive as much as my ability and strength permit. Going to the further shore of the ocean, I will do what a human should do.⁷⁰

Often in Buddhist texts the ocean represents *saṃsāra* and the further shore nirvana, and it is possible that this symbolism also informs Mahājanaka's heroic determination. In service to such virtue, Mañimekhalā now saves the Bodhisatta. As he himself states, her presence represents the 'visible fruit' of his karma (v.8). This subordinate role is accentuated by v.10, in which she praises the Bodhisatta and declares that she will take him wherever he wants:

Possessing righteous effort, you have not stopped your toil in this limitless, great flood of sea.⁷¹ Therefore go wherever your heart desires.⁷²

⁷⁰ *nisamma vattaṃ lokassa vāyāmassa ca devate /
tasmā majjhe samuddasmim apassan tīram āyūhe ti //2//
anaṇo nātināṃ hoti devānaṃ pituno ca so /
karaṃ purisakiccāni na ca pacchānutappaṭi ti //4//
apāraṇeyyaṃ accantaṃ yo viditvāna devate /
na rakkhe attano pāṇaṃ jaññā so yadi hāpaye //6//
adhippāyaphalaṃ [-ān' ?] eke asmiṃ lokasmi devate /
payojayanti kammāni, tāni ijjhanti vā na vā //7//
sandīṭṭhikaṃ kammaphalaṃ nanu passasi devate /
sannā aññe tarāṃ' ahaṃ tañ ca passāmi santike //8//
so ahaṃ vāyāmissāmi yathāsattim yathābalaṃ /
gacchaṃ pāraṃ samuddassa kāsaṃ purisakāriyaṃ ti //9//*

In v.4, I use the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* reading *pitunaṃ*. The commentary suggests that *pituno* signifies Brahmā (J 6.36.4).

⁷¹ Or: 'As a result of your karma, you do not drown in such a limitless, great flood of sea.'

⁷² *yo tvam evaṃgate oghe appameyye maḥaṇṇave /
dhammavāyāmasaṃpanno kammanā nāvāsīdasi /
so tvam tatth' eva gacchāhi yattha te nirato mano ti //10//*

Rather than divine will controlling the cosmos, it is now virtuous humans who control the gods.⁷³

This emphasis on human effort is accentuated by the recurrent theme that virtue can only properly be cultivated in the human realm. The Buddha himself is said to have descended from the Tusita heaven to be enlightened as a human being.⁷⁴ Similarly, in the *Samkhapāla Jātaka* (524), when the *nāga* Samkhapāla is asked why he seeks rebirth as a human when he is surrounded by divine pleasures, he responds (v.43): ‘Aḷāra, except for in the human world, purity and restraint cannot be found. After I have attained rebirth as a human, I will make an end to birth and death.’⁷⁵ The idea that virtue is performed primarily in the human realm is also expressed by the passage in the *Visayha Jātaka* discussed above (pp.49ff.), in which Sakka is said to attain his divine position by giving alms as a human. Indeed, in order to continue their lives in heaven, gods often have to make merit by participating in the human realm through activities such as listening to the *dhamma* or rejoicing in the virtuous deeds of humans.⁷⁶ That the texts are sensitive to the ambiguities of this issue is shown by the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545). In this story, royal *nāgas* are said to have attained a luxurious palace as a result of giving gifts to ascetics when they were humans (vv.251ff.). The Bodhisatta tells them to be virtuous so that they may once again have such a palace. To this the *nāga*-king justifiably responds (v.255): ‘There are no ascetics and brahmins to whom we can give food and drink, O steward. Tell me how we might live in a palace again.’⁷⁷ Rather than recommending that they go to the

⁷³ A further eulogy of human effort is found in *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, vv.14-19. These verses are repeated in the *Sarabhamiga Jātaka* (483) vv.1-6, and the first two verses are found in the *Mahāsīlava Jātaka* (51) and *Cūlajanaka Jātaka* (52) respectively.

⁷⁴ Cf. however the notion of the non-returner (*anāgāmin*), who reaches enlightenment from the heavens. Sakka sees himself as becoming such a non-returner after he has been reborn as a human (*D* 2.285f.).

⁷⁵ *alāra nāññatra manussalokā suddhī ca saṃvijjati saññamo vā /
ahañ ca laddhāna manussayoniṃ kāhāmi jātīmaraṇassa antaṃ //43//*

⁷⁶ In *D* 2.285f., Sakka mentions the continuation of life as a god as one of six benefits that result from his joy at hearing the *dhamma*. For the notion of gods rejoicing in the merit of humans, see Gombrich 1971:266ff.

⁷⁷ *na idha santi samaṇabrāhmaṇā va yes’ annapānāni dademu katta /
akkhāhi me pucchito etam atthaṃ yathā vimānaṃ punam āvasemā ti //255//*

human world, the Bodhisatta advises that they act morally in the *nāga*-world itself (vv.256f.):

There are snakes who are born here – sons, wives, and dependents. Be good to them continuously, in word and deed. By not committing any fault in word or deed, *nāga*, you will stay here in the palace until your life-span runs out and from here you will go up to heaven.⁷⁸

In this story, therefore, virtue can be practised in heaven-like circumstances.⁷⁹ Generally, however, the *Jātakas* adopt the pattern of karma in the human realm and the enjoyment of its merit (*bhoga*) in the heavens.

2.5.2 Asceticism and divine happiness

Since rebirth as a god is determined by virtuous conduct, ascetics are often connected with divine imagery.⁸⁰ As Steven Collins has pointed out (1998:331ff.), forest hermitages, with their ever-fruitful trees and cool streams, are often described in idyllic language which recalls the heavens. In both cases the scenery abounds with fertility and the wilder aspects of nature have been tamed. Often hermitages are built by the god Vissakamma. Indeed the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) explicitly compares the forest dwelling of an ascetic with the Nandana garden in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven (vv.338, 343, 379). Other stories describe meditation as a sport played by ascetics (e.g. *jhānakīlaṃ kīlanto*, J 5.152.22; *jhānasukhena kīli*, J 5.193.15f.), a metaphor which is perhaps linked to the divine sport of the gods. Furthermore, just as ascetics are compared with gods, so gods can have ascetic

⁷⁸ *bhogī hi te santi idh' ūpapannā puttā ca dārā anujīvino ca /
tesu tuvaṃ vacasā kammanā ca asampaduṭṭho va bhavāhi niccaṃ //256//
evaṃ tuvaṃ nāga asampadosam anupālaya vacasā kammanā ca /
thatvā idhā yāvātāyuṃ vimāne uddham ito gacchasi devalokaṃ ti //257//*

⁷⁹ The position of *nāgas* in Buddhist cosmology is complex. Although not technically a heaven, the *nāga* realm has similar divine pleasures to those enjoyed by *devas*. Indeed humans often aspire to be *nāgas* in the same way as they aspire to be gods. However, since *nāgas* are animals, they also represent a lower rebirth than both humans and gods. See Collins 1998:316ff.

⁸⁰ Likewise humans of significant status such as kings and queens are often compared with gods. E.g. *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528), v.59 and *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), v.765. The word *deva* is of course used as a form of address to a king. Compare Hopkins 1915:62ff. on how heroes in the epics often have divine parentage and are described as gods.

attributes. For example in the *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544) Brahmā descends from his Brahmaloaka in the form of a renunciate; ornately dressed, he shines like the moon and carries a golden needle in his matted hair, a silver hide decorated with gold stars, and a golden bowl alongside a coral water-pot (*J* 6.242). Similarly, the *Kusa Jātaka* (531) compares the fall of the gods when their merit has diminished to the fall of monks when they give way to desire (*J* 5.278). Indeed, nirvana itself is sometimes viewed as a superior type of heaven: just as Sakka aspires to fill the heavens, so in the *Mahākaṇha Jātaka* (469) the city of nirvana is said to be filled (*nibbānanagaram pūretvā*, *J* 4.181.9).⁸¹ This reflects Collins’ argument that nirvana is both beyond the conventional world and a syntactic category structuring various felicities within the conventional world (§1.6).

The Buddha too is sometimes portrayed as god-like. An *atideva/adhideva* (‘superior god’),⁸² he – like all *arahants* – has attained the ‘divine eye’ (*dibbacakkhu*),⁸³ and he bears marks with divine qualities: for example, golden skin unsullied by dust and a Brahmā-like voice.⁸⁴ This sensual imagery sometimes extends to erotic connotations. In the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545) the Bodhisatta is said to ‘teach the doctrine to the people with the grace of the Buddha’. He does this by ‘seducing all the kings of Jambudīpa with his sweet discourse on the doctrine, just as elephants are bewitched by the sound of a favourite lute’ (*J* 6.255.29ff.).⁸⁵ The word used for this Buddha-like seduction is *palobhetvā*, a verb commonly applied to nymphs when they entice ascetics with their beauty.⁸⁶ Erotic and ascetic imagery are also combined in a humorous passage in the *Sakkapañha Sutta* (*D* 2.265ff.), in which the deity Pañcasikha compares his passion for a lover with ascetic values. He sings that his lover’s beauty is as dear to him as the *dhamma* is to *arahants*, and asks her to cool his flames with her water (the verb *parinibbāpeti* is used); he declares that his desire grows like the gifts that *arahants* receive, and hopes that

⁸¹ See Collins 1998:291.

⁸² See *PED* and *DP* s.v., and Norman 1991a, 1991b.

⁸³ *D* 1.82.

⁸⁴ *D* 3.143f.

⁸⁵ *sakalaJambudīpe rājāno hatthikantavīṇāsarena paluddhatthino viya attano madhuradhammadesanāya palobhetvā [...] Buddhalīhāya mahājanassa dhammaṃ desento.*

⁸⁶ See for example the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), v.2: *isiṃ palobhike*; and *Mbh* 9.50.7: *pralobhanārtham*.

the merit derived from his almsgiving will bring the fruit of her love; he seeks her love as a Sakyaputta does the deathless goal, and imagines that his union with her will be as joyful as a Sakyaputta's happiness at being enlightened. Although Pañcasikha's song occurs in the inappropriate context of attempting to arouse the Buddha from his meditation, the passage nevertheless offers a startling example of how renunciate values can be expressed kataphatically through sensual and even erotic imagery.⁸⁷

However, the texts often make it clear that when such imagery is applied to asceticism it is transformed onto a different level of meaning. This is conveyed for example by *D* 2.284f., in which Sakka compares the joy (*somanassa*) he feels from listening to the *dhamma* with the joy of conquering the *asuras*. He emphasises that the former joy is superior because it conduces to renunciate values (*virāga* and *nirodha*) and is not based on martial ones (*daṇḍa* and *sattha*). Similarly, the word *sukha* is able to convey several notions of happiness, which are often qualitatively distinct.⁸⁸ This is shown by the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526), in which Naḷinikā persuades the ascetic Isisiṅga to make her 'happy' through sexual intercourse (*ahaṃ paramasukhī bhaveyyan*, v.17);⁸⁹ this sexual happiness threatens to corrupt the ascetic happiness of Isisiṅga's meditation (*jhānasukha*, *J* 5.153.15).⁹⁰ Similarly, when Isisiṅga's father asks his son why he no longer takes pleasure (*ramasi*, v.26) in his ascetic duties and tells him that an ascetic should not feel displeasure (*arati*, v.51) in the forest, his use of language strikes an ironic chord: it is precisely because of sexual pleasure (*rati*) that Isisiṅga feels ascetic displeasure (*arati*).⁹¹

⁸⁷ See O'Flaherty 1973 for the close relationship between asceticism and eroticism in Hindu myth, especially regarding Śiva; and Ali 1998, who argues that Buddhism utilises 'technologies of the self' which are similar to those expressed in texts such as the *Kāma Sūtra*.

⁸⁸ Collins 1998:207ff.

⁸⁹ See also v.46: *sukhito 'smī ti brahme*.

⁹⁰ For the concept of ascetic *sukha*, and its superiority over kingship, see the *Sukhavihāri Jātaka* (10).

⁹¹ Word-play may underlie v.26 of the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), in which Alambusā tells Isisiṅga to be 'skilful in sex' (*ratīnaṃ kusalo bhava*). The nymph uses a moral term (*kusala*) for an act which is actually immoral (*akusala*).

The intertwining of motifs of love, heaven, and asceticism is also seen in the *Udaya Jātaka* (458).⁹² In this story the Bodhisatta (Udaya) is born as a prince who has no sexual feelings (*methunadhamma*, J 4.105.1f.). He tries to avoid marriage by insisting that he will only wed a woman if she is as beautiful as a golden statue that he makes. When this woman (Udayabhaddā) is finally found, she turns out to be as virtuous as he. Ironically, the Bodhisatta thus attains a beautiful wife through the very act of not desiring her. This interconnection between beauty and moral purity, love and renunciation, is further developed when the Bodhisatta dies and is reborn as Sakka. Keeping his pledge to return to Udayabhaddā and tell her where he has been reborn, the Bodhisatta descends from the Tāvatiṃsa heaven to inform her of his divine status. Describing how humans age and fade in beauty whereas gods do not age but increase in beauty (v.12), the Bodhisatta tells Udayabhaddā that access to heaven’s ‘abundant pleasures’ (*vipulā ca bhogā*, v.12) is acquired through virtuous conduct (v.13). The theme of love now becomes accentuated when Udayabhaddā asks her (ex-)husband how they can be re-united (v.18). The Bodhisatta responds by preaching the law of impermanence (v.19), praising those who renounce wealth (v.20), and declaring that even relatives must part from one another (v.21). This is hardly the conventional response of a lover! However, it turns out to be good advice. For, inspired by the Bodhisatta’s words, Udayabhaddā becomes an ascetic and, at her death, is reunited with the Bodhisatta in heaven as his wife (*pādapariṅkārīkā*). The motif of love and reunion thus becomes intricately associated with renunciation. This theme will become particularly relevant to our discussion of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) in Chapters 6 and 7.

⁹² See also the *Sudhābhajana Jātaka* (535), in which the ascetic Kosiya decides which of four goddesses – Sirī (Glory), Āsā (Hope), Saddhā (Faith), and Hirī (Shame) – should receive the prize of ambrosia (*sudhā*). He picks Hirī for her modesty and ultimately marries her in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. Hirī’s external appearance contrasts with the other goddesses: she is said to be (v.64) ‘black, as if born from a fire, like a flower in a drought which is shaken by the wind and wreathed in red leaves’ (*kālā nidāghe-r-iva aggijāt’ iva anileritā lohitaṭṭamālinī*). However, her shyness is qualified by her shout of triumph (v.81) as, ‘intoxicated with the passion of fame’ (*vaṇṇamadena mattā*), she asks Sakka to give her victory (*dehi me jayam*). This seems to conflict with the renunciate role for which she is rewarded, and suggests a tension between different notions of divinity.

For another allegorical treatment of the gods, see the *Sirikālakāṇṇi Jātaka* (382). For the epics, see Hopkins 1915:53f.

In the *Udaya Jātaka*, Udayabhaddā's desire to be reborn in heaven inspires her to abandon ordinary attachments and become an ascetic. Underlying this outlook is the idea that the heavens offer a superior and more refined form of enjoyment than the human realm. A similar sentiment is expressed by the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Samgāmāvacara Jātaka* (182), in which the Buddha tells Nanda that, if he becomes a monk, he will attain nymphs far more beautiful than his present wife. Inspired, Nanda sets out on the monastic path (*samañadhamma*, *J* 2.93.18). Here too heavenly pleasures therefore act as an incitement for renunciate practice. However, the story changes its tone when, at the Buddha's instigation, monks chastise Nanda for being attached to desire (*kilesa*, *J* 2.93.29). Ashamed, Nanda sets aside his desire for heaven and attains arahantship by practising insight meditation (*vipassanā*). Thus, while the *Udaya Jātaka* concentrates on the value of heavenly pleasures in their own right,⁹³ the *Samgāmāvacara Jātaka* places desire for heaven within a hierarchical scheme whereby it initially acts as an incentive for renunciation but is later abandoned for higher forms of happiness. Indeed several stories express the notion that divine pleasures, while representing the fruit of renunciation, can be an obstacle to spiritual progress. (One recalls that the post-Vedic Indra tries to corrupt the ascetic Dadhīca with divine rewards (p.53)). In the *Bhūridatta Jātaka*, for example, the *nāga* Bhūridatta goes to the human realm to practise the *uposatha* vow so as not to be distracted by the pleasures of the *nāga* world (*J* 6.169).

The complex significance of divine pleasures is also expressed by the motif of the mango. Described as 'the portion of the gods' (*devatāparibhoga* *J* 2.104.19), the mango is often treated as a symbol of rare refinement and is associated with deities, ascetics, and idyllic forest scenes.⁹⁴ At the same time, however, the exquisite taste of mango often captivates those who eat it with an insatiable and often destructive desire. For example, in the *Suka*

⁹³ See Collins 1998:311f.: 'In many stories which focus on the material rewards of merit-making rather than the value of celibacy, the heavenly Worlds of Desire are depicted in enthusiastically sensual terms, without the need to compare them negatively either with the Brahma worlds or with nirvana.'

⁹⁴ See for example the *Abbhantara Jātaka* (281).

Jātaka (255) a parrot’s greed for mango results in its death, and in the *Mahākapi Jātaka* (407) a king attempts to kill a troop of monkeys in order to gain access to a mango tree.

The ambiguous status of the mango is particularly seen in the *Kimchanda Jātaka* (511), in which it is viewed both as a potential source of attachment and as something which helps the ascetic on his spiritual path. In this complicated story, a man is reborn as a spirit (*petā*) who inhabits a mango grove as a result of a gift he gave in a past life.⁹⁵ An ascetic (the Bodhisatta) lives downstream from this mango grove and happens to eat a mango that floats to him, whereupon he becomes ‘captivated by craving for its taste’ (*rasataṇhāya bajjhivā*, *J* 5.3.13f.). His craving is so intense that he refuses any other food and claims he will die from starvation (v.6). Further negative remarks are made by a goddess who presides over the river and surrounding landscape (including the mango trees). She tells the Bodhisatta not to indulge his obsession (*mā rocaya-m-abhisāṅgam*, v.16), criticises his hankering after death (v.17), and accuses him of returning to the attachments he has already renounced (v.24). However, when the Bodhisatta warns her that she will be responsible for his death, the goddess relents and agrees to take him to the mango grove, which is idyllically described as teeming with birds, flowers, and fruit. She says (v.23): ‘I offer you myself and my mangoes, you who have renounced and abandoned sense-pleasures and who are steadfast in peace and truth.’⁹⁶ Here the goddess views mangoes as an appropriately refined reward for a self-restrained ascetic. Not only that, she seems to link the Bodhisatta’s spiritual ‘peace’ (*santi*, v.23) with the satisfaction of his desire (v.25): ‘Come, I will get you what you want. Be carefree, as you please. I will take you to a cool place; live there at ease.’⁹⁷ The notion that the Bodhisatta’s ascetic practice is in fact related to his desire for mango is foreshadowed by v.7, in which his starvation is described as a form of fasting (*upavasām’ ahaṃ*). Moreover, at the end of the story we are

⁹⁵ This form of existence occurs only during the night; during the day he tears out flesh from his back because he accepted bribes in the same past life.

⁹⁶ [...] *attānaṃ ambañ ca dadāmi te taṃ /
yo duccaje kāmaguṇe pahāya santiñ ca dhammañ ca adhiṭṭhito si //23//*

⁹⁷ *ehi, taṃ pāpayissāmi, kāmaṃ appossuko bhava /
upanayāmi sītasmiṃ, viharāhi anussuko //25//*

told that by enjoying mango (*taṃ paribhuñjanto*, *J* 5.10.29), the Bodhisatta cultivates the *jhānas* and *abhiññās* and reaches the Brahmaloaka. The ascetic's desire for and enjoyment of mango thus appear to act as a medium for attaining high states of meditation and rebirth. This is linked to the Nanda story, in which Nanda's desire for nymphs is used as a soteriological tool for suppressing his lust for women and, ultimately, for aspiring to nirvana.

Divine happiness is therefore viewed both as a potential obstacle to asceticism and as part of the same soteriological continuum as asceticism, a dialectic between opposition and complementarity which, as discussed in §1.6, lies at the heart of the relationship between renunciate values and the conventional world.

2.5.3 The problem of divine boons

A recurring theme in the *Jātakas* is that divine happiness should be seen as the result of karma and not another cause. For example in the *Samkhapāla Jātaka* (524) the *nāga*-Bodhisatta states (v.29): 'I neither received this palace through chance nor through some sudden change, neither because it was self-made nor because it was given by the gods. I received it because of the merit derived from my own good deeds.'⁹⁸ A similar concern with ethical autonomy is shown by the *Sādhīna Jātaka* (494). In this story, Sakka asks the Bodhisatta to stay in the Tāvatiṃsa realm and enjoy divine pleasures 'through his divine power' (*devānubhāvena*, v.10), even – according to the *veyyākaraṇa* – offering to split his own merit in half (*J* 4.357.29f.). Sādhīna refuses, insisting that he will reach heaven through his own efforts (vv.11ff.):

[11] The happiness derived from another's gift is the same as a borrowed carriage or borrowed wealth. [12] I do not want that which is derived from another's gift. My own personal wealth will be the merit I have made myself. [13] I will go

⁹⁸ *nādhicca laddhaṃ na pariṇāmajam me, na sayamkataṃ na pi devehi dinnam /
sakehi kammehi apāpakehi puññehi me laddham idaṃ vimānaṃ //29//*
See also *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545), v.249.

among men and do many good deeds. When a person has done this through giving, correct conduct, restraint, and self-control, he is happy and has no regrets afterwards.⁹⁹

However, divine boons do not necessarily have to conflict with karma. Gananath Obeyesekere (1968:21ff.), for example, has observed how in modern Sinhalese Buddhism karma and divine intervention are often treated as co-existent ways of explaining good or bad fortune. Similarly, Steven Collins (1998:109f.) explains how karma can co-exist with other causal factors by differentiating between efficient modes of causation on the one hand (for example divine activity) and ultimate modes of causation on the other (karma). Indeed, the notion that karma is only one among many possible causal factors is expressed in texts such as *S* 4.230, which describes how painful feelings can arise from various causes, including the climate, the imbalance of the bodily humours, or *kamma*.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, it is also worth noting J. Bruce Long's comments about the multiplicity of causal factors in the *Mbh*. He states (1983:47): 'The fact that various spokesmen in the *Mbh* designate first one then another factor as the cause of events would seem to indicate that they did not feel that the total complexity of forces at work in the world could be accounted for by reference to a single principle or agent. There is a variety of causal elements: human action, divine influence, hereditary traits, extenuating circumstances, and even potent actions of extraordinary personages such as sages, seers, magicians, and soothsayers.'

This multi-layered outlook is also found in the *Jātakas*. For example, in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) the goddess Maṇimekhalā saves the Bodhisatta both because of his good karma and because of her own personal motivation (see pp.59ff.). Similarly, in the

⁹⁹ *yathā yācītakam yānam yathā yācītakam dhanam /
evaṃsāmpadam ev' etaṃ yam parato dānapaccayā //11//
na cāham etaṃ icchāmi yam parato dānapaccayā /
sayamkatāni puññāni taṃ me āveṇiyam dhanam //12//
so 'haṃ gantvā manussesu kāhāmi kusalam bahum /
dānena samacariyāya saṃyamena damena ca /
yam katvā sukhiṭo hoti na ca pacchānutappatī ti //13//*

These verses recur in the *Nimi Jātaka* (541), vv.163-5. In other texts, the image of borrowed goods is used for desire in the phrase *yācītak' upamā kāmā*. See *PED* s.v.

¹⁰⁰ Collins 1982:68ff.

paccuppannavatthu of the *Khadiraṅgāra Jātaka* (40), Anāthapiṇḍika receives the karmic fruit of his *dāna* through the unwitting activity of a deity. Here divine activity provides the means through which karma is fulfilled, a process which fits Collins' model of efficient forms of causation working alongside karma as an ultimate form of causation. Other stories however suggest a rather different pattern. In the *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544), for example, the princess Rujā is helped by a Brahmā deity when she makes the following plea for help (*J* 6.241.31ff.):

In this world there are righteous ascetics and brahmins who sustain the world, as well as guardian deities and Great Brahmās. Let them come by their own power and make my father get rid of his false views. Even if he lacks the virtue, let them come by my virtue, my power, and my truth in order to rid him of this false view, and let them make the whole world safe.¹⁰¹

Rujā's words treat karma as an equal alternative to divine influence, rather than the latter being a subset of the former. Moreover, although exegetical commentaries often try to explain every human (mis)fortune in terms of karma, it is not clear to me that narrative texts always consider karma to be present as a causal factor (even on an implicit level).¹⁰² Hence, when stories describe events such as divine boons or forgiveness, one of the reasons why such phenomena are often not depicted as contradicting the doctrine of karma may be because karma is simply not relevant.

However, that said, some *jātakas* do seem to portray a conflict between karma and divine influence. This is shown by the *Sivi Jātaka* (499). In this story, king Sivi (the Bodhisatta) gives away his eyes to a brahmin, whereupon he becomes an ascetic and reflects on his gift. This heats up Sakka's throne, who decides to restore Sivi's eyes by offering him a boon (*J* 4.408.23f.). Already there is therefore an ambiguity over whether Sakka acts

¹⁰¹ *imasmiṃ loke lokasandhārakā dhammikā samaṇabrāhmaṇā nāma lokapāladevatā nāma Mahābrahmāṇo nāma atthi, te āgantvā attano balena mama pītaṃ micchādassanaṃ vissajjāpentu, etassa guṇe asati pi mama guṇena mama balena mama saccena āgantvā imaṃ micchādassanaṃ vissajjāpetvā sakalalokassa sothiṃ karontū ti.*

Compare the *Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka* (542), vv.151ff., in which an act of truth is simultaneously combined with a prayer to the gods.

¹⁰² See pp.106f.

independently or in response to Sivi's virtue. This ambiguity increases when Sakka approaches Sivi and asks him to choose a boon (*varam varassu rājisi*, v.20). Sivi replies that he would, in the misery of his blindness, only be satisfied with death (v.21). Sakka then advises him to claim the fruit of his *dāna* by making an act of truth, which Sivi then does. Sivi's act of truth invests him with a pair of 'divine eyes' (*dibbāni nettāni*, v.28; *cakkhuṃ amānusam*, v.30).

That there is an uneasiness over Sakka's role is shown by the fact that certain sections of the prose are keen to deny that Sakka gives Sivi his divine eyes. Thus Sivi states (*J* 4.409.23ff.): 'Sakka, if you want to give me an eye, let the eye arise as a result of my gift, and do not use any other means.' To this Sakka dutifully replies: 'I cannot give an eye to others, even though I am Sakka, king of the gods. Your eye will arise only as the fruit of the gift you gave.'¹⁰³ On this basis, Sakka is merely present in order to give the king good advice and not, as may have been surmised from the rest of the narrative, in order to reward the king.¹⁰⁴

The awkward nature of this argument is accentuated by a prose passage which occurs after Sivi has made his act of truth and received his new eyes. The verses explicitly describe the eyes as divine (*dibbāni*, v.26, 28; *amānusam*, v.30), the implication being that this is because they have been given by a god. Indeed the word-commentary states that the eyes' ability to see through walls and over long distances makes them 'like the eyes of the gods' (*devatānaṃ cakkhūni viya*, *J* 4.411.11f.). This, however, would conflict with the assertion that Sivi attained the eyes only through karmic fruit, and the prose tries to counter the suggestion of divine influence by explaining (*J* 4.410.24ff.), 'But these eyes of his were neither natural nor divine. For an eye that is given by Sakka or a brahmin cannot be natural, and a divine eye cannot arise in anything injured. On the contrary, these eyes of

¹⁰³ *Sakka sace si mama cakkhuṃ dātukāmo aññaṃ upāyaṃ mā kari, mama dānanissanden' eva me cakkhuṃ uppajjatū ti vatvā Sakkena, mahārāja, ahaṃ Sakko ahaṃ devarājā ti na paresaṃ cakkhuṃ dātuṃ sakkomi, tayā dinnassa dānassa phalen' eva te cakkhuṃ uppajjissatī ti vutte [...]*

¹⁰⁴ This is noted by Jones 1979:141, who states: 'It looks as if there has been some tampering with the story in an attempt to change an act of divine help into an act of karmic reward.'

his are called “the eyes of the perfection of truth”.¹⁰⁵ The text’s internal debate is highlighted by the fact that the prose states that Sakka’s eyes are ‘not divine’ (*na dibbāni*, *J 4.410.25*), whereas the verses say they are ‘divine’ (*dibbāni*, vv.26, 28).

A similar unease over divine boons is expressed by the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440). In this story Sakka offers Kaṇha a series of boons for his ascetic practice, and Kaṇha asks to have no greed or hatred, to be free from disease, and not to harm any creature. The prose-composer, however, denies that that Sakka can grant such boons. He states (*J 4.14.12ff.*): ‘He [Kaṇha] knew that the body is characterised by disease. Sakka cannot cure it of disease; for the purification of the three gates is nothing to do with Sakka. Even so, he chose these boons in order to teach him the doctrine.’¹⁰⁶ This denial of Sakka’s curative powers contrasts with his role as a fertility god in the epics, where he controls the rain, cures wounds, and even makes the dead come alive.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Sakka is further demeaned by the fact that Kaṇha’s asceticism is said to go beyond concerns of attaining Sakkahood (*J 4.10.14ff.*).

Divine boons are thus portrayed ambiguously in the *Jātakas*. On the one hand, they highlight and authorise a character’s virtue. On the other hand, they are devalued in order to emphasise the autonomy of the character in question.

¹⁰⁵ *tāni pan’ assa cakkhūni n’ eva pākatikāni na dibbāni, Sakkabrāhmaṇassa hi dinnacakkhuṃ puna pākatikaṃ kātuṃ na sakkā, upahatavatthuno ca dibbacakkhuṃ nāma na uppajjati, tāni pan’ assa saccapāramitācakkhūni ti vuttāni.*

¹⁰⁶ *jānāti c’ esa sarīraṃ nāma vyādhidhammaṃ, na taṃ sakkā Sakkena avyādhidhammaṃ kātuṃ, sattānaṃ hi tīsu dvāresu parisuddhabhāvo na sakkāyatto va, evaṃ sante pi tassa dhammadesanattaṃ ime vare gaṇhi.*

The juxtaposition of *sakkā* and *Sakkena* in the first line appears to be a deliberate and ironic word-play on Sakka’s name: he who is ‘powerful’ or ‘able’ (Sakka) is not ‘able’ (*sakkā*) to stop disease.

¹⁰⁷ See Hopkins 1915:127f. for Indra as a rain-god. In *Rām* 6.108, Indra cures the wounded and the dead. In *Mbh* 3.294.32f. Indra assures Karṇa that his body will appear unblemished after it has been stripped of its natural armour.

2.6 Fighting for the *dhamma*: Remaining aspects of the post-Vedic Indra.

This final section examines the techniques that Sakka uses to support the virtuous and restrain the wicked. In particular, it investigates how certain aspects of Sakka's post-Vedic character are still present, in a modified manner, in his role as protector of the *dhamma*. The section concludes by examining how this role relates to ascetic values, an issue that will be central to Chapter 3.

In epic literature, Indra is frequently depicted as a devious and manipulative character who uses tricks to conquer his enemies. A famous example is his use of deceit to conquer the demon Vṛtra (*Mbh* 5.10).¹⁰⁸ Indeed, 'the net of Indra' (*indrajālā*) is a common term 'for magical trickery, used by any warrior' (Hopkins 1915:124). Similarly, in the *Jātakas*, Sakka often fulfils his goals through tricks. In particular he uses disguise. As has already been mentioned (§2.4.1), such disguise is often devoid of the aggressive connotations found in post-Vedic literature; rather than seeking to overpower an opponent, Sakka disguises himself in order to test people's virtue. This constructive role is highlighted by the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), in which Sakka's disguise as a brahmin provides a way of reducing suffering, since it results in the Bodhisatta giving his wife to him and not to the wicked brahmin Jūjaka. Similarly in the *Kusa Jātaka* (531) Sakka disguises himself in order to save queen Sīlavatī from the disgrace of being sent out into the streets to conceive a child. The fact that Sakka helps Sīlavatī conceive immaculately by giving her a boon and rubbing her navel highlights how his role has changed from the Indra of post-Vedic literature, who seduces and even rapes women that he lusts after.

However, in other stories, Sakka's use of trickery and disguise can be more controversial. In the *Bhisa Jātaka* (488), for example, Sakka steals food from a group of ascetics (including the Bodhisatta) in order to see if they are free from greed. When Sakka reveals

¹⁰⁸ See Hopkins 1915:66: 'All the greatest victories of the gods were won by deception of which they boast with pride.' He also states (*ibid.*) that Indra is 'famous as an adulterer, deceiver, and drinker.'

that he is the perpetrator of the theft, the Bodhisatta criticises him, saying (v.19): ‘We are not your actors nor play-things, neither your kinsmen nor your friends. So why, thousand-eyed king of the gods, do you play with sages?’¹⁰⁹ This concept of gods playing with humans is echoed by Draupadī in the *Mbh* (3.31.36): ‘Joining and separating them at will, the blessed Lord plays with creatures as a child plays with toys.’¹¹⁰ Sakka’s response to the Bodhisatta confirms that his proper role is to serve virtuous ascetics (v.20): ‘You are my teacher; you are like a father to me. This is my protection for my wrong-doing, brahmin. Pardon my one fault in your great wisdom; the wise do not have their strength in anger.’¹¹¹

In the *Bhisa Jātaka*, Sakka is reproached for meddling with ascetics who are virtuous. However, when his purpose is to ‘tame’ (*√dam*) the unvirtuous,¹¹² Sakka is often portrayed as justified in humiliating and ridiculing his victims. Like the post-Vedic Indra, Sakka uses tricks and deception, but he uses them to promote virtue. For example in the *Keḷisīla Jātaka* (202), Sakka out-pranks a prankster (*keḷisīla*) king, who has taken to humiliating old people by making them perform demeaning acts such as rolling on the floor. As a means of ‘taming’ him (*damessāmi nan ti*, *J* 2.143.6), Sakka dresses up as an old man in a rickety cart and humiliates the king by smashing jars of butter-milk on his head in the middle of a solemn procession. In the *Culladhanuggaha Jātaka* (374), Sakka puts an adulterous woman to shame (*lajjāpetvā*, *J* 3.222.10) when he and his divine assistants concoct an elaborate ploy involving disguises as a fish, bird and jackal. In the *Kāmanīta Jātaka* (228), Sakka even lies in order to shame (*lajjāpessāmi*, *J* 2.212.19f.) a greedy king. Disguising himself as a brahmin, he tells the king of three prosperous cities which are ready to be conquered but which, in reality, do not exist. When the king cannot find the

¹⁰⁹ *na te naṭā no pana kīlaneyyā na bandhavā no pana te sahāyā /
kismiṃ paratthambha sahasanetta isihi tvaṃ kīlasi devarājā ti //19//*

¹¹⁰ *samprayojya viyojyāyaṃ kāmākārakah prabhuh /
krīdate bhagavān bhūtair bālah krīdanakair iva //36//*

Draupadī’s assertion that human morality is irrelevant because ‘the Arranger’ (*dhātṛ*) is all-powerful and capricious is condemned by Yudhiṣṭhira as heretical (*nāstikyam*, *Mbh* 3.32.1). See Long 1983:46f.

¹¹¹ *ācariyo me si pitā va mayham, esā patiṭṭhā khalitassa brahme /
ekāparādham khama bhūripañña, na paṇḍitā kodhabalā bhavanti ti //20//*

¹¹² For example, in the *Sudhābhajana Jātaka* (535) Sakka and his fellow deities tame (*dametvā nibbisevanam katvā*, *J* 5.392.13) a miserly ascetic by ridiculing him. See also the *Bīḷarikosiya Jātaka* (450).

cities, he falls ill from his unfulfilled desire for glory. Sakka then cures the king by telling him of the evils of desire.

In addition to shame (*lajjā*), Sakka often makes his victims experience the emotion of shock (*saṃvega*).¹¹³ An important term, *saṃvega* signifies how the mind needs to be ‘shaken’ in order for it to see the world differently. Sometimes Sakka effects *saṃvega* in someone by simply reciting verses on the *dhamma*. In the *Migapotaka Jātaka* (372), for example, he preaches to a misguided ascetic on the vanity of grief. In other stories, however, Sakka’s methods of taming extend beyond mere preaching, and even beyond the use of deception, to include violence (or at least the threat of violence), a tendency which recalls his martial role in post-Vedic literature. In the *Illisa Jātaka* (78), for example, Sakka ‘harasses and tames’ (*saṃkhobetvā dametvā*, *J* 1.350.22) a miser by arranging for the miser to be beaten by his fellow citizens. Furthermore Sakka threatens to kill the miser if he refuses to give alms (*J* 1.354.2ff.): ‘If you will not give, I will destroy all your wealth and kill you by splitting your head open with this thunderbolt of Indra.’¹¹⁴

This violent trait is also illustrated by the *Kaccāni Jātaka* (417), in which Sakka goes to help a woman called Kaccāni, who believes that morality must be dead (*dhammo mato bhavissati*, *J* 3.424.29). Her reason for this belief is that she has been thrown out of her house by her son and daughter-in-law. Her conviction is so strong that she performs a death ritual for *dhamma* in a cemetery. When Sakka descends in the disguise of a brahmin, he dramatically identifies himself as the personification of *dhamma* itself (vv.3, 6):

Thousand-eyed and unequalled in might, the excellent *dhamma* nowhere dies. [...] I am alive. I am not dead. I have come here for your sake.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ See for example the *Vighāsa Jātaka* (393), in which Sakka, disguised as a parrot, alarms (*ime saṃvejessāmi ti*, *J* 3.310.25) and puts to shame (*te lajjāpetvā*, *J* 3.312.7) some reprobate ascetics. Also *J* 3.138.3: *saṃvejessāmi nan ti*; and *J* 3.389.26: *saṃvejetvā naṃ satim paṭilābhessāmi ti*.

¹¹⁴ *noce dassasi sabbaṃ te dhanam antaradhāpetvā iminā Indavaḥirena sīsam chinditvā jīvitakkhayam pāpessāmā ti*. I read *sabbaṃ* rather than the nonsensical *tabbaṃ* in the PTS edition, as is supported by the *Chātthasaṅgāyana* and suggested by Fausbøll.

¹¹⁵ *sahassanetto atulānubhāvo, na miyyati dhammavaro kadācī ti //3//
jīvāmi vo 'haṃ, nāhaṃ mato 'smi, tav' eva atthāya idhāgato 'smi / [...] //6//*

The notion that the gods should uphold morality is also expressed in the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519), in which a woman calls for help when she is attacked by a demon (v.14):

Are there not any gods who dwell here? Are there not any protectors of the world here? Are there not any beings to check those who are unrestrained in acts of violence?¹¹⁶

In the *Sambulā Jātaka*, Sakka responds by tying up the demon and taking it to another mountain. In the *Kaccāni Jātaka*, this use of violence is taken a step further when Sakka threatens to kill Kaccāni's son and daughter-in-law by burning them to ashes (v.6). Kaccāni clearly finds Sakka's attitude disturbing: she urges Sakka not to incinerate her son but to promote harmony instead (v.7). Sakka obeys her wishes, which he himself admits are moral (*dhammaṃ*, v.8), and arranges things so that her son and daughter-in-law regret their wrongdoing and accept her home.¹¹⁷ In this story, therefore, Sakka is a flawed being, whose tactics verge on the immoral and have to be modified.

Sakka's tendency to arouse fear in the wicked is startlingly expressed in the *Mahākāṇha Jātaka* (469). In this story Sakka decides to terrify a kingdom when he notices that no new gods are arriving in heaven as a result of a decline in virtue. He therefore makes the following resolution (*sanniṭṭhāna*): 'I will frighten and terrify the people, and when I have seen their terrified state, I'll console them, teach them the *dhamma*, uphold the decaying religion, and make it continue for another thousand years' (*J* 4.181.19ff.).¹¹⁸ Dressed in the guise of a forester wielding adamantite-tipped arrows, Sakka is accompanied by his charioteer Mātali, who is disguised as a vicious black dog. The dog, Kāṇha, gives the *jātaka* its title and the prose describes in detail how it terrifies the city with its roar. In his

¹¹⁶ *na santi devā pavasanti nūna, na ha nūna santi idha lokapālā /
sahasā karontānaṃ asaṅṅatānaṃ na ha nūna santi paṭisedhitāro //14//*

The verse is repeated in the *Maṇicora Jātaka* (194), v.1.

¹¹⁷ We are told only that this occurred 'through Sakka's power' (*Sakkānubhāvena, J* 3.427.19) and that the son and daughter-in-law were 'compelled by the king of the gods' (*devānaṃ indena adhiggahitā, v.9*).

¹¹⁸ *mahājanaṃ bhāyevā tāsetvā bhītabhāvaṃ ṅatvā assāsetvā dhammaṃ desetvā osakkitasāsaṃ paggayha aparaṃ vassasahassaṃ pavattanakāraṇaṃ karissāmī ti.*

fear, the king asks Sakka why he has set the dog on them (v.1). Reminiscent of the *Bhagavad Gīta* passage (4.7f.) in which Kṛṣṇa famously states that he will reveal himself whenever there is a decline in the *dharmā*,¹¹⁹ Sakka answers that the dog is released when humans act wrongly (v.2).¹²⁰ There follow ten verses which give instances of such wrongdoing, including adultery, monks farming, and brahmins sacrificing for money. The prose's description of the dog running around the city terrifying people is steeped in humour, and it is perhaps possible to view the story as a gentle parody of Kṛṣṇa (Pāli: Kaṇha). This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that Kaṇha is here a charioteer, Kṛṣṇa's famous role in the *Mbh*. On the other hand, the *Jātakas* frequently inject a comic aspect into their plots, and stories which depict Sakka in his role as tamer are often bawdy in tone. Moreover, given the emphasis on non-violence in Buddhism, it is not surprising to find that Sakka's tactics are softened by the use of humour. That is not to say, however, that the violent aspects to Sakka's actions are thereby negated; instead humour provides an accessible context within which to investigate the role of what might be called 'righteous violence' in Buddhist ethics.¹²¹

In many ways, Sakka provides a convenient way for virtuous humans to maintain their non-violent morality and at the same time be defended by the threat of violence. This is illustrated by the *Ayakūṭa Jātaka* (347), in which the Bodhisatta is a king who forbids animal sacrifice. Enraged at their loss of blood-offerings, a group of *yakkhas* send a demon to kill the Bodhisatta. Sakka stops this attack by threatening the demon with his

¹¹⁹ *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata /
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā 'tmānam sṛjāmy aham //7//
paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām /
dharmaśamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge //8//*

¹²⁰ 'Usinara, this dog will not be used for hunting. But when humans act wrongly, then Kaṇha will be released.'

*nāyaṃ migānam atthāya Usinara bhavissati /
manussānam anayo hutvā tadā Kaṇho pamokkhati ti //2//*

¹²¹ Compare Rhys Davids' analysis (1880:xxvif.) of the *Rājovāda Jātaka* (151). 'The mixture in this Jātaka of earnestness with dry humour is very instructive. [...] It throws, and is meant to throw, an air of unreality over the story; and it is none the less humour because it is left to be inferred, because it is only an aroma which might easily escape unnoticed, only the humour of naïve absurdity and of clever repartee. But none the less also is the story-teller thoroughly in earnest; he really means that justice is noble, that to conquer evil by good is the right thing, and that goodness is the measure of greatness. The object is edification also, and not amusement only.'

thunderbolt. Similarly, in the *Mahākaṇha Jātaka* discussed above, Sakka terrorises a city in order to protect the *sāsana* of Kassapa Buddha. Likewise, in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (*D* 1.87ff.), a deity called Vajirapāṇi (‘Thunderbolt-hand’), who may or may not be the same god as Sakka, forces the brahmin Ambaṭṭha to respond to the Buddha’s questions by threatening to split open his head if he does not.

The contrast between Sakka’s active role and the passive role played by ascetics is also seen in stories such as the *Dhajaviheṭṭha Jātaka* (391), in which monks have to rely on Sakka’s support when they are unfairly exiled from a kingdom. However, ascetics are not always portrayed as passive. Indeed the metaphor of taming is commonly applied to the Buddha himself. Described as ‘the charioteer of men [who are like horses] to be tamed’ (*purisadammasārathi*),¹²² the Buddha tames the bloodthirsty robber Aṅgulimāla (*J* 5.546f.) and the Brahmanical ascetics the Kassapas (*J* 6.220). Like Sakka, the Buddha sometimes uses fear as a method of shocking people. In the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Kumbhajātaka* (512), for example, the Buddha produces *saṃvega* in a group of drunken women by terrifying them with darkness. Moreover, he also becomes their saviour by shining a beam from between his eyebrows and providing the only light in the world (*J* 5.11). This paradoxical role as both terrifier and refuge from terror is also expressed by the *Mahāvamsa* (1.19ff.), in which the Buddha purifies Laṅkā of *yakkhas*. He achieves this by terrifying the demons with rain-storms and darkness (1.24). The *yakkhas* then take refuge in the Buddha as the only one who can rescue them from the terrors he has himself created.¹²³

Unlike Sakka, however, the Buddha is generally noted for his non-violent methods of taming. For example in the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* (537), the Buddha is praised for taming

¹²² E.g. *J* 1.505.20, *D* 1.49, *M* 1.37. In *Vism* 207f. Buddhaghosa lists different tamed beings in his explanation of this epithet.

¹²³ Compare the *Gagga Jātaka* (155), in which the Bodhisatta tames a *yakkha* by terrifying it with the fear of hell (*yakkhaṃ dametvā nirayabhayena tajjētvā*, *J* 2.17.10f.). Terrifying descriptions of hell are commonly used in the *Jātakas* as a way of persuading people to act morally. See for example the *Samkicca Jātaka* (530), *Nimi Jātaka* (541) and *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544).

Aṅgulimāla ‘without force or weapon’ (*adaṇḍena asatthena*, *J* 5.456.25f.).¹²⁴ This is linked to his past life as a prince when he tames a *yakkha* non-violently by reciting verses on the *dhamma*.¹²⁵ Similarly the contrast between Sakka’s propensity for violence and the renunciate tendency to avoid such forms of taming is illustrated by the *Illīsa Jātaka* (78), in which Sakka tames a miser by threatening to split his head open whereas Moggallāna achieves the same goal through the use of miracles. However, Buddhist ascetics are also ambiguously associated with violence, especially in the context of conversion (or ‘taming’). In *Vin* 1.24f., for example, the Buddha defeats a *nāga* in a battle of fire.¹²⁶ Similarly, in the *Ambatṭha Sutta* mentioned above (*D* 1.87ff.), when Vajirapāṇi threatens to split open Ambatṭha’s head if he does not answer the Buddha’s question, the fact that Vajirapāṇi only appears after the Buddha has warned Ambatṭha of what will happen suggests that the text is playing with the ambiguity of the Buddha’s involvement in such punishment.¹²⁷

This ambiguity between non-violence and forceful methods of ‘taming’, and between renunciate detachment and engaged interaction with the world, is central to the next chapter, the main focus of which is the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), in which the Bodhisatta is an outcaste ascetic who ‘tames’ various brahmins by employing tactics of humiliation similar to those used by Sakka.

¹²⁴ Compare the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533), in which the Buddha tames the elephant Nālāgiri through the power of his *mettā*.

¹²⁵ For this theme, see also the *Devadhamma Jātaka* (6), *Ekaṇṇa Jātaka* (149), *Sutano Jataka* (398), *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545).

¹²⁶ In *J* 1.360 the Elder Sāgata is said to tame a *nāga* by harming it in a battle of fire.

¹²⁷ The text justifies this threatened violence by portraying it as a natural law: anyone who refuses a Tathāgata’s question three times has their head split open. For the head-splitting motif in Indian literature, see Insler 1989-90 and Witzel 1987.

Chapter 3

Brahmins and ascetics

Having explored various tensions and affinities between gods and ascetics in the *Jātakas*, this chapter turns to the relationship between brahmins and ascetics.

3.1 The portrayal of brahmins in the *Jātakas*

Brahmins are prominent in many of the *Jātakas*. Indeed, the Bodhisatta himself is frequently reborn as one. Often he plays a royal chaplain (*purohita*) or teacher (*ācariya*), who is noted for his wisdom and virtue.¹ Most commonly, however, he is portrayed as an ascetic who leaves society in order to enter the forest;² indeed, the stories in which he is a *purohita* also often conclude with the Bodhisatta's adoption of the ascetic path.³ The virtues that the Bodhisatta exhibits as such an ascetic are often related to the Buddha (or other monks) in the *paccuppannavatthu*. For example, in the *Mahāsupina Jātaka* (77), *Lohakumbhi Jātaka* (314) and *Aṭṭhasadda Jātaka* (418), the Bodhisatta and Buddha are linked by the fact that they both stop a king from performing animal sacrifice.⁴

The Bodhisatta's lifestyle as a Brahmanical ascetic is usually only described cursorily. In stories such as the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522) he has matted hair and an antelope skin and lives in a hermitage. Sometimes he is a solitary ascetic and at other times he lives with a group of ascetics; in stories like the *Cullabodhi Jātaka* (443) he is accompanied by his wife in the manner of a *vanaprastha*. Generally, however, the emphasis of the stories is on the Bodhisatta's moral virtues rather than his ascetic practices, and any specifically

¹ For stories in which the Bodhisatta is a wise *purohita*, see for example *J* nos. 86, 120, 214, 220, 241, 290, 305, 330, 362, 377, 401, 402, 413, 546. For stories in which he is an *ācariya*, see *J* nos. 71, 130, 245, 252, 287, 353.

² See *inter alia* *J* nos. 43, 61, 77, 87, 99, 134, 135, 149, 154, 165, 166, 167, 169, 197, 235, 244, 246, 253, 273, 281, 284, 285, 299, 310, 312, 313, 314, 319, 323, 328, 334, 337, 348, 376, 403, 414, 418, 423, 431, 433, 440, 443, 453, 477, 480, 490, 509, 522, 523, 526, 528, 532, 540.

³ See for example a group of stories entitled *Silavīmamsa/Silavīmamsana Jātaka* (nos. 86, 290, 330, 362). See also *J* nos. 120, 310, and 411.

⁴ See also *J* nos. 81, 87, 99, 134, 135, 149, 154, 285.

Brahmanical imagery tends to serve merely as a narrative framework for the depiction of values that are relevant to Buddhism. For example, in the *Asātamanta Jātaka* (61) the Bodhisatta is a Brahmanical ascetic who worships fire in the forest, but the main thrust of the story concerns his realisation of the dangers of lust. This in turn is linked to the *paccuppannavatthu*, in which a monk is exhorted to control his sexual passion. Similarly, when the Bodhisatta is portrayed as a *purohita*, he never instructs a king on Vedic ritual – except when he wants to undermine it – but instead offers him moral or political advice. Moreover, when the Bodhisatta’s ascetic practices are described, it is often in Buddhist terminology. Thus he is frequently said to cultivate the *jhānas*, *samāpattis*, or *abhiññās*. The Bodhisatta is never, of course, said to attain enlightenment, as this would contradict the underlying premise of the *Jātakas* – namely that they depict the Buddha’s past lives. This hierarchical relationship is also expressed by the fact that the four noble truths are only ever taught after the *atītavatthu* in the *samodhāna*, an event which often leads the Buddha’s audience to attain the state of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) and even arahantship.

When Brahmanical practices are emphasised, it is usually in order to criticise them. For example, in the *Setaketu Jātaka* (377), the Bodhisatta is a *purohita* who advises a king not to support a group of Brahmanical ascetics headed by Setaketu, who are said to practise ‘false asceticism’ (*micchātapa*, *J* 3.236.1).⁵ Involving practices such as lying on thorn-beds and reciting *mantras*, such asceticism is not only condemned in its own right, but also portrayed as a sham for obtaining alms.⁶ Furthermore, the Bodhisatta devalues the *Vedas* by stating that their only benefit is to bring fame (*kitti*) and that only moral conduct (*carāṇa*) can dispel suffering (vv.4ff.). This anti-Brahmanical stance is accentuated by the

⁵ In the *Nāṅguttha Jātaka* (144) and *Santhava Jātaka* (162), *micchātapa* refers to the self-mortification practices of the Ājīvikas in the *paccuppannavatthu* and to fire-worship in the *atītavatthu*. In the *Lomahaṃsa Jātaka* (94), the Bodhisatta himself is a naked ascetic in the Ājīvika tradition, who practises self-mortification but realises that it is worthless. The way in which the Buddhist tradition thus absorbs this form of asceticism and at the same time ultimately rejects it is mirrored by the *suttas*’ treatment of Gotama’s period of self-mortification before he became enlightened.

⁶ See also the *Biḷāra Jātaka* (128) and *Aggika Jātaka* (129), in which a jackal pretends to be a Brahmanical ascetic practising austerities in order to lull a group of rats into a false sense of security and eat them. For the theme of the hypocritical ascetic, see also the *Godha Jātaka* (138), *Ādiccupaṭṭhāna Jātaka* (175), *Romaka Jātaka* (277) and *Godha Jātaka* (325).

fact that Setaketu (Śvetaketu) is an important brahmin in the *Upaniṣads* and *Mbh*. Indeed, Śvetaketu's father Uddālaka – himself a prominent figure in Brahmanical literature – is also attacked for his 'false asceticism' in the related story the *Uddālaka Jātaka* (487), in which the Bodhisatta asserts that a brahmin can only become perfect (*kevalī*) through eliminating desire and not through Vedic ritual, and that a person's birth is irrelevant to their attainment of *parinibbāna* (vv.6ff.).⁷ Not only that, the story satirises Uddālaka by having his name refer to the fact that he was conceived under an Uddāla tree by a slave-girl who had an illicit affair with the Bodhisatta (*J* 4.298).⁸ This is in marked contrast to *Mbh* 1.3.20ff., in which Uddālaka is asked by his teacher to close a breach in a dike, which he does by laying down his body; when his teacher summons him, Uddālaka stands up and the breach opens again, which gives him the name Uddālaka ('he who splits open').

However, although Brahmanical ascetics are sometimes criticised in this way, it is usually non-ascetic brahmins who are the focus of attack in the *Jātakas*. This attitude is summarised by the *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka* (495), which describes ten types of brahmin that are unworthy of a gift. These include traders, hunters, fortune-tellers, and officiants at the *soma*-sacrifice: generally brahmins whose occupations are depicted as either servile or based upon materialistic desire. The true brahmin is the renunciate who is free from desire (vv.2f., 46f.). Brahmins are also frequently portrayed by the *Jātakas* as greedy and cruel, a prime example being Jūjaka in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), who in many ways represents a caricature of Brahmanical wickedness. Several stories also condemn Vedic sacrifice, especially animal sacrifice.⁹ One of the most complex texts of this kind is the *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (543), which not only criticises fire worship and animal sacrifice, but also attacks the notion of Brahmā as a creator God.

⁷ See the *Naṅguṭṭha Jātaka* (144) and *Santhava Jātaka* (162) for stories in which the worship of fire by Brahmanical ascetics is ridiculed.

⁸ Similarly, in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (*D* 1.87ff.) the Buddha forces a brahmin to admit that he is born from a slave-girl, thereby subverting the very basis of the brahmin's pride.

⁹ See for example the *Matakabhatta Jātaka* (18), *Āyacitabhatta Jātaka* (19), *Dummedha Jātaka* (50), *Mahāsupina Jātaka* (77), *Lohakumbhi Jātaka* (314), *Aṭṭhasadda Jātaka* (418) and *Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka* (542).

The story that I have chosen to analyse in this chapter is the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), which is particularly polemical against Brahmanical values, especially the notion that a person's purity is determined by their birth. My examination has three basic concerns. Firstly, I explore the techniques that the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* uses to subvert Brahmanical values. Secondly, I argue that the methods employed by the Bodhisatta to 'tame' brahmins relate him in various ways to the figure of the 'wrathful ascetic' in epic literature. Thirdly, I investigate how the text negotiates a balance between this form of 'taming' and the ethic of renunciation and non-violence.

Although my main focus is on the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (*MJ*) itself, I also refer to other Pāli versions of the *Mātaṅga* story. Canonical texts include: *Cp* 88f. (section 2.7); *M* 1.371ff.; and *Sn* vv.137-139. Commentarial texts include: *Pj II* 184ff.; *Cp-a* 152ff.; *Ps* 3.69ff.; and *Dhp-a* 1.39ff.¹⁰ In addition, a Jain variant of the story is found in *Uttarajjhāyana* 12 (*Utt* 12), where many verses closely parallel those in the *MJ*.¹¹

3.2 The plot of the *Mātaṅga Jātaka*

3.2.1 The story of the present

The subject heading of the *MJ* is 'the hereditary king Udena' (*Udenavaṃsarājānaṃ*, *J* 4.375.3f.). In the *paccuppannavatthu*, king Udena is depicted playing with his courtesans in a park after a week of drinking. When Udena falls asleep, his courtesans wander around the park and chance upon the monk Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, who is sitting there 'in the happiness of the attainment of (meditative) fruits' (*phalasaṃpattisukhena*, *J* 4.375.9). Piṇḍolabhāradvāja takes this opportunity to teach the women the *dhamma*. However,

¹⁰ The *Pj II* and *Cp-a* seem to derive from a similar recension, although the former is more elaborate. The *Ps* has several differences in content and language from the *MJ* as well as from *Pj II* and *Cp-a*. It cites 16 of the *MJ*'s 24 verses, whereas *Pj II* and *Cp-a* only cite the first verse in what may be intended as a type of shorthand for the rest of the verses. See also von Hinüber 1998:134f.

¹¹ Charpentier 1909, Alsdorf 1962.

when Udena wakes up and realises where his courtesans have gone, he takes offence and orders a basket of ants to be tipped over the monk. Piṇḍolabhāradvāja escapes by flying to the Buddha's *gandhakuṭi*. This then leads the Buddha to narrate a story about the past, in which he tells us that Udena 'also previously harassed ascetics' (*pabbajite [...] pubbe pi vihethay' eva, J 4.375.23*).

3.2.2 The story of the past

The *atītavatthu* can be divided into four sections (numbered accordingly below). The third section is particularly disconnected from the rest of the narrative, which may indicate that it once formed a separate story. This is supported by *Cp* 88f., which describes Mātaṅga's exploits solely in terms of the third section, and by *Dhp-a* 1.39ff., which also represents a self-contained version of the third section. In addition, the events described in *Utt* 12 parallel only the second section of the *MJ*.

3.2.2.1 Section one

The Bodhisatta is born as an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*) called Mātaṅga, or Wise Mātaṅga (Mātaṅgapaṇḍita), in a *caṇḍāla* village outside the city of Bārāṇasī.¹² At the city gate he encounters a merchant's daughter called Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā, who is on her way to a park with an entourage. When she sees Mātaṅga, she immediately washes her eyes with scented water in order to rid herself of the polluting sight. Her companions are so irate that their festive day has been spoiled that they beat Mātaṅga senseless. After he has recovered, Mātaṅga responds to this injustice by lying in front of Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā's house and refusing to move until she is handed over to him in marriage. After a week, he wins her and makes her carry him home piggy-back.

¹² Other stories in which the Bodhisatta is born as a *caṇḍāla* include the *Satadhamma Jātaka* (179), *Chavaka Jātaka* (309), *Amba Jātaka* (474) and *Cittasambhūta Jātaka* (498).

Mātaṅga now decides to become an ascetic in the Himālayas in order to cultivate supernatural powers so that he may provide his wife with what he calls ‘the highest gain and glory’ (*lābhagga-yasagga*, *J* 4.376.28). After attaining these powers, he tells Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā to proclaim that her husband is none other than Brahmā. Imitating Brahmā’s appearance, Mātaṅga breaks through the moon in a blaze of light and flies down to the *caṇḍāla* village, whereupon a procession of Brahmā devotees worship Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā’s house. Meanwhile Mātaṅga makes Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā pregnant by rubbing his thumb against her navel, after which he returns to the Himālayas. The devotees then take Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā from the village to the centre of the city, where they build her an ornate pavilion.

3.2.2.2 Section two

In the second and largest section of the story, Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā rears a son called Maṇḍavya, so named because he is born in the pavilion (*maṇḍapa*). Maṇḍavya receives teachings in the *Vedas* and, as a young adult, provides 16,000 brahmins with food. Mātaṅga perceives his son’s donations through his supernatural power and judges them to be misguided. He therefore decides to leave the Himālayas in order to interrupt these wayward acts of piety. Donning ragged robes, he descends to beg at the gate where Maṇḍavya is giving donations. A debate ensues in which Maṇḍavya and Mātaṅga argue over what constitutes a worthy object of donation or ‘good fields (of merit)’ (*khettāni supesalāni*, vv.5, 7). Maṇḍavya favours those born as brahmins whereas Mātaṅga favours the virtuous. Frustrated at Mātaṅga’s insolence, Maṇḍavya orders him to be thrashed. Mātaṅga flies away to safety while warning Maṇḍavya of the vanity of insulting an ascetic. Demons now punish Maṇḍavya and his fellow brahmins for this insult. Described in gory detail, the torture consists of twisting their necks, rolling their eyes and stretching their limbs stiff, with the result that they are likened to the dead (*yathā matassa*, v.11). The punishment only stops when Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā begs Mātaṅga for forgiveness,

whereupon he cures Maṇḍavya and the brahmins by giving them his leftovers to eat. Deprived of their brahminhood by this polluting meal, the brahmins flee to Mejjha. The section concludes with Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā telling her son to give to *arahants* (v.23), thereby reaffirming Mātaṅga's definition of the good field of merit.

3.2.2.3 Section three

In another contest Mātaṅga humbles a Brahmanical ascetic called Jātimanta. Mātaṅga drops a chewed toothstick into a river, which becomes caught in the brahmin's matted hair while he is bathing. Disgusted by this pollution, Jātimanta orders Mātaṅga to live downstream from him, whereupon Mātaṅga makes the toothstick go upstream and once again stick in the brahmin's hair. Jātimanta curses the Bodhisatta with having his head split open if he does not move within a week. Mātaṅga prevents this by stopping the sun from rising on the seventh day. He tells the distraught inhabitants of the area that he will only release the sun when Jātimanta falls at his feet. They accordingly drag the brahmin before Mātaṅga, who now explains that, if he releases the sun, the brahmin's head will split in seven. A ruse is therefore concocted to counteract this but also to provide a final humiliating touch. A ball of clay is placed on Jātimanta's head as he is led into the river. At sunrise the clay ball splits open instead of his head, and Jātimanta sinks into the water disgraced.

3.2.2.4 Section four

Mātaṅga now continues his rampage by going to Mejjha in order to tame the brahmins who have fled there. The brahmins fear for their safety and persuade the king that Mātaṅga is a magician (*māyākāra*) who should be imprisoned. Soldiers are dispatched and

kill Mātaṅga while he is eating.¹³ The narrator puts the Bodhisatta's death down to bad *kamma*.¹⁴ Gods then destroy the kingdom of Mejjha.

3.2.3 The *samodhāna*

Finally, the *MJ* is wrapped up by the *samodhāna*, in which the Buddha states that Udena was Maṇḍavya and that he was Mātaṅga.

3.3 Piṇḍolabhāradvāja and Mātaṅga

The *paccuppannavatthu* foreshadows several important themes in the *atītavatthu*. The most obvious theme is the immoral act of insulting an ascetic. However, Piṇḍolabhāradvāja also acts as an appropriate precursor to Mātaṅga in other ways. Several stories surround this character, many of which have been examined by John Strong (1979).¹⁵ The fact that Piṇḍolabhāradvāja is himself a brahmin who converted to Buddhism (hence the Brahmanical name Bhāradvāja) makes him particularly suitable for introducing the *MJ*, which is so concerned with taming brahmins.¹⁶ In addition, Mātaṅga's desire to establish a correct system of gift-donation (*dāna*) is paralleled by the fact that Piṇḍolabhāradvāja is often concerned with receiving alms. Indeed his very name Piṇḍola is construed by Strong (1979:61, 66) as meaning either 'alms go-getter' (from *piṇḍa* and *ulati*) or 'storehouse of alms' (from *piṇḍa* and *ālaya*).

The most famous story about Piṇḍolabhāradvāja regards his use of supernatural power (especially his ability to fly), which he displays in front of the laity in order to defeat heretics.¹⁷ The Buddha reprimands him for such an improper display, but despite this there

¹³ *Ps* 3.88 asserts that the king himself kills Mātaṅga.

¹⁴ This bad *kamma* derives from having been a *koṇḍadamaka* (*J* 4.389.23). The meaning of this phrase is uncertain. Rouse (1895:244) translates it as 'mongoose-tamer', taking the word as being *kuṇḍa*-. However, neither the *PED* nor *DP* supports Rouse's translation; *DP* states that *kuṇḍa* can mean 'iguana'.

¹⁵ See also Ray 1994:151ff.

¹⁶ See *ThG-a* II, 4 and Strong 1979:59. In this story he is born as the son of Udena's chief priest (*purohita*).

¹⁷ *Vin* 2.110ff.; *Dhp-a* 3.201ff.; Strong 1979:71ff.

is, as Strong points out (1979:71), ‘a real ambivalence in the Buddhist attitude towards the use of magical powers’. Although disparaged by some strands of thought, they are also viewed as ‘real tools in defeating heretics as well as in overcoming the doubts of the crowd’ (Strong *ibid.*). Like Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, Mātaṅga also uses magical power to defeat heretics. Moreover, it is perhaps the very controversy surrounding Piṇḍolabhāradvāja that makes him an appropriate narrative precursor to Mātaṅga and his extreme methods of taming.

It is also noteworthy that the setting of the *paccuppannavatthu* closely parallels a section in the *Khantivāda Jātaka* (313).¹⁸ Such stock settings are common in oral literature, but they often provide effective techniques for accentuating divergences between narratives as well as similarities. Thus, although the two texts agree in condemning those who insult ascetics, they differ in that the king in the *Khantivāda Jātaka* mutilates and eventually kills the ascetic Khantivāda, who is praised for his forbearance (*khanti*). Piṇḍolabhāradvāja on the other hand avoids any such eventuality by flying away from the basket of ants which Udena orders to be tipped over him. Piṇḍolabhāradvāja’s active response therefore provides a contrast to the passive form of asceticism espoused by Khantivāda. In addition, the comic detail of the ants may also be significant. Ant hills are often associated with ascetic austerity,¹⁹ and Piṇḍolabhāradvāja’s decision to flee the scene may express an aversion to the kind of self-mortification suggested by Khantivāda’s gory displays of patience.²⁰

This contrast in attitudes is paralleled by Mātaṅga and his Jain counterpart in *Utt* 12. Whereas the Jain ascetic – like Khantivāda – allows himself to be physically assaulted, Mātaṅga – like Piṇḍolabhāradvāja – flies away from his aggressors. Nor is this surprising

¹⁸ Compare the events in *J* 3.40 with those in *J* 4.375.

¹⁹ See for example *Mbh* 3.122, in which Cyavana turns into an anthill because of his stationary ascetic posture.

²⁰ According to *Pj II* 515, Piṇḍolabhāradvāja flies away out of compassion (*anukampamāno*), so that the king will not go to hell for his actions.

given the importance of self-mortification within Jainism.²¹ That this detail may reflect different ascetic outlooks is also suggested by the fact that Mātaṅga is only injured when his ascetic powers are either undeveloped or weakened; this occurs at the beginning of the story when his meditative attainments are still unacquired and at the end of the story when he is killed because of bad *kamma*.

3.4 Humiliating brahmins

3.4.1 Weddings and piggy-backs

The *MJ* is conspicuous for the way in which it degrades Brahmanical values, particularly those centred around the notion that purity is determined by birth. At the bottom of this natal hierarchy lies the outcaste, whose impurity pollutes those above him with a mere look. Thus Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā washes her eyes upon seeing Mātaṅga.²² This initial narrative event, combined with the fact that the Bodhisatta is heralded as a *caṇḍāla* through his name (Mātaṅga), which itself means ‘outcaste’, immediately sets the context for an investigation into Brahmanical notions of purity.

In accord with the typological bent of the *Jātakas*, Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā’s name also has symbolic meaning. It can be translated as ‘she who has seen the auspicious’,²³ and signals the transformation that she herself is about to undergo in terms of what she sees as (true) auspice. What she thought was inauspicious to see (Mātaṅga) turns out to be in fact auspicious. Mātaṅga’s main tactic for humiliating Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā’s pride involves subjecting her to experiences that are offensive to her purity values. Not only does she have to endure the humiliation of marrying an outcaste but, to rub salt in the wound, he

²¹ That is not to imply that notions of self-mortification are absent from Buddhist stories. As well as the *Khantivāda Jātaka*, see for example the *Sivi Jātaka* (499).

²² On sight as a polluting or purifying faculty, see Gonda 1969.

²³ *Pj II* 185 explains her name thus: ‘It is said that she did not want to see an ugly sight because she thought it was inauspicious, and therefore she acquired the name Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā.’ *sā kira dussañhitarūpaṃ amaṅgalan ti daṭṭhuṃ na icchati, ten’ assā Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā tv eva saṃkhā udapādi*. Compare *Cp-a* 153, *Ps* 3.69f. and *J* 4.390.21ff.

makes her carry him piggy-back to his *caṇḍāla* village. By depicting Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā as a brahmin and not a merchant's daughter, the same events are portrayed in an even more extreme manner by the *Cp-a* and *Pj II*.²⁴

It is interesting to observe how the marriage motif is formulated in different ways in the *MJ* and *Utt* 12. In *Utt* 12, Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā's counterpart is a princess called Bhadrā ('Auspicious'),²⁵ who informs us that her father previously offered her as a bride to the ascetic outcaste of the story, but that the ascetic refused (vv.21f.). In *Utt* 12, therefore, the marriage motif serves to accentuate the ascetic hero's chastity and self-restraint. In the *MJ*, by contrast, Mātaṅga purposefully seeks to marry Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā in order to humiliate her and to satisfy his sense of justice.

3.4.2 Impersonating Brahmā

Brahmanical sentiments are derided further when Mātaṅga impersonates Brahmā in order to show his wife that her supposedly shameful marriage actually results in the highest Brahmanical glory – namely, the status of being Brahmā's wife. In a passage replete with subversive satire, Brahmā is demeaned by a *caṇḍāla* taking on his form and his devotees are ridiculed by the fact that their worship, which is described in ironic detail, is based on nothing more than a fraud created by a magical apparition.²⁶ Not only is an outcaste's wife worshipped by Brahmā devotees but under false pretexts she is also led from the *caṇḍāla* village, which lies outside the city because of its impurity, into the centre of Benares, which represents the city's core. Such a reversal of purity values is startlingly expressed in

²⁴ The *Ps* version on the other hand agrees with the *MJ* in describing her as a merchant's daughter. It also extends the piggy-back scene, which the composers of the *Cp-a* and *Pj II* omit. That this omission is deliberate is shown by their comment that 'Jātaka narrators say that he climbed onto her back'; *piṭṭhiṃ āropetvā ti jātakabhāṇakā* (*Pj II* 186), *tassā piṭṭhiṃ abhirūhivā ti jātakabhāṇakā vadanti* (*Cp-a* 154).

²⁵ It is possible that Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā is a paraphrase of Bhadrā. In this case it may mean something like 'auspicious to look at'. See *Cp-a* 152, in which Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā is said to be 'as beautiful as a goddess in her appearance' (*devakaññā viya rūpena dassanīyā*). Mātaṅga by contrast is said to be ugly (*ibid.*).

²⁶ In *Pj II* 188 the devotees even offer their daughters as brides to 'Mahābrahmā' and believe that Brahmā was previously disguised as an outcaste but then returned in his true form.

Mātaṅga’s speech to Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā, in which conventional impurities are transformed into some of the highest manifestations of purity. He tells her (J 4.378.9ff.):

The water used for washing your feet will be the consecration water for kings over the whole of Jambudīpa. Your bathing water will be the elixir of immortality. Those who sprinkle it on their heads will always be free from disease and will avoid bad luck. Those who come to honour you and place their heads on your footstool will give a thousand coins, and those who come to honour you and stand within your hearing will give a hundred coins, and those who come to honour you and stand within your sight will give one coin. Be diligent.²⁷

The typically Buddhist language at the end of this speech (‘Be diligent’) authorises Mātaṅga’s subversion of Brahmanical values as defiantly Buddhist.

3.4.3 The brahmin outcaste

Mātaṅga’s next victim is his son, Maṅḍavya, whose sponsorship of brahmins spurs the ascetic to interrupt what he considers to be deluded piety. He resolves (J 4.379.18f.): ‘On this very day, I will go and tame this boy and return after making him give a gift that bears great fruit.’²⁸ His actions are therefore sparked by a desire to install – or, following the taming metaphor, enforce – what he sees as the correct hierarchy in gift-donation. This is achieved by means of a contest, starting with an exchange of verses in which each opponent provides his own interpretation of the good field of merit. On one side of the debate Maṅḍavya insults Mātaṅga with being a vagabond unfit for offerings (*adakkhiṇeyyo*, v.1) and defines good fields of merit as ‘brahmins who possess birth and mantras’ (v.5).²⁹ On the other side, Mātaṅga uses the inclusivist argument that one should give to all religious groups (v.4).³⁰ However, this switches to an exclusivist argument

²⁷ *tava pādadhovanaudakaṃ sakala-Jambudīpe rājūnaṃ abhiseka-udakaṃ bhavissati, nahānodakaṃ pana te amatosadhaṃ bhavissati, ye naṃ sīse āsiṅcissanti te sabbadā rogehi muccissanti kālakañṇiṃ parivajjessanti, tava pādapiṭhe sīsaṃ ṭhapetvā vandantā sahaṣsaṃ dassanti, tathā savanaṭṭhāne ṭhatvā vandantā satamaṃ dassanti, cakkhupathe ṭhatvā vandantā ekaṃ kahāpaṇaṃ datvā vandissanti, appamattā hohī ti.*

²⁸ *ajj’ eva gantvā māṇavaṃ dametvā yattha dīnaṃ mahapphalaṃ hoti tattha dānaṃ dāpetvā āgamissāmī ti.*

²⁹ *ye brāhmaṇā jātimantūpapannā tānidha khettāni supesalāni ti //*

³⁰ ‘They sow their seed on both low and high ground, hoping for fruit in marshy fields. Give your donation in this belief, and you shall certainly find worthy recipients.’

(after all, almsfood is finite) whereby the good field of merit constitutes those who are devoid of qualities such as greed, hatred and delusion, the three Buddhist root evils. He states (vv.6f.):

Pride in birth and excessive conceit, greed, hatred, arrogance and delusion; all those who have these bad qualities are not good fields. Pride in birth and excessive conceit, greed, hatred, arrogance and delusion; all those who do not have these bad qualities are good fields.³¹

External qualities such as birth are therefore disparaged by the true hierarchy propounded by Mātaṅga, in which internal qualities such as virtue define the true field of merit.³² This basic polarity between the external and internal, appearance and reality, is also discerned in v.22, which states that ‘matted hair and antelope skin cannot protect the foolish’.³³ Similarly, in v.18, Mātaṅga tells Dīṭṭhamaṅgalikā that her son has learnt only the letter of the *Vedas* without understanding their inner meaning: ‘Intoxicated with pride in the *Vedas*, your son [Maṇḍavya] does not know the meaning of the *Vedas* although he has learnt them.’³⁴ Mātaṅga, it is implied, does understand the true meaning of the *Vedas* and is therefore a true brahmin, despite his *caṇḍāla* birth.

This notion of a true brahmin has already appeared in a satirical context when Mātaṅga imitates Brahmā. It is also found in several other Theravādin texts, including the *Vasala Sutta* (*Sn* 21ff.),³⁵ which in fact refers to a version of the Mātaṅga story (vv.137-9) as an

*thale ca ninne ca vapanti bījam anūpakhetṭe phalam āsasānā /
etāya saddhāya dadāhi dānam appeva ārādhaye dakkhiṇeyye //4//*

³¹ *jātīmodo ca atimānitā ca lobho ca doso ca mado ca mohō /
ete aguṇā yesu va santi sabbe tānīdha khetṭāni apesalāni //6//
jātīmodo ca atimānitā ca lobho ca doso ca mado ca mohō /
ete aguṇā yesu na santi sabbe tānīdha khetṭāni supesalāni ti //7//*

³² Birth as a *caṇḍāla* can however signify bad *kamma*. In order to counter this implication, *Pj II* explains the Bodhisatta’s birth as skill-in-means: ‘They say that, in order to benefit sentient beings through various means, the Great Man was in the past born in a *caṇḍāla* family that lived as outcastes.’ *atīte kira Mahāpuriso tena tenūpāyena sattahitaṃ karonto sopākajīvike caṇḍālakule uppajji* (*Pj II* 184). *Sopāka* literally means ‘dog-cooker’ but is often simply a synonym for *caṇḍāla*.

³³ *na jaṭājīnan tāyati appapaññaṃ //*

This refers, of course, to Brahmanical ascetic dress.

³⁴ *putto ca te vedamadena matto atthaṃ na jānāti adhicca vede //*

³⁵ For example, the *Vasala Sutta* states (*Sn* v.136): ‘Not by birth is one an outcaste, not by birth is one a brahmin. By action one is an outcaste, by action a brahmin.’

example of its thesis that unethical action defines the true outcaste, just as ethical action defines the true brahmin.³⁶ The passage states (vv.137-9):

Know it also by this example that I show here. There was an outcaste *caṇḍāla* well-known as Mātaṅga. That Mātaṅga attained the highest glory, which is very hard to gain. Many *kṣatriyas* and brahmins came to serve him. He set out upon the great stainless path which leads to the gods, and he reached the Brahmaloaka after he had cleansed himself of desire and passion. His birth did not hinder him from being reborn in the Brahmaloaka.³⁷

Similarly, texts such as the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (D 1.127ff.) define true sacrifice (*yañña*) in terms of Buddhist practices such as gift-donation (*dāna*) and meditation. Central to these assertions is the language of authenticity, which texts such as the *MJ* invest themselves with by claiming that their reinterpretation of Brahmanical terms is simply a return to their original meaning.³⁸ Mātaṅga does not so much deny that it is a brahmin's right or duty (*svadharmā*) to receive offerings as challenge what it is that makes a brahmin. Indeed, because Mātaṅga *is* a true brahmin he therefore deserves to receive offerings.³⁹ The structure of *svadharmā* has been maintained but its meaning has been changed.

3.4.4 Leftovers

*na jaccā vasalo hoti, na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo /
kammanā vasalo hoti, kammanā hoti brāhmaṇo //136//*

See also the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (D 1.111ff.), *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* (Sn 115ff., vv.594-656), *Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta* (Sn 50ff., vv.284-315) and *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka* (495).

³⁶ For this concept in epic literature, see *Mbh* 3.173ff., in which Yudhiṣṭhira saves Bhīma from a snake by answering that virtuous qualities such as truthfulness and self-restraint make a true brahmin rather than birth. See also the story of Tulādhāra and Jājali in *Mbh* 12.253ff.

³⁷ *tad aminā pi jānātha, yathā me 'daṃ nidassanaṃ /
caṇḍālaputto sopāko Mātaṅgo iti vissuto //137//
so yasaṃ paramaṃ patto Mātaṅgo yaṃ sudullabhaṃ /
āgañchum tass' upaṭṭhānaṃ khattiyā brāhmaṇā bahū //138//
so devayānaṃ āruyha, virajam so mahāpathaṃ /
kāmarāgaṃ virājetvā brahmalokūpago ahu /
na naṃ jāti nivāresi brahmalokūpapattiyā //139//*

³⁸ On Buddhist reinterpretations of Brahmanism, see Gombrich 1996: especially 27-95. Cf. Heesterman 1985:42, who argues that, in both Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical renunciate circles, 'the question that occupies religious thought does not appear to be the affirmation or rejection of sacrifice, but rather what is the true sacrifice', and that such redefinitions should therefore not be seen 'as a merely propagandistic device' by Buddhists against Brahmanism.

³⁹ Contrary to Maṇḍavya's assertion (v.1) that he is *adakkhineyyo* ('not worthy of offerings'), *dakkhinā* being a Brahmanical term (Sanskrit: *dakṣiṇā*) for the sacrificial fee.

When Maṇḍavya orders Mātaṅga to be beaten, he simply corroborates the Bodhisatta's claim to be a true brahmin, since Maṇḍavya's own violent actions show him to be a true outcaste as defined by the new hierarchy.⁴⁰ This notion has been elaborated by Colette Caillat (1994, especially 262ff.), who argues that the demon's torture of the brahmins reflects rules found in *Manu* and the *Arthasāstra* concerning the punishment a low-caste individual should receive for abusing a brahmin.⁴¹ Brahmins thus become newly defined as outcastes, and outcastes as brahmins. However, the climax of Mātaṅga's triumph occurs when he 'exorcises' the demons by giving the brahmins his leftovers as medicine. In another shocking reversal of Brahmanical values, brahmins are cured by one of the most polluting substances in Brahmanical thought: the leftovers of an outcaste.

Charles Malamoud (1996) has shown that leftover food (*ucchiṣṭa*, *śeṣa* or *vighasa*) is generally considered by Brahmanical thought to be polluting and therefore only to be eaten by inferior beings.⁴² Mātaṅga's offering therefore expresses his superiority over the brahmins in the new hierarchy. However, Malamoud also shows that leftovers are considered to be desirable if they are sacrificial remains (1996:21):

So long as they remain external to the hierarchical processes of the sacrifice, food scraps are objects of repulsion. But when they become the remains of a *yajña*, they become the edible food *par excellence*, and play an essential role in the continuity of the *dharma*.

Moreover, since food given to a brahmin guest or teacher is often likened to a sacrificial oblation, the leftovers of such an offering are also considered to be sacrificial remains and

⁴⁰ Whereas Mātaṅga is praised for his wisdom (*bhūripaṇṇa*, v.19) and virtue, Maṇḍavya is described as ignorant (*appapaṇṇo*, v.20; *bālo*, *parittapaṇṇo*, v.21), intoxicated (*matto*, v.18), deluded (*sammuyhat'eva*, v.19) angry and mentally corrupt (*duṭṭhacittam kupitam*, v.16). In v.21 the brahmins who receive donations from Maṇḍavya have 'great faults' (*mahakkasāvesu*), are 'impure in action' (*kiliṭṭhakammesu*) and 'unrestrained' (*asaṇṇātesu*). According to the *PED* and *DP kasāva*, translated above as 'fault', can refer to the three root evils (see *s.v.*).

Caillat 1994:259 similarly points out that in *Utt* 12 '[the brahmins'] behaviour is, and can be shown to be, the very negation of *real* brahmanhood'.

⁴¹ Her arguments are specifically related to *Utt* 12 but they can be extended to the *MJ*.

⁴² Malamoud's main sources are *Dharmasūtra* and *Dharmasāstra* texts.

hence desirable.⁴³ Mātaṅga's leftovers may allude to this notion of sacrificial remains.⁴⁴ Just as in Brahmanical texts gifts to brahmins are frequently equated with sacrifice,⁴⁵ so also in Buddhist texts sacrificial terms such as *yañña* or *dakkhiṇā* are often used as synonyms for donations (*dāna*).⁴⁶ Mātaṅga's leftovers are an extension of this sacrificial imagery, accentuating the notion that a gift to a true brahmin such as Mātaṅga is a true sacrifice and his leftovers are therefore true sacrificial remains.

The Jain version of our story, *Utt* 12, also refers to sacrificial remains as part of a wider concern with redefining true brahminhood. In *Utt* 12 the *caṇḍāla* ascetic does not, as in the *MJ*, request alms from a lay donor but descends into a sacrificial enclosure and asks the brahmins to give him 'the rest of the sacrificial remains' (*sesāvasesaṃ*, v.10). The attainment of this sacrificial food at the end of the story signifies the true brahmin nature of the Jain ascetic, and verses follow (vv.40-47) in which Jain practices are equated with Vedic sacrifice. For example, he states (v.44):

Penance is my fire; life my fireplace; right exertion is my sacrificial ladle; the body the dried cowdung; *karma* is my fuel; self-control, right exertion, and tranquillity are the oblations, praised by the sages, which I offer.⁴⁷

The events of *Utt* 12 seem to be inversely echoed by the *MJ*. Whereas in *Utt* 12 the outcaste receives sacrificial leftovers, in the *MJ* the outcaste provides them. Mātaṅga's leftovers are humorously called the 'medicine of ambrosia' (*amatosadham*, *J* 4.386.10,17), and it may be no coincidence that in *Manu* 3.285 the remains of a sacrifice

⁴³ Malamoud 1996:12ff. On the issue of leftovers, see also Olivelle 2000:475 (footnote to *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 1.3.27).

⁴⁴ In v.20 the leftovers are called *uttiṭṭhapiṇḍaṃ*, which the word-commentary glosses as *ucchiṭṭhakaṃ piṇḍaṃ ti* (*J* 4.386.16). The prose (*J* 4.386.18) uses *ucchiṭṭha-*.

⁴⁵ See for example *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 1.3.43-1.4.4. *Manu* 1.86 describes *dāna* as an inferior substitute for sacrifice, appropriate to our degenerate times.

⁴⁶ See Freiberger 1998, especially 42-46. These concepts are discussed in greater detail in §4.3.4.

⁴⁷ Translations are taken from Jacobi 1895.

*tavo jōi jīvo jōiṭhāṇaṃ jogā suyā sarīraṃ kārisaṃgaṃ /
kammehā saṃjamaṃjogasanti homaṃ huṇāmi isiṇaṃ pasatthaṃ //44//*

are also called ‘ambrosia’ (*amṛta*, Pāli: *amata*).⁴⁸ Purified through the ‘true sacrifice’ of Mātaṅga’s virtuous conduct, a *caṇḍāla*’s leftovers have become likened to sacrificial food.

3.4.5 Toothsticks and matted hair

Mātaṅga’s competition with the brahmin ascetic Jātimanta is similarly satirical. Jātimanta literally means ‘Of Good Birth’, the very quality that Maṇḍavya thought defined the true field of merit but which has been shown to be inferior.⁴⁹ His name therefore anticipates the collapse of authority that he experiences during his contest with Mātaṅga, in which his curse is belittled by the degrading scene of a clay ball splitting on his head. As in the previous sections, the Bodhisatta’s methods of conversion are intended to ridicule Brahmanical obsessions with purity. Thus he purposefully pollutes Jātimanta by lodging a chewed toothstick in his matted hair during the ritually sensitive act of bathing.

This event is paralleled by an episode (*J* 5.134f.) in the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522), in which various characters throw chewed toothsticks into an ascetic’s matted hair in the belief that they can discard their ‘bad luck’ (*kali*) onto the ascetic, who is himself considered to be ‘inauspicious’ or ‘unlucky’ (*kālakaṇṇī*).⁵⁰ Their beliefs are however undermined when their consequent good luck is shown to be due to unrelated causes. Not only that: because they have insulted an ascetic, their kingdom is destroyed by angry gods. Both the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* and the *MJ* therefore employ the toothstick motif in order to satirise ritualistic notions of purity. However, whereas in the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* the brahmin ascetic is the hero of the story, in the *MJ* he is the butt of the hero’s joke. What the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* disparages, albeit humorously, as an aggressive and immoral insult against an ascetic, the *MJ* sanctions through its attack on brahmins.

⁴⁸ Cited by Malamoud 1996:15.

⁴⁹ Jātimanta could also possibly mean ‘birth and mantras’ and may therefore be a pun alluding to v.5, in which Maṇḍavya praises brahmins ‘who possess birth and mantras’ (*jātimantūpapannā*).

⁵⁰ When the toothstick lodges in his hair, Jātimanta also describes it as ‘bad luck’ (*kālakaṇṇī*, *J* 4.388.14). See also *J* 4.378.12, where Mātaṅga predicts that people will avoid *kālakaṇṇī* by worshipping *Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā*.

The next section will explore in greater detail the aggressive connotations of Mātaṅga's taming methods and how they are legitimised.

3.5 Wrathful asceticism

The metaphor of taming is used several times in reference to Mātaṅga,⁵¹ and it is in this context that the *MJ* revels in Mātaṅga's antagonism and abounds in violent imagery. Indeed, Mātaṅga shares many qualities with Sakka, who – as we saw in §2.6 – often plays the role of tamer. Like Mātaṅga, Sakka descends into the realm of ordinary humans in order to convert those who have strayed from the *dhamma*, and a similar emphasis is placed on the ingenuity of Sakka's plans, which often involve disguise – one recalls Mātaṅga's impersonation of Brahmā – and humiliation. Both characters are also able to impregnate women by rubbing their navels.⁵² In addition, the extreme nature of some of Sakka's methods, which can include deceit and violence, also serves to colour Mātaṅga's own tactics. Just as Sakka's actions are often excused as being proportionate to the immoral character of his victims – 'the end justifies the means' – so, as we shall see, the *MJ* often divests Mātaṅga of moral culpability by portraying his deeds as a response to the wickedness of those he seeks to tame.

In this section, I argue that Mātaṅga's role as tamer is accentuated by his being linked to the figure of the 'wrathful ascetic' in epic literature. As discussed in §2.3, such wrathful ascetics are often characterised by their cultivation of *tapas*, which they use to destroy enemies in an angry rage. That, in texts other than *MJ*, Mātaṅga may actually be such a wrathful ascetic is suggested by the *Upāli Sutta* (*M* 1.371ff.). In this canonical story the

⁵¹ Thus Mātaṅga resolves to tame Maṅḍavya (*māṇavaṃ dametvā*, *J* 4.379.18) and the brahmins who move to Mejjha (*te damessāmi ti*, *J* 4.389.14) after they have been shamed (*lajjitā*, *J* 4.388.5). He also resolves to 'break the pride' of Jātimanta (*etassa mānaṃ bhīndissāmi ti*, *J* 4.388.9f.), who is described as tamed (*taṃ dametvā*, *J* 4.389.12).

⁵² For example, *J* 5.281. This motif is also found in epic literature; for example in *Mbh* 3.291.23ff., Sūrya enters Pṛthā through yogic power and touches her navel without corrupting her virginity.

Buddha teaches a Jain layman called Upāli that mental *kamma* is more important than bodily or verbal *kamma* by explaining that an ascetic can reduce cities to ash by the power of his hatred (*M* 1.377f.). He asks Upāli (*M* 1.378), ‘Have you heard how the wildernesses of Daṇḍaka, Kāliṅga, Mejjha and Mātaṅga became wildernesses?’ To which Upāli replies, ‘Venerable One, I have heard that the wildernesses of Daṇḍaka, Kāliṅga, Mejjha and Mātaṅga became wildernesses because of the mental hatred of ascetics.’⁵³ No further detail is given about these wildernesses, but the passage appears to allude to a version of the Mātaṅga story. This is supported by the commentary (*Ps* 3.69ff) to the *Upāli Sutta*, which explains this passage by citing a version of the *MJ*. In addition, an elliptical and isolated verse (v.24) in the *MJ* also seems to refer to the Mejjha wilderness mentioned above.⁵⁴ The verse is corrupt, but two emendations produce the following translation: ‘When the famous Mātaṅga was killed, Mejjha was destroyed with all its people and then became the Mejjha wilderness.’⁵⁵

However, if the *Upāli Sutta* refers to the same ascetic as the *MJ*, then in the *MJ* Mātaṅga has certainly been modified to suit a different context. The most significant change is that he is said to be devoid of anger. This conceptual shift from wrathful ascetic to non-violent ascetic is neatly encapsulated by the *Cp*. In this text the Buddha recalls his life as Mātaṅga thus (2.7.4.): ‘If I had been angry with him [Jātīmanta] and if I had not protected my virtue, I would have made him like ash with a mere look’.⁵⁶ The motif of burning someone

⁵³ *kinti te sutam kena tam Daṇḍakāraññaṃ Kāliṅgāraññaṃ Mejjhāraññaṃ Mātaṅgāraññaṃ araññaṃ araññabhūtan ti. sutam m’ etam bhante isīnaṃ manopadosena tam Daṇḍakāraññaṃ Kāliṅgāraññaṃ Mejjhāraññaṃ Mātaṅgāraññaṃ araññaṃ araññabhūtan ti.*

⁵⁴ The *Upāli Sutta*’s reference to a ‘Mātaṅga wilderness’ may simply be due to the association of Mejjha with Mātaṅga, as is suggested by the commentary: ‘It is called the “Mātaṅga wilderness” because of the ascetic Mātaṅga.’ *Mātaṅgassa pana isino vasena tadeva Mātaṅgāraññaṃ ti vuttam* (*Ps* 3.88).

⁵⁵ The PTS edition reads:

*upahañnamāne Mejjhā Mātaṅgasmim yasassine /
sapārisajjo ucchinno Mejjharaññaṃ tadā ahū ti //24//*

I would emend *Mejjhā* to *Mejjho* and *Mejjharaññaṃ* to *Mejjhāraññaṃ*. Both readings are given by *Ps* 3.88 and by a parallel verse in the *Samkicca Jātaka* (530), v.28. The verse echoes the *Upāli Sutta* phrase: *Mejjhāraññaṃ Mātaṅgāraññaṃ araññaṃ araññabhūtan ti* (*M* 1.378).

⁵⁶ *yadi ’ham tassa kuppeyyam yadi sīlam na gopaye /
oloketvān’ ahan tassa kareyyam chārikaṃ viya //4//*

Similarly in *Utt* 12 the brahmins are warned not to injure the Jain ascetic in case he consumes them with his fire (v.23) or reduces the world to ashes (v.28).

with one's eyes is commonplace in wrathful ascetic stories. However the point of the verse is to praise Mātaṅga's self-restraint and to emphasise that, although he could have destroyed Jātīmanta, he did not do so but refrained from anger.⁵⁷

Several motifs connected with wrathful asceticism are reflected in the *MJ* and are squared in various ways with Mātaṅga's claims to non-violence. Issues explored through this tension include the conflict between non-violence and the need to restrain wrongdoers,⁵⁸ and the problem of how ascetics are to engage with society while maintaining their renunciate status. The motifs I particularly intend to examine are:

- 1) **As recompense for being insulted, an ascetic wins a woman (often a princess) by threatening her father with his power.**⁵⁹

This is illustrated by the story of the ascetic Cyavana (*Mbh* 3.122ff.), who is (accidentally) insulted by a princess and harasses her father until she is handed over to him. Yavakrīta (*Mbh* 3.135ff.) is another proud and wrathful ascetic, who forces the daughter-in-law of the ascetic Raibhya to sleep with him (3.137). She gives in to Yavakrīta's demands because she fears his curse.

- 2) **An ascetic sends demons to possess or harass someone who has insulted him.**

See the Cyavana story (*Mbh* 3.122ff.) or the story of Yavakrīta (*Mbh* 3.135ff., especially 137).

- 3) **Ascetics compete in a contest often involving curses.**

⁵⁷ This verse sparks off a debate in *Cp-a* 158f. against the 'sophist' (*viṭaṇḍavādīn*) who argues that supernatural powers acquired through meditation (*bhāvanāmayā iddhi*) can be used for violent ends.

⁵⁸ A similar issue is debated in *Md* 1.184ff.

⁵⁹ O'Flaherty (1973:47) describes this as 'the classical behaviour of the ascetic who falls in love with a princess, is rejected by her father, and threatens to burn the king with his *tapas* unless he is given the princess in marriage'.

See the Yavakṛita story (*Mbh* 3.135ff.) or the battles between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha (*Mbh* 1.164ff., and *Rām* 1.50ff.). Viśvāmitra in many ways represents an archetypal picture of the wrathful ascetic.⁶⁰ Like Mātāṅga, Viśvāmitra is noted for his antagonistic attitude towards brahmins; indeed he threatens to subvert Brahmanical notions of purity by placing the *caṇḍāla* Triśaṅku in the heavens in his bodily form (see pp.43f.).⁶¹ Furthermore, just as Mātāṅga is portrayed as a ‘true brahmin’ because of his virtue, so Viśvāmitra finally attains brahminhood through the cultivation of non-violence, despite being a *kṣatriya*.

4) An ascetic is begged for pardon by his humbled opponent.

This is expressed in the Cyavana story, in which a king is forced to beg the ascetic for forgiveness (*Mbh* 3.122.21). Cyavana only gives his pardon when the king hands over his daughter in marriage. Compare also the importance of the notion of refuge in the story of Viśvāmitra (see p.43).

Some of the strategies used by the *MJ* to modify these motifs are as follows.

1) The first motif is paralleled by Mātāṅga’s resolve to win Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā after he has been insulted by her entourage. In epic stories, the wrathful ascetic is often motivated by sexual desire.⁶² Mātāṅga’s goal, however, is to humiliate his aggressors and the *MJ* is keen to emphasise Mātāṅga’s lack of lust by stressing that he has no sexual intercourse with Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā but makes her conceive immaculately. The force he uses to attain her is non-violent, albeit coercive. Thus we are told that Mātāṅga succeeds purely through the

⁶⁰ See also *Mbh* 1.65f.

⁶¹ This subversive quality is also alluded to in *Mbh* 3.135, in which Yavakṛita attempts to master the *Vedas* through austerities rather than through a *guru*; he is dissuaded from this course of action by Indra. Similarly, Cyavana makes the Aśvins into *soma*-recipients against the will of the gods (*Mbh* 3.122ff.).

⁶² See for example Cyavana (*Mbh* 3.122ff.).

power of his resolution (*J* 4.376.20f.).⁶³ Foreshadowing modern sit-down demonstrations, he simply lies at the door of Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā's house until he attains his goal.⁶⁴ The *Cp-a* (154) supplies a reason as to why Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā's family feels forced to concede: 'Apparently this was the custom in that region at that time: if a *caṇḍāla* lies down and dies at someone's house, then the inhabitants of 49 houses along with that house become *caṇḍālas*.'⁶⁵ Her humiliating demise is therefore satirised as being solely due to her family's puritanical concerns. The Bodhisatta himself is portrayed as a mere catalyst sparking off the self-destructive effect of Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā's Brahmanical concepts.

2) In the second motif wrathful ascetics send demons to harass their enemies, which seems to be paralleled in the *MJ* by the torture suffered by the brahmins. However, when Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā asks, 'Who did this to my son?' (v.11, 15),⁶⁶ Mātaṅga replies, 'Both then and now I have no hatred in my mind. Your son, intoxicated with pride in the *Vedas*, does not know the true meaning of the *Vedas* although he has learnt them' (v.18).⁶⁷ Mātaṅga therefore legitimises the violence by arguing that Maṇḍavya is to blame for the consequences of his actions. He himself not only claims to be unsullied by anger but also denies any direct association with the torture, which he argues is entirely due to the demons: 'There are powerful demons with fine bodies who follow sages. These demons did this to your son when they noticed that he was angry and had a corrupt mind' (v.16).⁶⁸

⁶³ 'The resolution of Bodhisattas always succeeds.' *Bodhisattānam adhiṭṭhānam nāma samijjhati*.

⁶⁴ This is associated with a practice described in *Dharmaśāstra* texts, whereby a creditor fasts in front of a debtor's house in order to enforce debt repayment. See Kane 1946:438ff. I am grateful to Patrick Olivelle for this observation. In addition, in *Rām* 2.103.17, Rāma states that this type of coercion is suitable only for brahmins and not for *kṣatriyas*. Mātaṅga's adoption of this practice may therefore further signify his true brahmin nature.

⁶⁵ *tadā kira ayam tasmim dese dhammo: yassa gharadvāre evaṃ nippajjivā caṇḍālo marati tena gharena saddhiṃ sattasattagharavāsino caṇḍālā hontī ti.*

⁶⁶ *ko me imaṃ puttam akāsi evan ti //*

⁶⁷ *tad eva hī etarahī ca mayhaṃ manopadoso mama n' atthi koci /
putto ca te vedamadena matto atthaṃ na jānāti adhicca vede //18//*

⁶⁸ *yakkhā have santi mahānubhāvā anvāgatā isayo sādthurūpā /
te duṭṭhacittaṃ kupitaṃ viditvā yakkhā hi te puttam akamsu evaṃ //16//*

Compare the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522), in which an ascetic who has been insulted by a king says (*J* 5.134f.), 'Sir, there is no hatred in my mind. But the gods are angry, and on the seventh day from now the whole kingdom will be destroyed' (literally, 'become no kingdom'). *āvuso mayhaṃ manopadoso n'atthi. devatā pana kupitā, ito sattame divase sakalaraṭṭham araṭṭhaṃ bhavissati*. This passage is closely connected with the final event of the *MJ*; see §3.2.2.4. See also the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (*D* 1.87ff.) for a similar scenario.

This is echoed by the rest of the narrative, which distances Mātaṅga from the violence by portraying the demons' torture as an independent decision (*J* 4.383.10ff.).

Without reducing the demons to personifications of abstract doctrine, their torture also echoes the karmic punishment of hell which, according to stories such as the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522), awaits those who insult an ascetic.⁶⁹ Therefore, far from undermining Mātaṅga's virtue, the torture in the *MJ* corroborates it with divine and karmic authority. The wrathful ascetic motif is both paralleled and at the same time subverted, since wrath has been supplanted by non-violent virtue, which is heralded as the true power.

The manner in which the *MJ* sanctions the torture by diverting responsibility for it from Mātaṅga to the demons can be elucidated by referring back to the *Upāli Sutta* mentioned above. In the *Upāli Sutta*, the kingdom of Mejjha is transformed into a wilderness 'because of the mental hatred of ascetics' (*isīnaṃ manopadosenā ti*). By contrast, in the *MJ*, it is the gods who destroy Mejjha in punishment for Mātaṅga's death and the ascetic himself is said to be devoid of anger. In the version known to the *Upāli Sutta* it seems that Mātaṅga actually is a wrathful ascetic. This has been modified by the *MJ*, which transfers the ascetic's anger to demons, thereby divesting Mātaṅga of any fault while still allowing his opponents to be punished with violence.

The switch from ascetic wrath to demonic/divine wrath is shown by the commentary to the *Upāli Sutta*, which sanitises the phrase 'because of the mental hatred of ascetics' (*isīnaṃ manopadosenā ti*) by recasting it in the following fashion (*Ps* 3.60):

'Because of the mental hatred of ascetics' means the mental hatred performed **on behalf** of the ascetics. Those kingdoms were destroyed by deities who were unable to control their mental hatred. However, worldly people think that ascetics caused

⁶⁹ See especially vv.20-25 of the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka*.

the destruction through their mental hate. Therefore one should understand this use of language merely in terms of such conventional talk.⁷⁰

3) The third motif, which involves curses, is also reformulated and ethicised. Here Jātīmanta threatens Mātaṅga with the common curse of head-splitting.⁷¹ To counteract the curse, Mātaṅga acts like a wrathful ascetic by manipulating the elements (in this case stopping the sunrise). However he refrains from using direct violence and, just as in the *Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā* episode, events are managed so that the brahmin is defeated by his own pride. The self-destructive nature of Jātīmanta's anger is conveyed by his curse rebounding upon itself.⁷² Thus it is Jātīmanta's head which risks being split instead of Mātaṅga's. This is expressed by Mātaṅga's words in *Cp*: 'By design, I released him from the curse which he angrily made against me with a corrupt mind and which fell on his very own head' (2.7.5).⁷³ The *Cp-a* (160) extends this and explains the backfiring curse in terms of *kamma*:

Because this fierce speech was made against the Mahāsatta in the form of a curse which slanders a noble one, [...] it had to be experienced in this very life because of the special nature of the Mahāsatta as its field and because of the fierce quality of the intention.⁷⁴

According to the *Cp-a*, *kamma*, one might say, curses Jātīmanta for his curse. Once again Mātaṅga is exonerated of any violence and his virtue is corroborated, since Jātīmanta's punishment reflects the fact that he has cursed a virtuous ascetic.⁷⁵ Mātaṅga gains all the

⁷⁰ *isīnaṃ manopadosenā ti isīnaṃ atthāya katena manopadosena. taṃ manopadosaṃ asahamānāhi devatāhi tāni raṭṭhāni vināsītāni. lokikā pana isayo maṇaṃ padosetvā vināsayimsū ti maññanti, tasmā imasmim lokavāde ṭhatvā va imaṃ vādāropanaṃ katan ti vedittabbam.*

⁷¹ The curse is meant to be fulfilled after seven days. This notion is also found in *Sn* v.983.

⁷² The notion of a curse backfiring when made against a virtuous person is also found in epic literature. See for example *Mbh* 3.55.10: 'Kali, he who would want to curse Nala, who is so virtuous, would foolishly curse and kill himself by his own action.'

*ātmānaṃ sa śapen mūḍho hanyāc cātmānaṃ ātmanā /
evamguṇaṃ nalaṃ yo vai kāmāyec chapituṃ kale //10//*

⁷³ *yaṃ so tadā maṃ abhisapi kupīto duṭṭhamānaṃ /
tass' eva matthake nīpati yogena taṃ pamocayim //5//*

⁷⁴ *yaṃ hi tena [...] Mahāsatte ariyūpavāda-kammaṃ abhisāpa-saṅkhātāṃ pharusa-vacanaṃ payuttaṃ, taṃ Mahāsattassa khetta-visesa-bhāvato tassa ca ajjhāsaya-pharusatāya diṭṭhadhammavedaniyaṃ hutvā [...]*

⁷⁵ Compare *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* (537) v.72, in which a man-eater fears to eat the Bodhisatta because his head may split in seven. Similarly in *Sambulā Jātaka* (519) v.15, Sakka warns a demon that his head will split in seven if he eats the virtuous Sambulā.

glory associated with winning an ascetic contest but achieves his victory while remaining non-violent.⁷⁶

The Jātīmanta scene may be derived from a version similar to that found in *Dhp-a* 1.39ff., which itself constitutes a *jātaka*. In this humorous tale the Bodhisatta is a Brahmanical ascetic called Nārada who accidentally steps on the matted hair of a fellow ascetic called Devala. Devala curses the Bodhisatta with the following verse (*Dhp-a* 1.41): ‘When the sun rises, dispelling darkness with its thousand rays and hundred flames, may your head split in seven’ (v.1).⁷⁷ Using exactly the same words as his opponent, the Bodhisatta replies with a counter curse (v.2). The story now continues in a similar fashion to the *MJ*: Devala is forced (in this case by a king) to beg for the Bodhisatta’s pardon and his head is saved from splitting by the substitution of a clay ball. In the *Dhp-a* story, therefore, wrathful ascetics curse one another. The *MJ* appears to have modified this by introducing the notion of a backfiring curse. In fact, a similar modification is found in the *Dhp-a* itself, which places a section of prose before Nārada’s verse in order to reinterpret the meaning of his curse. Nārada states (*Dhp-a* 1.41): ‘Will you curse me, master, even though I tell you that I am innocent? May he who is at fault have his head split open and not he who is innocent.’⁷⁸ By making moral culpability the criterion for head-splitting, the curse becomes ethicised and as such ceases to be a curse. In the *MJ* a similar process of ethicisation occurs but there the Bodhisatta does not, as in the *Dhp-a*, pronounce a curse but his opponent’s curse simply rebounds.

In its stereotyped portrayal of brahmins the *MJ* depicts violence as a natural characteristic of Brahmanical pride. Confronted with the aggression of Jātīmanta and others, Mātāṅga subverts the wrathfulness of his opponents from within. Rather than contradicting

⁷⁶ For a variation on this theme, see the *Seyya Jātaka* (282), in which the Bodhisatta cultivates *mettā* for a king who has usurped his throne. As a result of the power of the Bodhisatta’s *mettā*, the usurper’s body is tormented with a burning pain (*J* 2.401).

⁷⁷ *sahassaraṃsī satatejo suriyo tamavinodano /
pātodayante suriye muddhā te phalatu sattadhā ti //*

⁷⁸ *ācariya maḃhaṃ doso n’ atthī ti mama vadantass’ eva tumhe abhisapissatha. yassa doso atthi tassa phalatu mā niddosassā ti.*

Mātaṅga’s discourses on virtue, the wrathful ascetic motifs can be seen as mediums through which the *MJ* asserts non-violence as the true power and thereby legitimates its polemic about the true field of merit. A true victor wins his contests through virtue and, in a paradox enjoyed by many texts, it is non-violence that wins the battle.⁷⁹

4) The role of the fourth motif in the *MJ* will be investigated in the next section.

3.6 Taming and devotion

Although the wrathful ascetic motifs are modified in the ways described above, Mātaṅga’s background manipulation of events problematizes the extent to which he is actually removed from the violence. This is ascertained by Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā. She appears wary of Mātaṅga’s argument that the demons are responsible for the torture, saying, ‘So demons did this to my son. Then don’t *you*, in your chastity, be angry with me. Full of grief for my son, I have gone to your feet for refuge, O monk’ (v.17).⁸⁰ Her main concern is Mātaṅga.⁸¹ Even after Mātaṅga’s retort that he feels no anger and her son is to blame (v.18), she still reminds him that ‘Wise men do not derive their strength from anger’ (v.19).⁸²

Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā’s searching question as to who is responsible for her son’s suffering (vv.11, 15) is therefore left ambiguously unanswered. Mātaṅga blames Maṇḍavya and the demons, but spectators of the scene tell Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā that Mātaṅga is behind the torture (v.12) and the audience itself knows that he intended the events from the start

⁷⁹ See p.54 for a discussion of the *Kulāvaka Jātaka* (31), in which Sakka’s non-violent action ironically causes an army of *asuras* to be routed. Martial imagery is thus not abandoned but is reinterpreted by being fused with the ethics of non-violence. See also *S* 1.162f. on ‘winning the battle which is hard to win’ (*saṃgāmaṃ jeti dujjayaṃ*) through not feeling anger. For a parallel notion in epic literature, compare *Rām* 1.64, in which the wrathful ascetic Viśvāmitra attains brahminhood by abandoning anger.

⁸⁰ *yakkhā ca me puttāṃ akāṃsu evaṃ, tvaṃ ñeva me mā kuddho brahmacāri / tumhe va pāde saraṇaṃ gatāsmi anvāgatā puttāsokena bhikkhu //17//*

⁸¹ This is further conveyed by the commentary (*J* 4.386.1ff.) to her verse: ‘If demons have done this in anger, then let them do so. A deity can be satisfied by a mere spoonful of water and so I am not afraid of them. But only don’t *you* be angry with my son.’ *sace yakkhā kupitā evaṃ akāṃsu karontu, devatā nāma pāṇiya-ulūka-mattena santappetuṃ sakkā, tasmāhaṃ tesāṃ na bhāyāmi, kevalaṃ tvaṃ ñeva me puttassa mā kujjhi.*

⁸² *na paṇḍitā kodhabalā bhavanti ti.*

when he resolved to tame his son. His control over the demons is shown by the fact that he provides the ‘medicine’ by which the torture is stopped. Moreover, he only intervenes in the torture after *Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā* has taken refuge in him (v.17) and begged him for forgiveness (v.19).⁸³ Similarly, *Jātimanta* is only released from his rebounding curse when he falls at *Mātaṅga*’s feet.

The *MJ* therefore depicts several simultaneous levels of agency and responsibility, prominent among which is the role played by the Bodhisatta’s pardon, which corresponds to the fourth of our wrathful ascetic motifs.⁸⁴ Devotional themes such as this are often overlooked in studies of Theravāda Buddhism, but in the context of taming, which stresses the transformation of an inferior by a superior, they are of central significance. Such an emphasis on ‘forgiveness’ could conflict with the doctrine of *kamma*. However, as discussed in §2.5.3, this need not be the case if the *MJ* views *kamma* as merely one among many types of causation, as is suggested by the story’s multi-layered model of agency. Of course, since *kamma* can be used to explain any particular occurrence, the *MJ*’s events *could* be glossed solely in terms of *kamma*. Indeed, this is the approach taken by the *Cp-a* (160), which attempts to incorporate forgiveness into the framework of *kamma* by treating *Jātimanta*’s release as an example of *ahosi-kamma*, whereby the merit produced by *Jātimanta*’s request for forgiveness wipes away the demerit of his curse (literally making it *ahosi*, a ‘has-been’).⁸⁵ However, this explanation should not obscure the actual narrative of the *MJ*, part of whose concern is to portray the Bodhisatta in a charismatic role, whereby refuge is offered to supplicants in the intimate context of a devotional relationship.⁸⁶

⁸³ ‘In your great wisdom, pardon this one fault’ (v.19). *ekāparādhaṃ khama bhūripañña*.

⁸⁴ See also *A* 4.373ff., in which the Buddha tells *Sāriputta* that he should pardon a monk for slandering him or the monk’s head will split in seven; *Sāriputta* only agrees to do so if the monk asks him for forgiveness.

⁸⁵ ‘If he had not asked the Mahāsatta for forgiveness, it [the bad *kamma* caused by his curse] would have come to fruition on the seventh day. But when the Mahāsatta was asked for forgiveness, it reached the state of non-fruition which comes from the condition of *ahosi kamma*, because the fruit of his action had been warded off.’ *sace so Mahāsattaṃ na khamāpesi sattame divase vipaccana-sabhāvaṃ jātaṃ. khamāpite pana Mahāsatte payoga-sampatti-paṭibāhitattā avipāka-dhammatam āpajji ahosi-kamma-bhāvato*.

⁸⁶ In the role of saviour *Mātaṅga* is also associated with healing metaphors, albeit tinged with satire. Thus *Maṇḍavya* is said to be cured (*arogo*, v.20) by the medicine of leftovers.

3.7 Taming from the outside

Mātaṅga's active engagement with ordinary human society marks him out from other, more passive ascetics such as Khantivāda in the *Khantivāda Jātaka* (313), which, as mentioned above (§3.3), is linked to the *MJ*. In the *Khantivāda Jātaka*, the hero's reaction is not to react. A paradigm of patience, he simply endures the torture inflicted upon him, and the king's punishment is left to the natural processes of *kamma*, whereby he is swallowed up by the earth and taken into hell. By contrast the *MJ*'s ascetic hero takes a more interventionist approach to wrongdoing. The opposition between the two ascetics can be described through the word *khanti*, a quality heralded by Khantivāda's very name. While its basic meaning is 'patience' or 'endurance', in a more active sense it can also mean 'pardon' or 'forgiveness'. Khantivāda's *khanti* is of the former type and has the internal significance of patient suffering. Mātaṅga's *khanti* is externally directed and serves to signify his active relationship with other people.⁸⁷

In many ways Mātaṅga's engagement with the ordinary world bridges the renunciate and social realms. As well as seeking to enforce a correct system of *dāna* and to tame brahmins, Mātaṅga's involvement in society is also expressed by his initial motivation for entering the forest, which is not to attain enlightenment but to provide glory for his lay wife through the acquisition of ascetic power. He states: 'I will be able to make her attain the highest gain and glory only if I become an ascetic and not otherwise' (*J* 4.376.28f).⁸⁸ Asceticism is therefore here accorded not only a social but also a domestic significance. On the other hand, Mātaṅga's active relationship with ordinary human society is simultaneously qualified by a degree of disassociation from it. Indeed his ability to 'tame' others stems from the powers he cultivates through renunciation. Always ambiguously

⁸⁷ That is not to say that Khantivāda has no relationship with others. On the contrary he depends upon others to test his patience.

⁸⁸ *aham eva taṃ lābhaggayasaggappattaṃ karonto pabbajitvā va kātuṃ sakhissāmi na itarathā ti.* In *Ps* 3.74, Mātaṅga considers it part of a Bodhisatta's vocation to give Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā fame: 'If the daughter of a great family does not attain great glory because of me, then I am not the disciple of the 24 Buddhas.' *mahākulassa dhītā sace maṃ nissāya mahantaṃ yasaṃ na pāpuṇāti na nāmaṃ ahaṃ catuvīsaniyā Buddhānaṃ antevāsiko.*

removed from the narrative action, it is from behind the scenes that Mātaṅga must manipulate the events.

This ‘outsider’ quality links Mātaṅga the ascetic with Mātaṅga the outcaste. Just as Mātaṅga the ascetic begs for alms, so, according to *Pj II* 185, Mātaṅga the outcaste earns his living by entering the city and begging for food (*bhikkhā*, a common term for alms).⁸⁹ Similarly, Mātaṅga’s ascetic abode in the forest is paralleled by the location of his *caṇḍāla* village outside the city walls. Just as *caṇḍālas* serve as an oppositional category within the caste system, so asceticism defines itself through its opposition to ordinary human society.

However, whereas the *caṇḍāla* village is portrayed in the *MJ*’s narrative geography with a specific location, Mātaṅga’s ascetic abode in the Himālayas has a translocal quality that remains, in the *MJ* at least, largely separate from the narrative action. Flying wherever his mission takes him, Mātaṅga refuses to be situated. This difficulty in tracing him is experienced by Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā, who has to seek him out after he flies away from the scene of the demons’ torture. When she asks where Mātaṅga has gone, she is answered: ‘The wise ascetic has gone into the sky, like a full-moon in the middle of its journey’ (v.14).⁹⁰ It is only because Mātaṅga makes his otherwise invisible footprints visible that Diṭṭhamaṅgalikā is able to find him – though it is significant that he *does* make them visible. This elusiveness in terms of space reflects his elusiveness in terms of identity. Defying fixed definition, Mātaṅga straddles several categories at once. He is both wrathful ascetic and non-violent ascetic, husband and renunciate, father and celibate, brahmin and outcaste, god-like in his affinity with Sakka and demon-like in his ragged appearance.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *anto-nagare bhikkhaṃ caritvā jīvikāṃ kappeti.*

⁹⁰ *vehāsayaṃ agamā bhūripaṇṇo pathaddhuno pannarase va cando /*

⁹¹ He is described by Maṇḍavya as a ‘dust-goblin’ (*paṃsupisācako*, v.1) and is said to be ‘ugly as a dirt-demon’ (*evaṃvirūpo saṃkārayakkhasadiso*, *J* 4.379.25).

Mātaṅga's multiple identities reflect the manner in which he manipulates the conventional world in order to further his own ends. Thus he disguises himself as Brahmā, plays with symbols such as 'sacrifice', and tames others through their own weaknesses. Conventions are turned upside-down as he sends toothsticks up-stream and transforms *caṇḍālas* into brahmins, literally revolutionising ('turning around') the ordinary world. Apart from the conclusion in which even he is undone by *kamma*, Mātaṅga is the only character in the *MJ* who has full understanding of the narrative events. Indeed he directs them with an omniscience shared only by the audience. All the other characters of the *MJ* are restricted by the limitations of their individual passions.

No wonder then that Mātaṅga is described as a 'magician' (*māyākāro*, *J* 4.389.17). Indeed it is his tendency to play tricks with the world that makes some of his actions seem disturbing. This is evoked by his ambiguous implication in demonic violence. Similarly, when he lodges a toothstick in Jātimanta's hair, he commits an insult which in the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* is punishable by death. This act appears to be sanctioned by Mātaṅga's virtuous intentions – as opposed to the deluded intentions of those in the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* – but the contrast between what Mātaṅga can do and what ordinary humans should not do also expresses a conflict between ascetic values and conventional morality.⁹² In its departure from conventional aspirations and its desire to produce the experience of 'shock' (*saṃvega*), asceticism naturally tends to subvert and disturb. Mātaṅga's role as a modified type of wrathful ascetic reflects this confrontational outlook, a quality which Steven Collins has described as asceticism's tendency to be 'offensive' (§1.6).

It is in this context that Mātaṅga warns Maṇḍavya of the sheer vanity of insulting an ascetic: 'If you slander an ascetic, you dig a mountain with your nails, chew iron with

⁹² Mātaṅga's transgressions of conventional morality are not however as extreme as those in some Mahāyāna texts, in which skill-in-means can even allow a Bodhisattva to kill. See Dayal 1932:248ff. and Williams 1989:143ff. Mātaṅga always maintains an ambiguous distance from any actual violence.

your teeth or burn up a fire' (v.9).⁹³ Couched in images of impossibility, the verse expresses Maṇḍavya's inability to fight against Mātaṅga's ascetic nature and highlights Mātaṅga's transcendence of the ordinary world. Enigmatic and elusive, Mātaṅga maintains an ambiguous relationship with society, but it is this very ambiguity that enables him to challenge and 'tame' ordinary humanity while renouncing it at the same time.

⁹³ *giriṅ nakhena khaṇasi ayo dantena khādasi /
jātavedaṃ padahasi yo isiṃ paribhāsati // 9//*

Chapter 4

Dāna: Individualist and relational giving

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how the ascetic hero of the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* is eager to dismantle what he sees as an incorrect system of religious donation (*dāna*). Coupled with his antagonism towards brahmins, it is Mātaṅga's concern with *dāna* which initially impels him to leave the forest and engage in society, employing forms of taming, which, I argued, connect him with the figure of the 'wrathful ascetic'. In the following chapters, I would like to focus more closely on the role of *dāna* in the *Jātakas*.

As an act which involves contact between a layperson (who gives) and an ascetic (who receives), *dāna* provides a fertile arena for examining the relationship between society and asceticism.¹ Indeed, as a form of renunciation, *dāna* is itself inherently bound up with asceticism and in many ways links the ascetic and social spheres; this is accentuated by the notion in the *suttas* that giving is the first step on the graduated path to *nibbāna*.² Renunciate values are further incorporated into the social sphere through the fact that the language of giving also informs several non-ascetic contexts in the *Jātakas* – for example, the theme of giving up one's life to one's family, lover, or king. The relationship between this social type of *dāna* and the type that is based on giving to an ascetic represents a central concern of the following chapters.

This chapter falls roughly into two halves. After a brief discussion of ways of categorising *dāna*, the first half discusses the role of the donor and the second half the recipient. Underlying this distinction is a concept central to this and later chapters: namely, the difference between giving in itself and giving *to* someone, what I call 'individualist' (or

¹ Strenski 1983:470: 'Giving defines the very relationship between the *saṅgha* and the laity.'

² E.g. *D* 1.110, 2.41, *M* 1.379f., *A* 4.186.

‘non-relational’) and ‘relational’ giving. I connect these forms of giving to two modes of Brahmanical sacrifice: the one individualist and internalised, the other relational and focussed outwards. Of particular interest to this chapter is the tension between the donor’s desire to give and the ascetic’s renunciate attitude towards receiving a gift. I argue that, while the ascetic recipient distances himself from a reciprocal exchange with the donor, an ambiguous degree of mutual transference still exists in their relationship.

My examination of *dāna* continues into Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 5 extends the application of *dāna* by exploring how it informs values such as love, friendship, and devotion. Chapters 6 and 7 concentrate on the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), the longest and most popular of the *Jātakas*. Considered to depict the life in which the Bodhisatta fulfils the perfection of giving, the *Vessantara Jātaka* encapsulates many of the themes discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In particular, I argue that the Bodhisatta’s individualist approach to *dāna* in the *Vessantara Jātaka* is significantly complemented by his wife’s relational form of self-sacrifice for him. It is her heroic love for her husband which finally enables the perfection of giving to be fulfilled, and the story’s conflict between ascetic and social values to be resolved. In Chapter 7, I attempt to elucidate these themes by comparing the *Vessantara Jātaka* with the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

4.2 Some exegetical analyses of *dāna*

4.2.1 *Pāramī*, *upapāramī*, and *paramatthapāramī*

Like all the ten perfections, the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramī*) is classified into three categories: ‘(basic) perfection’, *pāramī*; ‘intermediate perfection’, *upapāramī*; and ‘ultimate perfection’, *paramatthapāramī*. A total of thirty perfections, this classification is known to the *Bv* (6, vv.76f.) and is expounded in detail in *Cp-a* 320f. The category *pāramī* involves possessions, children or wives; *upapāramī* involves limbs or eyes;

paramatthapāramī involves life. The prototype for this hierarchy is the perfection of giving, whereby the Bodhisatta gives up his possessions, family, bodily parts or life.

Horner (1975:xiv, note 2) has pointed out that ‘these [threefold perfections] seem to correspond with the five great Sacrifices’. The five great sacrifices (*mahāpariccāga*) are, for example, mentioned in the commentary to the *Vessantara Jātaka* (*J* 6.552.32ff.), in which they are listed as the sacrifice of wealth (*dhanapariccāga*), the sacrifice of limbs (*aṅgapariccāga*), the sacrifice of life (*jīvitapariccāga*), the sacrifice of children (*puttapariccāga*), and the sacrifice of wives (*bhariyāpariccāga*). Here, however, the usual order of the *pariccāgas* has been changed. The giving of one’s wife and children is usually subsumed, together with the giving of possessions, within the category of *dāna-pāramī*, while the giving of one’s limbs and life is usually accorded the higher status of *dāna-upapāramī* and *dāna-paramatthapāramī* respectively. The commentator of the *Vessantara Jātaka* seems to have placed the giving of one’s wife and children at the top of the hierarchy in order to eulogise the Bodhisatta’s gift as an act suitable for the Buddha’s penultimate human birth.

Be that as it may, the importance of the *mahāpariccāgas* is expressed by a passage in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, in which the Bodhisatta asserts that it is impossible for him to become a Buddha unless he has performed all the various forms of giving. He states (*J* 6.553.1ff.): ‘There have been no previous Buddhas who have not performed these five great sacrifices. I am one of them. I cannot become a Buddha if I too do not give away my wife and children.’³ Similarly, in the *Jinālaṅkāra* (v.250), the *mahāpariccāgas* are listed as one of the qualities necessary for achieving Buddhahood.⁴

³ *ime pañca mahāpariccāge apariccajivā Buddhabhūtapubbā nāma n’ atthi. ahaṃ tesam abbhantaro. mayāpi puttadhūtarō adatvā na sakkā Buddhena bhavitun ti.*

⁴ Despite their importance, the *mahāpariccāgas* have often been overlooked in Buddhist studies, perhaps because they conflict with the rationalistic conception of Buddhism often favoured by Western scholarship. As a result, a whole genre of stories has largely been neglected. Indeed the theme of giving away one’s body, family, or life becomes almost a leitmotif in later texts such as the *Paññāsa Jātaka* collections or the *Dasabodhisattupattikathā*. For negative responses of Western academics to such themes, see Ohnuma 2000:43f.

Dāna therefore plays a crucial role in the concept of the Bodhisatta path. Not only is it the basis upon which the thirty perfections are categorised, it is also, of the ten *pāramīs*, the perfection that receives the most attention in the lengthy treatise found in the *Cp-a*. That said, the *Cp-a* considers the perfections to be linked in successive hierarchy, so that *dāna-pāramī* is perceived as a springboard for the nine other *pāramīs*, which are themselves considered to be more difficult to cultivate. It states (278): ‘Giving is stated at the beginning: (a) because it is common to all beings, since even ordinary people practise giving; (b) because it is the least fruitful; and (c) because it is the easiest to practise.’⁵ However, far from being a limiting factor, it is precisely this quality of being ‘common to all beings’ which makes *dāna* such a useful tool for examining multiple levels of renunciation in the *Jātakas*.

4.2.2 Internal and external gifts

In addition to the three types of perfection discussed above, the *Cp-a* (303ff.) classifies *dāna* into three further overarching categories: the giving of material objects (*āmisa-dāna*); the giving of security (*abhaya-dāna*); and the giving of the *dhamma* (*dhamma-dāna*). This threefold division appears to be an expansion of the twofold classification found in *A* 1.92 of *āmisa-cāga* and *dhamma-cāga*. In the *Cp-a* exegesis, the five *mahāpariccāgas* are a subset of *āmisa-dāna* (306f.). *Abhaya-dāna* is simply described as the giving of protection (*parittāṇa*) to beings frightened by kings, thieves, animals, or demons (*Cp-a* 305). *Dhamma-dāna* refers to teaching the doctrine (*ibid.*). These are again differentiated according to whether they are internal or external. The division is at times unclear,⁶ but it seems that material objects such as food and garlands are grouped together

⁵ *pacurañanesu pi pavattiyā sabbasattasādhāraṇattā appaphalattā sukarattā ca ādimhi dānaṃ vuttaṃ.*

In this thesis, I have used Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation (1978) of the *Cp-a*’s treatise on the perfections.

⁶ At first the *Cp-a* states (303) that the external gift is tenfold: food, drink, garments, vehicles, garlands, scents, unguents, bedding, dwellings, and lamps. This does not include wives and children. However, wives and children are referred to in another explanation of the external gift (304), and the gift of the body or limbs is described in a section on the internal gift (305). All of the *mahāpariccāgas* are described in the section on the material gift (306ff.).

with wives and children in being external; on the other hand, bodily parts and life are grouped together with security and the *dhamma* in being internal. The structure envisaged by the *Cp-a* therefore appears to be this:

	<u><i>Āmisadāna</i></u>	<u><i>Abhayadāna</i></u>	<u><i>Dhammadāna</i></u>
<u>INTERNAL</u>	<i>Jīvitapariccāga</i> <i>Aṅgapariccāga</i>	✓	✓
<u>EXTERNAL</u>	<i>Bhariyāpariccāga</i> <i>Puttapariccāga</i> <i>Dhanapariccāga</i>	X	X

(The vertical and horizontal columns are hierarchically arranged.)

The pattern thus moves hierarchically from donations of a gross and external nature to those of a subtle and internal nature, culminating in the gift of knowledge. This movement towards internalisation becomes particularly important when relating *dāna* to the notion of sacrifice (§4.3.4).

This contrast between material gifts (*āmisa-dāna*) and gifts of the *dhamma* (*dhammadāna*) mirrors Thomas Trautmann's analysis (1981:278) that gifts flow upwards towards superiors and downwards towards inferiors.⁷ According to Trautmann, bottom-up giving is characteristic of the 'religious gift' and its opposite is the commerce system of reciprocal exchange. In the *Cp-a* scheme, this corresponds to *āmisa-dāna*, the material gift given for example to a monk (or monastery, relic, etc.). Top-down giving, according to Trautmann,

⁷ Compare Gombrich (1971:290), who describes two types of giving in modern Sinhalese Buddhism: one motivated by respect and worship (a gift to the Saṅgha) and one motivated by pity (a gift to a beggar).

characterises the ‘lordly gift’ given by *kṣatriyas* to their subjects; its opposite is the service performed by a dependent for wages. From the viewpoint of the *kṣatriya*, the brahmin may be considered inferior because of the latter’s situation of dependency; top-down giving therefore conflicts with the model of bottom-up giving in which the brahmin is superior. However, in the *Cp-a* scheme, top-down giving is represented by *dhamma-dāna* (often said to be performed out of compassion – an attitude that immediately implies superiority), which is typically associated with monks. Here Trautmann’s quintessentially royal activity has been applied to the monastic domain, a theme that will be expanded upon later.

4.2.3 Giving and giving to

The distinction between top-down and bottom-up giving is also suggested by the gift-structure set forth in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* (*M* 3.253ff.).⁸ Here the purity of a gift – that is, the extent to which it bears good fruit – is determined by two criteria: the nature of the donor and the nature of the recipient (*M* 3.256f.). If the donor has virtue (*sīlavā*) and faith (*supasannacitta*), has attained the donation morally (*dhammena laddhā*) and believes in the karmic law that deeds bear fruit (*abhisaddahaṃ kammaphalaṃ uḷāraṃ*), then the gift is purified through the donor (*dāyakato visujjhati*), irrespective of the virtue of the recipient (*M* 3.257). This devaluation of the importance of the recipient can lead to a form of top-down giving. If on the other hand the giver has none of the above qualities and the recipient is virtuous, then the gift is said to be purified through the recipient (*paṭiggāhakato visujjhati, ibid.*); here the emphasis on the recipient creates an appropriate arena for bottom-up giving. A virtuous giver and a virtuous recipient result in a very fruitful gift, the epitome of which occurs when an *arahant* gives a gift to another *arahant*. The only time a gift is not fruitful is when both giver and recipient are unvirtuous.⁹

⁸ See also Brekke 1998:289, 303.

⁹ The *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* is ambiguous. It says that in this circumstance ‘the gift does not bear much fruit’ (*na taṃ dānaṃ vipulapphalan ti*), implying that it bears at least some fruit.

The *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* offers two useful modes for embarking on our analysis of *dāna* in the *Jātakas*. In the first mode, the intention of the giver is stressed, and in the second mode the quality of the recipient is stressed. There is, as we shall see, some overlap between these modes. However, for convenience, let us first turn to describing the donor and the motivation behind the gift.

4.3 The donor

4.3.1 Giving as renunciation

The *Cp-a* (281) states that ‘the perfection of giving has the characteristic of relinquishing; its function is to dispel greed for things that can be given away’.¹⁰ The Pāli for ‘relinquishing’ is *pariccāga*, an intensified form of *cāga* (Sanskrit: *tyāga*), which denotes an attitude of selfless abandonment on the part of the donor. The gift must be given willingly, not only during the act of giving but also before and afterwards.¹¹ For example, in the *Mayhaka Jātaka* (390) we are told (*J* 3.300.17f.): ‘Before giving, one should be happy; while giving, one should calm the mind; and after giving one should be content. This is the attainment of sacrifice.’¹² The avoidance of regret (*anutāpa*) after giving a gift is of particular concern. For example, in the *Dasañṇaka Jātaka* (401), a king gives his wife to a young brahmin for a week because the brahmin craves her. They elope and the king is consumed with grief. The Bodhisatta cures him by teaching the value of giving without regret (v.6): ‘It is harder for a man to give a gift, large or small, and feel no regret after giving. Everything else is easy. Know that, Māgadha.’¹³ The importance of giving

¹⁰ *pariccāgalakkhaṇā dānapāramī, deyyadhamme lobhaviddhamsanarasā.*

¹¹ See *A* 3.336f., in which giving is said to have six aspects, three to do with the intention of the giver (past, present, future) and three to do with the qualities of the recipient (whether *lobha*, *dosa*, or *moha*). Not all gifts are, of course, given with the correct attitude; *A* 4.236ff. lists eight different possible motivations behind gift-giving.

¹² *pubbe va dānā sumano dadaṃ cittaṃ pasādaye /
datvā attamano hoti, esā yaññassa sampadā //*

The verse is from *A* 3.337.

¹³ *dadeyya puriso dānaṃ appaṃ vā yadi vā baḥuṃ /
yo ca datvā nānutape taṃ dukkhataṃ tato /
sabb’ aññaṃ sukaraṃ thānaṃ, evaṃ jānāhi Māgadhā ti //6//*

with the correct mental attitude is further underlined by several passages which praise the donor's intention over the gift's material value.¹⁴ This is encapsulated by an aphorism in the *Duddada Jātaka* (180): 'Where there is a faithful thought, there is never a small gift' (*J* 2.85.28).¹⁵

As a form of *cāga*, giving is therefore fundamentally an act of renunciation. Indeed, it is often in the context of *dāna* that laypeople assume their most renunciate outlook, thus blurring the boundaries between the ascetic and social spheres. This is illustrated by the fact that an ascetic's abandonment of ordinary social life is – like a layman's gift of material objects – referred to in terms of *pariccāga*. For example, in the *Samkappa Jātaka* (251) we are told that the Bodhisatta 'left behind [*pariccajivā*] his weeping relatives, entered the Himālayas, and went forth on the ascetic path' (*J* 2.272.11f.).¹⁶ Indeed, in the *Akitti Jātaka* (480), the Bodhisatta's main virtuous act as an ascetic is to give almsfood to a beggar. We are told (*J* 4.236.26ff.):

Gifts should certainly be given both by householders and by ascetics. Wise men in the past became ascetics and lived in the forest, and even though they ate only *kāra* leaves soaked in water, without salt or spice, they gave as much as they were asked for by whatever beggars came along and lived self-sufficiently off their joy and happiness.¹⁷

Dāna is similarly portrayed as a form of asceticism in the *Visayha Jātaka* (340), in which the Bodhisatta's almsgiving causes Sakka to fear that he may be toppled from his divine position: this motif is usually applied to ascetics but has here been used of a layman in the context of giving (see pp.49ff.).

See also the *Akitti Jātaka* (480), in which Akitti asks Sakka for the boon of giving without regret (v.17).

¹⁴ For example, the *Khadiraṅgāra Jātaka* (40), especially *J* 1.228.7ff.; and the *Kuṇḍakapūva Jātaka* (109).

¹⁵ *cittapasāde sati appakaṃ nāma dānaṃ n' atthi ti.*

¹⁶ *assumukhaṃ ṇātisaṅghaṃ pariccajivā himavantam pavisitvā isipabbajjam pabbajivā* [...] The phrase *isipabbajjam pabbajivā* is found in the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* but not in the PTS edition.

¹⁷ *dānaṃ nāma gihināpi pabbajitenāpi dātabbam eva, porāṇakapaṇḍitā pabbajivā araṇṇe vasantā aloṇadhūpanaṃ udakamattasittaṃ kārapaṇṇaṃ khādamānāpi sampattayācakānaṃ yāvadatthaṃ datvā sayam pītisukhena yāpayimsū ti.*

That said, although *dāna* is based upon renunciate values, several *jātakas* juxtapose, for contrasting effect, the ascetic in the forest with the donor in the city. For example, the motif of two friends following the divergent paths of asceticism and donation-based kingship is illustrated by the *Darīmukha Jātaka* (378) and *Cittasambhūta Jātaka* (498). Similarly, the notion that an ascetic’s renunciation is more complete than a lay donor’s is expressed by the motif discussed on p.36 that ascetics are typically reborn in the Brahmaloaka and good laypeople in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. Nor does *dāna* always cause rebirth in the heavens. That this is a matter of debate is illustrated by the *Nimi Jātaka* (541). On the one hand this story describes the benefits that accrue from *dāna* (and other expressions of *sīla*), including rebirth in *vimānas* and the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. On the other hand it contains a passage which almost polemically extols asceticism (*brahmacariya*) above *dāna* (vv.6ff.).¹⁸ Thus, in response to king Nimi’s question as to which is more fruitful, *dāna* or *brahmacariya*, Sakka states (vv.8f.):

Through lower asceticism, one is reborn as a *khattiya*. Through medium asceticism, one is reborn as a god. Through the highest asceticism, one is completely purified. These states in which homeless ascetics are reborn are not easily attained by giving [*yācayoga*].¹⁹

According to these verses, therefore, even rebirth as a *kṣatriya* is difficult to attain through giving, let alone rebirth in the heavens.

However, although asceticism is thus accorded a higher position than giving, it is important to stress that they are not conceived as contradictory paths, but rather as different stages on the same continuum of renunciation – as is shown by the *Akitti Jātaka* and *Visayha Jātaka*. The lay donor has more attachments than the ascetic, who by contrast

¹⁸ This passage has a variant in the *Āditta Jātaka* (424), which states that the *dhammapada* (‘word of the teaching’?) is better than giving (vv.7f.). See also the commentarial discussion in *J* 3.473.32ff.

¹⁹ *hīnena brahmacariyena khattiye upapajjati /
majjhimena ca devattaṃ uttamaṃ visujjhati //8//
na h’ ete sulabhā kāyā yācayogena kenaci /
ye kāye upapajjanti anāgārā tapassino ti //9//*

has internalised the act of renunciation more fully. I use the word ‘internalised’ in order to recall the *Cp-a* scheme, in which gifts progress from being external to internal. Indeed, in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) it is the Bodhisatta’s giving of internal gifts which results in his exile from society and his adoption of the ascetic life. Similarly, in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), the Bodhisatta’s gift of his eyes to a brahmin results in his renouncing kingship and attaining the status of a ‘royal sage’ (*rājisi*, v.20). Internalised giving is also linked to the Brahmanical notion that an ascetic interiorises the sacrificial fires; the relevance of this connection will become apparent in §4.3.4, in which the sacrificial concepts underpinning *dāna* will be discussed.

4.3.2 The fruit of *dāna*

The act of giving is frequently accompanied by an expectation that the gift will bear good fruit, an attitude summarised by the *Sivi Jātaka*’s pithy statement (*J* 4.401.25): ‘He who gives what is dear, receives what is dear’ (*piyassa dātā piyaṃ labhatī ti*). Belief (*saddhā*) in *kamma* is, along with a calm mind (*supasannacitta*), one of the defining features of the virtuous (*sīlavā*) donor in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, who is said to ‘believe in the great karmic fruit [that comes from giving]’ (*abhisaddahaṃ kammaphalaṃ ulāraṃ*, *M* 3.257). This is even the case when the donor is an *arahant*, although the commentary is quick to point out that this does not undermine the *arahant*’s passionless state, since he believes in *kamma* but has no desire for existence (*Ps* 5.77).²⁰ Similarly, the *Āditta Jātaka* (424) speaks of ‘giving with belief’ (*saddahāno dadāti*, v.4), which is glossed by the commentary (*J* 3.473.18f.) as: ‘He gives with belief in the gift, *kamma* and its fruit’ (*deyyadhammaṃ kammañ ca phalañ ca saddahanto deti*).

²⁰ *tasmā arahatā arahato dinnadānam eva aggaṃ. kasmā? bhavālayassa bhavapattanāya abhāvato. nanu khīṇāsavo dānaphalaṃ na saddahatī ti? dānaphalaṃ saddahantā khīṇāsavasadisā na honti. khīṇāsavena katakammaṃ pana nicchandarāgattā kusalaṃ vā akusalaṃ vā na hoti, kiriyatṭhāne tiṭṭhati, ten’ ev’ assa dānaṃ aggaṃ hotī ti vadanti.*

A key word in these passages is *saddhā*, which seems to mean ‘belief’ in *kamma*. It is noteworthy, however, that Maria Hibbets (2000), on the basis of Jain, Brahmanical and Buddhist medieval sources on giving, argues that *śraddhā* is best translated as ‘esteem’. She states (2000:31):

Although *śraddhā* is often translated by scholars as faith or confidence, in the sense of faith in religious doctrine or teachers, it is not clear what this sense of the term could have in the gift relationship. Instead, on the basis of these textual sources and drawing on the suggestions of other scholars, I argue that the term *śraddhā*, when used in the context of giving and hospitality, suggests a kind of unquestioning, non-judging esteem on the part of the giver toward the recipient of the gift.

As we shall see, the notion of ‘esteem’ for a recipient plays an important role in *dāna*, and I shall refer again to Hibbets’ arguments in that context. However, in the earlier texts under our discussion, it seems problematic to use the word ‘esteem’ for *saddhā*, the above evidence suggesting that *saddhā* primarily refers to the belief that a gift will bear fruit.

In the *Jātakas*, the fruits derived from a gift are various and occur in either the same or a later life. In addition to rebirth in the heavens, the karmic reward for a gift includes, amongst other things, wealth, physical beauty, food, and kingship. For example, a verse in the *Kummāsapiṇḍa Jātaka* (415) states (v.2):

I have many elephants, cows, and horses, as well as wealth, grain, and the entire earth. Here are my women, who resemble nymphs. Look at the fruit of my [gift of a] lump of rice-gruel!²¹

Sometimes the merit derived from a gift is reified into a type of credit with which one buys certain felicities.²² For example, in the *Kuṇḍakapūva Jātaka* (109) a layman acquires merit by giving a gift to the Buddha, which others then ask him to transfer to them

²¹ *hatthī gavāssā ca me bahū dhanadhaññaṃ paṭhavī ca kevalā /
nāriyo c’ imā accharūpamā, passa phalaṃ kummāsapiṇḍiyā ti //2//*

²² See Gombrich 1971:279, who describes how merit is often viewed as a form of credit which one stores up to buy other-worldly attainments.

(*amhākaṃ pattiṃ dehi*, *J* 1.422.24) in exchange for large amounts of food and money, a transaction which the Buddha endorses.²³

The fruit of a gift can also be influenced by making a wish (*patthanā*). For example, in the *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527) a woman gives a robe to a monk and makes the *patthanā* that she may become so beautiful in a future life that men will be unable to control themselves at her sight (*J* 5.212.22ff.). Similarly, in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) a princess sprinkles sandal powder over the Buddha Vipassin’s body and wishes that in the future she may become the mother of a Buddha like him (*J* 6.480.25f.). Both wishes of course come true. It is also possible for a donor to aspire to enlightenment or – to use the language of the *Jātakas* – ‘omniscience’ (*sabbaññutaññāṇa*). This occurs for example in the *Akitti Jātaka* (480) and *Sivi Jātaka* (499), in which both the Bodhisattas express the hope that their gifts will be a cause (*paccaya*) for omniscience (*J* 4.239.2f., *J* 4.407.22ff.).

A useful distinction concerning the fruit of a gift is made by *A* 4.59ff., which contrasts two types of donors: those who give for a future reward and those who give for its own sake. In practice, there is an inevitable ambiguity over the extent to which a gift is self-interested or governed by a concern for its result;²⁴ at the root of the issue lies the role of desire and its difference from attitudes such as anticipation. Be that as it may, the passage in *A* 4.59ff. offers us a heuristic tool for analysing *dāna*. According to the text, the first type of donor gives ‘with expectation’ (*sāpekho*), ‘with a mind caught up [in desire for the fruit]’ (*paṭibaddhacitto*), ‘seeking reward’ (*sannidhipekho*) and ‘motivated by the prospect of enjoying the result after death’ (*imaṃ pecca paribhuñjissāmī ti*). After he has spent his merit among the gods of the Four Great Kings, he is said to return to this world. The

²³ For the concept of transferring merit, see the *Silānisamsa Jātaka* (190) and *Macchuddāna Jātaka* (288). An important aspect of this is *anumodana*, for which see pp.165ff.

²⁴ See for example *Cp-a* 292, in which giving without concern is juxtaposed with predicting a result: ‘He should arouse a desire to give without concern by reflecting: “Good returns to the one who gives without his concern, just as the boomerang returns to the one who threw it without his concern.”’ *api ca attho nāmāyaṃ nirapekkhaṃ dāyakam anugacchatī, yathā taṃ nirapekkhaṃ khepakakīṭako ti ca atthe nirapekkhatāya cittaṃ uppādetabbaṃ*. And *Cp-a* 291: ‘Bestowing a gift upon a suppliant will be beneficial to me as well as to him.’ *yācakassa dānāpadesena mayhaṃ evāyaṃ anuggaho ti*.

second type has none of the above qualities. He instead gives with the attitude that ‘it is good to give’ (*sādhū dānan ti*), or because he is conforming to family tradition, or because he is emulating the great sacrifices (*mahāyaññāni*) performed by sages of the past, or because he thinks that giving calms the mind and produces joy, or because it improves his mind (*cittālaṅkāra*). His donations result in rebirth among the Brahmā deities and, after his merit is spent, he does not return to this world – in other words he becomes a ‘non-returner’. Interestingly, the notion of the non-returner is also expressed in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), in which the Bodhisatta gives with a similar attitude of abandonment and asks Sakka (v.647) that, after his death, he should never return to the world.

Giving without desire appears to underlie the attitude of the donors in the *Akitti Jātaka* and *Sivi Jātaka*, who, as we saw above, make an aspiration for omniscience. In both stories, the Bodhisatta’s *dāna* is closely connected with asceticism (§4.3.1), and both heroes have a disregard for results such as wealth.²⁵ For example, Sivi states (v.14): ‘I do not give this [gift] out of a desire for fame, nor because I want children, wealth, or a kingdom. The ancient way of the good has been practised. My mind delights only in giving.’²⁶ Similarly, when Sakka offers Akitti a boon for his *dāna*, Akitti asks to cease desiring family and wealth, and to be free from the transience of property such as land, gold, cattle, horses, or slaves (vv.4, 6). These requests directly conflict with the type of boons depicted in stories such as the *Juṅha Jātaka* (456), in which a king offers a brahmin villages, cattle, slaves, money and wives. Indeed, Akitti’s verses seem to be aimed at a practice so conventional that it is depicted as early as the *dānastutis* of the *Ṛg Veda*, regarding which Jan Gonda remarks (1965:212): ‘Among the presents [to brahmins] mentioned in the *dānastutis* the most prominent are cows; reference is however also made

²⁵ Compare *Cp-a* 304: ‘He does not give because he desires gain, honour, or fame, or because he expects something in return, or out of expectation of some fruit other than supreme enlightenment.’ *na ca lābhasakkārasilokasannissito deti. na ca paccupakārasannissito deti. na ca phalapāṭikāṅkhī deti aññatra sammāsambodhiyā.*

²⁶ *na v’ āhaṃ etaṃ yasaṃ dadāmi. na puttā icche na dhanaṃ na raṭṭhaṃ / satañ ca dhammo carito purāṇo. icc-eva dāne ramate mano māmān ti //14//*

to gifts of horses, camels, sheep, asses, chariots, girls (female servants), gold, food, clothes.’

The unconventional nature of Akitti’s requests is further highlighted by his last boon, in which he asks Sakka never to visit him again. Sakka points out that this is contrary to normal human aspirations (v.20), to which Akitti responds (v.21): ‘The sight of your divine beauty, which satisfies all desires, might make me neglect my asceticism. That is why I fear to look upon you.’²⁷ Sakka’s beautiful presence and the boons he offers represent the fruit of Akitti’s renunciate giving, but this very reward threatens to subvert Akitti’s ability to have a renunciate attitude and so is rejected. On the one hand such fertility is a natural consequence of renunciation, on the other hand the ascetic must be careful not to be attached to it. The complexity of this relationship between renunciation and fruit is further accentuated by the fact that Akitti does not reject every fruit, but asks for boons such as divine food (v.16) and requests that his store might not dwindle after it has been given away (v.17).²⁸ Akitti thus aspires to a variety of happinesses alongside and including omniscience. Similarly, in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), king Sivi both claims to be only concerned with giving (v.14) and at the same time advises his people to follow his example of receiving a divine eye in exchange for a human eye by enjoying the fruit of their gifts (v.31). Similar ambiguities were discussed in §2.5.2 in the context of asceticism and divine pleasures.

The conclusion of this intimate connection between renunciation and fruit is that the ascetic becomes a repository of continuous fertility. Thus hermitages are often depicted as idyllic havens providing abundant fruit and offering protection to animals (§2.5.2).²⁹

²⁷ *taṃ tādisaṃ devavaṇṇiṃ sabbakāmasamiddhinaṃ /
disvā tapo pamajjeyyaṃ, etaṃ te dassane bhayaṃ ti //21//*

The notion that the fruit of a gift can be an obstacle to spiritual progress is also expressed in the *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527), in which a woman makes the wish that, through her gift, she may be reborn beautiful. Her beauty tempts a king (the Bodhisatta) to act immorally by taking her from her husband.

²⁸ *dadato ca me na khīyetha* (v.17). Similarly, in the *Visayha Jātaka* (340), the generous donor Visayha asks Sakka to provide him with ever increasing wealth (v.3), but then denies that he is dependent upon Sakka’s boons by claiming that he will carry on giving even if he has no wealth (v.4).

²⁹ See Collins 1998: especially 89ff., 289ff.

Similarly renunciates such as Vessantara in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) are described as wish-fulfilling trees (e.g. vv.141f., 196). The theme of the ever-fruitful tree is also found in the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440), which is closely related to the *Akitti Jātaka*. In this story, Sakka again offers the Bodhisatta boons for his asceticism. Kaṇha asks for the ethicised boons of no anger, hatred, greed or emotional attachment, whereupon Sakka is so impressed by these renunciate requests that he offers him more boons. Kaṇha then asks to be free from disease so that there may be no obstacles to his asceticism. Again Sakka is overawed by Kaṇha's disregard for conventional boons such as food,³⁰ and offers him another boon, which Kaṇha chooses to be that he should harm no living being. At the end of the story, Sakka makes the tree under which Kaṇha resides bear eternal fruit. He therefore rewards Kaṇha with a permanent supply of food, the very disregard for which he had so admired in the ascetic. However, it is not in spite of Kaṇha's renunciation that he receives eternal fruit, but because of it. His fruit is eternal because it is eternally renounced.

4.3.3 Giving as soteriological

Although giving with desire is distinguished from giving without desire, it is only when a gift is renounced properly that it is possible to enjoy its future result. This is evoked by the *Mayhaka Jātaka* (390), in which a merchant gives a donation to a *paccekabuddha* but regrets the gift afterwards, since 'he was unable to have a perfect afterthought' (*J* 3.300.10).³¹ As a result of his donation the merchant gains much wealth, but 'because he was unable to have the correct attitude after giving, he was unable to enjoy his wealth [*bhoga*]' (*J* 3.300.20f.).³² The seeming contradiction between renunciation and desire is therefore resolved when one realises that the donor renounces an object in order to enjoy a

³⁰ 'After he had heard this, Sakka thought, "When wise Kaṇha chooses a boon he chooses nothing connected with food [or, 'material objects'], but only what is connected with asceticism." Delighted even more at this, he spoke another verse offering him a further boon.' *taṃ sutvā Sakko Kaṇhapāṇḍito varam gaṇhanto na āmisasannissitaṃ gaṇhāti tapokammanissitaṃ eva gaṇhāti ti cintetvā bhīyyosomattāya pasanno aparaṃ pi varam dadamāno itaram gātham āha* (*J* 4.13.22ff.).

³¹ *aparacetanam paripunnaṃ kātuṃ nāsakki*.

³² *datvā aparacetanaṃ paṇītaṃ kātuṃ asamattatāya bhoge bhūñjituṃ nāsakki*.

more purified and refined form of *bhoga* than the one he gave up. The donor is not concerned with receiving a direct counter-gift from the recipient but with the future ‘unseen’ fruit of *kamma*. He renounces objects of this world in order to attain the happiness of other worlds, such as good rebirth in heaven.³³

This is in contrast to the archaic gift structure envisaged by Marcel Mauss in his famous work *Essai Sur Le Don*,³⁴ in which giving is based upon a reciprocal exchange between interdependent members of society. As Thomas Trautmann states (1981:279), the ideology of *dāna* is ‘a soteriology, not a sociology of reciprocity.’ Trautmann continues (1981:281):

If the recipient of a gift makes a counter-gift, that would be the visible fruit of the original gift. [...] Only if the gift is made without this visible *quid pro quo* in prospect, among other things, can it be presumed that it incurs an invisible fruit, a transcendently bestowed counter-gift. Once again, so that there be no mistake about it, the fruit may be quite a tangible one; it is only the causal connection between gift and fruit that is invisible in the sense that it is or may be delayed to another life. [...] The difference between sacred and profane exchange, then, hinges on the distinction between what we might call transcendental and mundane reciprocity.³⁵

This distinction between transcendental and mundane reciprocity is linked to Ivan Strenski’s contrast (1983:471ff.) between generalised and restricted exchange. Strenski argues that it is generalised exchange that primarily characterises the *saṅgha*’s relationship with society. He states (1983:471):

‘Restricted exchange’ operates on a simple *quid pro quo* basis; ‘generalised exchange’ establishes moral ‘credit’, involving social risk and even speculation that the initial gift might never be returned. [...]. GX [Generalised exchange] seeks an unbalanced condition between exchange partners, which requires payment at some unspecified time, typically by another group or person than the original receiver of the first gift. [...]. Pushed to its limit, GX approaches sacrifice, which I take to be outright giving in which no return is expected – partly because the gift is

³³ As described above, karmic fruit can of course also include meritorious forms of this-worldly attainments such as wealth or social position.

³⁴ Translated into English as *The Gift* by W.D. Halls (1990).

³⁵ See also Parry 1986:462.

alienated in some way, as by killing a victim, consuming it and so on. [...]. I want to argue [...] that giving to the *saṅgha* ought to be interpreted much more as an instance of GX than RX [restricted exchange] (and also to some degree as sacrifice –SX).

What it is important to stress is that giving with desire for a fruit is, as Trautmann states, a ‘soteriological’ enterprise, in that the donor seeks something beyond an ordinary exchange of gifts. As Axel Michaels puts it (1997:259): ‘[It is] the giver’s search for the abnormal, uncommon, supernatural.’ The consequences of a gift may not be permanent (heaven is after all transient), but they nevertheless lie on the same soteriological continuum as enlightenment: hence the notion of an ascetic surrounded by fertility. This is linked to Steven Collins’ argument, discussed in §1.6, that narrative texts like the *Jātakas* depict a series of felicities, of which nirvana is the ultimate felicity informing and structuring the rest.

Axel Michaels (1997:253, 261) has suggested that the soteriological motivation behind *dāna* may have arisen from within the context of agricultural surplus, which gave rise to moral issues over the possession and handling of property. To avoid the charge of greed, those with property gave in order to legitimise and purify their possessions – it is no coincidence that the archetypal donor is the king, whose wealth is primarily acquired through violent conquest and therefore stands most in need of purification. This notion is linked to the common exhortation in the *Jātakas* that one must give in order to enjoy. For example, king Sivi tells his people (499, v.31): ‘Now that you have seen this [gift of mine], people of Sivi, you should give gifts and then enjoy. When you have given and enjoyed to the best of your ability, you will go to heaven blamelessly.’³⁶ Similarly, eating without giving is frequently criticised by both Buddhist and Brahmanical texts. For example, a miser is chastised in the *Sudhābhojana Jātaka* (535, vv.4f.):

³⁶ *etaṃ pi disvā Sivayo detha dānāni bhuñjatha /
datvā ca bhutvā ca yathānubhāvam aninditā saggam upetha thānan ti //31//*

This verse is echoed in the *Cittasambhūta Jātaka* (498), v.26 and the *Sudhābhojana Jātaka* (535), v.5 (given in footnote 37). See also the *Mayhaka Jātaka* (390), which describes how one who hoards cannot enjoy.

One's sacrifice is empty and one's desire in vain if one eats alone when a guest is sat down. I tell you this, Kosiya: give gifts and then eat. Undertake the noble path. He who eats alone does not attain happiness.³⁷

Likewise the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* comments (2.7.3): 'A man who eats before his guest, eats up the vigour, prosperity, progeny, livestock, sacrifices, and good works of his family.'³⁸

Torkel Brekke has criticised Michaels' arguments that *dāna* is based on soteriological motives. He states (1998:288):

It is not clear to me, however, that the ascetic spirit with its questioning of earthly possessions, which Michaels sees as the background to religious giving, actually can be ascribed to the most important donors: the merchants, townsmen and common people supporting Brahmins and monks. The householders' donations do not imply soteriological concerns. On the contrary they are motivated by a desire for merit which is, strictly speaking, a this-worldly currency.

Brekke's criticisms appear, however, to be misplaced. Basing his objections around a dichotomy between merit-motivated giving as hedonistic and asceticism as salvific,³⁹ he offers a rather limited framework within which to understand soteriological values. To requote Trautmann, giving is soteriological in the sense that the donor engages in a form of 'transcendental' rather than 'mundane' exchange, seeking an 'invisible' rather than 'visible' fruit. As we have seen, the very enjoyment of such a fruit is itself contingent upon the act of renouncing a gift. Although this fruit still belongs to *saṃsāra*, it is a more refined form of *bhoga* than the one given up. The donor is searching for something better and beyond the ordinary. Rather than simply contrasting desire for merit with

³⁷ *moghañ c' assa hutam hoti moghañ cāpi samīhitam /
atīhismim yo nisinnasmim eko bhuñjati bhojanaṃ //4//
tam tam vadāmi Kosiya: dehi dānāni bhuñja ca /
ariyamaggaṃ samārūha, n' ekāsī labhate sukhan ti //5//*

³⁸ *ūrjaṃ puṣṭim prajāṃ paśūn iṣṭāpūrtam iti grhāṇām aśnāti yaḥ pūrvo 'tither aśnāti //3//.*

In this thesis, I use Olivelle's translation and text (2000) for the *Dharmasūtras*. See also Trautmann (1981:287): 'Hence one who eats food one has prepared for oneself without first offering it to the divinities and brahmin guests (and then consuming it as their "leavings") is said to eat sin.'

³⁹ Compare Brekke 1998:294: 'Against the ethics of merit and favourable rebirth stands the path of the uncompromising salvation-seeker.'

enlightenment, it is important to situate such refined forms of *bhoga* in a soteriological continuum of hierarchically organised states of happiness (*sukha*). Steven Collins' argument concerning the need to 'recenter' nirvana as a 'syntactic value [...] which structures and systematises the cosmology of imagined felicities' (1998:116) is again pertinent. Like Michaels, Collins stresses the importance of considering the economic context of the premodern world in order to understand the religious significance of aspirations for states of happiness such as wealth. He remarks (1998:94f.):

I want to see nirvana not as an example of a free-floating, ahistorical ideal, but as one aspect of a congeries of Buddhist felicities imagined by flesh-and-blood human beings in the material-historical world. And the point about premodern poverty is that collective, universal material wealth, of the kind industrial society made possible (though never actual), was not a possible goal in that world. [...] These reflections on poverty and the framework of plausibility should, I think, affect modern evaluations of the non-nirvanic felicities elaborated in the Pali imaginaire. When one encounters Buddhist texts which describe, as objects of religious ambition, conditions of natural abundance, unlimited food, physical beauty, forest paradises, earthly and heavenly palaces sparkling with jewels and precious metals, conditions of peace on earth and goodwill to all; and when one encounters historians or anthropologists who report that nirvana was and is the immediate goal of very few people or no-one, it is easy for a nonhistorical modern mind to conclude, as is so often done, that "all Buddhists should really aspire to extinction in nirvana, but that the overwhelming majority prefer the more materialistic and hedonistic goals of rebirth in heaven, or as a rich person on earth." This is an anachronistic, myopic, even inhuman evaluation: sitting, in conditions of affluence, in a modern armchair, or at a modern desk, and constructing a pure, "spiritual" Buddhism which soars above the trivial business of mundane, imaginable happiness.

The soteriological aim of *dāna* is reinforced by the common *jātaka* motif of a character (often the Bodhisatta) realising that mundane possessions cannot be taken into the next world.⁴⁰ For example, in the *Akitti Jātaka* (480) Akitti ponders on the wealth his parents have left behind after their death (*J* 4.237.12ff.): 'This wealth is plainly visible, but those who collected it are not. They have all departed, leaving behind this wealth. But I will take

⁴⁰ The notion that *dāna* is contingent upon the realisation of impermanence is expressed by the *Cp-a* (309): 'In practising the perfection of giving the Great Being should apply the perception of impermanence to life and possessions.' *imañ ca dānapāramiṃ paṭipajjantena mahāsattena jīvite aniccasaññā paccupaṭṭhapetabbā.*

it when I depart.’⁴¹ Akitti then practises *dāna* and asceticism in order that he may achieve his goal of bringing wealth into the next world. This refined and reliable form of ‘wealth’ is merit, which, as mentioned above, is often viewed as a type of stored treasure, a metaphor explicitly used by the *Vessantara Jātaka*, in which the Bodhisatta tells his wife to ‘store’ (*ni-√dhā*) her wealth by giving it to the virtuous (vv.63ff.).

Giving is thus seen as a way of transforming mundane possessions into a refined form of *bhoga*, a notion alluded to by the *Āditta Jātaka* (424), which states:

Whatever property one can retrieve from a burning house is for one’s benefit, and not what is burnt there. The world is ablaze with old age and death. One should save what one can by giving. For a gift is saved.⁴²

Giving is therefore not simply a rejection of *samsāra*, but a way of purifying it from within. Mundane objects are transcended by themselves being used for soteriological ends. This appears to be the meaning of an elliptical but suggestive passage in the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440). In this story, as in the *Akitti Jātaka* (480), the Bodhisatta realises that wealth cannot be taken into the next life. He counters this problem by undertaking religious practices such as meditation and giving, the emphasis being on the latter. These practices are described as ways of attaining the essence (*sāra*) of the mundane world which is essenceless (*asāra*). He states (*J* 4.7.23ff.):

Wealth is essenceless because of the five common qualities; its essence is in giving. The body is essenceless because of its connection with much disease; its essence is in acts such as greeting the virtuous. Life is essenceless because of its impermanence; its essence is in the application of insight meditation by seeing it as impermanent and so forth.⁴³

⁴¹ *idaṃ dhanam eva paññāyati, na dhanassa saṃhārakā. sabbe imaṃ dhanam pahāy’ eva gatā, ahaṃ pana taṃ ādāya gamissāmi ti.*

⁴² *āditasmim agārasmim yaṃ nīharati bhājanam /
taṃ tassa hoti atthāya no ca yaṃ tattha dayhati //1//
evam ādīpito loko jarāya maraṇena ca /
nīhareth’ eva dānena, dinnam hi hoti nībhatan ti //2//*

⁴³ *pañcasādhāraṇabhāvena hi asārassa dhanassa dānam saro, bahurogasādhāraṇabhāvena asārassa kāyassa sīlavānesu abhivādanādikammaṃ sāro, aniccatābhībhūtassa asārassa jīvitassa aniccādivasena vipassanāyogo sāro.*

He concludes with the startling assertion (*J* 4.7.27):

Therefore, I will give gifts in order to attain essence by means of these essenceless possessions.⁴⁴

Because *dāna* is a tool through which the mundane world is transformed, the fruit of a gift is often described as a purified homology of the object given away.⁴⁵ Thus in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) Queen Phusatī (literally, ‘Sprinkler’) is so named because she ‘sprinkled’ sandal powder over the Buddha Vipassin’s body in a past life, as a result of which she herself lived through various lives with a body the colour of red sandal (*J* 6.480f.). Similarly in the *Chaddanta Jātaka* (514) the elephant Chaddanta hopes to receive ‘tusks of omniscience’ in return for the tusks that are taken away from him (*J* 5.52.29ff.), just as in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499) Sivi receives ‘eyes of omniscience’ in return for the eyes he gave away (*J* 4.407.22ff.). Thus Sivi triumphantly exclaims: ‘There is in this mortal life nothing beyond pure giving. When I gave a human eye, I gained a non-human eye’ (v.30).⁴⁶ The *Cp-a* (306f.) extends this theme and gives a long list of purified equivalents for objects that are given away.⁴⁷ There is only space here for a few of the homologies that are listed (306):

He gives [...] vehicles for attaining the modes of psychic potency and the bliss of *nibbāna*; scents for producing the sweet scent of virtue; garlands and unguents for producing the beauty of the Buddha-qualities; seats for producing the seat on the terrace of enlightenment; bedding for producing the bed of a Tathāgata’s rest; dwellings so that he may become a refuge for beings; lamps so he may obtain the five eyes. [...] He gives gifts of gold, gems, pearls, coral etc. in order to achieve the major marks of physical beauty [...] He gives his treasures as a gift in order to

⁴⁴ *tasmā asārehi bhogehi sārāgahaṇattham dānam dassāmī ti.*

⁴⁵ For the same concept in Brahmanical Dharmasāstra texts, see Brekke 1998:298..

⁴⁶ *na cāgamattā param atthi kiñci maccānaṃ idha jīvite /
datvāna mānusaṃ cakkhuṃ laddhaṃ [me] cakkhuṃ amānusaṃ //30//*

One may note the emphasis of the words *maccānaṃ idha jīvite*: giving purifies *samsāra* but it does so within and through the context of *samsāra* itself.

⁴⁷ Similar homologies are also found in the context of bad *kamma*. For example, in *Dhp-a* 1.226, a woman laughs at a *paccekabuddha* for being a hunchback and so is herself reborn as a hunchback. See Kloppenborg 1974:67ff.

obtain the treasury of the true Dhamma; the gift of his kingdom in order to become the king of the Dhamma.⁴⁸

An apophatic aspect to giving (the abandonment of a gift) is thus simultaneously combined with a kataphatic aspect to giving (the return of a purified form of the gift), a dialectic discussed in §1.6. Rather than simply being a rejection of the conventional world, renunciate values also involve a transformation of the conventional world. Ultimately, as we shall see, this leads to the gift of life resulting in a purified form of life. In order to elaborate these ideas further, let us turn to examining how giving is related to sacrifice.

4.3.4 Sacrifice

4.3.4.1 Giving as sacrifice

As was discussed in §3.4.4, sacrifice (*yañña*) is frequently found in Pāli as a synonym for *dāna*. In the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (*D* 1.127ff.), *yañña* is extended to refer to several types of Buddhist practice, but usually, when it does not refer specifically to Vedic ritual, it is reserved for giving. We have already seen an example of this in the *Mayhaka Jātaka* (390), in which ‘the attainments of sacrifice’ (*yaññassa sampadā*, *J* 3.300.17f.) are referred to in the context of joyful giving. Similarly, in the *Saṅkha Jātaka* (442), the Bodhisatta’s gift (*dakkhinā* (v.8), Pāli for *dakṣiṇā* ‘the sacrificial fee’) to a *paccekabuddha* is described (v.7) as a ‘sacrifice’ (*yiṭṭham*) and ‘oblation’ (*hutam*), which, because it bears great fruit, is said to be a ‘wish-fulfilling cow’ (*kāmaduhā*, v.8). Often the use of such sacrificial terminology occurs in satirical contexts, such as in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* or *Mātāṅga Jātaka*, in order to subvert Brahmanical ideology. However, as Jan Heesterman has pointed out (1985:42), the widespread employment of sacrificial words for *dāna*

⁴⁸ *tathā iddhividhassa c’ eva nibbānasukhassa ca nipphattiyā yānaṃ deti. tathā silagandhanipphattiyā gandham deti. tathā Buddhaguṇasobhānipphattiyā mālāvilepanaṃ deti. bodhimaṇḍāsanānipphattiyā āsanaṃ deti. tathāgataseyyānipphattiyā seyyaṃ deti. saraṇabhāva-nipphattiyā āvasathaṃ deti. pañcacakkhupaṭilābhāya padīpeyyaṃ deti. [...] sukhālakkaṇasampattiyā suvaṇṇamaṇimuttāpavāḷādīdānaṃ deti. [...] saddhammakosādhigamāya vittakosadānaṃ, dhammarājabhāvāya rajjadānaṃ.*

implies that this is not merely a ‘propagandistic device’ to subvert Brahmanical hegemony. Firstly, the Buddhist concept of *dāna* seems to have several structural links with Vedic sacrifice. Secondly, it is not only in Buddhist texts that sacrificial terminology is used for *dāna*, but Brahmanical texts also frequently compare giving with sacrifice (although *dāna* is considered to be a diluted form of *yajña*, as is appropriate to our degenerate times).⁴⁹

Buddhist ‘sacrifice’ in the form of *dāna* is divested of the details of Vedic ritual but much of the same structure still remains. Some of the more obvious parallels between *dāna* and sacrifice include:

1) The combination of renunciation and desire.⁵⁰

Just as belief in the fruition of a gift (*kamma*) is an important component in *dāna*, so belief in the efficacy of the sacrificial act (*karman*) is central to Vedic sacrifice, the former being a universalised and ethicised extension of the latter.⁵¹

2) The mundane object is transformed into a purified object.

3) The connection between the giver and the gift.

The *Cp-a* scheme in §4.2.2 showed how material gifts take on an increasingly internalised significance until ultimately one gives up one’s own life. Indeed, it is because the gift is an extension of the self that the giver receives the fruits of their donation. Similarly in Vedic sacrifice, the giver is identified with the sacrificial victim and, through this substitute, he

⁴⁹ See Trautmann 1981:279, Heesterman 1986:42, Parry 1986:460 and Brekke 1998:303ff. Jain texts also employ the motif of the true sacrifice and the true brahmin, as we saw in §3.4.4.

⁵⁰ Malamoud (1996:34): ‘[The definition] of the Vedic theologians, reiterated by the *Mīmāṃsakas*, is the following: *yajña* is the surrendering (*tyāga*) of oblatory substances (*dravya*) to divinities (*devatā*) in the perspective of obtaining a certain benefit (literally, a fruit, *phala*).’ See also Das (1983), who discusses the seeming contradiction in having ‘both individual desire and renunciation at the centre of a sacrificial cult’ (1983:445); see also her analysis of sacrifice and giving (1983:450f.).

⁵¹ Collins 1982:53ff.

himself becomes purified.⁵² Thus Jonathan Parry states (1986:461): ‘The identification between the sacrificer and the victim, which in the classical theory is explicitly a substitute for his own person, is carried over into the theory of [Brahmanical] *dāna* as an identification between the donor and the gift.’ Ultimately, therefore, sacrifice is the giving up of one’s mundane life in order to receive a purified form of life. On the macrocosmic level, the ‘rebirth’ of the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) is conveyed by his identification with Prajāpati, the cosmic man, who continuously destroys and regenerates himself through sacrifice. This is noted by Jan Heesterman (1985:26f.):

Ostensibly the central theme of the solemn *śrauta* ritual is the periodical regeneration of the cosmos, the winning of life out of death. [...] [The *yajamāna*] is supposed symbolically to incorporate the universe – he is identified with the cosmic man, Prajāpati. The ritual culminates in his ritual rebirth, which signifies the regeneration of the cosmos.

In *dāna* too, the donor ultimately risks his life, as will be highlighted in §4.3.4. The interplay between life and death in *dāna* is further suggested by the *Āditta Jātaka* (424), which states (v.4): ‘They say that giving and battle are the same. Even a few people can conquer many. [Similarly,] if one gives even a small amount with faith, then through that alone one becomes happy in the next world.’⁵³ The commentary’s explanation of the verse is instructive; it compares a warrior’s willingness to sacrifice his life in battle to a donor’s willingness to renounce possessions (*J* 3.473.13ff.):

One who is afraid of loss cannot give, just as one who is afraid of danger cannot fight. By abandoning attachment to life, the warrior can fight and it is only by abandoning attachment to possessions that the donor can give. This is the way in which they say that both are ‘the same’. The meaning of ‘even a few people’ is that even if they are a few, those who have given up their lives can conquer the many. In the very same way, even a little of the thought of abandonment can conquer even a large miserly mind or greed and so forth, which are trapped in defilements.⁵⁴

⁵² Gonda 1965:209, Heesterman 1985:32. Trautmann (1981:286f.) describes how the gift ‘is an extension of the giver’ and quotes *Mbh* 13.75.13, in which a donor gives cattle proclaiming: ‘What you are, that I have this day become. Giving you, I give myself away.’ *yā vai yūyaṃ so ’haṃ adyaikabhāvo, yuṣmān dattvā cāham ātmapradātā.*

⁵³ *dānañ ca yuddhañ ca samānam āhu. appāpi santā bahuke jinanti /
appam pi ce saddahāno dadāti ten’ eva so hoti sukhī parattha //4//*

⁵⁴ *khayabhīrukassa hi dānaṃ n’ atthi, bhayabhīrukassa yuddhaṃ n’ atthi. jīvite ālayaṃ vijahitvā yujjhanto yujjhitaṃ sakkoti, bhogesu ālayaṃ vijahitvā va dāyako dātuṃ sakkoti, ten’ eva taṃ ubhayaṃ samānan ti*

The concept of giving up one's self is also expressed by the common phrase in the *Jātakas* of 'giving one's heart to the *sāsana*' (*sāsane uraṃ datvā*).⁵⁵ This is linked to the notion, found for example in *Ps* 132f., that taking refuge involves giving one's life to the three jewels.⁵⁶ Thus one of the four ways of taking refuge is to 'dedicate oneself' (*attasanniyyātana*), which is glossed as the 'giving up of oneself' (*attapariccajana*, *Ps* 132).⁵⁷ The text expands upon this, saying (*Ps* 133):

The dedication of oneself should be understood thus: 'Moreover I give myself to the Buddha and I give myself to the *dhamma* and the *saṅgha*. My life I also give. I have given myself and my life. I go to refuge in the Buddha until the end of my life. The Buddha is my refuge, shelter and protection.'⁵⁸

The transformative effects of such a gift are expressed by the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* (1), which states (*J* 1.97) that those who have taken refuge in the three jewels will not be reborn in any of the bad realms (*duggati*).⁵⁹ The implication is that by giving one's life to the three jewels one is 'reborn' with a purified form of life in the *sugatis*, a transformation which echoes that of the *yajamāna* who is reborn through sacrifice. In the *yajamāna*'s case,

vadanti. appāpi santā ti thokāpi samānā pariccattajīvitā bahuke jinanti, evaṃ evaṃ appāpi muñcanacetanā bahuṃ pi maccheracittaṃ lobhādīṃ vā kilesagahaṇaṃ jināti.

⁵⁵ E.g. *J* 1.303.1 (*ratanasāsane...*), 1.367.25 (*Buddhasāsane...*), 1.401.29, 1.418.6, 1.449.20, 1.501.5, 2.271.6 (*ratanasāsane...*), 3.139.22, etc.

⁵⁶ See also *J* 1.12.29, in which Sumedha makes a *jīvita-pariccāga* to Dīpaṅkara: 'Today I must give up my life to the Dasabala.' *ajja mayā Dasabalassa jīvitapariccāgaṃ kātuṃ vattatī ti*. Similarly, the *Cp-a* states (326): 'For the sake of the supreme enlightenment, the Great Being, striving for enlightenment, should first of all surrender himself to the Buddhas thus: "I offer myself up to the Buddhas." *tathā mahāsattena bodhāya paṭipajjantena sammāsambodhāya Buddhānaṃ puretaraṃ eva attā niyyādetabbo: imāhaṃ atabhāvaṃ Buddhānaṃ niyyādemī ti*. It adds (327): 'Self-surrender to the Buddhas is also a means for the complete accomplishment of the *pāramīs*.' *api ca yaṃ mahāsattassa Buddhānaṃ attasanniyyātanaṃ taṃ sammad eva sabbapāramīnaṃ sampādanūpāyo*.

⁵⁷ Taking refuge can be either mundane (*lokiya*) or supramundane (*lokuttara*). The four aspects of the mundane type are: dedication of oneself (*attasanniyyātana*), inclination towards the jewels (*tapparāyatana*), undertaking pupilship (*sissabhāvūpagamana*) and prostration (*paṇipāta*). This contrasts with *Pj I* 16f., in which the four categories are resolution (*samādāna*), undertaking pupilship (*sissabhāvūpagamana*), inclination towards the jewels (*tappoṇatta*) and dedication of oneself (*attasanniyyātana*). For a discussion of these passages see Carter 1982.

⁵⁸ *api ca bhagavato attānaṃ pariccajāmi, dhammassa, saṅghassa attānaṃ pariccajāmi. jīvitaṃ ca pariccajāmi. pariccatto yeva me attā, pariccattaṃ yeva me jīvitaṃ. jīvitapariyantikaṃ Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi. Buddho me saraṇaṃ lenaṃ tāṇaṃ ti evaṃ pi attasanniyyātanaṃ veditabbaṃ.*

⁵⁹ The verses in this passage are found in *D* 2.255 and *Dhp* vv.188ff.

however, the sacrifice is a largely individual affair, whereas in the case of taking refuge it is relational. The following section will explore this distinction further.

4.3.4.2 Individualist and relational sacrifice

Jan Heesterman has contrasted the individualist scheme above, in which the *yajamāna* is central to the sacrifice and is identified with the cosmic man, with what he calls an ‘older, preclassical system’ (1985:27), in which sacrifice consists of an agonistic relationship between brahmin and patron.⁶⁰ He states (*ibid.*):

[In the preclassical system], purity and impurity are complementary to each other. The *yajamāna*, who has undergone the *dīkṣā*, is not pure, but on the contrary is charged with the evil of death to which he has to submit in order to be reborn. [...] Being tainted by death, the *dīkṣita* has to divest himself of his impure self. [...] By means of the various offerings and the gifts (*dakṣiṇā*) which represent the parts of his body, he disposes of his impure self. Thus he is reborn pure, “out of the sacrifice.” [...] In this light, the relationship between patron and officiant is of a nature diametrically opposed to what the classical theory of the pure ritual wants it to be. The function of the brahmin officiant is to take over the death impurity of the patron by eating from the offerings and accepting the *dakṣiṇās*. By gifts and food, evil and impurity are transferred and purity attained, especially if the donee is a brahmin. It is no matter for surprise, then, that the acceptance of *dakṣiṇās* by the brahmin is surrounded with meticulous care.

The patron therefore purifies his polluted self through the brahmin who consumes his defilements. Indeed, through sacrifice the patron actually becomes a brahmin. Thus Heestermann continues (1985:28):

At the acme of the ritual, the moment of birth, when the *dakṣiṇās* are distributed, a reversal takes place: the *dīkṣita* patron sheds his death impurity and is reborn a pure brahman. The brahman on the other hand takes over the burden of death. [...] Finally, the officiating brahmin represents the brahman out of which the *yajamāna* is ritually reborn a brahmin. Seen against this background, the life-winning

⁶⁰ Heesterman 1985:28: ‘Whereas the pivot of the classical ritual is represented by the single *yajamāna*, the preclassical ritual is based on a complementary pair.’ I leave to one side Heesterman’s claim that, in the preclassical system, brahmin and patron were equals engaged in a reciprocal exchange, which changed in the classical system into an asymmetrical relationship, whereby the brahmin became aloof in order to ensure that the sacrificial domain retained absolute purity. It appears to me unestablished that the relationship was not asymmetrical from the beginning, but a discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of this chapter.

function of the exchanges stands out clearly. The evil (*pāpman*), which the *dīkṣita* transfers on his ritual rebirth to the brahmin, can thus produce rich returns. It is, to say, transformed into *śrī*, good fortune.

Aspects of this relational form of sacrifice were carried through to the Brahmanical system of *dāna*. This is conveyed by Trautmann's analysis of Brahmanical *dāna*, which closely echoes Heesterman's notion that 'preclassical sacrifice' consists of an agonistic relationship between patron and brahmin. Trautmann states (1981:287):

The theory of the gift participates in the theory of pollution, which has as its paradigm those biological extensions of the self, the offscourings of the body. The theory is a relational one: The bodily extensions of inferior beings are dangerously polluting to superiors, but conversely those of superiors, such as the "leavings" of a god's meal or the dust of a guru's feet, are concrete forms of grace (*prasāda*) to inferiors. [...] The offscourings of the body, or the gifts that are conceptually assimilated to them, are one's own sin, one's death. [...] Thus it is that the gift has become an instrument of salvation, a way of transmuting pollution, sin, and death into purity and immortality, a means, like the sacrifice, of turning *pāpman* into *śrī*.

Examples of the sacrificial connotations of relational giving in Brahmanical *dharmaśāstra* texts are provided by Brekke (1998:306ff.), from whom I draw the following references. For instance, in the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* (2.7.1ff.) gift-giving to guests is identified with sacrifice. It states (2.7.1f.): 'This is the sacrifice to Prajāpati that a householder offers incessantly – the fire within the guests is the offertorial fire, the fire within the house is the householder's fire, the fire used for cooking is the southern fire.'⁶¹ Similarly, the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* states (30.2f.): 'A brahmin is a fire because a Vedic text states a brahmin is clearly a fire.'⁶² The brahmin's body is then identified with the sacrificial altar, his mouth with the offertorial fire (the *āvahanīya*) and so on. Emphasis is placed upon the mouth and stomach of the brahmin – since the brahmin is considered to 'digest' impurities – and accordingly Manu (3.98) states that the mouth of a brahmin is the fire in which to offer

⁶¹ *sa eṣa prājāpatyaḥ kuṭumbino yajñō nityapratataḥ //1// yo 'tithinām agniḥ sa āhavanīyo yaḥ kuṭumbe sa gārhapatyō yasmin pacyate so 'nvāhāryapacanaḥ //2//*

⁶² *brāhmaṇo bhavaty agniḥ //2// agnir vai brāhmaṇa iti śruteḥ //3//*

For the Vedic text, Olivelle (2000:463) refers us to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.4.2.2. He also refers us to a similar statement in *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* 1.6.2.

sacrifices and even (7.84) that an oblation into a brahmin's mouth is better than the daily fire sacrifices since such an oblation is never spilt or destroyed.

The contrast between an individualist form of sacrifice and a relational form of sacrifice seems to reflect the distinction in Buddhism between giving based upon the intention of the donor and giving based upon the quality of the recipient. Both are forms of sacrifice, but in the former the process occurs primarily within the donor himself, whereas in the latter the emphasis is on sacrificing through another person and giving *to* someone. There are differences between these two forms of giving and the Brahmanical models of sacrifice – for example, the agonistic elements which Heesterman and Trautmann perceive in relational sacrifice are largely absent in Buddhism – but their similarities offer important ways for understanding Buddhist *dāna*.

In this thesis I therefore describe intention-based giving as 'individualist giving' and recipient-based giving as 'relational giving'. I should however point out that in using the term 'individualist', I mean it in the most basic sense of 'being centred around an individual'; no pejorative connotations of selfishness are intended. Occasionally I also refer to individualist giving as 'absolutist', in the sense that it tends to underplay the role of context; relational giving on the other hand is inherently defined by context – namely, that of giving to a worthy recipient. Generally, however, I will favour the term 'individualist' over 'absolutist', since relational giving can also be performed absolutely: a person might make a gift to a particular recipient under every circumstance. Similarly, the word 'internalised' is not exclusive to individualist giving, since relational giving can also involve giving up one's self, as is the case when taking refuge in the three jewels.

Torkel Brekke (1998:209, 303) has described the difference between recipient-based giving and donor-based giving in terms of 'sacrifice' on the one hand and 'charity' on the other. The former he reserves for bottom-up giving, in which the recipient is accentuated, and the latter he reserves for top-down giving, in which the intention of the donor is

accentuated. However I find his terminology problematic for two reasons.⁶³ Firstly, I believe that it is important to view both types of giving as forms of sacrifice. Secondly, as we shall see, the word ‘charity’ is not entirely appropriate, since top-down giving is not always governed by a sense of compassion.

4.3.5 Individualist giving and self-mortification

It follows from the individualist model that the gift of one’s body or life need not be restricted to the context of giving to brahmins or ascetics but can consist of a purely internal form of sacrifice. This is illustrated by the *Campeyya Jātaka* (506), in which the Bodhisatta is a *nāga* who practises the *uposatha* vow ‘by offering his body into the **mouth of giving** with the thought, “If anyone wants my skin and so forth, let him take it. If anyone wants to make me into a play-snake, let him do so”’ (*J* 4.456.3ff.).⁶⁴ These images of self-mortification echo the Brahmanical notion of offering up oneself in sacrifice in order to be ‘reborn’. Nor is the *nāga*’s self-mortification limited to this internal sacrifice, but, as his vow implicitly predicts (and perhaps intends), a snake-charmer afflicts him with various torments, thereby providing the context for the Bodhisatta to cultivate his virtue by not reacting in anger. The imagery of life and death is further expressed when the Bodhisatta refuses to accept food from the snake-charmer, fearing that he will die (*maraṇaṃ bhavissatī ti*, *J* 4.458.17) if he does so. In his quest for a refined form of life based upon virtue, the alternative is considered to be death.

Bearing stories such as the *Campeyya Jātaka* in mind, let us turn to *jātakas* in which giving to brahmins forms the structure of the narrative.

⁶³ On the problem of translating *dāna* as ‘charity’, ‘liberality’ etc., see Gonda 1965:208f.

⁶⁴ *mama cammādīhi atthikā cammādīni gaṇhantu, maṃ kīlāsappaṃ vā kātukāmā kīlāsappaṃ karontū ti sarīraṃ dānamukhe vissajjevā [...]*

In the closely connected *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (543), the *nāga* Bhūridatta makes an *uposatha* vow (*J* 6.169.24ff.), which is fourfold (*caturaṅga*) because he offers his skin, muscle, bones and blood. Such vows are not limited to the *Jātakas*. A similar resolution is made by a *sāvaka* in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* (*M* 1.480f.).

The subject-heading of the *Sivi Jātaka* (499) is the ‘incomparable gift’ (*asadisa-dāna*, *J* 4.401.11). What makes king Sivi’s donation so remarkable is that it is internal. Thus he resolves (*J* 4.402.9ff.): ‘There is no external object that I have not given. External gifts do not satisfy me. I desire to give an internal gift.’⁶⁵ His wish is fulfilled when he gives his eyes to a brahmin (who is Sakka in disguise). The intensity of Sivi’s language, as he joyfully considers giving up a part of his body, makes the passage worth citing in full (*J* 4.402.13ff.):

If anyone were to name the flesh of my heart, I would give it to him by striking my chest with a spear and, as if I were pulling out a lotus, stalk and all, from a tranquil pond, I would take out my heart dripping with drops of blood. If anyone were to name the flesh of my body, I would give it to him by cutting into my bodily flesh as if I were writing with a stylus. If anyone were to name my blood, I would give my blood to him by filling a ready vessel and pouring it into his mouth. If anyone were to say, “My housework is not getting done; please work as a slave in my house,” I would take off my royal clothes, stand outside, announce myself and work as a slave. If anyone were to name my eyes, I would give them to him, pulling them out as if I were taking out the pith from a palm-tree.⁶⁶

These violent acts of self-immolation are qualified by the images with which they are compared. Gory depictions of dripping hearts are paradoxically juxtaposed with the calm beauty of a lotus being pulled from a tranquil pond; cutting into flesh is glossed with the artistry of stylus-writing; and the pouring of blood is associated with the quenching of thirst. Perhaps most strikingly, the act of giving is compared with self-imposed slavery, a metaphor also found in other *dāna* stories, which powerfully evokes the sense of willing submission to a state of self-abnegation.⁶⁷ (This theme will be discussed in Chapter 5 in

⁶⁵ *mayā bāhiravatthum adinnaṃ nāma n’ atthi. na maṃ bāhiradānaṃ toseti. ahaṃ ajjhattikadānaṃ dātukāmo.*

⁶⁶ *sace me koci hadayamaṃsassa nāmaṃ gaṇḥeyya kaṇayena uraṃ paharivā pasannaudakato sanālaṃ padumaṃ uddharanto viya lohitaṃbindūni paggharantaṃ hadayaṃ niharivā dassāmi. sace sarīramaṃsassa nāmaṃ gaṇḥeyya avalekhanasatthena lekheṇto viya sarīramaṃsaṃ otāretvā dassāmi. sace me koci lohitaṃsassa nāmaṃ gaṇḥeyy’ antamukhe pakkhipivā upanītabhājanaṃ pūretvā lohitaṃ dassāmi. sace vā pana koci gehe me kammaṃ na ppavattati, gehe me dāsakammaṃ karohī ti vadeyya rājavesaṃ apānetvā bahi thatvā attānaṃ sāvetvā dāsakammaṃ karissāmi. sace me koci akkhīnaṃ nāmaṃ gaṇḥeyya tālamūñjaṃ nīharanto viya akkhīni uppāṭetvā dassāmi ti cintesi.*

⁶⁷ This theme is expanded in the *Cp-a*, which states (305): ‘Just as a man, for the sake of food and clothing, surrenders himself to another and enters into servitude and slavery, in the same way the Great Man, wishing for the supreme welfare and happiness of all beings, desiring to fulfil his own perfection of giving, with a spiritually-oriented mind, for the sake of enlightenment, surrenders himself to another and enters into

the context of devotion, whereby one willingly gives oneself up as a slave to a superior.) Above all, Sivi feels joy at the prospect of such painful deeds.⁶⁸ It is important to stress, however, that pain itself is not viewed as purificatory. In fact, any feeling of pain would be seen as negative. In Sivi's case, it would signify that he was incapable of giving an internal gift, which must always be given willingly.⁶⁹ Far from being performed in order to feel pain, the purpose of these extreme deeds is to *test* the strength of an individual's virtue. Hence Sakka disguises himself as a brahmin 'in order to test' Sivi (*vīmaṃsanatthāya*, *J* 4.403.4).

Although technically a gift of a body part (*aṅgapariccāga*), the notion that giving is ultimately a sacrifice of life is suggested by the fact that, after he has given away his eyes, Sivi, in the misery of his blindness, wants to die (v.21). However, a more explicit example of a gift of life is provided by the *Sasa Jātaka* (316), in which the Bodhisatta is a hare who throws himself into a fire in order to feed a brahmin (again Sakka in disguise). The act is described as a sacrifice of life (*jīvitam pariccajivā*, *J* 3.51.20) and of the self (*attānam pariccajivā*, *J* 3.55.1).

Once again there is a deliberate contrast between the hare's painful deed and his joyful emotion (*J* 3.55.13ff.):

Offering his whole body into the **mouth of giving**, he leapt up and joyfully fell into the heap of coals, like a royal swan into a cluster of lotuses. But the fire could not

servitude, placing himself at the disposal of others.' *yathā nāma koci puriso ghāsacchādanahetu attānam parassa nissajati, vidheyabhāvaṃ upagacchati dāsavyam; evam eva mahāpuriso sambodhihetu nirāmisacitto sattānam anuttaram hitasukham icchanto attano dānapāramiṃ paripūretukāmo attānam parassa nissajati, vidheyabhāvaṃ upagacchati.*

⁶⁸ Note also Sivi's joy upon hearing the brahmin's request for his eyes (*J* 4.403.17ff.): 'What an opportunity! For today I will fulfil my desire. I will give a gift that has never been given before.' And in his joy he sang the second verse.' *aho me lābhā, ajja vata me manoratho matthakam pāpuṇissati, adinnapubbādānam dassāmī ti tuṭṭhamānaso dutiyam gātham āha.* See also v.25, in which Sivi describes the joy he felt at giving to the brahmin: 'A greater joy and vast happiness entered me.' *bhiyyo maṃ āvisi pīti somanassañ c' anappakam.*

⁶⁹ Despite the claim of some Buddhist texts that Jains believe in attaining happiness through pain, Jainism seems to have had a similar attitude towards self-mortification. See Dundas 1992:142f.

heat up the Bodhisatta's body, not even the pores of his hair. It was as if he had entered a pile of snow.⁷⁰

The self-violence suggested by the hare jumping into the fire is, as in the *Sivi Jātaka*, countered by the calm beauty of the simile of a swan descending into lotuses. Similarly, the transformative power of giving is shown by the fire turning into snow and the coals turning into lotuses, the unnatural quality of which expresses how *dāna* purifies and counteracts the normal course of *samsāra*.⁷¹ There is also again an emphasis on testing. Thus, when the Bodhisatta asks the brahmin (Sakka) why the fire is cold, Sakka reveals his identity and explains that he has come to test him, to which the Bodhisatta responds, 'Sakka, if not only you but all the world's creatures were to test my giving, they would not see me unwilling to give' (*J* 3.55.20ff.).⁷²

The image of the fire immediately has connotations of sacrifice. Indeed the sacrificial idea that the giver is inherent in the gift seems to have been literalised by the *Sasa Jātaka* to the extent that the giver has now become the sacrificial food. In accord with the relational model of sacrifice described above, the implication is that the giver partakes of the purity of the recipient through the latter 'digesting' and thereby directly transforming the former. Indeed it is noteworthy that the *paccuppannavatthu* compares the hare's gift of the body to a layman's 'gift of all the requisites' (*sabbaparikkhāra-dānaṃ*, *J* 3.51.11), which the *saṅgha* would then use or 'consume'. However, in the *Sasa Jātaka*, this relational sacrifice simply provides the skeleton of the story within which to extol giving for its own sake. Hence the significance of the statement that the Bodhisatta gives 'into the mouth of giving' (*dānamukhe*, 3.55.13), a phrase which is clearly meant to contrast with the norm of giving into the mouth of a recipient.⁷³ Indeed, the hare is never actually eaten by the

⁷⁰ *sakalasarīraṃ dānamukhe datvā lamghitvā padumapuñje rājahaṃso viya pamuditacitto aṅgārarāsimhi pati. so pana aggi Bodhisattassa sarīre lomakūpamattaṃ pi uñhaṃ kātuṃ nāsakkhi, himagabbhaṃ pavittho viya ahosi.*

⁷¹ That the story attributes the coldness of the fire to Sakka's intervention does not change the fact that it is the Bodhisatta's virtue which ultimately governs this transformation.

⁷² *Sakka, tvaṃ tāva tiṭṭha, sakalo pi ce lokasannivāso maṃ dānena vīmaṃseyya n' eva me adātukāmatam passeyyā ti Bodhisatto sihanādaṃ nadi.*

⁷³ Cf. *Mbh* 3.284.25, in which Karṇa states he will give 'into the mouths of brahmins' (*dvijamukhyebhyo*).

brahmin; the important thing is only that he is *willing* to be eaten. Sacrifice has therefore, as in Heestermann's 'classical' scheme, become individualised and internalised. The giving of a gift, which ultimately corresponds to oneself, and the transformation of that gift have all become subsumed within the same individual. The structure of a giver (as a separate entity) being 'digested' by a brahmin recipient (as a separate entity) is present and provides the framework for the story, but it acts as a kind of metaphor for the internal process occurring within the donor. The *Sasa Jātaka* thus effectively conveys the tension between individualist and relational giving.

Heesterman (1985) argues that the classical sacrifice, which emphasises the individual centrality of *yajamāna*, tames the agonistic connotations of the preclassical sacrifice, in which the patron discards his impurity onto the brahmin.⁷⁴ This process of internalisation extended to the notion of interiorising the sacrificial fires, whereby the ascetic himself becomes the sacrifice and thereby attains immortality.⁷⁵ Moreover he points out (1985:34) that such individualisation gave rise to the *karma* doctrine, whereby 'man depends only on his own (ritual) work, his own *karman*'. A similar process can be seen in the individualist giving portrayed in the *Sivi Jātaka* and *Sasa Jātaka*. The donor's self-mortification has become an internalised act and the fruit of sacrifice is acquired through the transcendent process of *karma* and not through a personalised exchange. As Heesterman states (1985:34): 'The world is no longer created through the contest and the exchange between the rival parties: the single individual creates it by himself through his own works, good as well as bad. In this conception, it is no longer possible to pass off the evil work, death, to the others; he must digest it himself.'

In addition, the agonistic aspects of preclassical sacrifice, whereby the patron transfers his pollution onto the brahmin, have been sanitised by the emphasis placed upon giving with

⁷⁴ Heesterman 1985:31: 'Whereas the classical ritual is supposed to produce its results [...] automatically without an intervening agency, the preclassical system based the life- and prosperity-furthering function on periodically alternating exchanges and reversals.'

⁷⁵ See Heesterman 1985:34f., 38ff.; Collins 1982:55ff.

joy, a theme discussed from the beginning of this chapter.⁷⁶ Thus Sivi's desire for self-mortification is mixed with emotions of happiness and metaphors of beauty. This change is also seen in Sakka's role, which can be contrasted with his frequently aggressive portrayal in post-Vedic literature (§2.3). In a famous passage in the *Mbh* (3.284ff.), Karṇa vows to act as a good *kṣatriya* by indiscriminately giving to brahmins, even at the cost of his life.⁷⁷ In order to undermine Karṇa's strength, Indra takes advantage of this vow by disguising himself as a brahmin (as in the above *jātakas*) and asking the warrior to give him the earrings and armour which provide Karṇa with his invincible power.⁷⁸ Karṇa at first refuses but then gives them reluctantly, receiving from Indra a destructive spear in return.⁷⁹ The above episode clearly conveys the notion that gifts harbour danger. Indra uses the structure of giving in order to make Karṇa vulnerable and expose him to his looming death. By contrast, in stories such as the *Sivi Jātaka* and *Sasa Jātaka* Indra's antagonism has been transformed into a desire to test the donor's virtue. The sinister connotations of disguise have been abandoned for more well-meaning ends and the agonistic aspect of the preclassical sacrifice has been diluted.

4.3.6 The independent donor

⁷⁶ In Brahmanical *dāna* there is also of course an emphasis on giving with attitudes such as joy. See Brekke 1998:292.

⁷⁷ Karṇa tells his father (*Mbh* 3.284.25): 'This whole world knows my vow, O Sun, that I would certainly give up even my life into the mouths of brahmins.'

*vratam vai mama loko 'yam veti kṛtsno vibhāvaso /
yathāham dvijamukhyebhyo dadyām prāṇān api dhruvam //25//*

Indeed he values the fame he will gain through giving to brahmins above the fame gained through offering up his body in war (3.284.35ff.).

⁷⁸ Karṇa's gift of his armour is a gift of life, not only because it makes him vulnerable to his enemies but also because the armour is moulded onto his body. For this reason, when Karṇa gives it away, Indra promises his body will not look wounded.

⁷⁹ The return-gift of the spear is spoken of in terms of exchange (*vinimayam kṛtvā*, 3.294.17). The spear is clearly a lesser gift than the armour and earrings, but the passage perhaps approaches Heesterman's notion of brahmin and patron engaged in an agonistic form of reciprocal exchange. Indeed, the story given in *Mbh* 3.284ff. contrasts with a version in 1.104, in which Karṇa gives without reluctance and Indra gives him the spear out of admiration for his virtue. Here the element of barter and exchange has been eradicated; this may belong to a later ideological stratum, in which brahmins (and gods) give boons in return for devoted service. See for example *Mbh* 3.289 in which a brahmin gives Kuntī the boon of being able to summon the gods; she partly receives such a great boon because she initially refused to ask for anything – compare similar sentiments in the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (440) and *Akitti Jātaka* (480).

As was discussed above, the remarkable nature of Sivi's gift lies in its being internal. The focus is on Sivi's intention and not primarily on satisfying the needs of the blind brahmin; for, as the text tells us, Sivi would have been willing to give to 'any beggars that came along' (*sampattānaṃ yācakānaṃ*, J 4.401.25f.).⁸⁰ His is an indiscriminate form of giving and, even though Sivi's role as royal protector is relevant,⁸¹ there is hardly any mention of his gift being motivated by compassion. Although the brahmin only requests one eye, Sivi insists on giving both.⁸² The brahmin simply provides a catalyst for Sivi to cultivate *dāna*, as is accentuated by the theme of testing. The emphasis is therefore on Sivi's mind and on the practice of giving in and for itself, an attitude clearly expressed by v.14 (quoted on p.123).

For this reason I find Brekke's use of the word 'charity' for intention-based giving problematic. Intention-based giving often involves a superior person giving to an inferior one, and this top-down giving can include an aspect of compassion, the classic example being the Buddha's gift of the teaching. Indeed, compassion is a key component in the *Cp-a*'s depiction of *dāna*, which places particular emphasis on the Bodhisatta's role as saviour.⁸³ However, the *Sivi Jātaka* (and related stories such as the *Vessantara Jātaka*) illustrate how compassion is unnecessary to top-down giving. In fact, as has been pointed out by Gombrich (1971:291ff.) and Hibbets (2000:33f.), compassionate giving is often valued less than other types of giving.⁸⁴

Far from being sensitive to the needs of his people, Sivi's *dāna* is to a large extent portrayed as anti-social. As we have seen, giving is an act of renunciation and, when taken

⁸⁰ See also J 4.403.2 (*sampattayācakānaṃ*) and J 4.402.12 (*kocid eva yācako*).

⁸¹ For example, Sivi tells the brahmin (v.5): 'May your desires be fulfilled.' *yad icchase tvaṃ tan te samijjhatū ti*.

⁸² As he himself states (v.6): 'Although you only ask for one, I will give you both.' *ekan te yācamānassa ubhayāni dadāṃ' ahaṃ*.

⁸³ See for example *Cp-a* 292ff., 296, 306ff., 318, 326. Often the Bodhisatta is compared to a medicine-tree that gives without discrimination to those in need (e.g. 296). There is a thin line between such indiscriminate compassion and the indiscriminate giving performed by Sivi and Vessantara (indeed Vessantara, as noted on p.125, is often described as a wish-fulfilling tree).

⁸⁴ Brekke himself points this out (1998:310).

to its extreme, it can conflict with social ethics. Thus army commanders, citizens and relatives all try to dissuade Sivi from his donation, which finally leads to his renouncing the throne and becoming an ascetic (*J*4.408).⁸⁵ Reiko Ohnuma has commented usefully on this theme (2000:54):

The opposers [of the Bodhisattva within the story] promote a view of self as being constituted through one's social context and relationships with others, whereas the Bodhisattva promotes a view of the self as an autonomous and individual agent.

According to Ohnuma, Sivi's sacrifice of his body is a rejection of the self bound by social ties – what she calls, with Carrithers and Olivelle, the *personne* (originally a Maussian term) – and an affirmation of the self as an independent moral agent (the *moi*). She continues (2000:56):

Giving up one's body and life for the sake of another would seem on the surface to be the *ultimate denial of self*, yet at the same time, it constitutes an *ultimate act of self-will* – an assertion of the self's right to dispose of himself as he pleases.

Nor is this ambiguity restricted to the 'inherent tension between the "selflessness" that *dāna* is supposed to help cultivate and the extreme "assertion-of-self" that the gift of one's body necessarily involves' (2000:57). For, as Ohnuma shows (2000:57ff.), 'there is evidence throughout Buddhist exegetical and commentarial literature that the bodhisattva's gift of his body was an ideal that caused a certain amount of ambivalence, and that its exalted position as an ideal form of *dāna* was sometimes contested' (2000:59f.).

Ohnuma's analysis adds depth to our contrast between individualist and relational giving. It is precisely Sivi's subscription to a non-relational outlook and his assertion of his self as an independent agent which conflicts with society around him. These themes will be particularly relevant to our discussion of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (whose hero also belongs

⁸⁵ On the motif of such opposition within gift-of-the-body stories, see Ohnuma 2000:47ff.

to the Sivi lineage), which similarly expresses ambivalent attitudes towards the Bodhisatta's extreme form of giving. Indeed, it is perhaps because such gifts are so extreme that stories like the *Sivi Jātaka* incorporate the motif of a brahmin making a request to the king. This motif reaffirms the superiority of the giver in accord with top-down giving and it keeps the patronage system intact (one should give to a brahmin and not just to anyone), but it also serves to dilute the implication that such gifts of the body are forms of self-mortification, a notion often ambivalently negotiated in Buddhist literature. Sivi must be asked to give his eyes; he cannot give them without a recipient. The autonomy of Sivi's gift is therefore tempered by a degree of relational context. Furthermore, by identifying the brahmin with Sakka, whose goal is only to test Sivi's virtue, the extremity of his gift is again diluted.

However, such qualifications do not conceal the underlying motivation of Sivi's gift, which, from the very beginning of the story, is to give an internal donation and to 'sacrifice' himself. The importance of Sivi's autonomy is especially conveyed by the conclusion to the *Sivi Jātaka*, in which the prose composer is keen to argue that Sivi's divine eyes arose because of his karma and not because of Sakka's boon (see pp.77ff.). In a similar manner to Akitti in the *Akitti Jātaka* (see pp.123f.), Sivi wants to be able to give *to* others but is wary of receiving *from* them. *Dāna* is thus kept as individualist an activity as possible. That said, Sivi's *dāna* is also accorded a social relevance. Even when he is an ascetic, Sivi is surrounded by courtiers who insist on carrying him to the park and on guarding him (*J* 4.408). More significantly, Sivi returns to his city after he has made his act of truth and is honoured by crowds of people to whom he teaches the importance of giving (*J* 4.111f.). As a layman, Sivi's *dāna* is related to the gifts of ordinary people. However, as a king, Sivi's gifts must also surpass those of the average layman. Independence is thus an integral aspect of kingship: a king must foster a degree of separation from society in order to have the authority to be responsible for it. The king engages in society but he also transcends it, and it is this quality which so often links him with the ascetic.

4.4 The recipient

4.4.1 Discriminatory giving

In the previous section we saw how, in stories such as the *Sivi Jātaka* and *Sasa Jātaka*, the emphasis is on an individualist form of *dāna*, although the structure of giving to a brahmin is still retained. This tendency is symptomatic of top-down giving, and is expressed in an exaggerated manner by the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), in which the recipient is portrayed as a wicked brahmin, whose ignominious character serves as a foil to the Bodhisatta’s virtue. Other stories, however, lend greater weight to the importance of the recipient for the purification of a gift. Here the emphasis is on giving *to* someone, or making a sacrifice through the medium of another’s purity, and is symptomatic of bottom-up giving. In contrast to the *Sivi Jātaka*, in which the king gives to whatever beggars come along, stories that stress the recipient are concerned with the quality of the person the gift is given to. As the *Āditta Jātaka* (424) states (v.5): ‘The discriminatory gift is praised by the Sugata. Donations bear great fruit when they are given to those worthy of offerings in this world of living, just as seeds are said to do in a good field.’⁸⁶ Discrimination is the key word and signifies the donor’s ability to distinguish between those who are worthy of offerings (*dakkhiṇeyya*) from those who are not, the former being a standard epithet of the *saṅgha*, which is considered to be the ultimate field of merit.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *viceyyadānaṃ sugatappasatthaṃ ye dakkhiṇeyyā idha jīvaloke /
etesu dinnāni mahapphalāni bijāni vuttāni yathā sukhette //5//*

⁸⁷ The commentary to the above verse explains (*J* 3.473.21ff.): ‘The phrase “the discriminatory gift” means the gift that is given after discriminating the gift and those who are worthy of offerings. One discriminates the gift by giving after one has examined the highest, most excellent gift and not giving just anything, and one discriminates those worthy of gifts by giving to those whom one has examined as being endowed with qualities such as virtue and not giving to just anyone.’ *viceyyadānaṃ ti dakkhiṇaṃ ca dakkhiṇeyyaṃ ca vicinitvā dinnadānaṃ, tattha yaṃ vā taṃ vā adatvā aggaggaṃ paṇītaṃ deyyadhammaṃ vicinitvā dento dakkhiṇaṃ vicināti nāma, yesaṃ vā tesāṃ vā adatvā silādiguṇasampanne vicinitvā tesāṃ dadanto dakkhiṇeyye vicināti nāma.*

Such concepts lead the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* to state that the nature of the recipient is as important in determining the purity of a gift as the intention of the donor. Indeed, it even states that if the donor is not virtuous and has no belief in *kamma*, the gift will still be purified when it is given to a virtuous recipient (*M* 3.257). As has been noticed by Gombrich (1971:291) and Brekke (1998), this conflicts with the doctrine that intention determines karma. Both scholars argue that the reason for this conflict lies in the *saṅgha*'s need to receive more lay patronage than other religious groups. As Gombrich points out (1971:289): 'If generous intention is all that counts, [...] why should people give to the Sangha rather than to anyone else?' Brekke elaborates on this, arguing that the notion of the 'suitable recipient' is a device for ensuring lay donations (1998:311):

The philosophy that classifies recipients according to merit is an ideology serving the interests of the religious specialists. The aspiration to domination of this class rests on this ideology. If people do not believe in the special merit of giving to renunciators, the renunciators will not receive alms. This has, of course, been clear to monks and Brahmins and they have worked to keep the ideology alive and gloss over its clash with the ethics of intention.

Brekke pinpoints an important factor in *dāna*, and indeed several *jātaka* stories present the issue of lay patronage as a source of strife between rival ascetic groups.⁸⁸ However, while it is valid to analyse concepts like the 'suitable recipient' in terms of monastic hegemony, to take this as one's sole approach risks ignoring the value systems expressed within the tradition itself. Brekke does add (*ibid.*): 'I do not mean to say that they themselves [the *saṅgha*] have not believed in their ideology.' Nevertheless, his reductionist analysis appears to overlook fundamental aspects of the notion of the 'suitable recipient'. Regarding this, I would concur with the comments made by Maria Hibbets concerning medieval treatises on *dāna* (2000:35):

Resistance to a worldview based on hierarchy and difference should not lead us to dismiss it as a kind of ethics, however. There is a temptation to read these discourses only as apologias for Brahmanical or clerical hegemony, or rhetoric trying to legitimize and maintain a social hierarchy and to preserve material

⁸⁸ For example, *J* nos. 163, 174, 213, 497.

interests. To an extent, we must keep these critiques in mind: it may be that power and economic interest never go away. But we should not let our own distinctly postmodern predisposition to see everything in terms of power foreclose on the possibility that certain discourses might actually be expressing coherent ethical perspectives. What the medieval gift theories do remind us of is that often where the modern observer sees only relations of power or dominance, or economic interest, thoughtful voices from within the tradition have often chosen not to focus solely on these aspects of the gift in favor of considering the gift's moral dimensions.

Brekke's criticisms seem to prioritise the ethic of intention as a type of original ideology, which was then compromised by the pressures of social necessity. Although I agree that intention plays a central role in Buddhist ethics, such a notion is problematic, not least because it tends to devalue aspects of Buddhism that do not fit within its mould, and it seems to me much more plausible – and indeed fruitful – to discern a continuously shifting debate in Buddhist texts over the role of intention. Moreover, I have already suggested that *dāna* is based upon notions of sacrifice. The shift between a relational and individualist form of sacrifice reflects the tension we find here between giving to a suitable recipient and giving based on intention. On the one hand one sacrifices through someone else, on the other hand one sacrifices within oneself. Buddhist *dāna* incorporates both models.

Indeed, the conflict between the intention of the donor and the quality of the recipient is often overstated. In exegetical texts like the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, the propensity for categorisation has separated the donor from the recipient in order to determine mathematically the purity of a gift in terms of two distinct factors. In the majority of the stories under my investigation, however, the intention of the donor plays a central role in recipient-based giving.

Often the donor gives alms in response to the recipient's virtue and deportment.⁸⁹ The gift expresses admiration for the renunciate and is accordingly rooted in the donor's intention. This attitude of respect is often accentuated by the manner in which the gift is given. For

⁸⁹ For example, *J* nos. 124, 235.

example, in the *Kummāsapiṇḍa Jātaka* (415) the Bodhisatta gives food to four *paccekabuddhas* thus (*J* 3.407.6ff.):

He spread sand, arranged four seats and covered them with broken branches. He then made the *paccekabuddhas* sit in order, brought water in a leaf-basket and poured the water of donation. He then placed the four portions of gruel in four bowls and venerated them, saying, ‘Venerable ones, as a result of these may I not be born in a poor family, and may this be the cause for attaining omniscience.’⁹⁰

After the *paccekabuddhas* have eaten and departed, the Bodhisatta feels ‘the joy of association with *paccekabuddhas*, and after they had left his sight and he had gone to his work, he remembered them always till his death’ (*J* 3.407.15f.).⁹¹ The gift therefore affects the Bodhisatta’s mind both during and after the donation. Indeed, even when, as a result of the donation, he is reborn as a prince in his next life, he still recollects the gift he gave to the *paccekabuddhas*, the thought of which fills his body with delight (*pīti*) and inspires him to teach others to give in the same way.

As discussed previously, giving to a worthy recipient involves the use of discrimination. Such discrimination involves ethical judgment, since the donor evaluates which person he considers to be most virtuous. In fact it is precisely this notion of discrimination which Brekke rejects. He argues that the contradiction between the ethic of intention and the notion of a suitable recipient could be avoided ‘by insisting that the fundamental difference of giving to religious specialists on the one hand and giving to any other being on the other rises only from the difference in motivation’ (1998:311). But he denies that this is the case, saying (*ibid.*): ‘In the cases I have encountered the explanation of the difference always involves references to the qualities of the recipient.’ What Brekke seems to overlook is that it is precisely because the recipient’s qualities are evaluated that the gift

⁹⁰ *vālikaṃ ussāpetvā cattāri āsanāni paññāpetvā tesam upari sākābhaṅgaṃ attharivā paccekabuddhe paṭipāṭiyā nisīdāpetvā paṇṇapuṭena udakaṃ āharivā dakkhiṇodakaṃ pātetvā catusu pātesu cattāro kummāsapiṇḍe paṭṭhāpetvā vanditvā bhante etesaṃ nissandena daḷiddagehe nibbatti nāma mā hotu, sabbaññutaññāpāvedhassa paccayo hotū ti.*

⁹¹ *paccekabuddhagataṃ pītiṃ gahetvā tesu cakkhupathe atītesu kammantaṃ gantvā yāvatāyukaṃ anussarivā [...]*

is closely linked to the donor's motivation. This has particularly been emphasised by Maria Hibbets (2000), who, on the basis of Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu exegetical treatises on *dāna*, describes how bottom-up giving is an act of worship, which she calls 'an ethics of esteem'. She states (2000:32):

To esteem someone is to set high value on him or her, to appraise such a person well, and to place him or her in high regard. It is a moral view that values demarcating difference, recognizing moral and religious superiority in others, and responding appropriately, as the very conditions for moral action. [...] We can now begin to see why the emphasis on the status of the recipient is so essential to these gift theories. The moral excellence of the recipient is vital not only for how much merit of good *kamma* the giver earns by the gift, but it also conditions the appropriate intentions and responses expected of the giver. A giver can only feel esteem when face-to-face with an admired other. The successful gift depends upon the giver recognizing moral worth in the recipient and responding to it. In this regard, the medieval theorists were interested in how the presence of exalted others conditions moral agency. [...] [Esteem] is an act of discrimination – of seeing good qualities in the other – that is a kind of religious act, a mark of piety. It involves the noting of difference, of recognizing the moral gap between one's self and the other, which itself can be a call to moral excellence.

Hibbets' comments on the importance of being 'face-to-face' with a recipient are reflected by the *Cūlasaccaka Sutta*, in which the Buddha states that the merit derived from giving to an enlightened person can only be attained if the gift is given directly and not if it is given through an intermediary (*M* 1.236f.). On the one hand it is thus important to consider *dāna* as a relationship between giver and recipient, a notion which will particularly come to the fore in Chapter 5 when we discuss giving in the context of love and devotion. On the other hand, as we shall see, the degree to which the donor and recipient personally interact is often ambiguous; indeed such ambiguity is crucial if the religious gift is to be an act of generalised rather than restricted exchange.

4.4.2 What makes an ideal recipient?

In relational giving, a gift becomes purified through the recipient. Thus the *Āditta Jātaka* (424) states (v.3): 'If one gives a gift to someone who has attained the truth and possesses

zeal and energy, one crosses the river [Vetaraṇi] of Yama and, though a mortal, one reaches the heavens.⁹² Moreover, because the giver aspires for fruit produced through generalised rather than restricted exchange, an ideal gift is not only given in a renunciate manner but also received in a renunciate manner. Accordingly stories such as the *Suvaṇṇahaṃsa Jātaka* (136) describe how an ascetic must not be greedy for alms. Indeed, greedy ascetics are less likely to receive alms since donors will be less willing to give to them.⁹³ As a renunciate, the ideal recipient is also not supposed to ask for a gift. Thus the *Aṭṭhisena Jātaka* (403) states (v.6): ‘The intelligent man should know that the wise do not beg. The noble stand in silence: this is the way that the noble beg.’⁹⁴ In the prose, the Bodhisatta adds (*J* 3.354.12ff.): ‘Begging is the practice of householders who take pleasure in desire and not the practice of ascetics. As soon as he has gone forth, an ascetic should practise the pure lifestyle, which is different from that of the householder.’⁹⁵ The Bodhisatta is then offered a reward for his words of a thousand cattle and a bull, which he refuses (in the prose but not the verses) saying, ‘Great king, I am an ascetic who possesses no property; I have no need of cows’ (*J* 3.355.13f.).⁹⁶

There is however an inbuilt tension between the ascetic’s aloofness on the one hand and his need for almsfood on the other.⁹⁷ (As we have seen, ironically the more renunciate the ascetic, the more donations he receives.) This ambiguity is illustrated by the *Abbhantara Jātaka* (281), in which Yasodharā falls ill and needs mango juice mixed with sugar in order to recover. She complains to her son, Rāhula, that her status as a nun makes it difficult for her to obtain the medicine (*J* 2.393.3ff.): ‘My son, when I was a householder, my stomach pains were cured by yellow mango juice flavoured with sugar; but now that I

⁹² *yo dhammaladdhassa dadāti dānaṃ uttḥānaviriyādhigatassa /
atikkamma so Vetaraṇiṃ Yamassa dibbāni thānāni upeti macco //3//*

⁹³ See also the *Mahilāmukha Jātaka* (26) and *Satadhamma Jātaka* (179) for the notion of obtaining one’s alms properly.

⁹⁴ *na ve yācanti sappaññā, dhīro ca vidituṃ arahati /
uddissa ariyā tiṭṭhanti, esā ariyānaṃ yācanā //6//*

⁹⁵ *yācanā hi nāma’ esā kāmabhogīnaṃ gihīnaṃ āciññā na pabbajitānaṃ. pabbajitena pana pabbajitakālato paṭṭhāya gihi-asamena parisuddhājīvena bhavitabban ti.*

⁹⁶ *ahaṃ mahārāja akiñcano pabbajito, na me gāvīhi attho ti.*

⁹⁷ Note the simile in the *Illisa Jātaka* (78) of how a monk should collect alms in a village like a bee who sucks nectar from a flower but leaves it undamaged (*J* 1.349.14f.); the verse is *Dhp* v.49.

live by alms, how am I to get any?’⁹⁸ Rāhula goes to Sāriputta for help, who agrees to obtain the medicine for Yasodharā. He does this by going to the king’s palace, at which point a gardener happens to enter with a basket of mangoes. The king then automatically crushes the mangoes and puts the juice (with sugar) in Sāriputta’s bowl. Sāriputta therefore never explicitly asks for the mango juice, and yet he still receives it through a combination of chance events and what appears to be supernatural foresight, or perhaps magic.

The theme of the renunciate recipient is also central to the *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka* (495). In this story, the ‘incomparable gift’ (*asadisadānaṃ*, *J* 4.360.23) is said to be ‘discriminatory giving’ (*viceyyadānaṃ*, *J* 4.361.2), which contrasts with the *Sivi Jātaka*, in which it is described as internal giving; the conflict between the two definitions summarises the tension between relational and individualist giving. In the *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka*, King Yudhiṭṭhila asks Vidhura (both of whom are *Mahābhārata* characters) what type of brahmin makes a gift bear the greatest fruit. Vidhura lists ten types of brahmin for the king to evaluate. Most of these brahmins are engaged in trade or various forms of service and are accordingly rejected with the refrain: ‘They have fallen from brahminhood. They are not called brahmins.’⁹⁹ The type of brahmin the king finally opts for is virtuous, learned and celibate, eats only one meal a day and refrains from alcohol (vv.46f.). It is the brahmin least concerned with food who should eat the king’s offering. The conclusion identifies such true brahmins with *paccekabuddhas*, who are invited to eat the king’s food.

4.4.3 The ideal consumer

The emphasis expressed in the *Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka* on finding a suitable recipient to consume an offering is also expressed in the *Bhikkhāparamparā Jātaka* (496). In this story, a food-offering is passed from a landowner to a king, from the king to a brahmin,

⁹⁸ *tāta aḡāramajjhe me sakkharāyojite ambarase pīte udaravāto vūpasammati, idāni pana piṇḍāya caritvā jīvikam kappema, kuto naṃ labhissāmā ti.*

⁹⁹ *apetā te brāhmaṇṇā [iti rājā Koravyo]. na te vuccanti brāhmaṇā.* vv.7, 11, 15, 19, 24, 28, 32, 36, 40, 44.

from the brahmin to an ascetic (*isi*), and finally from the ascetic to a monk (*bhikkhu*). Each successive person represents a stage away from passion and greed. The hierarchy concludes with the *bhikkhu*, who alone has the authority to eat on his own since he does not cook or have wealth.¹⁰⁰ The ascetic (*isi*) is inferior to him because he seeks and accumulates food by digging wild bulbs, drying rice, and collecting fruit and honey. Most importantly the ascetic cooks whereas the monk is viewed as the true renunciate because he lives off leftovers. However, although it is only the monk who eats on his own and is, in this sense, independent, his commitment to living off leftovers ironically means that he is dependent upon and in continuous contact with lay people. Indeed, the monk's dependency upon the laity is perhaps one reason why the intention of the lay donor is so stressed, since the monk wants the gift to be a true leftover in order to corroborate his position as a renunciate. The attitude with which a gift is given can therefore be as important to the recipient as it is to the donor.

The implication of the food-chain depicted by the *Bhikkhāparamparā Jātaka* is that it is not only important who receives the gift but also who consumes it. This echoes the concept of relational sacrifice in Brahmanism, whereby the gift (and, by extension, the giver) is purified by the brahmin who consumes it. In a type of inverse mirroring of the renunciate's eating of leftovers, the donor receives 'leftovers' (*śeṣa, ucchiṣṭa*) in the shape of the purified form of the gift, which returns to him after it has been 'consumed' by the brahmin.¹⁰¹ The concept that a gift has to be used by a recipient before it produces fruit is also noted by Gonda (1965:221):

Among other beliefs and practices in connection with 'gifts' from which it may appear that their 'archaic' character has been largely preserved in post-Vedic times is for instance the conviction, expressed by authorities on dharma, that, if a gift is sent to a person, but is stolen or lost and never reaches the donee, the donor cannot reap the 'unseen reward' in such a case because there is no acceptance and so no complete *dāna*.

¹⁰⁰ On the importance of cooking, see Malamoud 1996:23ff.

¹⁰¹ On the importance of eating a superior's leftovers, especially the leftovers of brahmins or gods (in other words, sacrificial leftovers) see Malamoud 1996:7ff. and Trautmann 1981:287. The *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497) parodies this when it depicts brahmins eating the leftovers of an outcaste; see §3.4.4.

In Theravāda Buddhism, on the other hand, the importance of consumption is not often expressed, perhaps because it steers too far from the ethic of intention. However, some texts do allude to the notion of consumption, which is often conveyed through the term *paribhoga*, literally ‘use’. For example, in *A* 2.54ff. we are told that a donor who gives the four requisites may receive four floods of merit (*puññābhisandhā*). This merit is limitless (*appamāṇa*) if the gift is given to a monk who ‘uses’ it (*paribhuñjamāno*) and who abides in limitless concentration of the mind (*appamāṇaṃ cetosamādhim*). The passage seems to correlate the limitlessness of the merit with the limitlessness of the recipient’s mental concentration. Moreover, the word *paribhuñjamāno* implies that the merit increases in accordance with how much it is used. It could be argued that *paribhuñjamāno* simply emphasises the notion that monks depend upon lay patronage for their sustenance. This appears to be the explanation of the commentary (*Mp* 3.93), which also states that the donor’s merit is limitless because he repeatedly recollects that the *arahant* is using his gift.¹⁰² The commentary’s explanation thus accords with the ethic of intention, a fact which might suggest that it is attempting to gloss over the sentiment that a gift’s merit depends upon its use.

Certainly the notion that a donor should give a monk something useful is a prevalent one. Thus in the *Saṅkha Jātaka* (442) a donor gives a *paccekabuddha* sandals to protect his feet from the hot ground.¹⁰³ In the *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527) a young woman gives a monk an ornate garment when she sees that he has been robbed of his. The result of this gift is that she is reborn beautiful, and the suggestion that this fruit is linked to the monk’s use of the gift is implied by the narrative’s emphasis on the radiance of the monk’s body after he dons the robe (*J* 5.212.18ff.), a beauty which appears to relate to the woman’s beauty in

¹⁰² *appamāṇo tassa puññābhisando ti iminā dāyakassa puññācetanāya appamāṇataṃ katheti; tassa hi khīṇāsavo me cīvaraṃ paribhuñjati ti punappuna anussaraṇavasena pavattā puññācetanā appamāṇā hoti.*

¹⁰³ Unknown to the donor, the *paccekabuddha* has purposefully appeared before him barefoot in order to provide him with the opportunity to make merit.

her future life.¹⁰⁴ Such concepts are also linked to the use of the word *paribhoga* in contexts outside of *dāna*. For example, in the *Sekha Sutta* (*M* 1.353f.) the Buddha is asked by the Sakyans to be the first to ‘use’ their assembly hall (*Bhagavā paṭhamam paribhuñjatu*) so that when they ‘use’ it later, they will receive welfare and happiness. Similarly, great importance is placed upon objects that have been used by the Buddha (*pāribhogikadhātu*),¹⁰⁵ such as the Bodhi tree or his needle-case, the worship of which leads to merit. An example of this is provided by a canonical *jātaka* called the *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* (*M* 2.45ff.) in which the Buddha stops at a spot where the Buddha Kassapa once had a monastery and where he himself lived in a past life. Ānanda asks him to sit there so that ‘this place will have been used by two *arahants* and perfectly enlightened buddhas’ (2.45).¹⁰⁶ Such sanctification produced by *paribhoga* seems to be connected with the purification of a gift through consumption.

4.4.4 The danger in the gift

A conspicuous aspect of *dāna*, which has caught the attention of much modern scholarship since Marcel Mauss, who noticed that it conflicted with his view of an archaic gift-exchange based upon reciprocity, is that the recipient does not return a reciprocal gift to the donor. Regarding Brahmanical *dāna*, many scholars have argued that this is due to the danger posed by a gift. The brahmin’s reluctance to reciprocate signifies his desire to alienate himself from the threat of impurity that is transmitted from the giver through the gift. The donor is also reluctant to receive a return gift since he too wants to alienate himself from the impurity he has passed on – hence the need for the gift to be relinquished with an attitude of abandonment. Trautmann for example states (1981:287): ‘The gift is a danger to him [the recipient], being the bodily extension of the donor, which because the

¹⁰⁴ The fact that she herself was about to wear the garment on her own body but then gave it to the monk to wear on his body accentuates the sense that the gift provides a physical connection between them.

¹⁰⁵ See *J* 4.228ff.

¹⁰⁶ *evāyaṃ bhūmippadeso dvīhi arahantehi sammāsambuddhehi paribhutto bhavissatī ti.*

donor is by definition an inferior, is defiling to him and diminishes his spiritual lustre, *tejas*, so painfully acquired and so easily drained away.’ He continues (1981:287f.):

[The donor and recipient] eye one another suspiciously, the recipient to assure himself that the donor is of sufficient standing and purity so that the danger of the gift is minimal, the donor to assure himself that the brahmin is a genuine disinterested *śrotiya* [...]. It is the interest of the donor to maximise the merit of the gift by giving to someone whose status is as superior as possible to his own, whereas it is the interest of the recipient to accept only from those most nearly his equals in purity.

This leads to the curious conclusion that (*ibid.*) ‘only the purest, most disinterested brahmin does not solicit gifts or, better yet, will not accept. Pushed to its logical extreme, the gift finds no recipient. [...] The theory of gift tends towards its own destruction.’ This threat of pollution is also noted by Parry (1986) in his study of contemporary brahmins in Benares. He remarks (1986:460):

[Brahmins] see themselves as endlessly accumulating the sin they accept with the gifts of the pilgrims and mourners who visit the city, and [...] they liken themselves to a sewer through which the moral filth of their patrons is passed. Theoretically they should be able to ‘digest’ the sin by dint of various ritual procedures of expiation, and by donating gifts they receive to another Brahman with increment. But quite apart from the fact that this is plainly an economic impossibility, they sadly admit ignorance of the correct ritual procedures.

In Buddhist texts, some passages also express the notion that *dāna* involves danger. For example, in the *Vissāsabhojana Jātaka* (93) the Buddha warns his monks that they should be ‘circumspect’ (*paccavekkhitvā*) in their ‘use’ (*paribhoga*, *J* 1.388.1) of requisites, even if they have been given by relatives. He adds (*J* 1.388.2ff.): ‘For if a monk is not circumspect in his use, he will not be released from existing as a demon or a ghost when he dies. Use without caution is like eating poison (*visaparibhogasadiso*).’¹⁰⁷ The title of this story refers to the idea of favouring food that is ‘trustworthy’ (*vissāsa*), and this theme

¹⁰⁷ *apaccavekkhitaparibhogam katvā hi kālam kurumāno bhikkhu yakkhapa-attabhāvato na muccati. apaccavekkhitaparibhogo nām’ esa visaparibhogasadiso.*

is particularly elaborated in *Dhp-a* 1.337ff. There King Pasenadi gives food to a group of monks but, because he does not serve them with proper attention, all the monks depart except for Ānanda. Ānanda remains because he alone has the ability to preserve the king's faith because of his great merit (*mahāpuñño*, *Dhp-a* 1.341), a notion which is perhaps related to the Brahmanical concept of a renunciate neutralising the danger in a gift by digesting its impurity. Ānanda informs the king that the monks left because they had no trust (*vissāsa*) in him, whereupon he lists nine factors which bar a family from receiving visits from monks. This list is also found in *A* 4.387f. and includes not treating a monk with proper respect and being greedy with food.

A similar concept in Brahmanism is discussed by Malamoud, who states (1996:26): 'The *Dharma Sūtras*, as well as the treatises of Manu and Yājñavalkya, draw up a list of those persons, who, because of personal imperfections (diseases, degrading occupations, infirmities, evil behaviour, un-expiated sins), may not be donors of food to brahmins.' In Buddhist texts, the emphasis usually appears to be on the donor's ethical rather than social status. However, that said, in the *Satadhamma Jātaka* (179), when a brahmin eats an outcaste's leftovers, he throws up blood and ultimately seeks death in the forest.¹⁰⁸ In the *paccuppannavatthu* the Buddha relates this to a monk's eating (*paribhoga*) of alms acquired through impropriety (*anesanā*). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the idea of being physically affected by another person's nature is also found in the context of associating with the correct friends.

The practice of rejecting a donor who is impure is further illustrated by the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), in which the Buddha refuses to give his *anumodana* because he says the assembly is impure (*asuddhā*, *J* 4.401.15). Similarly, a monk can, under special circumstances, refuse alms by turning over his bowl if the donor has committed some transgression.¹⁰⁹ Such a refusal is rare, but it nevertheless serves to

¹⁰⁸ This is marked contrast to the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), in which Mātaṅga's leftovers are viewed positively; see §3.4.4.

¹⁰⁹ See Brekke 1998:298, and the *paccuppannavatthu* to the *Takkāriya Jātaka* (481).

qualify the general rule that ascetics should receive gifts from everybody. The importance of a donor's purity is accentuated by the ritual of offering a water-libation (*dakkhiṇodaka*) when giving a gift, as is described for example in the *Cullakaseṭṭhi Jātaka* (4) (*J* 1.118.13) or *Illisa Jātaka* (78) (*J* 1.348.22). Moreover, a donor should give with the pure mental attitude of joy and respect; as the *Bhaddasāla Jātaka* (465) states (*J* 4.144.17f.): 'The food of friendship is the best, great king; for even a portion of gruel is sweet if it is given by a friend.'¹¹⁰ As was discussed above, this emphasis on joy divests gifts of any agonistic connotations. Indeed in Buddhism the monk too expresses what is literally described as 'joy' (*anumodana*) in the donor's gift (see pp.165ff.). *Dāna* thus becomes a sanitised and purified arena.

Despite some of the passages cited above, the notion that a donor transfers his impurity onto an ascetic recipient is uncommon in the *Jātakas*, as fits an intention-based rather than physicalist theory of karma.¹¹¹ For example, while in Brahmanical *dāna* a gift can be 'passed on' from one brahmin recipient to another as a means of expiating its impurity (Parry 1996:460), in what is perhaps a Buddhist restructuring of this, onlookers gain merit by rejoicing in the gift. Indeed, rather than the threat of pollution, it is more often the fear of becoming attached to a gift which makes a gift dangerous and influences the recipient's aloofness. For example, in the *Vātamiḅa Jātaka* (14) a woman persuades a monk to leave the *saṅgha* by enticing him with delicious almsfood. We are told (*J* 1.157.3f.): 'After she had bound him in the cravings of taste, she gradually got him to sit down in her house, and when she realised that by giving him almsfood she had him under her power, she pretended to be ill and lay down in her bedroom.'¹¹² The Buddha links this event to a story in the past in which a wild deer is caught in a trap by its desire for honey.

¹¹⁰ *vissāsaparamaṃ [bhojanaṃ] mahārāja, kaṅṅikamattaṃ pi hi viśāsikena dinnāṃ madhuraṃ hotī ti.*

¹¹¹ As was discussed in §3.4.5, the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522) attacks the idea of transferring impurity onto an ascetic.

¹¹² *rasataṅhāya bandhitvā anukkamena gehe nisīdāpetvā bhikkhaṃ dadamānā attano vasaṃ upagatabhāvaṃ ṅatvā gilānālayaṃ dassetvā antogabbhe nipajji.*

The notion that a gift may harm an ascetic by arousing his desire has already been discussed in the context of the *Akitti Jātaka* (480), in which the Bodhisatta fears that he will become attached to Sakka’s beauty. It is also conveyed by the *Sattubhastā Jātaka* (402), in which a brahmin tries to give the Bodhisatta money as payment for having saved his life. This is preceded by a verse in which the brahmin states that he finds the Bodhisatta’s knowledge terrifying (v.6): ‘Your veils have been removed and you see everything. Your knowledge, brahmin, has a terrifying appearance.’¹¹³ The verse implies that the brahmin hopes somehow to placate the fierce nature of the Bodhisatta’s knowledge by offering him a gift. Accordingly the Bodhisatta rejects the gift since it threatens to dilute his purity. Not only that, the Bodhisatta disassociates himself from any suggestion of restricted exchange by giving the brahmin money instead.

Indeed, Axel Michaels has argued that it is this renunciate outlook which also underlies the recipient’s aloofness in Brahmanical *dāna* and not the fear of pollution. In contrast to scholars such as Trautmann, Michaels asserts that the lack of reciprocity in Brahmanical gift-giving may not be ‘because impurity is transmitted but because the theory of *dāna* arose in a period when any gift had to be measured against the highest soteriological goal, namely ascetic morality’ (1997:244). To support his conclusion, Michaels compares *dāna* with the rules for greetings given by *Dharmaśāstra* texts. These greeting rules reflect a similar asymmetrical hierarchy and are also concerned with preventing the defilement that may accrue from such a confrontational context. But in these rules a greeting must be returned, even if one is a brahmin. According to Michaels, the reason why similar reservations were not formed around reciprocating a greeting is because ‘the gift, in contrast to the greeting, is a good of gross material nature, an equivalent return on which the Brahmin can only be excused from when he himself is an ascetic or the motive for the gift is an ascetic one’ (1997:262). In being an individual who has renounced the normal

¹¹³ *vivattacchaddā nu si sabbadassī, ñaṇaṃ nu te brāhmaṇa bhīmsarūpaṃ //6//*
Bhīmsarūpa is, however, a stock epithet used for ascetic power or knowledge. See for example v.4 of the *Juṅha Jātaka* (456), where it is used of *tapas*.

social exchange of give and take, the ascetic does not reciprocate a gift. Indeed, to do so would be to deny the donor his merit since the gift is meant to be given without any expectation of a direct return. Michaels' stress on the material nature of the gift leads him to underplay the importance of the identification between the giver and the gift as well as the importance of the gift being purified by the recipient, but his argument does expose several significant themes which are relevant to *dāna* in Buddhism. If an exchange is wanted, it is a form of transcendental or generalised exchange, and not a form of mundane or restricted exchange.

4.4.5 Restricted or personalised exchange

Uneasiness over restricted exchange provides the framework for the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* (*M* 3.253ff.). At the beginning of this text, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī asks the Buddha to accept a cloth that she has made for him. Her request is supported by Ānanda, who praises the love shown by Mahāpajāpatī to the Buddha as his foster-mother. Ānanda also points out that it is because of the Buddha that she has understood the four noble truths. The gift of the cloth is therefore viewed as an expression of the personal relationship that exists between the Buddha and his foster-mother, which is based, on the one hand, upon kinship and affection and, on the other, upon the close connection between teacher and pupil. The Buddha however recommends that she donate the cloth to the *saṅgha* as well as to himself. The commentary asserts that the Buddha does this in order to increase her merit, and not because the *saṅgha* is more meritorious than the Buddha.¹¹⁴ Another reason for the Buddha's statement is however suggested by the rest of the *sutta*: namely, that he wants to disassociate the gift from being a personal donation (*pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*). This is partly because worship and material donations are not to be viewed in terms of a direct exchange for religious teachings. A material gift, we are told, cannot easily pay back (*na suppaṭikāraṃ*) the gift of the *dhamma* (*M* 3.254).¹¹⁵ Although other passages express the

¹¹⁴ *Ps* 5.67ff.

¹¹⁵ Thus in *M* 3.254, the Buddha tells Ānanda: 'When one person, due to another, has become free from doubt about suffering, about the origin of suffering, about the cessation of suffering, and about the way

notion that monks give teachings in exchange for lay patronage,¹¹⁶ it is clear that this reciprocal relationship, if it is one at all, is asymmetrical. The gift of the teaching is made out of compassion, a mental attitude which implies the superiority of the giver, and is not given in the sense of a return payment. Moreover, by giving to the *saṅgha* the donor is assured of having a pure recipient, thereby safeguarding against the future when there will be ‘members of the clan who are “yellow-necks”, immoral, and of evil character’ (*M* 3.256).¹¹⁷ Indeed the Buddha states that ‘in no way does a gift to a person individually ever have greater fruit than an offering made to the *saṅgha*’ (*M* 3.256).¹¹⁸ By giving to the *saṅgha*, *dāna* remains impersonal and stays within the framework of generalised rather than restricted exchange.

This emphasis on impersonal giving influences the notion that the recipient provides an opportunity for the donor to make merit but does not actually give the donor any merit.¹¹⁹ The recipient’s qualities form the arena, the ‘field of merit’, in which the donor purifies his offering, but the recipient does not himself reciprocate a gift. Taken to its extreme, some conclude that in Theravāda Buddhism ‘we find the gift without a recipient at all’ (Parry 1986:462). However, in the context of personal offerings, this strict viewpoint becomes less clear-cut. Personal offerings make up the majority of donations portrayed in the *Jātakas*, and they are far from dismissed in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, which lists

leading to suffering, it is not, I say, easy for him to repay the other by such means as venerating him, rising up for him, saluting him respectfully, acting properly towards him, providing him with robes, almsfood, resting places, and medicinal requisites for the sick.’ *yaṃ h’ ānanda, puggalo puggalaṃ āgamma dukkhe nikkāṅkho hoti, dukkhasamudaye nikkāṅkho hoti, dukkhanirodhe nikkāṅkho hoti, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya nikkāṅkho hoti, imass’ ānanda puggalassa iminā puggalena na suppatikāraṃ vadāmi, yadidaṃ abhivādāna-paccuṭṭhāna-añjalikamma-sāmicikamma-cīvara-piṇḍapāta-senāsana-gilānapaccaya-bhesajja-parikkhārānuppadānena.*

¹¹⁶ For example, the *Itivuttaka* (111f.) states: ‘Monks, householders and brahmins are very helpful to you, since they give you robes, food, lodging, medicine and treatment when you are ill. You, too, monks, are very helpful to householders and brahmins, since you teach them the doctrine.’ *bahūpakārā, bhikkhave, brāhmaṇagahapatikā tumhākaṃ, ye vo paccupaṭṭhitā cīvarapiṇḍapātasenāsanagilānapaccayabhesajja-parikkhārehi. tumhe pi, bhikkhave, bahūpakārā brāhmaṇagahapatikānaṃ yaṃ nesam dhammaṃ desetha.* See Wijayaratna 1990:132. See also Strenski 1983:472f. for how this type of contract shifts between restricted and generalised exchange.

¹¹⁷ *gotrabhuno kāsāvakaṇṭhā dussilā pāpadhammā.*

¹¹⁸ *na tv’ evāhaṃ, Ānanda, kenaci pariyāyena saṅghagatāya dakkhiṇāya pāṭipuggalikaṃ dānaṃ mahapphalataraṃ vadāmi.*

¹¹⁹ Strenski 1983:465, 473ff.

fourteen types of personal offering (*pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*) from which arise varying amounts of merit depending on the nature of the recipient (*M* 3.254f.). Thus, a gift to an animal repays a hundredfold, a gift to an ordinary immoral person (*puthujjanadussīle*) repays a thousandfold, whereas gifts to those who have entered upon the path towards realising the fruit of stream-entry repay immeasurably.¹²⁰ The *sutta* continues (*M* 3.255): ‘What should then be said about a gift to a stream-enterer, [...] a once-returner, [...] a non-returner, [...] an *arahant*, [...] a *paccekabuddha*, [...] a Tathāgata who is an arahant and perfectly enlightened?’¹²¹

Given that it is precisely the recipient who determines the purity of a gift, it comes as no surprise that stories such as the *Jātakas* often depict a grey area between restricted and generalised exchange. The relationship between giver and recipient is still asymmetrical – the monk does not reciprocate a gift of equal nature to the one he received and he distances himself from such a relationship, as indeed he must do, since otherwise the dynamic of *dāna* as a soteriological enterprise is undermined – but there is an ambiguity over the extent to which the purified form of the gift, its fruit, is administered by the monk. This is intensified when one considers the sacrificial ideas underlying *dāna* – the donor purifies his gift (and by extension himself) through the medium of another purer person. As the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* states (*M* 3.257): ‘The gift is purified by the recipient’ (*sā dakkhiṇā paṭiggāhakato visujjhati*).

This ambiguity is effectively conveyed by the *Kuṇḍakapūva Jātaka* (109). In this story, the Bodhisatta is a tree-deity who receives an offering from a poor villager. When the deity asks the reason for his offering, the villager replies that he wants to be released from his poverty. At this point the Bodhisatta shows the villager pots of buried treasure, an act which he describes as a return favour (*J* 1.423.31ff.): ‘Don’t worry, my friend. You have

¹²⁰ These mathematical equations are noticeably similar to passages in *Dharmaśāstra* texts which deal with categorisations of pure and impure interaction between the *varṇas*.

¹²¹ *ko pana vādo sotāpanne [...] sakadāgamiṣṣa [...] anāgamiṣṣa [...] arahante [...] paccekabuddhe, ko pana vādo tathāgate arahante sammāsambuddhe.*

offered worship to someone who is grateful and mindful of what others have done for him.¹²² Significantly, this passage is an *atītavatthu* to an event in the present, in which a poor man gives a gift to the Buddha and acquires great wealth as a result of the merit. The villagers's attainment of treasure in the past is thus clearly linked to the donor's attainment of merit in the present. What is more, the implication is that, just as the Bodhisatta gives pots of treasure as a type of return favour, so in some sense the Buddha is considered to give merit in response to receiving a gift. It is important, however, to stress that the *paccuppannavatthu* never actually states this, and instead the issue is left on the ambiguous level of implication. Thus the Buddha only states that he influenced or mediated the situation, saying that it was 'because of me' (*maṃ nissāya*, *J* 1.423.5) that the donor gained his merit.

The issue of whether the recipient administers the fruit of a gift is also accentuated in the concept of *anumodana*. An *anumodana* commonly occurs in response to a gift, which, as we have seen, is often accompanied by a wish (*patthanā*).¹²³ For example, in the *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527) a woman gives a robe to a monk with the wish (*J* 5.212.22ff.): 'Reverend one, may I, as I travel through existence, become so extremely beautiful that no man will be able to contain himself when he sees me, and may no other woman be more beautiful than me.'¹²⁴ The monk makes an *anumodana* and then leaves. As Gombrich (1971:258) points out, although such a wish can be explained in terms of karma, 'there is little doubt that affectively the donor feels he is achieving a certain result by a certain action in an automatic, magical way.' Not only that, the implication of the above passage is that the monk grants the donor's wish by making an *anumodana*, or at least he authorises it somehow.¹²⁵ The verb *anumodati* has several nuances and is difficult to

¹²² *bho purisa, mā cintayī. tayā kataññussa katavedino pūjā katā.*

¹²³ Gombrich 1971:254ff.

¹²⁴ *bhante ahaṃ bhava carantī uttamarūpadharā bhaveyyaṃ, maṃ disvā koci puriso sakabhāvena saññhātum mā asakkhi, mayā abhirūpatarā nāma aññā mā hotū ti.*

¹²⁵ This is also commented upon by Gombrich (1971:261f.) with regard to a passage from the *Dhp-a* (4.200), in which a man feeds a *paccekabuddha* with sugar-cane and makes a wish for divine rebirth followed by enlightenment. The *paccekabuddha* replies 'so be it' (*evaṃ hotu*), makes an *anumodana*, and even resolves that the donor should have insight (*yathā so passati evaṃ adhiṭṭhahitvā*). Gombrich comments: 'This is wildly undoctinal! [...] The man who gave the sugar-cane doubtless considered that the *pratyekabuddha*

translate. In some circumstances an *anumodana* consists of a doctrinal teaching,¹²⁶ in others an expression of hope that the donor's wishes will come true; it is also related to *muditā* ('empathetic joy'), one of the four *brahmavihāras*. Gombrich (1971:277ff.) traces the evolution of its meaning from 'thank' or 'gratefully receive' to 'rejoice in' or 'empathise' (as in empathising in the merit of another person and receiving merit for one's empathy). These meanings are found in various situations, but neither 'thanking' nor 'rejoicing' seem to convey the sense of *anumodana* in the *Ummadantī Jātaka*. Rather, the notion seems to be that the monk 'approves' of the gift,¹²⁷ with the sense that he 'authorises' it or even, by a natural extension which may conflict with the theory of *kamma*, that he 'grants' the wish and 'gives it his blessing'.¹²⁸

The ambiguity of *anumodana* is conveyed by a verse often spoken by monks upon receiving gifts, which I cite from Gombrich (1971:257f.): 'May what you wish and desire very soon be successful; may all your wishes for yourself be fulfilled like the full moon.'¹²⁹ On the one hand this may simply be taken as an expression of benevolence, on the other hand the context and overtone of the words suggest a type of blessing.¹³⁰ In some sense, the monk appears to be fulfilling the wish of the donor. It is significant, however, that the texts tend to avoid actually stating this. The monk always keeps an ambiguous distance from the donor, as indeed he must do or the very efficacy of the gift would be

was granting his wish, and so did the story-teller. The notion that anyone, even a *pratyekabuddha*, can resolve on someone else's spiritual progress is a more flagrant deviation from doctrine than anything I came across in the field and suggests the Mahāyāna.'

¹²⁶ See for example the *Duddada Jātaka* (180) and *Āditta Jātaka* (424). It is perhaps significant that an *anumodana* often occurs after the recipient has eaten a food-offering, which suggests that it is linked to the notion of an ascetic 'returning' a purified form of the offering that he has consumed. See for example the *Kummāsapīṇḍa Jātaka* (415), *J* 3.407.13.

¹²⁷ As Gombrich notes (1971:266), one of the meanings of *anumodati* is simply 'to agree with', as in *A* 3.194: 'No monk agrees with me' (*na me koci bhikkhu anumodati*).

¹²⁸ The idea that one's wish comes true because it is made in front of a significant person is encapsulated by the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka* (12), in which a woman 'gave birth to a strong son, whom she had wished for at the feet of the Buddha Padumuttara'. *Padumuttarapādamūle patthitapatthanam mahānubhāvaṃ puttam vijāyī* (*J* 1.148.18f.).

¹²⁹ *icchitam patthitam tuyham khippam eva samijjhatu /
sabbe pūrentu attasaṃkappā cando pannarasī yathā //*

This *anumodana* is in fact spoken by the *paccekabuddha* in the *Dhp-a* story referred to in footnote 125.

¹³⁰ The ambiguity of *anumodana* is echoed by the role of *vyākaraṇa* in texts such as the *Bv*, which treads a thin line between prediction and predetermination.

undermined, since it is the avoidance of a relationship based upon reciprocal exchange which makes the monk such a fruitful recipient for the donor.

It is perhaps no coincidence that, in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), the word *anumodittha* is used in the context of giving boons (v.13).¹³¹ Here the boon-giver is Sakka, but the phrase nevertheless conveys how *anumodana* has certain connections with boons. Usually in the *Jātakas* boons are given by kings (or gods), but they are also given by monks. Thus in the the *Juṅha Jātaka* (456), a king's giving of boons in the *atītavatthu* is paralleled by the Buddha's giving of boons to Ānanda in the *paccuppannavatthu*. Moreover, that a monk's *anumodana* has thematic links with royal munificence is suggested by the similarity between the *anumodana* cited above ('May what you wish and desire very soon be successful') and the language used by king Sivi in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499) when he grants the wish of a beggar: 'May whatever you desire be fulfilled' (v.6).¹³² As was discussed in §4.2.2, Trautmann (1981) has argued that top-down giving is epitomised by kingship. In the context of *anumodana*, however, this role appears to have been adopted by monks. Just as kings support their dependents, so monks provide their donors with the chance to make merit: the renunciate recipient has become the munificent provider.

In the next chapter, I would like to extend such connections between the ascetic and social spheres by examining how the themes discussed in this chapter relate to giving in the context of friendship, love, and devotion.

¹³¹ *Phusatīyā varaṃ datvā anumodittha Vāsavo ti.*

However, *anumodittha* may simply here mean 'rejoiced' or 'felt empathetic joy'.

¹³² *yad icchase tvaṃ tan te samijjhatū ti.*

Chapter 5

Intimacy and devotion

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, we discussed *dāna* in terms of two categories: individualist and relational giving. In the former the gift is purified primarily through the intention of the donor, in the latter through the quality of the recipient (although the intention of the donor is also important). We finished the chapter by investigating how relational giving is sometimes portrayed in the personal context of two interactive individuals. Although the relationship between donor and recipient is still asymmetrical, it can take on characteristics of restricted exchange. In order to extend this theme further, this chapter will examine how relational giving operates in the context of friendship. This investigation into notions of intimacy will then lead to a discussion of themes such as sacrificing oneself for one's family, lover, or king. Such forms of giving are often pregnant with devotional connotations, whereby one either gives upwards to the object of one's devotion or downwards to one's devotee. This social type of giving has several important links with the type of *dāna* discussed in Chapter 4 and highlights the way in which renunciate values inform both the social and ascetic spheres in the *Jātakas*.

5.2 Giving through friendship

In contrast to the ethic of non-reciprocal exchange discussed in Chapter 4, in friendship there is a strong emphasis on reciprocity.¹ Favours must be returned and debts must be repaid.² Several *jātakas* expound the merits of associating with good friends and of returning their favours. The *Mahāassāroha Jātaka* (302) is one such story, whose subject-matter is to describe how 'wise men in the past also repaid services' (*J* 3.8.18).³

¹ For the interplay between these two models see the *Rājovāda Jātaka* (151) and also Collins (1998:419ff.).

² See for example the *Javasakuṇa Jātaka* (308) and *Sīlavīmaṃsa Jātaka* (362).

³ *porāṇapaṇḍitā pi attano upakāravasen' eva karimṣu*.

In the *atītavatthu* the Bodhisatta is a virtuous king who is defeated in battle in his frontier lands. In his flight, he meets a villager, who asks the Bodhisatta whether he is a supporter of the king. Discovering that he is on the king's side, but not that he is the actual king, the villager offers him hospitality. When the king leaves, he informs his benefactor only that he is called 'The Great Horseman' (Mahāassāroha) and tells him how to contact him in the city. After he has returned to his palace, the king wishes to repay the villager's kindness but is disappointed that the villager does not visit him. His wish is so great that he raises taxes so as to force the villager to go to the city and ask for help from the 'Great Horseman'! This succeeds, but only after the villager is pressed by his fellow villagers to go. When he arrives at the city, he is led to the king and given hospitality parallel to that which he gave the king in his village. This time, however, it is in a royal context. Just as his wife washed the king's feet, so now the queen washes the villager's feet. The villager also gives the royal family gifts of cake, ornaments and clothes. These the royal family eat and wear, whereupon the king gives him royal food and royal clothes. This royal hospitality culminates in the king's giving the villager half of his kingdom and in their living together as the closest of friends. The story ends with verses sung by the king, which extol the importance of giving to friends (vv.1-4):

[1] If one gives to those unworthy of gifts,⁴ and has no regard for those who deserve gifts, one finds no friends when one falls upon disaster in times of misfortune. [2] But if one does not give to those unworthy of gifts, and has regard for those who deserve gifts, one finds friends when one falls upon disaster in times of misfortune. [3] If one's ties are with untrustworthy people of ignoble character, and if one enjoys their company and associates with their qualities, that is destructive. But if one does the same with the noble and upright, even to a small degree, that bears great fruit. [4] He who has acted well in the past and done what is hard to do in the world, should be constantly honoured, whether he does a good deed afterwards or not.⁵

⁴ The commentary says that this refers to those who have not done one a service (*pubbe akatūpakāresu*, *J* 3.12.11).

⁵ *adeyyesu dadam dānam deyyesu na ppavecchati /
āpāsu vyasanam patto sahāyam nādhigacchati //1//
nādeyyesu dadam dānam deyyesu yo pavecchati /
āpāsu vyasanam patto sahāyam adhigacchati //2//*

It is noticeable how the language of this passage echoes some of the concepts discussed in Chapter 4 regarding giving to an ascetic: one should give to someone worthy of gifts, and such a gift bears great fruit. The king's gift is seen as a way of rewarding and sustaining the villager's friendship; as the verses emphasise, giving is a means of creating bonds with those who can provide help. This self-interested approach to *dāna* is qualified by the more altruistic attitude of the villager, a contrast reflected in the irony that the king's desire to repay friendship is countered by his friend's lack of concern with being repaid. Indeed, the villager only seeks repayment when he is coerced to do so by the king's taxes; even then, he has to be persuaded by his peers before he relents. The villager's altruism is also expressed when he helps the king without knowing his exact identity. Renunciatory giving, which is so central to 'religious' *dāna*, is therefore also an aspect of friendship.

However, just as a donor chooses a suitable recipient for his gift, so in the *Mahāassāroha Jātaka* the villager's generosity is not entirely indiscriminating. He gives his hospitality on the understanding that the 'Great Horseman' supports the king: giving is restricted to allies, in the same way as the king's gifts are restricted to good friends. How gifts enhance and create bonds of friendship is vividly shown by the exchanges that occur between the king and the villager, when they both offer each other food and clothes. (Once again one may note that the consumption of gifts is emphasised, here as a means of bonding friendship.) Similarly, just as the villager's wife washed the king's feet, so the queen washes the villager's feet. Indeed, the villager becomes so closely connected with the king that not only does he put on royal clothes, but he also receives half of the kingdom. In the arena of friendship, therefore, the connotations of intimacy that are sometimes ambiguously suggested in the context of giving to an ascetic become more accentuated (see §4.4.5).

*saññogasambhogavisesadassanaṃ anariyadhammesu saṭhesu nassati /
katañ ca ariyesu ca añjavesu ca mahapphalaṃ hoti aṇuṃ pi tādisu //3//
yo pubbe katakalyāṇo akā lokesu dukkaraṃ /
pacchā kayira na vā kayirā accantaṃ pūjanāraho //4//*

The implication of the above story is that by giving one integrates oneself with the nature of the recipient. For this reason it is necessary to determine the nature of the person to whom one gives a gift: a gift to an untrustworthy recipient can only lead to disaster. As a result, the importance of associating with the right people is a major theme of the *Jātakas*. Indeed, in some passages individuals are considered to influence each other in a direct and almost tactile manner. For example we are told in the *Mahānārada-kassapa Jātaka* (544, vv.102ff.):

[102] A king falls under the power of the person he frequents, whether good or bad, virtuous or unvirtuous. [103] He becomes just like the friend he makes and just like the friend he follows. For such is intimacy. [104] Through close association, when one touches another, one is oneself touched, as a poisoned arrow contaminates an undefiled quiver. A wise man should not befriend the bad out of fear of contamination. [105] When a man touches a rotting fish with a tip of *kusa* grass, the *kusa* grass also smells rotten. So it is when one associates with fools. [106] When a man touches a fragrant herb with a leaf, the leaves also become fragrant. So it is when one associates with the wise. [107] Therefore, knowing that one matures like the ripening of a basket of fruit, the wise man should not frequent the bad but should associate with the good. The bad lead to hell. The virtuous bring about a good rebirth.⁶

Here people are considered to be in direct contact with the company they keep; one is literally ‘touched’ (*samphuṭṭha*) by one’s friends. The transformative power of such association is emphasised by the imagery of physical contamination or purification.

⁶ *yaṃ yaṃ hi rājā bhajati sataṃ vā yadi vā asaṃ /*
silavantaṃ viṣīlaṃ vā vasaṃ tassa’ eva gacchati //102//
yādisaṃ kurute mittaṃ yādisaṃ c’ ūpasevati /
so pi tādisako hoti. sahavāso hi tādiso //103//
sevamāno sevamānaṃ samphuṭṭho samphusaṃ paraṃ /
saro diddho kalāpaṃ va alittam upalimpati /
upalepabhayā dhīro n’ eva pāpasakhā siyā //104//
pūtimacchaṃ kusaggena yo naro upanayhati /
kusā pi pūti vāyanti, evaṃ bālūpasevanā //105//
tagaraṇ ca palāsena yo naro upanayhati /
pattā pi surabhī vāyanti, evaṃ dhīrūpasevanā //106//
tasmā phalapuṭṭasseva ñatvā sampākam attano /
asante n’ ūpaseveyya sante seveyya paṇḍito /
asanto nirayaṃ nenti, santo pāpenti suggaṭin ti //107//

These verses are also found in the *Sattigumba Jātaka* (503), vv.22ff.

Keeping the company of fools is like being polluted by the smell of rotten fish, whereas keeping the company of the wise is like being fragranced by perfume.⁷

Gifts increase the intensity of such association with others, hence the need to give to the right people. (In the context of religious giving, however, this threat of contamination is alleviated by the monk's distance.) Gifts do not therefore merely symbolise friendship but also actualise it.⁸ Through giving one immediately and intimately connects oneself with the recipient of the gift. From this point of view, it is important to gauge whom one gives to, but equally important to gauge whom one receives from. If gifts are inherently connected with the personality of the giver, then the attitude with which the gift is given becomes as important to the recipient as the nature of the recipient is to the giver. This is portrayed by the *Kesava Jātaka* (346).

In this story the Bodhisatta, called Kappa, is the disciple of an ascetic called Kesava ('Long-Hair'). Kappa is said to be 'affectionate' (*sasneho*, *J* 3.143.6) towards his teacher and the two feel strong friendship (literally 'trust': *vissāsa*) for each other (*te aññamaññaṃ ativissāsikā ahesuṃ*, *J* 3.143.7). However, they become separated when Kesava is asked by a king to live in his garden, while Kappa returns with the other disciples to the Himālayas. Kesava becomes sick with longing for Kappa and, after the royal doctors have failed to cure him, he asks the king to send him to the Himālayas. As soon as he sees his disciple again, his unhappiness ceases, and Kappa cures him of his dysentery by giving him bland broth. When asked how he can be satisfied with such mediocre food, Kesava replies (v.4) that it is because the food is flavoured with friendship (*vissāsa*).⁹ Kappa's food-offering to his teacher is therefore a direct manifestation of their

⁷ Similarly, the importance of seeing another person is emphasised in Buddhism and other Indian religions, and is conceived as a tactile activity. See Gonda 1969. An example of this is found in the *Kesava Jātaka* (346), described in the main text below, in which an ascetic's unhappiness ceases as soon as he sees his dear disciple.

⁸ We are approaching Mauss's notion of archaic gift exchange, in which members of society formulate and express their interdependency through gifts.

⁹ *Vissāsa* is difficult to translate. It literally means 'belief' or 'trust', which extends to the sense of 'friendship' or 'intimacy'. One may note that the verses make no mention of the food curing disease, which may be an innovation of the prose.

intimacy. Indeed, because the food is given and received with affection, it is capable of curing Kesava, while the professional attempts of the royal doctors fail. The nature of the gift is not determined by its substance (here flavourless broth) but by the attitude with which it is given. Indeed, the food's very taste (*rasa*) derives from the gift's underlying attitude; thus we are told that 'the best taste is friendship' (*vissāsaparamā rasā ti*, v.4).

Although several stories dealing with renunciation warn against the dangers of affectionate attachment, the *Kesava Jātaka* portrays ascetic life as less of an antithetical contrast to social values. Here, in a relationship between ascetics, giving is seen, as in the *Mahāassāroha Jātaka*, as an expression of intimate friendship. Furthermore, as has been discussed on pp.158f., the notion of giving food flavoured with friendship is also found in the context of a layperson's gift of alms to a monk. This is emphasised by the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Kesava Jātaka*. In this section a king provides the *saṅgha* with sumptuous food, which is dispensed by his ministers. However, the food is not offered by donors 'with their own hands in friendship and affection' (*vissāsenā pana sinehena sahatthā J 3.142.7*). The monks therefore respond to this impersonal form of donation by taking the king's food to the houses of friendly attendants (*vissāsika-upaṭṭhakānaṃ*), giving them the food, and eating whatever they receive, whether coarse or not. The story finishes with the Buddha telling the king that no food is as tasty as that given with friendship (*vissāsa*).

5.3 Devotion

When notions of intimacy are combined with an asymmetrical relationship (whereby one gives oneself up to a worthy superior), the natural consequence is devotionism. Indeed several stories depict either the Bodhisatta giving his life to dependents in the role of protector (top-down giving) or dependents giving their lives to him (bottom-up giving). Some stories portray a combination of both models. For example, in the *Nandiyamiga*

Jātaka (385) the Bodhisatta’s gift of life to his mother and father is both an expression of protection towards his dependent parents and one of submissive devotion to their superior kinship status – as he himself says, ‘Your life is better [than mine]’ (*jīvitam vo seyyo, J* 3.271.9).

The Bodhisatta’s role as protector and saviour is particularly developed in the *Cp-a*. For example, the Bodhisatta’s gift of flesh and blood (*maṃsalohitādidānaṃ*) is said to be motivated by the thought (307): ‘May my body be the means of life for all the world! May it bring welfare and happiness to all beings at all times, on occasions of seeing, hearing, recollecting or ministering to me!’¹⁰ Such devotional sentiments reflect similar themes found in the *Jātakas*.¹¹ Examples of stories which concentrate upon the Bodhisatta’s protection of dependents are provided by the *Mahākapi Jātaka* (407) and *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka* (12).

5.3.1 Sacrificing oneself for one’s dependents

5.3.1.1 The *Mahākapi Jātaka*

In the *Mahākapi Jātaka* the Bodhisatta is the leader of 80,000 monkeys who live in the Himālayas feeding off mangoes. The mango tree is situated by a river and the Bodhisatta fears danger if any mangoes fall into the water and are carried down to the ‘human realm’ (*manussapatha*). The human realm is thus clearly seen as antagonistic to the forest, a theme developed in the remainder of the narrative. The monkeys’ attempts at guarding the tree are foiled when a single mango falls into the river by accident. This mango reaches a king who becomes captivated by its taste and ventures up the river to find its source. When the king sees the monkeys feeding off the mangoes, he orders them to be shot with

¹⁰ *dassanasavaṇanussaraṇapāricariyādisu sabbakālam sabbasattānaṃ hitasukhāvaho sabbalokena ca upajīvitabbo me kāyo bhaveyyā ti.*

¹¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi (1978:45f.) has noticed that the *Cp-a* borrows material from *Mahāyāna* texts such as the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*. This does not, however, mean that the *Cp-a*’s comments are not developments upon themes already inherent in the *jātaka* narrative.

arrows.¹² The Bodhisatta now decides to save his herd by sacrificing his life for them: ‘Do not fear. I will give you life’ (*J* 3.371.23f.).¹³ He does this by forming a bridge with bamboo shoots between two trees; the last part of the bridge is his own body. The monkeys pass over his body to safety, but one wicked monkey (Devadatta) takes advantage of the Bodhisatta’s vulnerability and breaks the Bodhisatta’s back in order to seize the leadership for himself. The king is so moved by the Bodhisatta’s self-sacrifice that he takes him down from the tree and cares for him. Before the Bodhisatta dies, he tells the king the importance of sacrificing oneself for the happiness of one’s dependents (vv.6f.):

I feel no pain from bondage, nor will I from death. For I have brought happiness to those over whom I have ruled. Here is a moral for you, O king, which has been made to elucidate benefit. A king should desire the happiness of his kingdom, his animals, his army, and his city; all of these he should desire if he is a wise *ksatriya*.¹⁴

The conflict between the human and forest realms has become resolved through the Bodhisatta’s self-sacrifice. The king’s destructive desire is stilled and his antagonism towards the monkeys is transformed into devotion, as is emphasised by the story’s conclusion, in which the king performs the Bodhisatta’s funeral rites and has a *cetiya* built over his remains. The initial clash between city and forest has resulted in their harmonisation, as the king learns the *dhamma* from a forest animal and brings the *dhamma* back into the human domain. One could say that this harmony represents the fruit of the Bodhisatta’s gift.

¹² The king intends to eat them as well as destroy them. The notion of an initial desire (here the lust for mangoes) developing into a craving for meat is a common *jātaka* theme. See for example the *Kumbha Jātaka* (512).

¹³ *mā bhāyittha, ahaṃ vo jīvitam dassāmi ti*. The phrase is a common one and should be translated as above. Grammatically, however, it could also mean: ‘I give my life to you.’ See also the king’s later remark (*J* 3.372.18f.): ‘With no regard for his own life, he has provided his people with safety, although being a mere animal.’ *ayaṃ tiracchāno hutvā attano jīvitam aganetvā parisāya sotthibhāvaṃ eva akāsi*. And also *J* 3.374.18f., ‘giving up his own life’, *attano jīvitam pi pariccajivā*.

¹⁴ *taṃ maṃ na tapate bandho. vadho me na tapessati /
sukhaṃ āharitaṃ tesam yesam rajjaṃ akārayim //6//
esā te upamā rāja atthasandassanī katā /
raññā raṭṭhassa yogassa balassa nigamassa ca /
sabbesaṃ sukhaṃ eṭṭhabbaṃ khattiyena pajānatā //7//*

The manner in which the Bodhisatta saves his herd is also overtly symbolic: in his role as protector he actually is their bridge to safety.¹⁵ This is conveyed by the first verse, in which the king addresses the Bodhisatta thus: ‘By making yourself into a bridge you helped them cross to safety.’¹⁶ The verb *samatārayi* (‘cause to cross over’) is pregnant with soteriological meaning and the Bodhisatta’s act foreshadows the Buddha’s role as ‘ford-maker’, whereby he crosses the ocean of *samsāra* and helps others to follow him.

The connection between the Bodhisatta and the Buddha is also ever-present in the frame-story of the *paccuppannavatthu*, which, in the *Mahākapi Jātaka*, compares the Bodhisatta’s rescue of his herd with the Buddha’s protection of the Sakyans. The *paccuppannavatthu* states that its subject matter is ‘acting for the sake of one’s relatives’ (*ñātattthacariyaṃ*, *J* 3.369.28) and it refers us on to the *Bhaddasāla Jātaka* (456) for the full story. In this tale, the Buddha saves the Sakyans from an inimical king by simply being present when the king attacks and thereby routing him. However the conclusion to the story modifies the Buddha’s role as saviour. When the king attacks for a third time the Buddha decides that the Sakyans must be experiencing the fruit of bad *kamma* and so lets the king continue with his slaughter! *Kamma* is therefore given precedence over the Buddha’s ability to save those with whom he has a personal relationship, a notion that is linked to the idea discussed in §4.4.5 of favouring impersonal over personal gifts.

5.3.1.2 The *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka*

Several stories depict the Bodhisatta in the role of saviour and connect this to the Buddha’s protection of those who have taken refuge in him. For example, the importance

¹⁵ Contrast this with the famous episode in the *Jātaka-nidāna* in which Sumedha makes himself into a bridge for Dīpaṅkara (*J* 1.12f.). There the Bodhisatta acts out of devotional submission to a superior, but in the *Mahākapi Jātaka* his self-abnegation is performed in order to rescue dependents. On the significance of Sumedha’s prostration, see Aronoff 1982:101ff.

¹⁶ *attānaṃ saṃkamaṃ katvā yo sotthiṃ samatārayi /*

of taking refuge in the Buddha is the principal concern of the lengthy *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Apannaka Jātaka* (1), whose *atītavatthu* portrays the Bodhisatta as a caravan leader who saves his caravan from being eaten by a *yakkha* in the desert, while the other caravan leader (Devadatta in a past life) loses his caravan to the demon. It is particularly noteworthy that moral values are described in terms of life and death: the path of morality results in life, the path of immorality results in death. Similarly, in the *Mahākapi Jātaka* the Bodhisatta's self-sacrifice resulted in a refined form of life for the forest and human realms.

The *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka* (12) similarly depicts the Buddha protecting his 'refugees' while Devadatta is portrayed as uncompassionate. In the *atītavatthu* the Bodhisatta is a golden deer called Nigrodha ('Banyan'), who leads five hundred other deer.¹⁷ A nearby herd of five hundred is led by another golden deer, called Sākha ('Branch'), who is Devadatta in a past life. A king rules in nearby Benares, who is typically fond of meat and hunting. He hunts with all his citizens as a retinue, which leads to the detriment of their everyday business. They therefore force the deer from the forest into the royal park so that the deer can easily be delivered to the king. The king surveys the herd and gives immunity to the two golden deer. At the request of his herd, the Bodhisatta installs a system whereby lots (*vāra*) are drawn in order to determine which deer should be killed, thereby avoiding needless wounding. One day the lot falls on a pregnant doe in Sākha's herd. She asks to be passed over since, due to her pregnancy, two deer would die instead of one. Sākha is however adamant that she should concede to her fate, whereupon she turns to the Bodhisatta, who decides to resolve the problem by taking her place. When the king asks the Bodhisatta why he is offering himself up and not the doe, the Bodhisatta replies, in a striking expression of self-sacrifice, that he is exchanging her death for his and thereby 'giving' her his life (*J* 1.151.17ff.): 'I could not subject another being to the pain of death. I gave her my own life and took her death upon myself

¹⁷ For the Bodhisatta as a golden and jewel-coloured animal, see the various *Haṃsa Jātakas* (502, 533, 534), *Ruru Jātaka* (482), *Suvaṇṇamiga Jātaka*, *Nandiyamiga Jātaka* (385), *Sarabhamiga Jātaka* (483).

and lay down here.’¹⁸ The king is overwhelmed by the Bodhisatta’s *khanti*, *mettā* and *anuddayā*, which he says are unprecedented even among humans, and devoutly (*pasanno*) gives immunity to the Bodhisatta and the doe. Under pressure from the Bodhisatta, the king spares the rest of the herd, then the deer who are not in the park, and then all four-footed creatures and birds. The Bodhisatta then preaches the *dhamma* to the king with what is described as ‘the grace of a Buddha’ (*Buddhalīhāya*) and returns to the forest with his herd.¹⁹

As in the *Mahākapi Jātaka*, the Bodhisatta therefore resolves the tension between city and forest through self-sacrifice. In an interplay between life and death which recalls the sacrificial origins underpinning *dāna*, the Bodhisatta’s gift of life results in a purified form of life for both him and his herd. Nor is such self-sacrifice one-way. Just as the Bodhisatta sacrifices his life for his herd (top-down giving), so they sacrifice their lives for him (bottom-up giving). This is expressed by the doe when she tells her son (after he is born): ‘You should follow only Nigrodha and you should not associate with Sākha. It is better to die with Nigrodha than to live with Sākha’ (v.1).²⁰ In an extension of the life and death imagery discussed above, the doe asserts that it is better to die for the sake of a good life than to live in a bad life. As we shall see in Chapter 6, these words echo verses spoken to the Bodhisatta by his wife in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) (vv.72f.): ‘If the choice is death with you or life without you, such a death is better than living without you. It is better to die on a flaming fire, one blazing mass, than to live without you.’²¹ The next section (§5.3.2) will develop such themes further.

¹⁸ *na sakkā kho pana mayā ekassa maraṇadukkhaṃ aññassa upari pakkhipitum, sv-āhaṃ attano jīvitam tassā datvā tassā santakaṃ maraṇaṃ gahetvā idha nipanno.*

¹⁹ The resolution between the city and the forest does not stop here. Due to their immunity the deer now fearlessly eat the crops of the farmers. The farmers are afraid to hit the deer because of the king’s decree. The Bodhisatta resolves the problem by telling the deer not to eat the crops. However, he also tells the farmers not to put fences up around their fields but, in a kind of agricultural utopia, they show the boundaries of their land simply by tying up bundles of leaves.

²⁰ *Nigrodham eva seveyya, na Sākhaṃ upasaṃvase /
Nigrodhasmiṃ mataṃ seyyo yañ ce Sākhasmiṃ jīvitam //1//*

²¹ *marañam vā tayā saddhiṃ jīvitam vā tayā vinā /
tad eva marañam seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //72//
aggim ujjālayitvāna ekajālasamāhitam /
tattha me marañam seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //73//*

5.3.2 Sacrificing oneself for a superior

In §4.3.4.1, we saw how taking refuge in the three jewels is sometimes glossed as a sacrifice of life (*jīvitapariccāga*), which results in a purified form of life under the Buddha's *sāsana*. In the *Jātakas*, similar images of self-sacrifice are applied to kingship, which again illustrates how renunciate values are found in the social as well as the ascetic sphere. For example in the *Abbhantara Jātaka* (281), a parrot risks his life while performing a duty for his king. When he is captured by goblins, the parrot explains that he is acting out of service to his king, for whom he has 'given up his life' (*attano jīvitam datvā*, *J* 2.398.10f.), and adds (*J* 2.398.11ff.): 'For whoever sacrifices their life for their parents or master is reborn in heaven.'²² Moreover, he compares himself in verse (v.3) to a 'hero who sacrifices himself' (*sūro attapariccāgī*) for his master. The goblins release the parrot, and at the end of the story the parrot receives from an ascetic the prized reward of a mango, which is described as 'the portion of the gods' (*devatānaṃ paribhogo*, *J* 2.396.15f.).

The *Khurappa Jātaka* (265) also contains the theme of the self-sacrificing hero. In this story, the Bodhisatta is the leader of a group of foresters, who agrees to convey a merchant safely through a forest; his service to the merchant is described in terms of self-sacrifice (*tassa jīvitam pariccajī*, *J* 2.335.20f.). When robbers attack their convoy, the rest of the group flee but the Bodhisatta stays and routs them in battle. Full of martial imagery, the verses again describe the Bodhisatta as a 'hero' (*sūra*) who is willing to sacrifice his life (*jīvitam āsi cattam*, v.3). Unlike the *Abbhantara Jātaka*, the Bodhisatta sacrifices himself for a merchant and not a king. Interestingly, however, just as the parrot's self-sacrifice is rewarded by an ascetic, so the Bodhisatta's self-sacrifice in battle is linked to ascetic values. This is expressed in the *paccuppannavatthu*, in which the Bodhisatta's resolve to

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:104) and the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* in reading *ujjālayitvāna* rather than the PTS *nijjālayitvāna* in v.73.

²² *yo hi attano mātāpitunnaṃ c' eva sāmikassa ca atthāya jīvitam pariccajati so devaloke yeva nibbattati.*

die in battle – although performed in a context ‘unconducive’ to attaining enlightenment (*aniyyānikatthāne*, *J* 2.335.10) – is linked to the energy (*virīya*) a monk should have in following the *sāsana*.

In order to explore the theme of self-sacrifice further, this section will now concentrate on the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533) and *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527). In the subsequent section (§5.4), I extend the theme of devotion into the context of marital love, focusing particularly on its representation in the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519).

5.3.2.1 The *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka*

We discussed above how the theme of sacrificing one’s life is found in both ascetic and martial contexts. The two aspects are combined in the *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533), which has as its subject-matter ‘Venerable Ānanda’s sacrifice of life’ (*āyasmato Ānandassa jīvitapariccāgam*, *J* 5.333.3f.).²³ The *paccuppannavatthu* describes how Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha by letting loose the violent elephant Nālāgiri against him. The meeting between the Buddha and elephant is humorously portrayed in battle imagery. Supporters are rallied on either side and view the scene from the rooftops. On one side the Buddha’s supporters think (*J* 5.335.9ff.): ‘Apparently today there will be a battle between the elephant-like Buddha and the beast-like elephant Nālāgiri. We will see Nālāgiri tamed by the incomparable grace of the Buddha.’²⁴ On the other side the Buddha’s deprecators think (*J* 5.335.14f.): ‘Today we’ll see the back of our enemy [the Buddha].’²⁵ Similarly, at the end of the story the Buddha is said to have ‘crushed the heretics’ (*titthiye madditvā*, *J* 5.337.9) and he leaves the city ‘like a warrior’

²³ This is also the subject title of the *Suvaṇṇakakkāṭa Jātaka* (389), in which Ānanda (a crab) again gives up his life to the Buddha (a brahmin) in a past existence. His self-sacrifice is viewed as an expression of friendship that transcends concerns for food. In this story, however, the significance of the crab’s love does not extend beyond his friendship with the Bodhisatta; on the contrary, it is called upon to destroy the Bodhisatta’s enemies through violence. In the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* on the other hand the swan’s love affects all the characters in the story and the friend-enemy dichotomy is eroded.

²⁴ *ajja kira Buddhanāgassa tiracchānanāgena saṅgāmo bhavissati, anopamāya Buddhalīhāya Nālāgiriḍamanam passissāmā ti.*

²⁵ *ajja paccāmittassa piṭṭhiṃ passissāmā ti.*

(*khattiyo viya*, *J* 5.337.10). When the ferocious elephant appears, Sāriputta offers to take the Buddha's place. In a metaphor which unites the social with the ascetic, he compares himself to an eldest son performing his duty for his father (*J* 5.335.23f.). The Buddha rejects his offer, as well as those of the other 80 chief disciples. Ānanda, however, refuses to listen and insists on standing in front of the Buddha 'because of the strong love he feels for the Teacher' (*sathari balavasinehena*, *J* 5.335.27). The Buddha asks him three times to move before he has to remove him forcibly by means of his supernatural power. Therefore, although Ānanda's devotion is commended, it is also portrayed as naïve and excessive. When the elephant finally attacks, he is controlled by the Buddha's *mettā* and overcome by seeing the Buddha's glory (*tejas*).

The *atītavatthu* sets up a similar contest between enemies, except that here the 'battle' is between a flock of geese and the 'human realm'. In this story the Bodhisatta is a royal goose called Dhataratṭha, who rules over his flock on a mountain called Cittakūṭa. When his geese hear of a lake near a city which provides good feeding, the Bodhisatta is, as in the *Mahākapi Jātaka*, suspicious of entering the human realm.²⁶ However, after constant persuasion, he finally relents. As soon as the Bodhisatta lands on the lake he is caught in a hunter's snare. Despite the pain caused by the snare, he compassionately refrains from crying out, since to do so would scare his flock into fleeing and thereby deprive them of their food. When he finally does cry out, only one goose stays to see what has happened – this is the king's 'general' (*senāpati*) called Sumukha, who is Ānanda in a past life. Upon seeing his king's misfortune, he tells him not to fear, since he will 'give up his life' (*jīvitam pariccajitvā*) and release him from the snare (*J* 5.339.2f.). A verse dialogue now ensues in which the Bodhisatta tries to persuade Sumukha to leave, and Sumukha insists on staying by his king's side. Sumukha's stance is one of uncompromising devotion, and is referred to by the word *bhatti* (vv.9, 11). He declares that he would follow his master under any circumstance (v.4): 'Whatever fate you may have would suit me, lord of the

²⁶ 'The human realm is fearful.' *manussapatho nāma sāsamko*, *J* 5.338.5. The danger of the human world is elaborated upon by the *Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka* (534), in which the lake is actually an artificial decoy made by hunters to lure the beautiful geese into a trap.

birds.²⁷ This self-abnegation extends even into death (see v.21), as is expressed by the third verse, which exactly parallels the verse cited above from the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547, v.72): ‘If the choice is death with you or life without you, such a death is better than living without you.’²⁸ What is more, Sumukha’s friendship with Dhataratṭha is compared with life. For example, in v.21 Sumukha declares that Dhataratṭha is ‘my friend who is equal to life’ (*sakhā pāṇasamo ca me*); and in v.32 Sumukha is described as ‘Dhataratṭha’s friend who shares his life’ (*Dhataratṭhassa pāṇasādhāraṇo sakhā*). Once again, therefore, the imagery of life is integral to the theme of self-sacrifice.

By contrast, however, Dhataratṭha argues that friendship is founded upon circumstance (v.1: ‘a prisoner has no friends’²⁹), and urges pragmatism (vv.6f.):

What fate is there for a bird bound in a noose except the kitchen? How can that appeal to you if you are sensible and free? What benefit [*attha*] do you see, winged-one, for either you or me or the relatives we leave behind if we both die?³⁰

Against such arguments based upon *artha* (which the prose (*J* 5.339.5) states are only tactics for testing Sumukha’s virtue),³¹ Sumukha appeals to the authority of *dharma*. He declares that ‘it is not right’ (*n’ esa dhammo*, v.4) for him to abandon his king and argues that *dharma* in fact incorporates *artha* in being the only truly beneficial course of action (vv.8-10):

²⁷ *yā gati tuyhaṃ sā mayhaṃ ruccate vihaṅgādhipa //4//*

²⁸ *maranaṃ vā tayā saddhiṃ jīvitam vā tayā vinā /
tad eva maraṇam seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //3//*

Indeed Sumukha cites his mortal nature as the reason for his devotion:

‘Whether I leave or do not leave, I would still not be immortal. After I have served you when you were happy, how can I abandon you when you suffer?’

*gacch’ evāhaṃ na vā gacche na tena amaro siyaṃ /
sukkhitaṃ taṃ upāsivā dukkhitaṃ taṃ kathaṃ jahe //2//*

²⁹ *n’atthi baddhe sahāyatā ti.*

³⁰ *kā nu pāsena baddhassa gati aññā mahānasā /
sā kathaṃ cetayānassa muttassa tava ruccati //5//
kaṃ vā tvam passase atthaṃ mama tuyhañ ca pakkhima /
ñātīnaṃ vāvasiṭṭhānaṃ ubhinnaṃ jīvitakkhaye //6//*

³¹ The *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528) is particularly damning of *artha*-based morality and associates it with the ruthless Machiavellianism of *kṣatriya* codes.

[8] How could you not be aware, O best of those who fly, of the benefit [*attha*] in *dhamma*? When *dhamma* is cultivated it shows the living what is beneficial [*attha*]. [9] I am one who looks towards *dhamma*, and when I see the benefit [*attha*] that derives from *dhamma* and the devotion [*bhatti*] I feel for you, then I have no desire for life. [10] For this is the *dhamma* of the good: a friend should not abandon a friend in distress, even for the sake of his own life, if he remembers the *dhamma*.³²

The verse dialogue thus expresses a tension between a consequentialist ethic (the goodness of an act is determined by its results) and a virtue ethic (the goodness of an act is determined by the mental attitude motivating it). Although the teleological flow of the narrative is to commend Sumukha's actions which, as we shall see, produce a happy ending, the dialogue between Sumukha and his king should still be seen as a genuine debate over the desirability of Sumukha's uncompromising devotion. We have already noted how Ānanda's over-zealous affection for the Buddha is partially satirised and questioned by the *paccuppannavatthu*. *Sineha* is, after all, a word of ambiguous significance, suggesting well-intentioned love but also excessive attachment. In a similar vein the *atītavatthu* investigates the validity of Sumukha's ethical stance. Is it really sensible to give up one's life to a doomed king, especially if it means risking one's whole flock? Is that really a compassionate act? The narrative events that follow seem to vindicate Sumukha, but the dialogue between Dhataratṭha and Sumukha is left unresolved, and it is worth noting that the last comments on the matter are made by the Bodhisatta, who applauds his general's virtue but still insists on being left to die. He even orders Sumukha to leave (after all, can a good servant disobey his master's orders?): 'You have performed this proper code of behaviour [*dhamma*] and I recognise your devotion [*bhatti*] to me. But you should follow my will and leave with my permission. Perhaps after some

³² *kathan nu patataṃ seṭṭha dhamme atthaṃ na bujḥasi /
dhammo apacito santo atthaṃ dasseti paṇinaṃ //8//
so 'haṃ dhammaṃ apekkhāno dhammā c' atthaṃ samuṭṭhitāṃ /
bhattiñ ca taya sampassaṃ nāvakaṅkhāmi jīvitāṃ //9//
addhā eso sataṃ dhammo yo mitto mittaṃ āpade /
na ccaje jīvitassāpi hetu dhammaṃ anussaraṃ //10//*

The mention of 'distress' in v.10 is perhaps a criticism of the Brahmanical notion of *āpad-dharma*. From Sumukha's point of view, a friend should be helped under any circumstances, which contrasts with Dhataratṭha's appeal to *svadharmā* when he states that a prisoner by definition has no friends (v.1).

time the bond I have with my relatives will be strengthened and perfected through you’ (vv.11f.).³³

Their discussion is interrupted by the arrival of a hunter, who is repeatedly described as their ‘enemy’ (*sattu*; vv.14, 15, 21, 64). The hunter is perplexed at seeing the unsnared goose standing by its master. Upon hearing the reasons for its loyalty, he offers to let Sumukha go since he is not technically his prisoner (v.26). Sumukha refuses and asks the hunter to take him instead of Dhataratṭha (v.27): ‘I never want to live without him. If you are satisfied with one of us, then release him and eat me.’³⁴ He even argues that such a bargain would bring about goodwill (*mettī*, v.30) between the hunter and Dhataratṭha’s geese. This mention of goodwill triggers the resolution that is about to occur as a result of Sumukha’s self-sacrifice and which echoes the *jātakas* discussed above. Struck by Sumukha’s love, the hunter releases both geese, whereupon Sumukha wishes the hunter the same happiness as he has given them (v.35). The friend-enemy dichotomy is eroded as the archetypal enemy of the geese becomes their benefactor and in return receives their blessings. This transformation is accentuated by the prose, in which the hunter is said to hand over the Bodhisatta ‘submissively’: *dāsaṃ katvā* (*J* 5.343.25). Literally this phrase means ‘making himself a slave’, a metaphor we previously saw in the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), in which giving is compared to self-imposed slavery (see p.140). Here the hunter’s willing enslavement is to another being, an outlook which parallels Sumukha’s attitude that he is a ‘servant’ (*peṣsa*, v.77) to the Bodhisatta. Indeed, the hunter’s newfound devotion is evoked in detail when he washes off the Bodhisatta’s blood and cures him by the power of his love (*J* 5.344.7ff.):

³³ *svāyaṃ dhammo ca te ciṅṅo bhattī ca viditā mayi /
kāmaṃ karassu mayh’ etaṃ, gacch’ evānumato mayā //11//
api tv’ evaṃ gate kāle yaṃ bandhaṃ ñātināṃ mayā /
tayā taṃ vuddhisampannaṃ assa paramasaṃvutaṃ //12//*

I follow the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* reading *vuddhi-sampannaṃ* in v.12 rather than the PTS *buddhi-*

³⁴ *n’ evāhaṃ etaṃ icchāmi aññatr’ etassa jīvītā /
sace ekena tuṭṭho si muñc’ etaṃ mañ ca bhakkhaya //27//*

Saying this, the hunter approached the Great Being with a loving heart, cut off his bonds, picked him up and lifted him out of the lake. He laid him on the bank of the lake on a bed of fresh grass, and gently and caringly released him from the snare tied around his feet, which he threw far away. Feeling great affection for the Great Being he lovingly brought water, washed off the blood and repeatedly wiped him. By the power of his loving kindness the tendons on his feet grew together, his flesh with his flesh and his skin with his skin.³⁵

In accord with the reciprocity ethic of friends, the geese now seek to repay the hunter's kindness by asking him to take them to his king so that he will be rewarded for his catch.³⁶ The hunter fears the worst, protesting that kings have 'unpredictable minds' (*calacittā*), but the geese insist. When they meet the king, the hunter tells of Sumukha's self-sacrifice (*cajītvāna jīvitam*, v.46) and how he himself attained *pasāda* (v.47), and Dhataratṭha explains that the hunter did not treat them as enemies (v.66) but released them devoutly (v.68). Dhataratṭha asks the king to reward the hunter, which the king does generously. The transformation that affected the hunter is now seen in the king, who is so overcome by Sumukha's self-sacrifice that he offers the geese his whole kingdom (vv.72f.). The geese recognise the king as their 'greatest friend' (*parame mitte*, v.81) and thank him for his devotion (*bhatti*, v.81). The infamous cruelty of kings has been pacified, and the final resolution to the story is achieved when the geese are released and return home to their flock.

5.3.2.2 The Ummadantī Jātaka

The second story I wish to examine is the *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527). Here the Bodhisatta is a king called Sivi who becomes captivated by a woman called Ummadantī

³⁵ *evaṃ vatvā pana nesādaputto pemacittena Mahāsattam upasaṃkamitvā bandhanam chinditvā āliṅgitvā sarato nikkhāpetvā saratīre taruṇadabbapiṭṭhe nisīdāpetvā pāde baddhapāsam muducittena sanīkam mocetvā dūre khipitvā Mahāsatte balavasineham paccupaṭṭhāpetvā mettacittena udakam ādāya lohitaṃ dhovitvā punappuna parimajji. tassa mettacittānubhāvena Bodhisattassa pāde sirā sirāhi maṃsam maṃsena cammam cammena ghaṭṭitam.*

³⁶ The theme of debt repayment is portrayed even more bizarrely by the *Nandiyamiga Jātaka* (385). In this story a herd of deer lives in a royal park and is hunted by a king much as in the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka* (12). When the Bodhisatta is offered a chance to escape he refuses because he feels indebted to the king for the food he ate in the park! The Bodhisatta ends up willingly exposing himself to the king's arrows on behalf of his parents.

(‘Intoxicator’).³⁷ His desire is however hindered by the fact that Ummadantī is married to his general, Ahipāraka. Several verses portray the king pining after her beauty, which is largely described in stock phrases (vv.6-14). For example he fantasises about her soft arms embracing him, like a creeper embracing a tree in the forest (v.10). The sensual quality of the verses is underscored by allusions to the negative aspects of the king’s lust. Thus his desire is associated with the drinking of alcohol (v.11) and with a deluded mind (v.12):

With her swelling breasts and lotus-coloured body and her fine skin dyed with lac, when will she lower her mouth to mine, like a drunkard passing a cup of wine to another drunkard? After seeing her standing there, delightful in every part of her body, I am aware of nothing in my mind.³⁸

He is unable to sleep and describes himself as ‘vanquished’ (*parājito*, v.13), a pun on a king’s defeat in battle. He even dreams of renouncing his identity, hoping that he might become Ahipāraka and Ahipāraka might become him (v.14).

The king receives help from an unlikely source: Ahipāraka himself offers to give Sivi his wife. (Ahipāraka’s gift provides a useful comparison to the Bodhisatta’s gift of his wife in the *Vessantara Jātaka*.) As in the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka*, the king now debates with Ahipāraka over the morality of such an extreme act of devotion. On one side of the debate lies Ahipāraka’s selfless devotion to Sivi, which is compared with family love and, as in the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka*, with slave imagery (v.22):

For you are both my mother and father, my master, my lord, my provider and my deity. I am your slave, along with my wife and children. Act as you desire, Sivi, so that you may be happy.³⁹

³⁷ The opportunity is not lost to make word-plays with her name. See v.5 in which Sivi states: ‘Alas! Alas! Her parents have named her well! For Ummadantī [‘Intoxicator’] has intoxicated me with a mere glance.’

*ambho ambho nāmaṃ idaṃ imissā matyā ca petyā ca kataṃ susādhu /
tathā hi mayhaṃ apalokayantī ummatakam Ummadantī akāsī ti //5//*

³⁸ *kadāssu lākhārasarattasucchavī bindutthanī puṇḍarīkattacaṅgī /
mukhaṃ mukhena upanāmayissati soṇḍo va soṇḍassa surāya thālaṃ //11//
yathāddasaṃ naṃ tiṭṭhantiṃ sabbagattaṃ manoramam /
tato sakassa cittaṃ nāvabodhāmi kiñcanaṃ //12//*

³⁹ *tvaṃ hi mātā ca pitā ca mayhaṃ bhattā patī posako devatā ca /
dāso ahaṃ tuyha saputtadāro, yathāsukhaṃ Sibba karohi kāmam //22//*

Nor does Ahipāraka offer his wife because she is undear to him. On the contrary, his love for her makes his offering all the more significant (v.29):

O king, you know that she is dear to me and that she is, protector of the earth, not undear. Lovingly, I give what I love, O king. Those who give what is dear receive what is dear, O lord.⁴⁰

Ahipāraka's offering is thus explicitly connected with *dāna*. Moreover, Ahipāraka describes it in terms of sacrifice, which he accuses Sivi of obstructing if he refuses to accept the gift (v.37):

Meritorious acts lead to heaven, O king. Do not obstruct my merit. I faithfully give Ummadanti to you, like a king giving wealth to brahmins at a sacrifice.⁴¹

Similarly, Ahipāraka describes Sivi as 'worthy of oblations' (*āhūniyo*, v.41) and states (*ibid.*): '[Ummadanti] will bear great fruit for me when she is sacrificed [*hutā*] to you.'⁴² By comparing Sivi with a brahmin recipient, kings and renunciates are thus again paralleled. Ahipāraka's devotion is connected with relational sacrifice, whereby he offers his gift through the sacrificial medium of his king. In addition to this imagery, there is also the implicit notion that Sivi deserves Ummadanti because, as a king, he owns his kingdom and therefore has a right to enjoy it. It is with this concept of kingship that the *Ummadanti Jātaka* particularly takes issue.

On the other side of the debate Sivi argues that, although he admires Ahipāraka's devotion (v.38, 40), which he even describes as *dhamma* (v.42),⁴³ he cannot accept what he ultimately considers to be an immoral (*a-dhamma*) gift. One notices the similarity

⁴⁰ *janinda jānāsi piyā mam' esā, na sā mamaṃ appiyā bhūmipāla /
piyena te dammi piyaṃ janinda, piyadāyino deva piyaṃ labhanti //29//*

⁴¹ *saggūpagaṃ puññakammaṃ janinda, mā me tuvaṃ antarāyaṃ akāsi /
dadāmi te Ummadantiṃ pasanno rājā va yaññe dhanam brāhmaṇānaṃ //37//*

See also v.24 for Ahipāraka's argument that Sivi should not obstruct what is simply *dāna*.

⁴² *tayī hutā deva mahapphalā hi me.*

⁴³ See also v.39, in which Ahipāraka insists that Sivi's citizens will not say that the deed is *adhamma*.

between this and the renunciate recipient's refusal of impure gifts. There is clearly a clash here between rival notions of *dhamma*.⁴⁴ Ahipāraka's concept of morality is determined by the relativist context of satisfying his master – in other words it is based on notions of *svadharmā* – whereas Sivi's arguments appeal to the generalised context of universal ethics. This conflict between relativist and universal morality is illustrated by the contrast between Ahipāraka's argument that his gift is simply a personal transaction hidden from the eyes of the world (v.17),⁴⁵ and Sivi's declaration that (v.18), 'The man who acts wrongly has the misconceived belief that others pay no attention to his deed. But there are spirits and upright men on the earth who do look upon him as he acts.'⁴⁶ These onlooking spirits and humans play a similar role to the impersonal mechanism of *kamma* (referred to by Sivi in vv.18, 21, 47), from which no man can hide. For Sivi it is wrong under *any* circumstances to take another man's wife. Moreover, he explicitly condemns the notion of kingship mentioned above, whereby a king assumes the right to have his desires satisfied, even at the expense of others (v.23): 'One lives a short life if one does a bad deed because one thinks one is all-powerful [*issara*] and if, after the deed, one has no remorse for others. Moreover, the gods do not look kindly upon such evil.'⁴⁷

The king is not the only one who would be acting wrongly if he accepted Ummadantī. Sivi asserts (v.32) that Ahipāraka himself would be censured for abandoning Ummadantī, who is after all innocent (*adūsiyañ*). Ahipāraka's response is startling and illustrates the extent of his devotion. Not only would he renounce fame and bear public disapproval on behalf of his king (v.33), he would even transgress the *dhamma* for him (v.35):

⁴⁴ See Collins 1998:420 and §6.4.4.

⁴⁵ 'O king, except for you and me, not one person will know about this deed. I give Ummadantī to you. Fulfil your desire, O king, and then return her to me.'

*janinda nāññatra tayā mayā vā sabb' āpi kammaṣṣa katassa jaññā /
yan te mayā Ummadantī padinnā, bhusehi rājā vanatham saḷāhi //17//*

Bhusehi is, according to the *PED*, found only here. I follow the commentary's explanation of the last *pāda*, but, leaving *bhusehi* aside for the moment, *saḷāhi* might perhaps make better sense if taken together with *vanatham*: '[enjoy her and] be rid of your desire.'

⁴⁶ *yo pāpakam kammaṃ karaṃ manusso so maññati: mā-y-idha maññimsu aññe /
passanti bhūtāni karontam etaṃ yuttā ca ye honti narā pathavyā //18//*

⁴⁷ *yo issaro 'mhī ti karoti pāpaṃ katvā ca so n' uttapate paresaṃ /
na tena so jīvati dīghaṃ āyu, devāpi pāpena samekkhara na //23//*

Whatever suffering or happiness arises from this, even if it exceeds morality [*dhamma*] and tortures my mind, all that I will bear on my chest, as the earth bears what moves and does not move.⁴⁸

This is unacceptable to Sivi. Not only must he bear his own suffering and refrain from harming others (v.36) but, as a good king, he must protect his kingdom and ensure that it practises the *dhamma*; ‘a good king delights in the *dhamma*’ (*sādhu dhammaruci rājā*, v.45). Accordingly he tells the now persuaded Ahipāraka (v.46): ‘In the realm of an unangry and morally steadfast king, people dwell happily in their homes under his cool shade.’⁴⁹ Similarly, he compares himself to a bull leading his herd across a river: just as the herd depends upon the bull to lead them in a straight path, so a kingdom’s morality depends upon its king (vv.48-51).

At the end of the story, Sivi therefore resumes his proper identity as king, which he was so close to discarding at the beginning. His near fall from royalty has allowed him to reassess what it means to be a true king. The stereotype of the violent and greedy king exploiting a kingdom for his own desires has been rejected for an ideal king who places *dhamma* before *bhoga* (vv.52-4), and who is no longer at the whim of his own mind (v.55). This self-discipline recalls Ahipāraka’s previous allusion to Sivi as a brahmin; by adopting ethics based on renunciate values the king proves himself to be worthy of the comparison. Sivi has learnt to sacrifice his own individual desires for his kingdom. As he himself asserts, the righteous man should be willing to suffer for others (v.27):

He who knows the *dhamma* replaces other people’s suffering with his own and his own happiness with the happiness of others, and he realises that, ‘In just this way what is mine also belongs to others’.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *yam kiñci dukkhaṃ ca sukhañ ca etto dhammātisāraṃ va manovighātaṃ /
urasā ahaṃ paccupadissāmi sabbaṃ pathavī yathā thāvarānaṃ tasānaṃ //35//*

⁴⁹ *akkodhanassa vijite thitadhammassa rājino /
sukhaṃ manussā āsetha sītacchāyāya saṃghare //46//*

On the simile of a king being like a shady tree, see for example the *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* (538), v.11.

⁵⁰ *yo attadukkhena parassa dukkhaṃ sukkena vā attasukhaṃ dahāti /
yath’ ev’ idaṃ mayha tathā paresaṃ yo evaṃ jānāti sa vedi dhammaṃ //27//*

Although the commentary ascribes this verse to Sivi, it is noticeable that its sentiment could easily have been expressed by Ahipāraka. Indeed the reciprocal nature of their relationship lies at the crux of the story's resolution. By itself, Ahipāraka's devotion appears extreme and ill-judged, but when met by an equal devotion from the king it becomes noble and balanced. At the beginning of the story Sivi only received devotion, by the end of the story he realises that he must return it too.

Let us now investigate how devotional motifs are portrayed in the context of marital love.

5.4 The *Sambulā Jātaka*

Attempts to discover positive portrayals of women in the *Jātakas* would often meet with disappointment. Not only is the Bodhisatta never depicted as a female, but several stories portray women in a negative stereotype as lustful, deceitful, and dangerous. A paradigm for such attitudes is offered by the *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536). In several *jātakas* women also provide the catalyst for an initial narrative conflict which later becomes resolved through the Bodhisatta's virtue. For example, in a cycle of stories a woman's desire initiates a hunt for a beautiful forest animal (frequently the Bodhisatta); this animal is then caught, whereupon it teaches the *dhamma* to its aggressors.⁵¹ However, some stories take a more sympathetic approach towards women. The *Sambulā Jātaka* (*SJ*, 519) is one such case. Indeed, its protagonist seems to be related to one of the most famous heroines in Indian literature, Sītā, whose devotion to her husband Rāma is often considered to epitomise feminine virtue. Many of these themes will reappear in our discussion of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547) and *Rāmāyaṇa* in Chapters 6 and 7.

I follow the Burmese reading *yo evaṃ* in *pāda* d rather than the PTS *so evaṃ*.

⁵¹ See for example the *Chaddanta Jātaka* (514), *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533) and *Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka* (534). The *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545) also follows the same pattern, but there a queen desires the heart of the wise minister Vidhura.

5.4.1 The story of the present

The *paccuppannavatthu* points us to the *Kummāsapiṇḍa Jātaka* (415), a story we have already referred to in our discussion of relational giving (p.151). The *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Kummāsapiṇḍa Jātaka* praises the deeds of a garland-making girl who gives rice-gruel to the Buddha and becomes a queen (called Mallikā) as a result of her gift. She is described as a loyal (*patidevatā*) and loving (*piyā, manapā*) wife, and is also said to be ‘a favourite of the Buddhas’ (*Buddhānaṃ vallabhā*) (*J* 3.406.11ff.). Her devotion to the *saṅgha*, exemplified by her gift-donation, is thus juxtaposed with her devotion to her king. This theme is accentuated by the *SJ*, which describes Queen Mallikā as ‘devoted to the Buddha and loyal to her husband’ (*Buddhūpaṭṭhāyikā patidevatā*, *J* 5.88.10). The secular and religious domains are thus brought into comparison, a theme which is further illustrated by the *Suvaṇṇamiga Jātaka* (359). In this story, a doe sacrifices her life for her mate (the Bodhisatta). The *paccuppannavatthu* of the *Suvaṇṇamiga Jātaka* likens this self-sacrifice in the past to the love she shows for her husband in the present when she persuades him to listen to the *dhamma*. As a result her husband becomes an *arahant*. We are told that, just as in the past she freed her mate from a hunter’s snare, so in the present she ‘freed him from the snare of passion’ (*rāgapāsā mocesi*, *J* 3.183.24). Her love for her husband is thus infused with soteriological values. Indeed, as in the *Kummāsapiṇḍa Jātaka* above, her marital devotion (*patidevatā*) is once again paralleled by her dedication to the *sāsana*: ‘A faithful believer, devoted to the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha, she is correctly behaved and wise, and delights in meritorious acts such as giving’ (*J* 3.182.10f.).⁵²

5.4.2 The story of the past

⁵² *saddhā pasannā Buddhamāmikā dhammamāmikā saṅghamāmikā ācārasampannā paṇḍitā dānādi-puññābhiratā.*

The *paccuppannavatthu* of the *SJ* cites Queen Mallikā's devotion to her husband (and, by extension, her devotion to the Buddha) as the theme connecting the present with the past. In the *atītavatthu*, our heroine is called Sambulā and is the chief wife of a prince called Soththisena. This prince falls prey to leprosy, which grieves him so much that he decides to leave the kingdom and reside in the forest. His wife insists on accompanying him. She cares for him meticulously, fetching him food and water as well as cleaning his body and tending his disease. One day, while collecting fruit in the forest, she decides to bathe by a cave. The forest is radiant with her beauty, and she is noticed by a demon (*dānava*), who lusts after her. A series of verses ensues in which the demon asks her who she is, which she answers and then informs him that her husband is sick. The demon tries to convince her that she should abandon the feeble Soththisena and become his chief wife instead, enjoying all the trappings of *dānava* power. He threatens that he will eat her if she refuses. Confronted by her marital loyalty, he grabs her by the arm, whereupon she calls upon the gods to help her (v.14) and declares that she is not worried about being eaten by the demon but only by the prospect of being bereft of her husband's love (v.13). In response to her call for help, Sakka enters the scene, extols Sambulā's virtue and tells the demon to set her free since, because of her purity, his head would split in seven if he ate her. The prose adds that the demon lets her go and that Sakka decides to prevent any further mishaps by tying the demon up and taking him to a distant mountain.

In an unsmooth transition, the story now shifts to Sambulā's return to her hut. No explanation is given by the narrative as to why Soththisena is absent from the hermitage,⁵³ but she becomes hysterical when she cannot see him in the forest. She is likened to a bird or cow which returns to her nest or fold to find her young gone (v.16). The image is slightly awkward since, although it expresses Sambulā's bewilderment at not seeing her

⁵³ Even later, in the prose narrative, Soththisena ignores Sambulā's question: 'Where did you go, lord?' (*kuhiṃ gato si devā ti*, *J* 5.93.29). The word-commentary to v.16 notices the gap in the plot and provides the following explanation (*J* 5.93.8ff.): 'For, while Sambulā was wandering around, Soththisena had left the hut and sat down on the path, because he feared: "Women are unpredictable. She might even come here with an enemy of mine." *tadā hi Soththiseno Sambulāya cirāyamānāya itthiyo nāma lolā paccāmittaṃ pi me gahetvā āgaccheyyā ti parisamkanto pañnasālato nikkhamitvā gacchantaraṃ pavisitvā nisīdi.*

husband, it is inexact since Sambulā has not lost her young. The reason for the slightly inappropriate metaphor may be that it rests upon an imperfect recollection of a passage in the *Vessantara Jātaka* in which the Bodhisatta's wife (Maddī) returns to her hermitage from the forest to find that her children are gone and is compared to a cow without its calves (v.546).⁵⁴ As we shall see in Chapter 6, Maddī and Sambulā are closely related heroines.

To return to the *SJ*, however, Sambulā now calls upon the protection of sages, animals, mountains, forests, the night, Gaṅgā and other parts of her environment. Soththisena appears and immediately doubts Sambulā's grief, reasoning that if she truly loved him her heart would have broken. He asks her why she is late and who her lover is (v.24). She tells him what occurred in the forest and repeats that her only concern was losing her husband's love (v.25). Unconvinced by her bizarre tale, Soththisena resorts to what seems to him a more plausible explanation, namely the stereotype that women are cunning and deceptive (v.26). Sambulā then proves her virtue by making an act of truth that she loves none other than him, as a result of which Soththisena's disease disappears.

The couple now return to the city, whereupon Soththisena is made king and Sambulā his chief queen. However, he turns his affection away from Sambulā and instead finds pleasure in other women. Sambulā grows thin with grief and when Soththisena's father (the Bodhisatta, who has become an ascetic) asks her why she is unhappy, she describes the beauty of her rivals (vv.29f.) and yearns to be back in the forest where she had her husband's love (v.31). Being an unloved wife is worse than death (v.32); love is more important than any wealth (vv.32-3). The Bodhisatta then harangues Soththisena for his treachery to Sambulā and tells him that he should act justly towards such a virtuous wife. Soththisena then tells Sambulā that he and his courtesans will follow her wishes. The two live happily and virtuously.

⁵⁴ In vv.124ff. of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547), Phusatī likens her distress at being separated from her son with that of a bird who finds her nest empty and her fledglings dead.

5.4.3 The Sambulā Jātaka and the Rāmāyana

D.C. Sen (1920:21) noticed many years ago that there were similarities between the *SJ* and *Rām*. His comments were however brief, and I would like to offer a more detailed comparison of the texts. Some of the general and more obvious similarities between the *SJ* and *Rām* are as follows:

- 1) A prince leaves his kingdom to live in the forest with his wife.
- 2) The princess is devoted to her husband and insists on accompanying him into the forest.⁵⁵
- 3) One day the princess is alone in the forest.
- 4) A demon is captivated by her beauty.
- 5) The demon asks who she is and tries to persuade her to become his chief queen.
- 6) The demon threatens to eat her if she refuses.
- 7) The princess remains loyal to her husband.
- 8) The demon grabs her.
- 9) She calls for help.
- 10) The princess is saved.
- 11) Upon returning to her husband, her purity is called into question.
- 12) She absolves herself by an act of truth.

There are also, however, several apparent differences between the two narratives. For example, Sothhisena decides to leave his kingdom because he has leprosy, whereas Rāma is exiled because of the boon his father gave to queen Kaikeyī. Rāma is accompanied by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, whereas Sothhisena is only accompanied by his wife. Sambulā is saved by a god, Sītā is saved by her husband. The situations giving rise to the abduction of

⁵⁵ Sambulā's attention to her husband's physical requirements, such as providing him with food and washing his body and feet, reminds one of the service shown by Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma.

the princesses are also very different. Several other differences, unnecessary to recount, may also be found, which show that the *SJ* is not simply a condensed version of the *Rām*. Indeed, such a direct borrowing would be unlikely given the fact that both texts developed over long periods of oral composition. A closer look at the *SJ* does, however, show that the texts are related, or at least that they use the same conventions.

The verses of the *Jātakas* often preserve earlier strata in the text and it is here that we are most likely to find verbal echoes of the *Rām* (especially since it itself is composed in verse). Some of these echoes may, however, simply be due to the similarity of plot. For example, the demon's opening address to Sambulā has certain affinities with Rāvaṇa's words to Sītā:

SJ vv.1f.:

‘Who are you standing alone, trembling in a mountain cave, lady with firm thighs? [...] Illuminating the delightful forest, which is frequented by lions and tigers, who are you, lovely fine-waisted lady, and to whom do you belong?’

kā vedhamānā girikandarāyaṃ ekā tuvaṃ tiṭṭhasi saññatūru /
 [...] //1//
obhāsayam vanam rammam sīhavyagghanisevitam /
kā vā tvam asi kalyāṇi, kassa vā tvam sumajjhime //2//

Rām 3.44.30:

‘Who are you, to whom do you belong, where do you come from, my precious, and why are you wandering all alone through the terrifying Daṇḍaka forest, the haunt of *rākṣasas*?’

kāsi kasya kutaś ca tvam kinṇimittam ca daṇḍakān /
ekā carasi kalyāṇi ghorān rākṣasasevitān //30//

Other echoes may be due to the use of stock phrases and epithets widespread in the oral tradition. For example, the demon addresses Sambulā as *kalyāṇi* (v.2), *pāṇipameyya-*

majjhe (v.1), *hāṭakavaṇṇabhe* (v.9) and *yaśassinī* (v.15). These epithets, or similar variations of them, are also used of Sītā by Rāvaṇa.⁵⁶ For example: *kalyāṇi* (*Rām* 3.44.30); *karāntamitamadhya* (*Rām* 3.44.21); *kāñcanavarṇābhe* (*Rām* 3.44.15); *yaśasvinī* (*Rām* 3.32.14). Sītā and Sambulā are also both described as ‘afflicted with grief’ (*śokārtam*, *Rām* 3.53.31; *sokaṭṭāya*, *SJ* v.7). The employment of such stock female epithets is also seen in the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), in which Isisiṅga’s eulogy of a nymph has several similarities with Rāvaṇa’s lustful appraisal of Sītā’s beauty (*Rām* 3.44). These, and many other verbal correlations between the *Jātakas* and the *Rām*, are listed in the Appendix to Chapter 7.

While such stock epithets do not show that the *SJ* and *Rām* are directly linked, they do show that they use the same kind of language and that they are talking about similar *types* of heroine. Perhaps the most important stock epithet which unites Sambulā and Sītā is the word *patibbatā* (v.15), Sanskrit *pativrata*, meaning ‘devoted to a husband’.⁵⁷ This adjective is also used of Maddī in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547, vv.366, 454, 637).

The similarities between the *SJ* and the *Rām* do not, however, lie merely at the level of stock phrases. Just as Rāvaṇa asks Sītā to be chief queen of his many wives and to be served by 5,000 female slaves in his mountain palace in Laṅkā (*Rām* 3.45.24-27), so the demon in the *SJ* asks Sambulā to be the chief queen of his 400 wives in his mountain lair (v.8).

Compare *Rām* 3.53.17:

‘In my entourage are many thousands of women. Be mistress of them all, beloved Sītā: Be my beloved wife.’

*bahūnāṃ strīśahasrāṇāṃ mama yo ’sau parigrahaḥ /
tāsāṃ tvam īśvarī sīte mama bhāryā bhava priye //17//*

⁵⁶ In *J* 6.547.9f., *tanumajjihmā* is glossed as *karamitamajjihā*.

⁵⁷ On Sītā as the *pativrata* wife, see Goldman and Goldman 1996:57ff.

And *SJ*, v.8:

‘Come, climb up to my mountain. I have four hundred wives. Be the best of them and fulfil all your desires.’

*ehi maṅgirim āruyha, bhariyā mayhaṃ catussatā /
tāsaṃ tvam pavarā hohi sabbakāmasiddhinī //8//*

Both demons offer to give the heroines whatever they desire (*SJ* v.9, *Rām* 3.46, 47, 53) and they also ask the heroines why they should want to stay with their weak husbands.

Compare *Rām* 3.53.21:⁵⁸

‘What use is Rāma to you, who is but a weak human?’

kiṃ kariṣyasi rāmeṇa mānuṣeṇālpatejasā.

And *SJ* v.6:

‘What use is the sick prince in the forest to you?’

kiṃ vane rājaputtana āturena karissasi.

Indeed Rāvaṇa’s request (3.53.22): *ramasveha mayā saha* (‘Come make love with me’) is paralleled almost exactly by the demon’s words in *SJ* v.9: *ramasv ajja mayā saha*.⁵⁹ In addition, and perhaps most strikingly because of the peculiarity of the phrase, both demons threaten that they will eat the heroine for breakfast if she refuses (*Rām* 3.54.22 *pātarāsārtham*; *SJ* v.10 *pātarāsāya*).⁶⁰ Ironically, the demon is later told by Sakka that if he were to eat Sambulā, his head would split in seven because of the purity of her virtue.

⁵⁸ See also *Rām* 3.46.16: ‘What use is this witless Rāma to you, who has been deposed from kingship?’
tena kiṃ bhraṣṭarājyena rāmeṇa gatacetasā / kariṣyasi [...] //16//

⁵⁹ In the same verse Rāvaṇa says *bhartāhaṃ sadṛśas tava*, which echoes *SJ* v.6: *ahaṃ bhattā bhavāmi te*.

⁶⁰ This is noted by Sen 1920:21.

A related notion is expressed in the *Rām*: as soon as Rāvaṇa touches her, he is considered to be as good as dead (*Rām* 3.44.35, 48.16ff., 49.19ff., 53.35, etc.).

Both heroines are physically seized by the demon and, when they cannot see their husbands, they both cry for help. Sītā (*Rām* 3.47.29-34) addresses the scenery, trees, mountains, river, tree deities, and forest animals, asking them to tell Rāma of her abduction. Three of Sītā's verses have a refrain: 'Tell Rāma quickly that Rāvaṇa is carrying off Sītā' (*kṣīpraṃ rāmāya śamsadhvaṃ sītāṃ harati rāvaṇaḥ*). In the parallel situation, Sambulā calls upon the gods, which instigates Sakka's protection. However, the passage that particularly seems to recollect Sītā's verses are found after Sambulā has been saved and is alone at the hermitage. Like Sītā, Sambulā is distraught at being unable to see her husband and addresses a variety of objects, including animals, forests, mountains, rivers and sages.⁶¹ Her verses are also given a refrain: 'Not seeing the prince, I have gone to you for refuge' (*rājaputtaṃ apassantī tumh' amhi saraṇaṃ gatā*, vv.18-23). Sītā seems to echo this in *Rām* 3.47.33: 'I go to everything for refuge' (*sarvāṇi saraṇaṃ yāmi*).⁶²

As we saw above, when Sambulā returns from her ordeal with the demon, Soththisena questions her purity. His suspicions are based upon negative female stereotypes, which he summarises through the normative language of a proverb (v.26): 'Women are deceitful and extremely cunning; truth is hard to find in them. The nature of women is difficult to ascertain, like the course of fish in water.'⁶³ Sambulā proves that she is in fact an extraordinary woman (*itthīnaṃ esā pavarā*, v.15) by her act of truth, which not only absolves her of any guilt but also cures her husband's disease.

⁶¹ Sambulā uses the word *vande* ('I greet') in all her verses; Sītā also uses *vande* in two of her verses (3.47.30f.) but employs other words such as *āmantraye* (3.47.29) and *namaskaromi* (3.47.32) in the others.

⁶² The episode in which Sakka binds the demon in chains could be a response to the event in the *Rām* in which Rāvaṇa binds Indra and takes him to Laṅkā in the *Uttara Kāṇḍa* (7.29). This episode in the *Rām* caught the attention of Vimala Sūri, who argues against its feasibility in his *Paūma-Cariya*; see Kulkarni 1959:195.

⁶³ *corīnaṃ bahubuddhīnaṃ yāsu saccaṃ sudullabhaṃ /
thīnaṃ bhāvo durājāno macchass' ev' odake gatan ti //26//*

Sītā too is forced to prove her purity to her husband. She is tested twice. On the first occasion, Rāma’s own doubts about Sītā’s virtue are emphasised, as he is repulsed by the idea of taking back a woman who has been possessed by another (*Rām* 6.103, especially vv.17ff.). As David Shulman (1991:90ff.) has pointed out, Rāma’s objections are based upon normative notions about women; this mirrors Sothhisena’s outlook. Thus Sītā criticises Rāma for talking to her inappropriately ‘like an ordinary man to an ordinary woman’ (*prākṛtaḥ prākṛtām iva*, 6.104.5) and says (6.104.7): ‘The behaviour of other women has made you doubt my nature.’⁶⁴ As in the *SJ*, the emphasis is not so much on denying the female stereotype, but rather on asserting the heroine’s claim to a status above such norms. Sītā shows that she is an abnormal type of woman by throwing herself upon a pyre with the declaration (6.104.24): ‘If my heart is constant and never turns away from Rāghava, then may Fire, the witness of the world, fully protect me!’⁶⁵ Her virtue is proved by the fact that she leaves the fire unscathed.⁶⁶

Just as in the *SJ* Sambulā refers to her feelings in order to absolve herself, so in the *Rām* it is the heroine’s inner purity which overrides the external norms of cultural censure. As Sītā herself states, her heart remains pure even if her body was controlled by Rāvaṇa (6.104.8f.):

If, O lord, my limbs touched another’s, it was against my will and contrary to my desire. It was fate that wronged me in this regard. That which is under my control, my heart, belongs to you. What could I do in my powerlessness if my limbs were under another’s control?⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *prthakstrīṇām pracāreṇa jātiṃ tvam pariśaṅkase /*

⁶⁵ *yathā me hṛdayaṃ nityaṃ nāpasarpaṭi rāghavāt /
tathā lokasya sāksī mām sarvataḥ pātu pāvakaḥ //24//*

⁶⁶ It is also noteworthy that Sītā describes her ordeal by fire as a ‘medicine for this disaster’ (*vyasanāsyā bheṣajam*, 6.104.18), an image which is perhaps picked up by the *SJ* when Sambulā’s act of truth cures Sothhisena of his leprosy.

⁶⁷ *yady ahaṃ gātrasaṃsparśam gatāsmi vivaśā prabho /
kāmakāro na me tatra daivaṃ tatrāparādhyati //8//
madadhīnaṃ tu yat tan me hṛdayaṃ tvayi vartate /
parādhīneṣu gātreṣu kiṃ kariṣyāmy anīśvarā //9//*

This contrast between internal and external agencies is accentuated by Rāma's excuse that social pressure forced him to test her. He claims that he knew all along that Sītā was pure, but that he was forced to test her or people would have said he was governed by lust (6.106.11f.). Fear of public censure is also said to motivate Rāma a second time when he repudiates Sītā by sending her away to a hermitage (7.44). After some time Rāma allows her back and she makes an act of truth. Her words express similar sentiments to Sambulā's act of truth in the *SJ*. Sītā declares (7.88.10): 'As I think of none other than Rāghava in my mind, so may the Goddess Mādhavī [Earth] open up for me!'⁶⁸ Likewise, Sambulā states (v.27): 'If I recognise none dearer than you, by this statement of truth may your disease disappear!'⁶⁹ Sītā is then swallowed up by the earth never to return.

Sītā and Sambulā therefore appear to be closely related heroines. But what of Rāma and Sothhisena? Could the *SJ*'s negative portrayal of Sothhisena represent a kind of satirical attack on Rāma? Could the *SJ* be responding to the unfair treatment Sītā experiences at Rāma's hands, a criticism expressed by several characters in the *Rām* itself? This is possible, but if there is a deliberate attack against Rāma, it is implicit and not explicit. Rather than one text simply commenting on the other, it seems to me more plausible that the *SJ* and *Rām* evolved from a common narrative cycle which worked with similar themes and motifs.

Above all, the *SJ* is concerned with extolling the virtue of its heroine. This is particularly achieved by demeaning Sothhisena, who thereby acts as a foil to Sambulā's virtue. Far from being a brave warrior like Rāma, Sothhisena leaves his kingdom because of an illness. Completely reliant upon his wife, Sothhisena is satirised for his frailty by the fact that Sambulā is not, as one would expect, saved by him (as Sītā is by Rāma) but by a god. In this context, Sothhisena's martial name is itself surely ironic. The final dishonourable

⁶⁸ *yathāhaṃ Rāghavād anyam manasāpi na cintaye /
tathā me mādhavī devī vivaram dātum arhati //10//*

⁶⁹ *yathāhaṃ nābhijānāmi aññaṃ piyataram tayā /
etena saccavajjena vyādhi te vūpasammatū ti //27//*

touch is expressed by Sotthisena’s betrayal of Sambulā, when he is licentious even after Sambulā has proved her devotion. Whereas Sambulā shows herself to be superior to the female stereotype, Sotthisena conforms all too well to the image of the adulterous husband and the hedonistic king. Rāma could never be accused of such infidelity: his monogamy is immaculate and in marked contrast to the royal custom of polygamy (practised for example by his father Daśaratha). Nevertheless, the motif of adultery is entertained in the *Rām* when Sītā despairs that Rāma will leave her to her captivity in Laṅkā (5.26.14):

Once you [Rāma] have carried out your father’s orders to the letter and have returned from the forest with your vow accomplished, you will, I think, make love with wide-eyed women, carefree, your purpose accomplished.⁷⁰

What Sītā fears will happen actually does happen in the *SJ*. Sītā also poignantly accuses Rāma thus (*Rām* 5.26.12):

My taking you for my sole divinity, my long suffering, my sleeping on the ground, and my rigorous adherence to righteousness – all this – my utter devotion to my husband, has been in vain, like the favours men do for ingrates.⁷¹

Although unfounded because of Rāma’s virtue, Sītā’s worries poignantly express the hardships faced by women in being dependent upon their husbands. It is on themes such as this that the *SJ* concentrates to create its own distinct narrative.

Like Sītā, Sambulā enters the forest for her husband, where she too suffers. Indeed, Sambulā’s devotion becomes particularly associated with the forest when she states that she would rather be in the forest alone with her husband than in the palace removed from his love (v.31). The *SJ* thus sets up a dichotomy between an ideal marriage in the forest and an unhappy marriage in the city. As in the stories discussed earlier in the chapter, this

⁷⁰ *pitur nirdeśaṃ niyamena kṛtvā vanān nivṛttaś caritavrataś ca /*
strībhis tu manye vipulekṣaṇābhiḥ saṃraṃsyase vītabhayaḥ kṛtārthaḥ //14//
⁷¹ *ananyadevatvam iyaṃ kṣamā ca bhūmau ca śayyā niyamaś ca dharme /*
pativratātvaṃ viphalam mamedam kṛtam kṛtaghneṣv iva mānuṣāṇām //12//

conflict between forest and city is finally resolved through Sambulā's virtue when the Bodhisatta tells Sotthisena that he must respect his devoted wife.

In Chapters 6 and 7, we will examine the theme of devoted love further, discussing in particular how it interacts with ascetic values. As we shall see, Maddī's love for her husband is championed in the *Vessantara Jātaka* much as Sambulā's is in the *SJ*.

Chapter 6

The *Vessantara Jātaka*: Sacrificing one's family for Buddhahood

6.1 Introduction

The culmination of the theme of *dāna*, in terms of both individualist and relational giving, is reached in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (547; *VJ*), in which the Bodhisatta achieves the perfection of giving by offering his wife and children as slaves to a wicked brahmin called Jūjaka.¹ The *VJ* is not only the last and longest of the *Jātakas*, but also the most influential. Indeed, its widespread popularity has led Richard Gombrich (1977:xv) to claim that the *VJ* 'is the most famous story in the Buddhist world' and that in modern Theravādin countries 'even the biography of the Buddha is not better known'.

This chapter concentrates on the *VJ*'s complex portrayal of the relationship between society and asceticism. As Steven Collins remarks (1998:501):

[The *VJ*] is, *inter alia*, a painfully honest confrontation of the difficulties of renunciation, showing that real human goods must be abandoned in the ascetic search for ultimate felicity; and it is also the most successful attempt in Pali literature to infuse ascetic values and soteriological motifs into an ideal image of collective life in an ordinary, productive and reproductive society.

In order to provide a context for the story, it would first be useful to summarise the attitudes expressed by other *jātakas* towards the relationship between society – especially family – and renunciation. These can be heuristically classified as twofold. On the one hand family and ascetic values are seen as mutually exclusive, on the other hand they are assimilated. The former approach is represented by the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539) and its associated story the *Sonaka Jātaka* (529), and the latter by the *Sonananda Jātaka* (532).

¹ The main academic studies on the *VJ* are Cone and Gombrich 1977; Gombrich 1985; and Collins 1998:42ff., 497ff. A summary of various versions of the Vessantara story can be found in Gombrich 1977:xxxvff. See Alsdorf 1957a for a philological examination of the *VJ*. Norman (1991c) also suggests textual emendations.

6.2 Opposing family and asceticism

6.2.1 The Mahājanaka Jātaka

In this story a king called Mahājanaka (the Bodhisatta) becomes disillusioned with kingship and decides to become an ascetic. In his search for solitude, he climbs onto his palace roof and sits there in silence, uninterested by affairs of state. Citizens remark upon their king's behaviour thus (vv.20f.):

How different the king is from before, the lord of the directions, ruler of the whole earth! He pays no attention to dancers today and has no concern for songs. He looks at neither deer, gardens nor swans. He sits silently like a mute and no longer gives commands on practical matters.²

These verses offer a conventional description of discontent with royal pleasures, but the emphasis on silence is noteworthy. Just as in the *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* (538) the Bodhisatta avoids inheriting kingship by pretending to be dumb,³ so also in this story Mahājanaka initially rejects his kingdom by 'sitting silently like a mute' (*mūgo va tuṅhīṃ āsīno*, v.21). As we shall see, silence becomes an important motif in defining Mahājanaka's ascetic identity. For the moment, however, Mahājanaka's silence is only temporary, as he has not yet totally renounced society.

Mahājanaka soon feels that his residence on the palace roof is too moderate a form of detachment and, in one of the longest songs in the *Jātakas*, he yearns to leave the city and cut himself free from desire (vv.25-115). In particular, Mahājanaka contrasts the ornate luxury of crowded urban life with the idyllic frugality of the forest, spheres which he treats as inherently separate. At the end of his song, Mahājanaka leaves the palace after

² *apurāṇaṃ vata bho rājā sabbabhummo disampati /
nājja nacce nisāmeti na gīte kurute mano //20//
na miḡe na pi uyyāne na pi haṃse udikkhati /
mūgo va tuṅhīṃ āsīno na atthaṃ anusāsati ti //21//*

³ Collins 1998:423ff.

shaving his head and dressing in yellow robes. As he departs he meets his wife, Sīvalī, who does not initially recognise him and supposes him to be a *paccekabuddha* (*J* 6.53.1ff.). Mahājanaka is thus already portrayed as estranged from his wife. Their complete separation, however, takes some time to be finalised, as Sīvalī and the inhabitants of the city try to seduce the Bodhisatta away from the ascetic path. In response, he expresses his defiant desire to transcend social norms. This is most startlingly expressed when he eats the leftovers of a dog and tells his disgusted wife (v.155): ‘Leftovers are not inedible for me, Sīvalī, whether they are a householder’s or a dog’s. It is said that any food gained lawfully is edible and blameless.’⁴

We have already remarked upon the significance of food as a means of defining spiritual authority. For example, in the *Bhikkhāparamparā Jātaka* (496), a portion of food passes through a hierarchy of recipients, including kings, brahmins and ascetics, until it finally reaches a monk at the top. The *Mahājanaka Jātaka* reveals a different emphasis. Here ascetic authority is not portrayed through simple one-upmanship, but rather through the rejection of any category at all. For Mahājanaka, even the most disgusting food is edible, irrespective of who gives it to him.⁵ Within the context of *dāna*, therefore, Mahājanaka adopts a wholly individualist approach which devalues the significance of a relationship between donor and recipient.

This individualistic concern is most obviously characterised by Mahājanaka’s desire for solitude. Two metaphors in particular are used to express this. The first occurs when Mahājanaka sees a girl with two bracelets on one hand and one bracelet on the other. The two bracelets jangle whereas the single bracelet remains silent, from which the girl draws the following conclusion (v.159):

⁴ *na cāpi me Sīvalī so abhakkho yaṃ hoti cattam gihino sunakhassa vā /
ye keci bhogā idha dhammaladdhā sabbo bhakkho anavajjo ti vutto ti //155//*

⁵ In v.128, food imagery is again used to describe Mahājanaka’s renunciation: ‘We who own nothing live happily. We will feed on joy like the Ābhassarā deities.’

*susukham vata jīvāma yesan no n’ atthi kiñcanam /
pītibhakkhā bhavissāma devā Ābhassarā yathā ti //128//*

The verse is the same as *Dhp* v.200. For the Ābhassara deities, see the *Aggañña Sutta* (*D* 3.80ff.)

A second object merely causes conflict. But what can a single object conflict against? Solitude should be attractive to one such as yourself who seeks heaven.⁶

The second metaphor occurs when the Bodhisatta sees an arrow-maker closing one eye as he makes an arrow straight (vv.165f.). Once again the above verse is sung in praise of being single (v.167). Solitude is thus described with images of tranquillity (lack of conflict), focus (the concentration of an arrow-maker) and rectitude (the straightness of an arrow). It is also described as an absence: in the first metaphor as the absence of another bracelet and the absence of sound, and in the second metaphor as the absence of a second eye. Such apophatic language effectively conveys notions of transcendence, and the example of the non-sound of a single bracelet represents how this form of expression is ultimately reduced to silence. At the same time, however, such apophasis is itself reliant upon kataphatic expression.⁷ It is only in comparison to the jangling of two bracelets that the non-sound of a single bracelet makes any sense. Similarly, the image of looking through one eye is only meaningful when contrasted with looking through two eyes. This interaction between apophatic and kataphatic modes of expression reflects how Mahājanaka's aspiration to ascetic solitude, while being seen in opposition to the conventional world, is itself ultimately related to the conventional world, a dialectic discussed in §1.6.

Images of absence and silence must of course be differentiated from notions of non-existence. It would be incorrect to surmise, for example, from the image of the blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion that *nibbāna* is not real. Instead, as Steven

⁶ *vivādamatto dutiyo, ken' eko vivādissati /
tassa te saggakāmassa ekattaṃ uparocatan ti //159//*

This verse echoes Mahājanaka's earlier song, in which he yearned to dwell 'without another' (*adutiyo*, v.112).

⁷ As discussed in §1.6, Buddhist texts also use kataphatic language to describe transcendental concepts. See Collins 1998:191ff. With regard to the *Saddanīti*, Collins points out (1998:201): 'Many, perhaps most of the terms given as synonyms or meanings of nirvana are negative or privative in grammatical form. [...] It is possible to emphasize this linguistic fact to interpret the doctrine of nirvana as a *via negativa*, an apophatic form of transcendentalism.' However, he adds: 'But this is not an interpretation for which any very strong support is given in the Pali texts.'

Collins demonstrates (1998:188ff.), absences and silences can be ways of ‘producing meaning’, and it is in this sense that they are used in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*. However, even though silence can produce meaning, it does so in a way which purposefully defies and disrupts ordinary modes of expression. The disruptive ramifications of apophatic expression are particularly conveyed in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* by the concluding scene in which Mahājanaka finally rejects Sīvalī.

Encouraged by the above metaphors of solitude, the Bodhisatta tells his wife (vv.161, 169):

Noble lady, this path followed by travellers splits in two. You take one of them and I’ll take the other. Never again say to me: ‘You are my husband’ or ‘I am your wife’.⁸

In this brutal language, Mahājanaka expresses how marriage is alien to his concept of asceticism, a dichotomy further exaggerated by the image of two diverging paths. Sīvalī, however, pathetically insists upon following the Bodhisatta to the edge of the forest, whereupon he picks up a piece of grass and cuts it in two, saying: ‘Look Sīvalī, just as this can no longer be joined, so I can no longer have any association with you’ (*J* 6.67.20ff.).⁹ Sīvalī now falls to the floor in a faint, which the Bodhisatta uses as an opportunity to enter the forest, covering up his footprints as he departs. By contrast, the ascetic hero of the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497) makes his footprints visible, thereby signalling his willingness to engage in society in order to ‘tame’ it (see pp.108f.).

Although other stories devote much material to describing the forest, in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* the forest is viewed as a place into which renunciates disappear and become untraceable. Mahājanaka has entered a realm so beyond any relational activity that it can

⁸ *ayaṃ dvedhāpatho bhadde anuciṇṇo pathāvīhi /
tesaṃ tvaṃ ekaṃ gaṇhāhi, ahaṃ ekaṃ punāparaṃ /
n’ eva maṃ tvaṃ pati me ti māhaṃ bhariyā ti vā punā ti //161, 169//*

⁹ *passa Sīvali, ayaṃ idha puna ghaṭetum na sakkā, evaṃ eva puna mayhaṃ tayā saddhiṃ samvāso nāma ghaṭetum na sakkō ti.*

only be characterised by silence, whether the non-sound of a single bracelet, Mahājanaka’s silent meditation on top of his palace, or the fact that he is never heard from again. Thus the narrative only tells us the bare bones of his life thereafter (*J* 6.68.7ff.): namely, that he acquires meditative attainments and that he never returns to the ‘human realm’ (*manussapatha*). The ascetic world of the forest thus acts as a type of ‘narrative closure’.¹⁰ On its own, it defies narrative momentum. At the same time, however, as an oppositional category contrasting with and informing the human realm, the forest provides the necessary tension for creating narrative momentum. Indeed, the whole plot of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* pivots around Mahājanaka’s quest for asceticism and the conflict this causes with society.

Mahājanaka’s separation from the ‘human realm’ is underscored by his attitudes to teaching. Thus, when an ascetic asks Mahājanaka,¹¹ ‘Who is your Blessed One and Teacher?’ (v.142),¹² Mahājanaka replies that his aspiration for renunciation originates from his own realisations rather than from any teacher (v.143): ‘Deer-hided ascetic, I have never at any time honoured nor approached any ascetic or brahmin.’¹³ On the contrary, his realisations are derived independently through signs. These include the bracelets and arrow-maker mentioned above, but what particularly inspires Mahājanaka is the sight of fruit-pickers destroying a fertile mango-tree and leaving a barren mango-tree untouched. This sign sparks off Mahājanaka’s aspiration for the ‘barren life’ of asceticism and, by describing the trees as his ‘teachers’ (*satthāro*, v.149), he disassociates himself further from human relationships.¹⁴

¹⁰ I take the concept from Collins (1998:241ff.), who uses it of nirvana.

¹¹ The first ascetic Mahājanaka meets is called Nārada Kassapa. According to the prose, Nārada then flies away, whereupon a second ascetic called Migājina arrives to speak to Mahājanaka. The verses make no mention of the departure of Nārada and originally Nārada and Migājina were probably one and the same person, since *migājina* simply means ‘deerhide’ (found here in the form of a *bahuvrīhi* meaning ‘deerhided one’) and is used as a generic adjective for a Brahmanical ascetic. The prose-composer took the verses literally and thought that Mahājanaka must be speaking to a different person.

¹² *ko nu te bhagavā satthā.*

¹³ *na migājina jātucca ahaṃ kiñci kudācanam /
samaṇam brāhmaṇam vāpi sakkatvā anupāvisin ti //143//*

¹⁴ Roy Norman (1991d) has argued that *paccekabuddha* may originally have meant ‘enlightened through a cause/sign (*paccaya*).’ Norman uses the *Kumbhakāra Jātaka* (408) as source-material for his argument, and

However, this disassociation is not without its qualifications. Although the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* tends to disparage human communication, the Bodhisatta has a positive relationship with the ascetic Nārada, who encourages Mahājanaka’s renunciate resolve. Indeed, without Nārada, the Bodhisatta is in danger of reaching the deluded conclusion that he is already enlightened. This is seen in his response to Nārada’s question as to why a crowd has congregated around him (v.130): ‘Although I have renounced them, these people here surround me because I have attained the wisdom of a sage, wandering in a state beyond boundaries and journeying full of joy. Why do you ask if you know this already?’ To which Nārada states (v.131): ‘Don’t think that you have crossed, when you still carry your body. This deed cannot be accomplished, for there are many obstacles still.’¹⁵ A small question-mark is thus raised concerning Mahājanaka’s isolationist approach, an issue that will become particularly relevant in our discussion of the *VJ*.¹⁶ In general, however, the ascetic ideal offered by the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* is one of solitude and separation, in which even teachers play a minor role.

Before finishing our brief treatment of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, it should be pointed out that the story does not simply disappear with Mahājanaka into the forest. Instead it remains for a while in the human world of relationships and returns sympathetically to Sīvalī. The rather ignoble manner in which Mahājanaka abandoned Sīvalī when she was unconscious cast a purposefully ambivalent tone over his renunciation; this is accentuated

it is noteworthy that two of the signs described in that story – the mango-tree and the bracelet – are also employed in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*. If Norman’s contention is correct, then Mahājanaka’s earlier comparison with a *paccekabuddha* (*J* 6.53.2) may be significant.

¹⁵ *mamaṃ ohāya gacchantaṃ etth’ eso abhisāṭo jano /*
simātikkanamaṃ yantaṃ munimonassa pattiyā /
missaṃ nandīhi gacchantāṃ kiṃ jānaṃ anupucchāsī ti //130//
māssu tiṅṅo amaññittho sarīraṃ dhārayaṃ imaṃ /
aīraṇeyyaṃ idaṃ kammaṃ, bahū hi paripanthayo ti //131//

Nārada later describes these obstacles (v.133) as sleep (*niddā*), sloth (*tandī*), tiredness (*vijambhikā*), discontent (*aratī*) and drowsiness after a meal (*bhattasammado*). Fausbøll points out that the list is found in *S* I.7.

¹⁶ On the Buddhological level, one might say that Mahājanaka is in danger of becoming a *paccekabuddha* rather than a *sammāsambuddha*, an eventuality that is suggested by his comparison with a *paccekabuddha* (*J* 6.53.2) and his connection with silence.

by the harsh language he used to address her. Mahājanaka's stoic resolve is depicted as virtuous, but the story still evokes the pain and bewilderment experienced by those who are left behind. Thus the story concludes with Sivalī who, after she has regained consciousness, finds that she is left only with her husband's empty spaces. In her grief, she poignantly attempts to counter – and at the same time express – these absences by building *cetiyas* in the places Mahājanaka used to be. Finally, however, she too renounces society, presumably in obedience to her husband's earlier advice that she should avoid bad rebirth by abandoning kingship (v.153). Importantly she does not follow Mahājanaka into the forest but becomes an ascetic in a park. Her decision to live in a park perhaps expresses her inability to take the final step into the world of absence represented by the forest, but more probably it serves to reinforce her now total separation from her husband.

6.2.2 The *Sonaka Jātaka*

The dichotomy between asceticism and family is nuanced further by the *Sonaka Jātaka* (529). Like the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, the *Sonaka Jātaka* tells of a king who decides to become an ascetic. On the advice of his ministers, he hands over his kingship and all its royal pleasures to his son, Dīghāvu. The story is clearly connected with the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, since Dīghāvu is also the name of Mahājanaka's son, who also takes over kingship from his father. There are, however, only brief references to Dīghāvu's coronation in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, and the *Sonaka Jātaka* offers a more detailed portrayal of the relationship between Dīghāvu and his father. When he hears of his father's intention to become a renunciate, Dīghāvu exclaims (vv.56ff.):

I am unable to live without you, father. Just as a young elephant follows behind a jungle-elephant, as he goes on his conquering way over mountains and difficult passes, the rough places and the smooth, so I shall follow behind you with a bowl. I will be no trouble to you; I will not be a burden.¹⁷

¹⁷ *tayā vinā ahaṃ tāta jīvitum hi na ussahe //56//
yathā ārañṇakaṃ nāgaṃ poto anveti pacchato /
jessantaṃ giriduggesu samesu visamesu ca //57//
evaṃ taṃ anugacchāmi pattam ādāya pacchato /*

Dīghāvu’s father refuses, arguing that the boy will only be an obstacle (*antarāyakaro*, v.60, a word often used in the context of hindering spiritual progress), and harshly describes him as an ‘inauspicious boy’ (*puttakali*). Instead he orders that Dīghāvu should be installed in the palace and enjoy the very sensual pleasures he himself disdains (vv.60ff.):

Put this boy in the pleasure-promoting palace. There golden-handed women will, like Sakka’s nymphs, give him (sexual) delight and he will have pleasure with them.¹⁸

No attempt is made to deter his son from the perils of kingship. On the contrary, the boy’s coronation is seen as an opportunity for the Bodhisatta to give up his royal responsibilities. In contrast to stories such as the *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* (538), which envisages a mass exodus from the city into the forest, the *Sonaka Jātaka* portrays kingship as a necessary evil. Kingship is Dīghāvu’s duty. The conflict between subscription to this duty and the knowledge that it hinders spiritual progress is pathetically expressed by Dīghāvu’s words of resignation as he enters the palace (vv.66f.):

The king has crossed the mud. The king is established on dry ground and has entered the great road that is free from thorns and jungle. I, however, have entered upon a path of thorns and jungle, which leads to bad rebirth.¹⁹

The palace women reply with a verse of welcome, which is surely pregnant with (dramatic) irony (v.68): ‘Welcome to you, O king, as a lion is welcome in his mountain lair. Instruct us, great king; you are the lord of us all.’²⁰ At the end of the story Sonaka

subharo te bhavissāmi, na te hessāmi dubbharo //58//

My translation is modelled on Cone’s translation of vv.74f. of the *VJ*. See p.212.

¹⁸ *imaṃ kumāraṃ pāpetha pāsādaṃ rativaddhanaṃ //60//*

tattha kambussahatthāyo yathā Sakkam va accharā /

tā naṃ tattha ramessanti tāhi-m-eso ramissati //61//

¹⁹ *paṃkaṃ rājā atikkanto thale rājā paṭiṭṭhito /*

akaṇṭakaṃ agahanaṃ paṭipanno mahāpatham //66//

ahañ ca paṭipanno ’smi maggaṃ duggatigāminaṃ /

sakaṇṭakaṃ sagahanaṃ yena gacchāmi duggatiṃ //67//

²⁰ *tassa te sāgataṃ rāja sīhasseva giribbajam /*

becomes intoxicated with royal glory (*yaso*), forgets his father, and rules the kingdom justly.

Like the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, the *Sonaka Jātaka* therefore considers family relationships to be incompatible with asceticism. It is also concerned, perhaps to a greater extent than the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, with portraying the pathos underlying the conflict between these two viewpoints. This is particularly evoked by the notion of kingship as a social necessity rather than an irrelevant burden. Dīghāvu knows that he is following a path of suffering, but he follows it nonetheless.

6.2.3 Dīghāvu and Maddī

Shared passages can highlight divergences as well as similarities between texts. It is therefore significant that Dīghāvu's plea to follow his father through the mountains is almost exactly paralleled in the *VJ*. In the *VJ* the Bodhisatta's wife, Maddī, is told by her husband, Vessantara, that he is about to enter the forest. She, like Dīghāvu, declares that she will die without him (e.g. v.73) and proclaims (vv.74f.):

Just as the cow-elephant follows her mate, the tusked jungle-elephant, as he goes on his conquering way over mountains and difficult passes, the rough places and the smooth, so I shall follow behind you with our children. I will be no trouble to you; I will not be a burden.²¹

These verses closely mirror vv.57f. of the *Sonaka Jātaka* given above. However, whereas in the *Sonaka Jātaka* Dīghāvu's plea to follow the Bodhisatta into the forest is rejected, in the *VJ* Maddī's is accepted. Not only that, Maddī also brings their children into the forest. In its admission of family relationships into the forest, the *VJ* thus reveals a different

²¹ *anusāsa mahārāja, tvaṃ no sabbāsaṃ issaro ti //68//
yathā ārañṇakaṃ nāgaṃ dantiṃ anveti hatthini /
jessantaṃ giriduggesu samesu visamesu ca //74//
evan taṃ anugacchāmi putte ādāya pacchato /
subharā te bhavissāmi, na te hessāmi dubbharā ti //75//*

emphasis from the *Sonaka Jātaka* and *Mahājanaka Jātaka*. Indeed, as we shall see, Maddī in many ways fuses family and ascetic values. A hint of this is expressed in her words above: whereas Dīghāvu says that he will follow his father carrying a bowl, Maddī says that she will follow Vessantara carrying their children. The substitution of ‘children’ (*putte*) for ‘bowl’ (*pattam*) suggests that Maddī’s love for her family is itself a form of asceticism (see §6.4.6).

That is not to say that the *VJ* underplays the role of renunciation. On the contrary, it frequently stresses the conflict between ascetic and social values. Maddī, like Dīghāvu, is accused of being an obstacle to her husband’s renunciation. Similarly, when Vessantara leaves the city for the forest, he tells his father (v.164): ‘I am making merit, you are sinking in the mud.’²² His language is echoed by Dīghāvu’s verse above, in which he laments being left in the mud while his father has gone beyond it. The *VJ* thus engages in similar issues to the *Sonaka Jātaka*, such as the pain caused by renunciation and the difficulties posed by ultimate moral individuality. But what differentiates the two texts lies not only in the detail and scope with which the *VJ* probes the relationship between asceticism and society, but also in the *VJ*’s attempt at forming a resolution between these two worlds through a type of ‘antagonistic symbiosis’,²³ whereby both outlooks are held together in a tense balance while at the same time maintaining their oppositionality.

6.3 Assimilating family and asceticism: The *Sonananda Jātaka*

In contrast to the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* and *Sonaka Jātaka*, the *Sonananda Jātaka* (532) presents a synthesis of ascetic and social values. In this story the Bodhisatta, Sona, is an

²² *ahaṃ puññāni karomi tumhe paṃkamhi sīdathā ti //164//*

²³ See Collins 1998:14, 32 for this phrase, which, following Gunawardana, he uses to describe the relationship between kings and ascetics/brahmins.

ascetic who exiles his younger brother, Nanda, from their hermitage because Nanda refuses to support his mother and father properly. The bulk of the plot revolves around Nanda's quest to attain his older brother's forgiveness in order to regain access to his parents and accumulate merit by serving them. Nanda persuades a hundred kings and their subjects to accompany him to the hermitage and ask Sona for forgiveness. Sona preaches the importance of behaving properly towards one's family and elders, and praises the eldest son's duty to practise the *dhamma*. His words inspire the royal audience into a realisation of the *dhamma*, and Nanda offers himself to the Bodhisatta as a servant (*baddhañcara*,²⁴ v.61) and attendant (*paricāraka*, v.61). Nanda is joyfully welcomed back and thereafter cares for their mother, while the Bodhisatta cares for their father.

Tales that expound family morality are far from rare in the *Jātakas*, but the *Sonananda Jātaka* is conspicuous for how it concentrates on filial service as an ascetic concern. This is highlighted when the Bodhisatta introduces himself to the royal retinue (vv.17f.):

Great King, I am Sona, an ascetic committed to his vows. I untiringly support my parents day and night. By collecting fruit and roots in the forest, lord of the directions, I care for my parents in remembrance of what they have done [for me].²⁵

The Bodhisatta thus describes his ascetic practice in terms of parental support.²⁶ Indeed we are told that those who know the truth (*dhammapada*) regard filial service as the path to heaven (*maggo saggassa lokassa*) (v.53). Asceticism and family love are further combined when the Bodhisatta's mother asks permission to embrace, kiss and 'sniff' (*upagghāyati*) her long lost son, a request to which the Bodhisatta gives his consent. Her emotional outburst at this reunion is noteworthy (vv.67ff.):

²⁴ Probably better read as *paddhacara*; see *PED* s.v.

²⁵ *ahaṃ Sono mahārāja tāpaso sahitamvato /
bharāmi mātāpitāro rattindivam atandito //17//
vane phalañ ca mūlañ ca āharitvā disampati /
posemi mātāpitāro pubbekataṃ anussaran ti //18//*

In v.17, the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* reads *sahitabbato*.

²⁶ See also the *Sāma Jātaka* (540).

[67] Just as the young shoot of a bo-tree is shaken by the wind, so my heart trembles at seeing Nanda after so long a time. [68] When I sleep and see Nanda return in my dreams, I am elated and happy: Our Nanda has returned! [69] But when I wake up and see that Nanda has not returned, I grieve even more and feel very unhappy.²⁷

The story concludes with a tender description of the pain suffered by mothers in rearing children and the need to repay one's parents with filial devotion if one is to reach heaven (vv.74-93).

In the *Sonananda Jātaka*, therefore, domestic morality has been assimilated with asceticism. The eldest son still plays the role of head of the family and the younger brother submits to his will. (This hierarchy is reproduced to some extent in the *saṅgha*, in which authority is determined by an individual's 'monastic age'.) Such family devotion is however still influenced by renunciate themes. For example, in his overriding desire to return to filial service, Nanda rejects offers of wealth and kingship (v.9). Likewise, themes of self-sacrifice are expressed in Nanda's subservience to his elder brother and in the verses that describe a mother's suffering for her children. Similar themes, such as family devotion and forest scenes of domestic felicity, are found in the *VJ*. However, the *Sonananda Jātaka* lacks the conflict between ascetic and family values, which is so sensitively explored by the *VJ*. The *Sonananda Jātaka* resolves ascetic and family values by simply defining the former in terms of the latter, but in doing so it largely glosses over the antagonistic tendencies of renunciation, which the *VJ*, by contrast, never loses sight of. In a dense interplay between conflict and resolution, the *VJ* seems to steer a middle path between the dichotomising viewpoint of stories such as the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* and the synthesising viewpoint of stories such as the *Sonananda Jātaka*.

²⁷ *assatthasseva taruṇaṃ pavālaṃ māluteritaṃ /
cirassaṃ Nandaṃ disvāna hadayaṃ me pavedhati //67//
yadā suttāpi suppante Nandaṃ passāmi āgataṃ /
udaggā sumadā homi: Nando no āgato ayaṃ //68//
yadā ca paṭibujjhitvā Nandaṃ passāmi nāgataṃ /
bhiyyo āvisatī soko domanassaṃ cānappakaṃ //69//*

6.4 The Vessantara Jātaka

6.4.1 Vessantara and individualist giving

From the beginning of the *VJ* Vessantara is portrayed as an extraordinary being. Even when in the womb, Vessantara reveals an irresistible desire for giving. This manifests itself through his mother, who builds almshouses and hands out lavish offerings. At his birth, Vessantara's abnormal status is further conveyed when he emerges from the womb clean and open-eyed, whereupon he immediately holds out his hand and asks to be able to give a gift. Throughout his childhood, Vessantara gives gifts and, at the age of eight, he makes the following dramatic aspiration (*J* 6.486.6ff.):

I give only gifts that are external to me; but they do not satisfy me. I want to give something of my very self. If someone were to ask me for my heart, I would split open my breast, take out the heart and give it. If someone were to ask for my eyes, I would tear out these eyes by the roots and give them. If someone were to ask for the flesh of my body, I would cut off the flesh from my whole body and give it.²⁸

These words echo the aspiration made by King Sivi in the *Sivi Jātaka* (*J* 4.402.13ff.), which was examined in pp.140f. In both stories the protagonists desire to give an internal gift.

Vessantara's gifts are accompanied by a simultaneous reception of limitless income, as people send presents to the royal family from all over Jambudīpa as a result of his merit. The inseparable link between giving and fruit means that Vessantara's insatiable desire to give results in boundless fertility, which in turn enables him to give more gifts, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus Vessantara is compared with a wish-fulfilling tree (*sabbakāmadadaṃ*

²⁸ *ahaṃ bāhiradānaṃ eva demi, taṃ maṃ na paritoseṭi, ajjhattikadānaṃ dātukāmo 'mhi, sace maṃ koci hadayaṃ yāceyya uraṃ bhinditvā hadayaṃ nīharitvā dadeyyaṃ, sace akkhīni yāceyya akkhīni uppāṭetvā dadeyyaṃ, sace sarīramaṃsaṃ yāceyya sakalasarīrato maṃsaṃ chetvā dadeyyan ti.*

dumaṃ, v.141; *rukkaṃ sabbakāma-rasāharaṃ*, v.142), and is said to satisfy every desire (*sabbakāmarasāharo*, v.52; *kāmado*, v.87; *sabbakāmadado*, v.196; *kāmadaṃ*, v.301). Even the wicked brahmin Jūjaka describes Vessantara as a source of refuge and fertility (vv.304-312), calling him an unconquered conqueror (*jayantaṃ aparājitaṃ*), a giver of safety in times of fear (*bhaye khemassa dātāraṃ*), and a refuge for beggars (*yācataṃ patiṭṭhā, yācataṃ gatī*); Vessantara is like the earth for its creatures (*bhūtānaṃ dharaṇī-riva*), like the ocean for rivers (*savantīnaṃ va sāgaro*), like a cool lake with beautiful fords and lotuses (v.307), and like a tree providing shade for travellers (vv.308-312). This connection between renunciation and reward is also seen in the *VJ*'s overall chiasmic structure: at the heart of the story Maddī is returned to Vessantara immediately after she is given away; Vessantara then receives back his children, who were given away before Maddī; finally Vessantara receives back the kingdom he gave up at the beginning of the story.²⁹

Alongside this interplay between renunciation and fruit there is also the notion, commonly found in the *Jātakas*, that the quality of a king determines the condition of his kingdom.³⁰ As a result, Vessantara's gifts invest his kingdom with abundant prosperity, a phenomenon noted by Vessantara's mother, Phusatī, who says that without Vessantara the Sivi kingdom would be like mangoes fallen to the ground, honey that has disappeared, or a goose with crippled wings in a dried-up pond (vv.104-6). According to this outlook, renunciation and kingship are one and the same thing. As a king Vessantara should give, and the natural consequence of giving is that he provides his country with prosperity, a quintessentially royal duty. However, if one takes this logic to the extreme, then a true king should, as a renunciate, also be willing to give away his kingdom. This leaves us with the paradoxical conclusion, flying in the face of ordinary notions of kingship, that a

²⁹ In some versions Vessantara also receives back the royal elephant he gave away. See Gombrich 1977:xx, xl. See also Collins (1998:519f.), who points out that, according to the commentary, the elephant is returned to the Sivi kingdom, but that this reading is awkward in the narrative context.

³⁰ Collins 1998:464ff..

kingdom will only be truly prosperous if it is first given up. Indeed, it is precisely with this uncompromising attitude that Vessantara makes his first major gift of the royal elephant.

This royal elephant is said to cause rain wherever it goes. It is described as a jewel (v.21) and as the ‘bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivas’ (*Sivīnaṃ raṭṭhavaḍḍhane*, v.29).³¹ When some unscrupulous brahmins arrive from the drought-ridden kingdom of Kaliṅga to ask Vessantara for the elephant, Vessantara’s response is one of unqualified joy (vv.22f.):

‘I do not hesitate; I give what the brahmins ask: the tusked riding-beast, best of elephants, trumpeter in rut.’ The king, bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivas, his heart set on liberality, got down from the elephant’s back and gave that gift to the brahmins.³²

This passage purposefully seems to play upon contradictory notions of kingship in order to express the radically unconventional nature of Vessantara’s gift. On the one hand, Vessantara is acting like an ordinary good king by showing his generosity to brahmins; on the other hand, he is unlike an ordinary king in that he gives away the kingdom’s source of fertility. Usually a king expresses his royal authority by being seated on top of an elephant, but here the *VJ* conveys how Vessantara’s gift conflicts with ordinary kingship by having him descend from the elephant. Moreover, this abnormal gift is paradoxically described alongside the conventional royal epithet of ‘bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivas’, a juxtaposition which once again evokes how Vessantara’s idealised notion of kingship conflicts with convention. By giving away the kingdom’s source of fertility, Vessantara actually invests the kingdom with fertility. It is also noteworthy that the epithet ‘bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivas’ is used not only of Vessantara but also

³¹ Interestingly, Gombrich notes (1977:xlf.) that in a Tibetan version of the *VJ* Vessantara gives away a wish-fulfilling jewel rather than an elephant, which leads Gombrich to conjecture: ‘Was this originally a metaphor applied to the elephant?’ The elephant’s comparison to a jewel in v.21 supports this contention.

³² *dadāmi na vikampāmi yaṃ maṃ yācanti brāhmaṇā /*
pabhinnam kuñjaram dantiṃ opavyuham gajuttamaṃ //22//
hatthikkhandhato oruyha rājā cāgādhimānaso /
brāhmaṇānaṃ adā dānaṃ Sivīnaṃ raṭṭhavaḍḍhano ti //23//

of the elephant. Indeed in many ways one can see Vessantara’s gift of the elephant as a gift of himself, thereby highlighting the notion that, in order to be a true king, Vessantara has to give away his kingship and, what is more, his own self.

Contrary to Vessantara’s idealistic outlook, the Sivi people are irate at this gift, since from their conventional and commonsensical viewpoint Vessantara has in fact destroyed the kingdom and not upheld it. They tell king Sañjaya (v.32): ‘Your son Vessantara is ruining your kingdom, Your Majesty! How could he give away our elephant, our elephant so honoured in the kingdom?’³³ They are so incensed that they demand Vessantara be sent into exile in the forest, which is later described as a place where ‘criminals’ (*dūsakā*) go (v.62). According to the Sivis, Vessantara has therefore committed a crime. Vessantara on the other hand is bewildered by their demands and, insisting that he has done nothing wrong (v.56), defiantly answers that he will continue to give (vv.58ff.):

[58] I would give my heart, or my eye! What is external wealth to me? What is gold or money or pearls or lapis lazuli gems? [59] If I met anyone who asked for it, I would give my right arm and not hesitate. My mind delights in giving! [60] Let the Sivis, all of them, banish me – or kill me! Let them cut me up into seven pieces, I will not stop giving!³⁴

These words reinforce how Vessantara’s gifts have an internal significance and are akin to gifts of the body and, ultimately, life. In addition, they also belong to the individualist model of giving. For Vessantara, the nature of the recipient is irrelevant: he would give to ‘any beggar that comes along’ (*yācakamāgate*, v.59).

³³ *vidhamam deva te rattham, putto Vessantaro tava /
kathan no hatthinam dajja nāgam ratthassa pūjitaṃ //32//*
³⁴ *hadayaṃ cakkhuṃ p’ ahaṃ dajjaṃ kiṃ me bāhiraṃ dhanam /
hiraññaṃ vā suvaṇṇam vā muttā veḷuriyā maṇi //58//
dakkhiṇam vāp’ ahaṃ bāhum disvā yācakamāgate /
dadeyyam na vikampeyyam, dāne me ramatī mano //59//
kāmaṃ maṃ Sivayo sabbe pabbājentu hanantu vā /
n’ eva dānā viramissaṃ, kāmaṃ chindantu sattadhā ti //60//*

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:104) and the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* in reading *dakkhiṇam* in v.59 rather than the PTS *adakkhiṇam*.

That is not to say that Vessantara’s gifts are only significant to him; on the contrary, they form the basis of his kingdom’s prosperity. Moreover, they are depicted as responses to the needs of his recipients. For example, before he goes into exile, Vessantara gives the ‘great gift of the seven hundreds’ thus (vv.137f.):

Give clothes to those who want them, toddy to the drinkers! Give food to those in need of it. Give presents freely! Let no one cause difficulties to any beggars who have arrived here. Give them their fill of food and drink, so that they may go on their way properly honoured!³⁵

However, although Vessantara’s gifts are relational in the sense that they satisfy people’s desires, they are also entirely indiscriminate. As a renunciate-king, Vessantara simply gives, no matter what the situation. The indiscriminate nature of his *dāna* is particularly conveyed by the fact that Vessantara gives even if it is morally objectionable.³⁶ Most problematically of all, he goes on to give his family as slaves to the wicked brahmin Jūjaka. Vessantara’s relationship with his recipients is as removed as it can be while still catering for their needs. His comparison to a wish-fulfilling tree is therefore apt in that it expresses how his gifts are mere reactions to the wishes of beggars. Indeed, it is because of – rather than in spite of – this distanced relationship that Vessantara can give without prejudice and thereby fulfil his role as renunciate-king in maximising his kingdom’s prosperity. As we shall see, Vessantara’s distance, coupled with his role as munificent provider, also influences the devotional language expressed by other characters in the *VJ* for the Bodhisatta.

³⁵ *vatthāni vatthakāmānaṃ soṇḍānaṃ detha vāruṇiṃ /
bhojanaṃ bhojanatthināṃ sammā detha paveccatha //137//
mā ca kañci vanibbake heṭṭhayittha idhāgate /
tappetha annapānena, gacchantu patipūjītā //138//*

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:104) in reading *heṭṭhayittha* rather than the PTS *heṭṭhāyittha*.

³⁶ In his ‘gift of the seven hundred’ Vessantara gives alcohol to those who crave it. Although one might argue that this is problematic given the negative connotations of alcohol in Buddhist ethics, such an objection seems inappropriate in this context. Instead, alcohol is treated as merely one among many ways in which the Sivi people are satisfied by Vessantara’s lavish generosity. A similar episode occurs in *Rām* 2.85, in which the ascetic Bharadvāja’s hospitality includes alcohol, nymphs, and abundant food. There the imagery is more sensual – and sexual – than it is in the *VJ*, but the tone is the same: the intention is to emphasise fertility and abundance, not to delve into doctrinal issues. I therefore disagree with Alsdorf (1957a:61) that this passage exemplifies what he perceives to be the ‘thoroughly non-Buddhist atmosphere’ (durchaus unbuddhistische Atmosphäre) of the verses in the *VJ*.

6.4.3 The Vessantara Jātaka and the Cariyā-pitaka-atthakathā

Vessantara's *dāna* not only conflicts with social conventions but also with normative descriptions of the Bodhisatta offered by texts such as the *Cp-a*. As Bhikkhu Bodhi has shown (1978:45ff.), this commentary is heavily influenced by a Mahāyāna text, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the Bodhisatta's compassion and skill-in-means are emphasised. The *Cp-a* defines the perfection of giving thus (280): 'The perfection of giving is the volition of relinquishing oneself and one's belongings, accompanied by compassion and skilful means.'³⁷ However in the *VJ*, although Vessantara promotes his people's welfare, he is never explicitly described as being motivated by compassion.³⁸ Indeed, in contrast to the ideology of skill-in-means, his gifts are often portrayed as inappropriate to the situation, and it is this that above all differentiates him from the *Cp-a* ideal of the Bodhisatta. One passage in the *Cp-a* openly criticises the type of *dāna* performed by Vessantara. It states (304):

Asked for his own children, wife, slaves, workers, and servants, the Great Man does not give them while they are as yet unwilling to go. But when they are willing and joyful, then he gives them. But if he knows that those who ask for them are demonic beings – ogres, demons, or goblins – or men of cruel disposition, then he does not give them away. So too, he will not give his kingdom to those intent on the harm, suffering, and affliction of the world, but he would give it away to righteous men who protect the world with Dhamma.³⁹

As we shall see, the notion of a willing gift is of central importance in the *VJ*, but for our present purposes it is noteworthy that Vessantara's children are far from joyful at being given away. Not only that, Jūjaka is certainly a man 'of cruel disposition' and is described as a 'demon' (*yakkha*, vv.477, 517, 665). Similarly, the Kalingan brahmins who ask for

³⁷ *karuṇūpāyakosallapariggahitā attūpakaraṇapariccāgacetanā dānapāramitā.*

³⁸ See §4.3.6.

³⁹ *na ca Mahāpuriso attano putta-dāra-dāsa-kammakara-porise yācito te asaṅṅāpīte domanassappatte yācakānaṃ deti. sammadeva pana saṅṅāpīte somanassappatte deti. dento ca yakkharakkhasapisācādīnaṃ vā manussānaṃ vā kurūrakammantānaṃ jānanto na deti. tathā rajjaṃ pi tādisānaṃ na deti, ye lokassa ahitāya dukkhāya anathāya paṭipajjanti, ye pana dhammikā dhammena lokaṃ pārenti, tesam deti.*

the royal elephant – and by extension Vessantara’s kingdom – are certainly not depicted as ‘righteous’. Vessantara’s gifts, which represent the peak of his Bodhisatta career, thus strongly contrast with the Bodhisatta ideology propounded by the *Cp-a*.

6.4.4 Two ethics

Vessantara’s indiscriminate form of giving represents an absolutist ethic, which emphasises the cultivation of virtue for its own sake regardless of the external consequences. This absolutist ethic conflicts with the relativist ethic generally followed by social convention (and the philosophy of skill-in-means), whereby virtuous actions are determined by the situation in which they occur. As Steven Collins has shown (1998:522ff.), the conflict is accentuated by the fact that Vessantara (and other characters) on the one hand professes his innocence, while the Sivi on the other hand condemn him as guilty. The moral ambiguity of Vessantara’s *dāna* is also conveyed by vv.298f., in which his gifts are called *atidāna*, which can either mean ‘extreme giving’ or ‘excessive giving’.⁴⁰ We are thus presented with a clash between two opposing moral systems, which Steven Collins has termed ‘Dhamma Mode 1’ and ‘Dhamma Mode 2’. The former he describes as ‘context-dependent’ and the latter ‘context-independent’, and in many ways these two modes reflect our categories of relational and individualist giving. With specific regard to kingship and its use of violence, Collins explains them thus (1998:420):

Mode 1 Dhamma is an ethics of reciprocity, in which the assessment of violence is context-dependent and negotiable. Buddhist advice to kings in Mode 1 tells them to not to pass judgment in haste or anger, but appropriately, such that the punishment fits the crime. [...] *Mode 2* Dhamma is an ethic of absolute values, in which the assessment of violence is context-independent and non-negotiable, and punishment, as a species of violence, is itself a crime. The only advice possible for kings in Mode 2 might seem to be “Don’t be one!”, “Renounce the world!”, “Leave everything to the law of karma!” Many stories recommend just this. Others, however, [like the *VJ*] envisage the utopia of a nonviolent king.

⁴⁰ See also *Mld* 277ff., in which Milinda accuses Vessantara of excess and Nāgasena defends him.

Collins examines in detail (1998: especially 522ff.) the *VJ*'s dense depiction of the interaction between these rival notions of rightness. He states (1998:500f.):

The narrative of his [Vessantara's] fulfilment of the Perfection of Generosity weaves its way through two conflicts: socially, between the ascetic values of renunciation and the mundane need for prudential government; and psychologically, between the aspiration to mental detachment, to a love universalized and depersonalized, and the immediate joys and ties of particular affection, filial, marital, and paternal. The two modes of Dhamma, 1 and 2, are here not overlapping alternatives in a variegated field: they are contrary, sometimes contradictory opposites, and to choose either is necessarily to lose something. [...] [The *VJ*] is, *inter alia*, a painfully honest confrontation of the difficulties of renunciation, showing that real human goods must, ultimately, be abandoned in the ascetic search for ultimate felicity.

By portraying the conflict caused by Vessantara's gift, the *VJ* shows that its intention is not simply to extol the virtue of giving, but to investigate the (often painful) ramifications of such renunciate activity on society. Vessantara's gifts are purposefully depicted as extraordinary and shocking, especially when he gives his children to Jūjaka. As Collins states (1998:43f.):

Giving away one's children and wife to slavery is obviously and intensely offensive to everyday moral sensibility. It is true that almost every traditional audience would have known that the protagonists would, at the end, "live happily ever after"; but it seems to me wrong to assume from this fact that the Vessantara story is simply a rather unusually extreme instance of the virtue of generosity. This is taking a fact about the outside of the text – that generosity is emphasized and valued in Buddhist ideology, and practiced under this description in cultures influenced by it – and reading (or rather ignoring) the inside because of it. As will be seen, the Pali text here goes out of its way to emphasize the pathos of these scenes, choosing deliberately strong language to intensify and highlight the emotions of both the characters and the audience.

Vessantara's gifts powerfully convey asceticism's tendency to grate against conventional values. It is this characteristic which leads Collins (1998:38ff.), within the context of his analysis of the *VJ*, to describe ascetic ideology as 'offensive' (§1.6), in the Kierkegaardian sense of being both threatening and exciting, alarming and thrilling, fear- and hope-inspiring. A constructive aspect to the 'offensive' nature of asceticism thus runs alongside

a destructive one, and it is this double-edged quality which is evoked by the *VJ*. For, as we have already mentioned, the *VJ* not only portrays asceticism's conflict with society, but also attempts to find a resolution to this conflict, however idealised that resolution may be. Just as renunciation and reward, abandonment and restoration, interact with one another, particularly within the arena of *dāna*, so do conflict and resolution. In fact resolution is determined by conflict, and it is this strained and tensely balanced relationship that informs the *VJ*'s momentum throughout.

6.4.5 Worshipping Vessantara

The moral ambiguity of Vessantara's gift is complicated by the fact that not all of the Sivas want Vessantara to be exiled. For instance, Phusatī insists on Vessantara's innocence (vv.100ff.) and tells Sañjaya that his kingdom will be destroyed if he exiles someone as innocent as Vessantara (vv.104ff.). She laments the hardships Vessantara will have to face in the forest and contrasts them with the royal luxuries to which he has been accustomed (vv.108ff.). This contrast between the forest and the city heightens the tension between renunciation and society that has been sparked off by Vessantara's gift. Their separation is starkly reinforced by Vessantara's words to his parents (v.164, 166): 'I shall endure this misfortune in the forest, the home of fierce wild beasts, the haunt of the rhinoceros and the leopard. I am doing good deeds; you sink in the mud [of desire].'⁴¹

Nor is it only Vessantara's mother who laments Vessantara's exile. Her distress is accompanied by that of citizens, ministers and courtesans, who collapse on the ground in grief. Beggars bewail the loss of their prince thus (vv.140f.):

They have cut down a sturdy tree bearing all kinds of fruit, in banishing
Vessantara from the kingdom, although he is guilty of no crime. They have cut

⁴¹ *aghaṃ taṃ patisevissaṃ vane vālamigākiṅṅe khaggadīpinisevite /
ahaṃ puññāni karomi tumhe paṃkamhi sīdathā ti //164, 166//*

down a sturdy tree, a fulfiller of every desire, in banishing Vessantara from the kingdom, although he is guilty of no crime.⁴²

The metaphor of a cut-down tree adds to the imagery of death surrounding Vessantara's exile and highlights the notion that his *dāna* involves gifts of life.⁴³ Such death imagery is also expressed when Vessantara tells Maddī that his 'life is at risk' (*jīvitam saṃsayo*, v.69) in the forest. Similarly, Phusatī likens her separation from Vessantara to that of a bird whose chicks have been killed (vv.124ff.), and Maddī says that with Vessantara gone she will have to lead the life of a widow (vv.186ff.). Likewise, King Sañjaya associates exiling his son with killing him (v.41): 'How could I slay him by the sword, Vessantara, my own son?'⁴⁴

Ultimately Sañjaya concedes the Sivi's demands (v.43, 107). Initially, however, he tries to refuse their requests, proclaiming that he would protect his son even at the cost of his own kingdom (v.40): 'Let my country perish, let my kingdom be ruined, I will not, at the command of the Sivi, exile the prince, innocent as he is, from his own kingdom; for he is my son, my very own.'⁴⁵ Once again Vessantara's gift of the elephant is considered to entail the destruction of the kingdom, but what is particularly significant about Sañjaya's words is that here it is not Vessantara who is willing to sacrifice his kingdom for the sake of giving, but instead Sañjaya who is willing to sacrifice his kingdom for the sake of his son. Both Vessantara and Sañjaya therefore make (virtual) gifts of their kingdom, but they are differentiated by the fact that the former is individualist and the latter relational. Vessantara's *dāna* is symptomatic of top-down giving and Sañjaya's of bottom-up giving.

⁴² *acchecchuṃ vata bho rukkhaṃ nānāphaladharaṃ dumaṃ /
yathā Vessantaram raṭṭhā pabbājenti adūsakaṃ //140//
acchecchuṃ vata bho rukkhaṃ sabbakāmadadaṃ dumaṃ /
yathā Vessantaram raṭṭhā pabbājenti adūsakaṃ //141//*

⁴³ The image of the cut-down tree is paralleled by v.135, in which women in the palace are said to collapse on the ground like uprooted *sāl* trees.

⁴⁴ *kathaṃ Vessantaram puttaṃ satthena ghātayāmaṃ ti //41//*

⁴⁵ *kāmaṃ janapado māsi, raṭṭhañ cāpi vinassatu /
nāhaṃ Sivīnaṃ vacanā rājaputtaṃ adūsakaṃ /
pabbājeyyaṃ sakā raṭṭhā, putto hi mama atrajo //40//*

Sañjaya’s willingness to sacrifice his kingdom for Vessantara is mirrored by other characters in the *VJ*. On his journey to the forest, for example, Vessantara is offered kingship by the Cetans. Others even consider giving up their lives in response to Vessantara’s exile. Phusatī for example contemplates suicide: ‘It would be best for me to take poison, or throw myself from a precipice, or strangle myself with a rope’ (v.100).⁴⁶ She later tells Sañjaya (v.133): ‘If in spite of my bitter cries you banish the prince from the kingdom to the forest, when he is guilty of no crime, then I think I shall die!’⁴⁷

All these are common, albeit extreme, expressions of family love and royal worship. However, the self-sacrifice evoked by these passages reaches a heightened – and even transformed – level of meaning in the figure of Vessantara’s wife, Maddī. One of the most striking heroines in the *Jātakas*, Maddī plays a crucial role in the *VJ* and her verses are some of the most elaborate and beautiful in the story. The *VJ* particularly stresses her love for Vessantara, an example of which is provided when she insists on following him into exile with their children (vv.71ff.):

[71] It is not right, great king, for you to go alone. Where you go, sir, I go also. [72] If the choice is death with you or life without you, such a death is better than living without you. [73] It is better to die on a flaming fire, one blazing mass, than to live without you.⁴⁸

Maddī’s decision to enter the forest with Vessantara is therefore also portrayed as a matter of life and death. Like Vessantara, she too is willing to give up her life. However, she is

⁴⁶ *seyyo visaṃ me khāyitaṃ papātā papateyy’ ahaṃ /*
[rajjuyā bajjha miyyāhaṃ]
kasmā Vessantaraṃ puttaṃ pabbājenti adūsakaṃ //100//

⁴⁷ *evaṃ ce me vilapantiyā rājaputtaṃ adūsakaṃ /*
pabbājesi vanaṃ raṭṭhā maññe hessāmi jīvitaṃ //133//

⁴⁸ *n’ esa dhammo mahārāja yaṃ tvaṃ gaccheyya ekako /*
ahaṃ pi tena gacchāmi yena gacchasi khattiya //71//
maraṇaṃ vā tayā saddhiṃ jīvitaṃ vā tayā vinā /
tad eva maraṇaṃ seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //72//
aggim ujjālayitvāna ekajālasamāhitaṃ /
tattha me maraṇaṃ seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //73//

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:104) and the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* in reading *ujjālayitvāna* rather than the PTS *nijjālayitvāna* in v.73.

different from Vessantara – and similar to Sañjaya – in that her outlook is relational rather than individualist. Maddī’s gift derives its meaning from whom she gives it to, which in this case is not only her husband but also her king and, on another level of the text, the future Buddha (although whether Maddī is ever aware of this aspect is dubious). That Maddī’s love for Vessantara represents a type of self-sacrifice is highlighted by the fact that, as we saw on p.182, her above words recur in the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533, v.3), where they are spoken by a character who performs ‘the sacrifice of life’ (*jīvitapariccāga*, *J* 5.333.3f., *J* 5.339.2).⁴⁹ What is more, the devotional connotations of Maddī’s words are conveyed by the fact that they are described in the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (vv.9, 11) as *bhatti* (Sanskrit: *bhakti*).

E.W. Hopkins (1911) has argued that, in epic literature, *bhakti* does not have the same force as it does in later Hindu devotional literature, and that it is often better translated as ‘love’ or ‘affection’.⁵⁰ This comment is also pertinent to the *Jātakas*. Nevertheless, the term is often used in contexts which seem to foreshadow some of the core notions found in later devotional texts such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: in particular, the idea of surrendering oneself to a superior being and the theme of separation-in-love.⁵¹ Chapter 7 will discuss how the *VJ*’s treatment of these themes has several important parallels in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

A complementary interaction between individualist and relational giving is thus portrayed by the *VJ*. Vessantara represents the former while Maddī, along with other characters such as Sañjaya and Phusatī, represent the latter.⁵² In a type of gift-exchange involving top-

⁴⁹ *VJ* v.72 = *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* v.3.

⁵⁰ Hardy (1983:25ff.) argues that in the *Mbh*, *bhakti* is closely linked with *yoga* and should be seen as an intellectual rather than emotional form of *bhakti*.

⁵¹ For the importance of separation in *bhakti*, see Hardy 1983; Shulman 1991; Siegel 1978:137ff.

Dayal 1932:31ff. argues that that *bhakti* may have originated in Buddhism, especially given its focus on an individual founder. Hardy 1983:29ff. suggests that the sensual and aesthetic elements of what he describes as ‘folk religion’ – such as worshipping at a *stūpa* with flowers, incense, and music – may have impacted on later emotional *bhakti*.

⁵² In contrast to his own gifts, which have little or no reference to the quality of the recipient, Vessantara tells Maddī to give in a relational manner to those who are worthy (v.66): ‘You should give gifts to the virtuous, Maddī, as they deserve; for there is no surer foundation for living beings than making gifts.’

down and bottom-up giving, Vessantara gives downwards to his people, while characters such as Maddī give upwards to him. Both forms of giving ultimately involve the gift of life. At this point in the story, however, this two-way interaction has not been harmonised. On the contrary, the Sivas have refused to submit themselves to their king's will and have instead exiled him because of the extreme nature of his gifts. It will be up to Maddī to initiate this resolution through an act of self-sacrifice which will itself radically conflict with conventional values.

6.4.6 Renunciation and family love

Maddī's concept of self-sacrifice is dominated by marital love. She pictures exile in the forest entirely in terms of following and serving her husband (vv.192f.):

That woman is honoured who shares the poverty of her husband as well as his riches. The gods praise her, for what she does is hard. I will follow my husband always, wearing the yellow robes, for without Vessantara I would not want even the whole earth.⁵³

In language reminiscent of *Dharmaśāstra* texts and their expositions of *svadharmā*, Maddī defines her very identity through her husband (v.191):

The banner marks the chariot; smoke is the sign of fire; the king symbolizes the kingdom; a husband gives meaning to a woman. The life of a widow is a bitter fate in this world. I will go [with you into exile], O lord of charioteers.⁵⁴

For Maddī, renunciation is necessarily imbued with relational significance. Hers is a kind of absolute form of *svadharmā*, whereby she gives up everything for her husband. Like

⁵³ *sīlavantesu dajjāsi dānaṃ Maddī yathārahaṃ /
na hi dānā paraṃ atthi patiṭṭhā sabbapāṇinan ti //66//
yā daliddī daliddassa aḍḍhā aḍḍhassa kittimā /
taṃ ve devā pasamsanti dukkaraṃ hi karoti sā //192//
sāmikaṃ anubandhissaṃ sadā kāsāyavāsini /*

⁵⁴ *pathavyāpi abhejjantya n' icche Vessantaraṃ vinā / [...] //193//
dhaḷo rathassa paññānaṃ, dhūmo paññānaṃ aggino /
rājā raṭṭhassapaññānaṃ, bhattā paññānaṃ itthiyā /
vedhabbaṃ kaṭukaṃ loke gacchaṃ ñeva rathesabha //191//*

Vessantara, Maddī is willing to adopt the ascetic life, endure the hardships of the forest, and even renounce ‘the great wealth-bearing earth’ (*vittadharam mahim*, v.194), but her view of these renunciate practices is inextricably bound up with family love. This tendency to combine the ascetic with the domestic is highlighted when Maddī compares her service to her family with ascetic practice (vv.576f.):

As a young disciple serves his teacher, so day and night I look after my husband and children, living the pure life of an ascetic with matted hair. Wearing the ascetic’s antelope skin, bearing wild roots and fruit I make my journeys day and night because of my love for you, my children.⁵⁵

Similarly, in v.757, she states: ‘I had one meal a day and slept always on the stony ground, and that was the sacrifice [*vata*] I undertook because of my love for you, my children.’⁵⁶

So long as she is with her husband and children, Maddī envisages asceticism as full of domestic bliss. In a song to Vessantara (vv.76-98), she praises the idyllic beauty of family life in the forest. For example (vv.76, 81, 95):

Seeing these children, sweetly chattering with their dear voices, sitting among the bushes of the forest, you will forget kingship. [...] Seeing these children, adorned and hung with garlands, playing in the lovely hermitage, you will forget kingship. [...] When you see the trees blossoming in the winter, spreading their fragrance, you will forget kingship.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *ahaṃ patiṅ ca putte ca āceram iva māṇavo /
anuṭṭhitā divārattim jaṭinī brahmacārini //576//
ajināni paridahitvā vanamūlaphalabhāriyā /
vicarāmi divārattim tumhaṃ kāmā hi puttakā //577//*

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:106) in reading *tumhaṃ kāmā hi* rather than the PTS *tuyhaṃ kāmāhi* in v.577.

⁵⁶ *ekabhattā pure āsiṃ niccaṃ thaṇḍilasāyini /
iti me taṃ vataṃ āsi tumhaṃ kāmā hi puttakā //757//*

⁵⁷ *ime kumāre passanto maṅjuka piyabhāṇine /
āsine vanagumbasmiṃ na rajjassa sarissasi //76//
ime kumāre passanto mālādhārī alaṃkate /
kilante assame ramme na rajjassa sarissasi //81//
yadā dakkhisi hemante pupphite dharanīruhe /
surabhisampavāyante na rajjassa sarissasi //95//*

Although a tender expression of family happiness, Maddī's song is also fraught with dramatic irony. The audience knows that Vessantara will give away his family, and Maddī's vision of domestic bliss is therefore all too doomed. Maddī does not yet realise it, but she, alongside Vessantara, will have to undergo a series of tests regarding her ability to renounce social conventions. Maddī will not be allowed simply to transport ordinary family values into the forest, as was the case in the *Sonananda Jātaka*. Her conventional picture of domestic happiness must itself be subject to renunciation – along with all the pain that this involves – and must be redefined in terms of a new vision of family based upon ascetic values. The ultimate test of her marital devotion will occur when she is asked, as a true wife, to support the gift of her own children. This act of renunciation is every bit as shocking as Vessantara's – for what could be more disturbing than a mother's agreement to the gift of her children into slavery? – but what differentiates it is that it is performed in the relational context of marital love. Indeed it is this remarkable blending of love and renunciation which, in my view, ultimately allows for the story's resolution between ascetic and social values and the consequent reconstruction of Vessantara's family and the kingdom of the Sivas.

6.4.7 The children

According to Gombrich (1977:xix), the gift of the children is the most common *VJ* scene to be depicted in Sinhalese art. As Gombrich suggests (1977:xx), this is no doubt because it is the most 'pathetic' and 'heart-rending' section in the story, especially when compared with the relative tranquillity of the Maddī-giving scene. Nowhere else in the *Jātakas* is the pain of renunciation so articulately and at the same time so problematically expressed. Gombrich describes the problematic ramifications of Vessantara's gift thus (1977:xxiif.):

The point for the Buddhist lies [...] in his [Vessantara's] becoming so free from attachment that he does not mind parting with anything. Of that detachment his gift of his family is only the culminating demonstration. When this has been said, the view that it is selfish to hand over one's family into slavery for, or as a sign

of, one's own spiritual advancement still remains, among Buddhists as among Western readers.

Moreover, he adds (*ibid.*):

In Ceylon we found Buddhist monks to opine that Vessantara had clearly acted wrongly. Further inquiry would probably encounter more such feelings, mixed with notions of the inscrutability of the ethics of such superior beings.

Steven Collins (1998:508ff., 526ff.) has also given a detailed analysis of the moral ambiguities involved in Vessantara's gift of the children. His comments need not be repeated here *verbatim*, but it would be worth describing some of the more remarkable images in the children-giving scene.

Even before Jūjaka arrives, Maddī has a nightmare that a man dressed in red robes drags her from her hut, gouges out her eyes, and lops off her arms. This gory violence casts an ominous shadow over Vessantara's gift, to which it of course refers; one notices again the death imagery pervading Vessantara's *dāna*, and the allusion to the self-sacrifice that Maddī herself will have to perform. Moreover, when Maddī asks Vessantara the meaning of her dream, Vessantara not only reprimands her for approaching him at night but also deceives her by saying that her nightmare is caused by indigestion. Although Vessantara's motivation for deceiving Maddī is to comfort her, his use of deception represents the first of many problematic images that come to surround Vessantara's gift. Some of these are summarised by Collins as follows (1998:527):

The text often expresses the enormity (in every sense of the word) of Vessantara's virtuous generosity, when viewed from the perspective of mundane life: as when, for example, it comments that after Maddī's dream, he 'deceivingly [*mohetvā*] consoled her' (*J* 6.541), when it compares his anticipation of Jūjaka to be like that of 'a drunkard eager for drink' (*J* 6.541), when it compares his setting of a ransom price on children to be 'like someone valuing oxen' (*J* 6.546).

He continues (*ibid.*):

These kinds of language, simile and incident must be meant to shock, to suggest that while his earlier gifts can be, from any perspective other than that of the Sivis, wholly admirable, the renunciation of family life literally embodied in his giving away/abandoning (*cāga*) the children and Maddī cannot be obviously and indisputably innocuous. Vessantara’s liberality conflicts with (offends) Dhamma Mode 1, not by simple criminality, but by following what is right according to Mode 2.

The main factor that makes Vessantara’s gift problematic is the suffering experienced by the children, which is dwelt upon by the *VJ* (*J* 6.545-555). For verse upon verse the children (Jāli and Kaṇhā) lament their lot, making pathetic farewells to the trees and hermitage, mourning the grief that their parents will experience,⁵⁸ and begging Vessantara to wait until Maddī returns home. They call Vessantara ‘iron-hearted’ (*hadayaṃ āyasam*, v.478) and ask how can he can let them be taken away (v.517). The suspense and pathos of the scene is heightened by the fact that the children twice break free from Jūjaka and beg Vessantara to reconsider. Jūjaka himself is described hideously (vv.474ff.) and is said to bind and thrash the children, who are compared with ‘cattle’ (*gāvo*, vv.478, 507, 524). Jūjaka leads them away, ‘spitting like fire at the end of an aeon’ (*kappuṭṭhānaggi viya uggiranto*, *J* 6.554.3f.), and a similar allusion to death is expressed by Jāli when he says (v.507): ‘Come, Kaṇhā, let us die, we have no reason for living.’⁵⁹

Vessantara, by contrast, is said to be ‘filled with happiness’ (*somanassajāto*, *J* 6.543.12) and responds automatically to Jūjaka’s request (v.446). That said, Vessantara’s emotions are complex. His joy is qualified – at least temporarily – by the fact that he is overtaken by grief (*balavasoko*, *J* 6.551.19). He trembles (*kampamāno*, *J* 6.551.21), is ‘unable to contain himself’ (*sakabhāvena sandhāretuṃ asakkonto*, *J* 6.551.21f.), and tearfully laments the children’s fate (vv.498ff.). He describes himself as ‘helplessly restricted as a

⁵⁸ *VJ* vv.480-1 = vv.18-19 of the *Sāma Jātaka* (540). The fact that Jāli awkwardly refers to himself as a ‘man’ (*pumunā*, *VJ* vv.480-1) implies that the *VJ* has borrowed from the *Sāma Jātaka*, rather than *vice versa*. This connection with the *Sāma Jātaka* adds a layer of significance to the role played by filial devotion in the *VJ*. Sāma is noticeable for his self-sacrificial love for his parents, and it is precisely this attitude that Vessantara asks his children to cultivate with regard to his gift, but which they here only imperfectly achieve.

⁵⁹ *ehi Kaṇhe marissāma n’ atth’ attho jīvitena no /*

fish caught in a net' (v.503),⁶⁰ implying that he feels trapped by his own desire to give. Not only that, he even considers taking his bow and sword, which he had lain aside on arriving at the hermitage, and killing Jūjaka, thereby effectively finishing his life as an ascetic (*J* 6.552.21ff.).

Ultimately, Vessantara restrains himself with the thought that good men should not regret their gifts (v.505). The commentary elaborates upon this by having Vessantara reason that he is simply doing what is necessary in order to attain Buddhahood (*J* 6.553.1ff.): 'There have been no previous Buddhas who have not performed these five great sacrifices. I am one of them. I cannot become a Buddha if I do not give away my wife and children.'⁶¹ Vessantara is thus driven by a higher ideal, which he himself notes (*J* 6.547.10f.): 'Omniscience is a hundred times, a thousand times, a hundred thousand times more precious to me than my son.'⁶² As Gombrich states (1977:xxiv): 'Vessantara is doing something dubious for the sake of a greater good – ends are invoked to justify means.'

6.4.8 The willing gift

It is not only Vessantara who must sacrifice his personal emotions for this higher ideal, but also those around him. This includes the children, who are asked to give themselves up to their father's will. Thus Vessantara states (vv.460ff.):

⁶⁰ *vārijasseva me sato baddhassa kumināmukhe /*

⁶¹ *ime pañca mahāpariccāge apariccajivā Buddha-bhūtapubbā nāma n' atthi. ahaṃ tesam abbhantaro. mayāpi puttadhītaro adatvā na sakkā Buddhena bhavitun ti.*

⁶² *puttena me sataguṇena saḥassaguṇena sataḥassaguṇena sabbañūtañāṇaṃ eva piyataran ti.*

Come my dear son/daughter, fulfil my Perfection. Consecrate my heart; do what I say. Be a steady boat to carry me on the sea of becoming. I shall cross to the further shore of birth, and make the world with its gods cross also.⁶³

Underlying these verses is the sentiment, standard in traditional Indian culture, that a father has ultimate control over his children, as he does over his wife.⁶⁴ However, the notion that it is a child's duty to obey his or her father is here redefined within the context of Vessantara's unconventional outlook. Their *svadharma*, like Maddī's, is invested with a new level of meaning, whereby they are asked, as dutiful children, to enter slavery for their father's sake.

Vessantara's verses occur at a pivotal point in the story. The children have run away and Vessantara's hopes of achieving a culminating moment in his renunciate career have suddenly been hampered. Without the children's consent, Vessantara is unable to give the 'ultimate donation' (*dānaṃ uttamam*, vv.606f., 611). The dramatic position of the verses accentuates the importance of this notion, and it is later reiterated when Vessantara states (*J* 6.546.24ff.): 'Dear Jāli, do you not know that giving brings me gladness? Help me to realize my aspiration.'⁶⁵

Scholars such as Jonathan Walters (1997:176) have pointed out that the *Jātakas* portray a complex web of karmic agency through the fact that the Bodhisatta is accompanied by others through various lives. In a related vein, John Strong (1997) has observed that in Mūlasarvāstivādin biographies, the Buddha's quest for enlightenment has repercussions on his relatives, who undergo austerities and trials which parallel those undertaken by the Buddha on his renunciate path.⁶⁶ He states (1997:122): 'The Bodhisattva's Great Departure was not universally, in the Buddhist tradition, treated as the solo quest of a

⁶³ *ehi tāta piyaputta [(462) amma piyadhīti], pūretha mama pāramiṃ /
hadayaṃ me 'bhisiñcetha, karotha vacanaṃ mama //460/462//
yānanāvā ca me hotha acalā bhavasāgare /
jātipāraṃ tarissāmi santāressaṃ sadevakan ti //461/463//*

⁶⁴ Gombrich 1977: xxiff.

⁶⁵ *tāta Jāli, kiṃ tvam mama dānavittabhāvaṃ na jānāsi, ajjhāsayaṃ me tāta matthakaṃ pāpehī ti.*

⁶⁶ Tatelman (1996:II, xxviii) also describes how in the *Bhadarakalapāvādāna* Yaśodharā undergoes austerities parallel to those undertaken by the Buddha.

solitary seeker after enlightenment; it was also, at least in part, a family affair.’ These themes are also relevant to the *VJ*. However, they are extended further so that the Bodhisatta’s renunciation not only affects others, but also cannot be realised without their help. Vessantara needs the participation of the children if he is to realise his path to Buddhahood, a notion highlighted by the startling comparison of the children with a boat carrying him across the ocean of *samsāra* (vv.461, 463). For this to occur, they must be willing to sacrifice themselves for him in as absolute a manner as he sacrifices himself for omniscience. Moreover, the audience, by extension, is also implicitly being asked to approve of Vessantara’s *dāna* and to offer itself up to the Bodhisatta.

As mentioned above, the notion of self-sacrifice to a superior being is potentially pregnant with devotional connotations. We have already raised these themes with regard to Maddī, but they are heightened here by the use of slave imagery. For example, Kaṇhā exclaims that Jūjaka is beating her as though she were a slave (*dāsiyaṃ*, v.516). In the previous chapter we saw how slavery is sometimes used as a metaphor for selfless service to a superior being, where it is often combined with the notion of ‘giving up one’s life’ (*jīvitapariiccāga*). It is important to emphasise that this is not forced slavery. On the contrary, it is a type of self-imposed, willing slavery. Indeed Vessantara makes this point concerning Maddī’s desire to follow him into the forest (v.168): ‘I would not want to lead even a slave into the jungle against her will. If she wants let her follow, if not let her stay.’⁶⁷ Similarly, when Vessantara gives his wife and children as slaves to Jūjaka, the issue of whether they consent to this slavery is of key importance. By pleading with his children to fulfil his perfection, Vessantara is essentially asking them to become such willing slaves. It is here that a potential solution lies to the conflict created by Vessantara’s *dāna*. It is however a solution which is itself full of pain and difficulty, as is powerfully evoked by the children’s lamentations.

⁶⁷ *nāhaṃ akāmā dāsīm pi araṇṇaṃ netuṃ ussahe /
sace icchatī anvetu, sace n’ icchatī acchatū ti //168//*

6.4.9 Turning to Maddī

For Vessantara's *dāna* to be perfect the children have to be willing gifts, but this willingness is far from established in the children-giving scene. Both children assent to Vessantara's request to fulfil his perfection, saying: 'I will not argue with my father' (*pitārā saddhiṃ dve kathā na kathessāmī ti*, *J* 6.546.9f., 6.546.20). Jāli adds: 'Let the brahmin do with me what he will' (*brāhmaṇo maṃ yathāruciṃ karotu*, *J* 6.546.9). However, their words appear to be governed by a sense of forced duty rather than willing acceptance, as is highlighted by the fact that, although he gives himself up to his father, Jāli refuses to expose his sister out of respect for a pact (*katikā*) he has made with her. Indeed, the *VJ* stresses the children's reluctance to be slaves: they fall at Vessantara's feet sobbing and, even after they have been given away, they repeatedly lament their fate and try to break free from their captor.

According to Jāli, Kaṇhā does not understand (v.479, *na sa jānāti kismici*) what is happening to her. The inability to understand the significance of Vessantara's gift is cited by the *Mld* as an explanation for the children's suffering. In answer to Milinda's question of whether Bodhisattas give away their wife and children with their consent (*anumatena*), Nāgasena states (*Mld* 275): '[In the case of the *VJ*] the wife consented, Great King, but the children lamented because of their youth. If they had understood the essential issue [*atthato*], they too would have shown their approval [*anumodeyyuṃ*] and they would not have lamented.'⁶⁸ However, whereas in the *Mld* this argument is used to exonerate Vessantara of immoral behaviour – if the children had known better they would not have suffered – in the *VJ* Kaṇhā's lack of understanding instead highlights the terrible magnitude of Vessantara's gift, without simplifying it in such rational terms.

⁶⁸ *bhāriyā mahārāja anumatā, dārakā pana bālatāya lālappiṃsu; yadi te atthato jāneyyūṃ, te pi anumodeyyūṃ, na te vilapeyyun ti.*

The end of the children-giving scene marks a critical point in the story. Vessantara himself has battled with his emotions throughout the section: even when the children are finally led away, Vessantara feels ‘overpowering grief’ (*balavasoko*) and cries tears of blood (*J* 6.554.22ff.). He manages to restrain himself by pinpointing affection (*sineha*) as the cause of his suffering and extracting that ‘dart of grief’ (*sokasallam*) (*J* 6.554.24ff.). The scene thus ends with the children on the one hand bewailing their fate and Vessantara on the other hand attempting to withdraw from attachments. When Maddī arrives at the hermitage, she is confronted by an almost totally silent Vessantara. Is this retreat into silence a suitable resolution to the story? In order to address this question, the *VJ* now turns to Maddī.

Despite her absence, Maddī plays an important background role throughout the children-giving scene. Jūjaka delays entering the hermitage until Maddī has left for the forest, fearing that she will be an obstacle (*antarāyakara*, *J* 6.540.18) to his plans. This concern is repeated later, when he refuses Vessantara’s offer to stay, arguing that (v.450) women are not ‘open-handed’ (*yācayogī*) and are ‘trouble-makers’ (*antarāyassa kāriyā*). The most important references to Maddī, however, are made by the children. Jāli, for example, begs Vessantara to wait with his gift until Maddī returns from the forest (v.472f.). Indeed, the children’s last words are addressed to her, as they pathetically call upon the scenery to inform Maddī of their departure (vv.520ff.).

Maddī’s reappearance is thus loaded with dramatic suspense. The most obvious expectation is that she will try to retrieve the children from Jūjaka. This is certainly the children’s hope, as it is Jūjaka’s worry. Vessantara too envisaged such a scenario when he lied to Maddī about the meaning of her nightmare. Moreover, the gods themselves delay her return to the hermitage so that she will not obstruct Vessantara’s gift. Maddī thus takes centre-stage at the very moment when the plot reaches its emotional climax. Her importance has often been overlooked by scholars who have understandably tended to

concentrate on the Bodhisatta. However, in terms of both narrative momentum and thematic development, Maddī's role is crucial for understanding the *VJ*.

Maddī's return to the hermitage is accompanied by a series of bad omens (*J* 6.557.2ff.; vv.530 and 572). She feels disorientated and is surrounded by unnatural sights, including fruitless fruit-bearing trees (*aphalā phalino rukkhā*, v.530). These distortions of nature are presumably meant to convey the abnormal quality of Vessantara's gift, which has contravened ordinary conventions. We are told (*J* 6.557.4ff.):

Trees bearing fruit seemed bare, and bare trees seemed to be bearing fruits, and she completely lost her bearings. Thinking, 'What is happening to me today? It has never been like his before,' she said [v.530]: 'My spade falls, my right eye throbs. Fruit-bearing trees are bare, and **all the directions are confused for me.**'⁶⁹

This image of confused directions is echoed by v.115 of the *Sāma Jātaka* (540), in which King Piliyakkha similarly states:

I am even more bewildered. **All the directions are confused for me.** I go to you for refuge, Sāma. Please be my refuge.⁷⁰

In this story, the solution to Piliyakkha's bewilderment lies in taking refuge in the Bodhisatta (Sāma), whose display of virtue has ironically also been the cause of Piliyakkha's confusion. Piliyakkha's act of refuge mirrors Maddī's solution to her own confusion. She too will find solace by taking refuge in the Bodhisatta, who himself is also the cause of her bewilderment. However, the implications of this solution are more far-reaching in the *VJ* than they are in the *Sāma Jātaka*. Vessantara's transcendence – and transgression – of conventional norms is more extreme than Sāma's and, by taking refuge

⁶⁹ *phalino rukkhā aphaḷā viya aphaḷā ca rukkhā phalino viya khāyimsu, dasa disā na paññāyimsu, sā kin nu kho idaṃ pubbe abhūtapubbaṃ ajja hotī ti cintetvā āha:*

khañittikaṃ me patati dakkhiṇakkhi ca phandati /

aphalā phalino rukkhā sabbā muyhanti me disā //530//

Similarly, she later says that 'the hermitage seems to be spinning round' (*bhamate viya assamo*, v.559).

⁷⁰ *esa bhīyyo pamuyhāmi, sabbā muyhanti me disā /*

saraṇaṃ taṃ Sāma gacchāmi, tvañ ca me saraṇaṃ bhavā ti //115//

in Vessantara, who is himself the source of her pain, Maddī will have to go against all her motherly instincts and condone the renunciation of her children.

Maddī's reaction upon entering the hermitage is one of utter distress. For 57 verses (vv.546-602), she runs around the hermitage and surrounding forest desperately looking for her children and fearing that they are dead. Her grief is exacerbated by Vessantara's silence (vv.567f.). She asks why he remains quiet (vv.562f.) and says that she will die if he does not speak to her (v.569). This silence is accentuated by the fact that the whole hermitage is quiet. She states (v.560, 563): 'Why does the hermitage seem so quiet to me? Even the crows are not cawing. My little ones must be dead! [...] Why are you silent? I feel as if I am dreaming; even the birds aren't singing. My little ones must be dead!'⁷¹

Vessantara's response is brief and harsh, as he asks her why she has returned so late from the forest (v.570). The prose expands upon this and has Vessantara attack Maddī with the most crude and insensitive of accusations (*J* 6.562.3ff.): 'Maddī, you are beautiful and attractive, and in the Himālayan forests live a lot of people like ascetics and magicians. Who knows what you have been doing.' He even tries to blame her for the children's absence: 'Married women do not behave like this, going off into the forest leaving young children. You did not so much as ask yourself what was happening to your children or what your husband would think, but left in the morning and are returning by moonlight. My unfortunate state is to blame for this.'⁷² As Steven Collins states (1998:513): 'The innuendo is harsh and, of course, entirely unfair; it seems impossible not to think that the intention is to cast Vessantara in an unsympathetic light, for not even the most severely applied values of renunciation would require this kind of slander.'

⁷¹ *kim idaṃ appasaddo va assamo paṭibhāti maṃ /
kākolāpi na vassanti, matā me nūna dāraḥā //560//
kim idaṃ tuṅhībūto si, api ratte va me mano /
sakuṅāpi na vassanti, matā me nūna dāraḥā //563//*

⁷² *Maddi tvaṃ abhirūpā pāsādikā, Himavante nāma bahuvanacarakā tāpasavijjādharaḥādayo vicaranti, ko jānāti kiñci tayā kataṃ, tvaṃ pāto va gantvā kim idaṃ sāyaṃ āgacchasi, daharakumārake ohāya araṇṇaṃ gatitthiyo nāma sasāmikitthiyo evarūpā na honti, ko nu kho me dāraḥānaṃ pavatti kiṃ vā me sāmi cintessati ti ettakam pi nāhosi, pāto va gantvā candālokena āgacchasi, mama duggatabhāvass' eva doso ti.*

Although Collins is right in pointing out Vessantara’s unfairness, I think the passage also has broader implications. The *Jātakas* deal in narrative types and conventional settings, and Vessantara’s harsh language becomes more significant when it is compared with similar contexts found in the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519) and *Rāmāyaṇa*, which were discussed in §5.4.3. Like Maddī, Sambulā enters the forest to collect fruit with a basket and spade, and her excursion similarly provides the demon of the story (played in the *VJ* by Jūjaka) with an opportunity to work his wicked deeds. Sambulā is also unfairly accused of infidelity by her husband when she returns to their hermitage after enduring hardships in the forest. Sītā too is falsely accused of adultery. However, as we saw in §5.4.3, both Sambulā and Sītā rise above their husbands’ accusations by proving that they are superior to the stereotype of female fickleness. Vessantara’s words seem to anticipate a similar outcome. By accusing Maddī of being selfish and unfaithful, Vessantara is certainly making a misjudgment, but his words also pave the way for Maddī to reveal her extraordinary virtue. (Indeed, it is noteworthy that both Vessantara and Rāma are said to accuse their wives without actually believing in their crime; thus Vessantara speaks to Maddī ‘in feigned accusation’ (*tajjetvā vañcetvā*, *J* 6.562.8).) Like Sambulā and Sītā, Maddī too will prove herself to be a devoted wife in the most extreme circumstances. Indeed her love for Vessantara is so abnormal that, contrary to the common expectation that she will obstruct Vessantara’s *dāna*, she instead approves of his gift of the children and even becomes a willing gift herself.⁷³

6.4.10 Returning to relationships

According to Steven Collins (1998:513), Vessantara ‘says nothing more [to Maddī] except to ask her peremptorily why she is neglecting her domestic tasks, “brooding and doing nothing.”’ However, unless he is reallocating the verses, Collins seems to be mistaken in

⁷³ That Vessantara’s words are at least partly meant to throw into relief Maddī’s virtue is shown when she responds to his criticisms by defending her character (vv.571-7).

ascribing these words to Vessantara since, in the PTS text at least, they are spoken by Maddī. The verse runs as follows (v.594): ‘You have not chopped the wood; you have not fetched water; you have not seen to the fire. Why are you brooding and doing nothing?’⁷⁴ This verse is found twice elsewhere in the *Jātakas* (*J* 4.221, 5.201), and in both situations it is addressed to an ascetic who has been seduced and who sits brooding over his lover’s absence. The implication seems to be that Vessantara too is not acting like a proper ascetic – after all, he has not done his hermitage chores – and that he is, as Collins puts it (1998:513), being ‘incompetent’.

Yet another question-mark is thus raised over Vessantara’s retreat into silence. Indeed, the issue comes to a head when Maddī finally stops her delirious search for her children and falls onto the ground in a faint (v.602). This is the dramatic climax of the story. Maddī has fainted, the hermitage is quiet, and Vessantara is immobile. (In a dramatic performance, the audience too might be stunned into silence.) Can the story finish with this stark picture of silent inactivity? In the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, silence was a key technique for expressing Mahājanaka’s transcendence of society and his disassociation from relationships. Indeed, the comparison with Mahājanaka is apposite since Mahājanaka too was faced with his wife fainting in front of him. Mahājanaka responded by escaping into the forest and becoming a solitary ascetic. Will Vessantara do the same? Will he also choose silence and solitude over relationships?

It is within this context that I think Vessantara’s response is significant. Rather than disappearing into the silence of the forest, Vessantara reaches out to Maddī with concerned tenderness. In the verses, his reaction is simple and direct (v.603): ‘As the princess had fallen near him he sprinkled her with water when he saw that she was ill.’⁷⁵

The prose, however, gives a more emotional portrayal (*J* 6.566.15ff.):

⁷⁴ *na te kaṭṭhāni bhinnāni, na te udakaṃ ābhatam /
aggī pi te na hāpito, kin nu mando va jhāyasi //594//*

⁷⁵ *taṃ ajjhapattam rājaputtiṃ udakena abhisīncatha /
assattham maṃ viditvāna atha naṃ etad abravī ti //603//*

Trembling at the thought that she was dead, the Great Being was filled with deep grief at the idea that Maddī had died in a remote and foreign place, since if she had died in the city of Jetuttara there would have been a great ceremonial, and two kingdoms would have quaked. ‘But I am alone in the forest,’ he thought, ‘What can I do?’ Regaining his self-possession he rose to find out how she was. When he placed his hand on her heart he felt warmth, and so he brought water in a jar, and although he had not touched her body for seven months, the strength of his anxiety forced all consideration for his ascetic state away from him, and with eyes filled with tears he raised her head and held it on his lap, and sprinkled her with water. So he sat, stroking her face and her heart.⁷⁶

Vessantara’s concern with the location of Maddī’s death suggests that he is, as Collins states (1998:513), ‘still thinking as a king’. Indeed, Vessantara never loses sight of his royal identity, even at the height of his renunciation. He is referred to as a ‘royal sage’ (*rājisi* v.639),⁷⁷ and throughout his ascetic period is described as ‘provider of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivi’ (*Sivīnaṃ raṭṭhavaḍḍhana*). When Jūjaka asks Vessantara in a standard greeting whether asceticism is treating him well (vv.436f., 613f.), Vessantara at first replies with the conventional response that everything is fine (vv.438f., 615f.), but then adds (v.440, v.617): ‘We have lived a life of sorrow in the forest for these seven months.’⁷⁸ In this respect, Vessantara is noticeably different from the ascetic Accuta, who is asked the same question by Jūjaka but, in addition to the standard response given by Vessantara (vv.359-360=438-439), says (v.361): ‘I have lived for many years in this hermitage, and I have not known any unpleasant affliction to occur.’⁷⁹ Vessantara is thus not entirely at ease with the ascetic life. This is not merely because Vessantara is unable to withstand the hardships of asceticism, but – more challengingly – because his is a form of renunciation which seeks to include kingship, however strained that relationship may be.

⁷⁶ *Mahāsatto matā ti saññāya kampamāno aṭṭhāne videse matā Maddī, sace hi-ssā Jetuttaranagare kālakiriya abhavissa mahanto parihāro abhavissa, dve raṭṭhāni caleyyum, ahaṃ pana araṇṇe ekako, kin nu kho karissāmi ti uppanabalavasoko satim paccupaṭṭhāpetvā janissāmi pi tāvā ti uṭṭhāya tassā hadaye hatthaṃ ṭhapetvā santāpavattim ñatvā kamaṇḍalunā udakaṃ āharitvā sattamāse kāyasamsaggaṃ anāpannapubbo pi balavasokena pabbajitabhāvaṃ sallakkhetum asakkonto assupunṇehi nettehi tassā sīsam ukkhipitvā urūsu ṭhapetvā udakena paripphosetvā mukhañ ca hadayañ ca parimajjanto nisīdi.*

⁷⁷ See also v.251, in which Vessantara’s hermitage is said to be situated where the *rājisi* dwell.

⁷⁸ *satta no māse vasataṃ araṇṇe jīvasokinaṃ /*

⁷⁹ *bahūni vassapūgāni assame vasato mama /
nābhijānāmi uppannaṃ ābādhaṃ amanoramaṃ //361//*

Nor does Vessantara value only royal concerns. He also exhibits strong emotional affection for Maddī, which ‘shows him still very much thinking as a husband’ (Collins *ibid.*).⁸⁰ Having had no physical contact with his wife for seven months, he now physically touches her and gives up his ascetic principles (*pabbajitabhāvaṃ*, *J* 6.566.22). However, the tone of the passage is far from censorious. As Collins states (1998:514): ‘The mood is not sexual – it is rather one of gentle physical intimacy and the concern of a husband for his wife.’ Vessantara’s affectionate response to Maddī’s suffering is thus ambiguously portrayed. On the one hand Vessantara appears to transgress ascetic propriety, on the other hand he acts as any conscientious husband should. This tense interaction between ascetic and marital values is further complicated by the fact that, as we shall see, it is precisely Vessantara’s loving relationship with Maddī which allows him to achieve the peak of his renunciation when he gives her away.

6.4.11 Sacrificing oneself and one’s children for the Bodhisatta

It is in this intimate context of marital affection that Vessantara finally tells Maddī what happened to the children (*J* 6.566.27f.): ‘My lady, I gave them as slaves to a brahmin.’⁸¹

He goes on to state (vv.604ff.):

A needy old brahmin came begging to our home, and I gave the children to him. Do not worry, Maddī; take comfort. Look to me, Maddī, not to the children. Do not grieve too much. [...] Be glad with me Maddī, for children are the very best gift.⁸²

⁸⁰ See also Collins 1998:523f., who states that Vessantara is shown ‘oscillating between detached potential Buddha, suffering father and affectionate husband’.

⁸¹ *devi ekassa brāhmaṇassa dāsathāya dinnā ti.*

⁸² *daliddo yācako vuddho brāhmaṇo gharaṃ āgato /
tassa dinnā mayā puttā, Maddi mā bhāyi assasa //604//
maṃ passa Maddi mā putte mā bālhaṃ paridevasi / [...] //605//*

Vessantara's words may strike the modern reader as crass and insensitive, but their simplicity is perhaps meant to convey a sense of relief as Vessantara finally 'comes clean'. Moreover, the bareness of his speech evokes the absolutist nature of his outlook: Vessantara simply has to give; what more is there to say? Steven Collins describes the force of the scene well (1998:514f.):

The strength of emotion in the exchange is perhaps all the more clearly suggested by the fact that the text is silent about it; the gap in the text allows the audiences to react to the scene as they wish. The stark disjunction between individual, celibate detachment, oriented towards an immaterial and future salvation, and the immediate mental and physical joys and consolations of marital and parental love is left unsoftened, with no explicit sign as to how it should be received. To the contrary, indeed, it is emphasized by the contrast between the delicate sensuality of the earlier part of the scene [when Vessantara caresses Maddī] and the austere tranquillity of its conclusion [when Vessantara gives Maddī away].

Of particular importance is Vessantara's advice that Maddī should look to him and not to the children, and that she should give him her consent (*anumodāhi*). In her devotion to her husband Maddī has to sacrifice all her other feelings, even those which she has for her children. The whole of the preceding passage, with its dense description of Maddī's lamentation, leads up to this moment. Just as Vessantara called upon his children to help him fulfil his perfection, so here he asks Maddī to support his renunciate aspirations, however 'offensive' they may be. The implication is, as it was with the children, that Vessantara needs Maddī's consent for his gift to be perfect and for the Bodhisatta path to be fulfilled.

She gives her approval (*anumodana*) in an immediate and unqualified manner (vv.607f.):

I am glad for you my lord; children are the very best gift. Now you have given them, let your mind be calm. Give more gifts. O king, among men who are full

[...] *anumodāhi me Maddi, puttake dānaṃ uttaman ti //606//*

of greed you, the bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivis, gave a gift to a brahmin.⁸³

The simplicity of Vessantara's earlier words is here matched by Maddī's response. In both cases it serves to convey the shocking, awe-inspiring nature of their renunciation. Maddī's relational form of self-sacrifice has now become bound up with Vessantara's individualist one. Contrary to expectations, Maddī has not proved to be an obstacle to Vessantara's gift of the children, but has in fact facilitated it by condoning it with marital approval. The mother to whom the children were crying for help has herself agreed to give them away. That is not to say that Maddī has no concern for her children. On the contrary, when she is later reunited with them she is said to quiver with emotion and, in a startlingly baroque image, sprays them with her breast-milk (v.742): 'Quivering like the goddess of drink [Vāruṇī], she sprinkled them with streams of milk from her breast.'⁸⁴ Indeed, her emotion so overwhelms her that she collapses on the ground in a faint along with everyone else including Vessantara.

The image of milk spraying from Maddī's breast is a fitting response to v.479, in which Kaṇhā 'cries like a fawn who has strayed from the herd and longs for its mother's milk'.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the children are said to run up to her 'like young calves to their mother' (*vacchā bālā va mātaram*, v.741), a simile which refers back to the earlier scene in which Maddī ran around the hermitage wondering why the children did not come to her 'like young calves to their mother' (*vacchā bālā va mātaram*, v.546). These metaphorical connections reinforce the sense of restoration and resolution which pervades the conclusion to the *VJ*. However, they also emphasise the paradoxical manner in which Maddī's reunion with her children comes about. Maddī is only united with her children

⁸³ *anumodāmi te deva, puttake dānaṃ uttamaṃ /
datvā cittaṃ pasādehi, bhīyyo dānadado bhava //607//
yo tvaṃ maccherabhūtesu manussesu janādhipa /
brāhmaṇassa adā dānaṃ Sivīnaṃ raṭṭhavaḍḍhano //608//*

⁸⁴ *Maddī ca puttake disvā dūrato sotthiṃ āgate /
vāruṇīva pavedhentī thanadhārābhisiñcathā ti //742//*

⁸⁵ *migīva khīrasammattā yūthā hīnā pakandatī ti //479//*

after she has consented to their abandonment. She can only provide them with sustenance when she has given them away. Motherhood is therefore not rejected, but it is redefined; family values have become reinvented around renunciation. Indeed, the transformation of Maddī's maternal role is shown by her abnormal fertility, as she now sprinkles the children with sprays of milk and is compared to the goddess Vāruṇī (v.742).

However, before this reunion can occur, Maddī not only has to agree to the gift of the children but also has to become a willing gift herself. This gift is said to represent the 'peak of perfection' (*pārami-kūṭa*, *J* 6.568.26), and is performed in a very different atmosphere from when the children were given away. The lack of menace is highlighted by the fact that it is not Jūjaka who comes to ask Vessantara for Maddī, but Sakka disguised as Jūjaka. This difference in tone is noted by Gombrich (1977:xxf.), who describes the gift of Maddī as the 'turning-point' in the story.

What above all distinguishes Maddī from the children is her response to Vessantara and his *dāna*. She becomes the willing gift, and the willing slave, that the children only imperfectly agreed to become before. It is for this reason that emphasis is placed upon Maddī's mental reaction to the gift (v.626): 'Maddī did not frown at him; she felt no resentment or sorrow. Under his gaze she was silent, thinking, "He knows what is best."⁸⁶ Vessantara too is concerned with Maddī's mental state (*J* 6.570.28ff.):

Wondering how Maddī was feeling, the Great Being looked at her face. She asked why he looked at her, and like a lion roaring she spoke this verse [v.629]: 'He whose virgin wife I became is my master and lord. Let him give me away or sell me to whomever he wishes; let him kill me!'⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *n' ev' assa Maddībhakuṭī, na sandhīyati na rodati /
pekkhat' ev' assa tunhī sā, eso jānāti yaṃ varan ti //626//*

Sakka is also said to notice the excellent 'intention' (*tesaṃ paṇītajjhasāyaṃ viditvā*, *J* 6.571.5) and know the 'resolve' (*tesaṃ saṃkappaṃ aṅṅāya*, v.630) of both Vessantara and Maddī before proclaiming his own anumodanā of Vessantara's gift. The importance placed on their partnership is also shown by v.746, in which the Sivis exclaim: 'May you both govern our kingdom!' (*rajjam kāretha no ubho*).

⁸⁷ *ath' assā Mahāsatto kīdisā Maddī ti pucchitvā mukhaṃ olokesi, sā kiṃ maṃ deva olokesi ti vatvā sīhanādaṃ nadantī imaṃ gāthaṃ āha:*

*komārī yassāhaṃ bhariyā sāmiko mama issaro /
yass' icche tassa maṃ dajjā vikkīṇeyya haneyya vā ti //629//*

Collins has suggested that (1998:516) ‘a premodern audience, notably the women in it, might be able to infer the existence of trauma in Maddī’s silent acceptance and all-too-brave words.’ This may be so – her self-sacrifice is portrayed as extreme – but it is important not to underestimate the solemn tranquillity of the scene. In the children-giving section, Jāli expresses a similar sentiment and there it certainly appears to convey trauma (v.473): ‘Do not give us away until mummy comes back. Then let this brahmin **sell us or kill us as he will.**’⁸⁸ But Maddī is far from the reluctant gift the children were. In her case, the words become weighty and grand – she is after all making a ‘lion-roar’ – and they signify the magnitude of her self-sacrifice. Indeed, it is because she has willingly given up her life to Vessantara that the gift is executed smoothly and the story’s resolution can now begin. Ascetic and social values have become fused: Maddī’s devotion to Vessantara has allowed his gift to be fulfilled, her relational sacrifice complements Vessantara’s individualist sacrifice, and renunciation has become intertwined with marital love.

6.4.12 Separation and reunion

When Vessantara gives Maddī to Sakka, Sakka immediately returns her and thereby sets in motion the first of many restorations that constitute the remainder of the story. Sakka’s words emphasise the unity between Vessantara and Maddī, a unity that is paradoxically derived from their separation. He states (vv.636ff.):

[636] My lord, I give you back your wife Maddī, on whose every limb sits beauty. You belong with Maddī, and Maddī belongs with her husband. [637] Just as milk and a conch-shell are alike in colour, so you and Maddī are alike in heart and thoughts. [638] You both, nobles of a good lineage, of high birth on your mothers’ and fathers’ sides, were banished to the jungle here. Live in peace in a hermitage, so that you may do works of merit by giving again and again.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *mā no tvaṃ tāta adadā yāva ammāpi eti no /
tadāyaṃ brāhmaṇo kāmaṃ vikkiṇātu hanātu vā //473//*

⁸⁹ *dadāmi bhoto bhariyaṃ Maddiṃ sabbaṅgasobhanaṃ /*

Their mutual dependency accentuates how Vessantara does not fulfil his perfection on his own. Indeed, aloneness is often depicted negatively in the *VJ*. We have already seen how Vessantara reaches out to Maddī when she faints. Similarly, Sakka disguises himself as a brahmin because he fears that someone may come and ask for Maddī and leave Vessantara ‘alone, helpless, and without support’ (*ekakaṃ [...] anātho nippaccayo J* 6.568.23ff.). Likewise, before leaving for the forest Vessantara tells Maddī (v.69): ‘My life is at risk alone in the great forest’ (*samsayo jīvitam mayham ekakassa brahāvane*). To which Maddī replies (v.71): ‘It is not right, great king, for you to go alone’ (*n’ esa dhammo mahārāja yaṃ tvaṃ gaccheyya ekako*). Vessantara’s need for Maddī is shown even after he has attained the ‘peak of perfection’. When Sañjaya enters the forest with a large army in order to bring Vessantara back to the city, Vessantara is terrified (*bhīto*, v.715) by the army’s noise and fears imminent slaughter. It is Maddī who calms him, saying (v.719): ‘No enemy could overcome you, as fire cannot overcome a flood. Concentrate on that. In this there may be salvation.’⁹⁰

Vessantara is therefore never totally detached from social relationships. As mentioned above, the forest life does not entirely please Vessantara, and this is reinforced when he tells Sañjaya (vv.728ff.):

[728-9] We find a living, Your Majesty, such as it is, but living is hard for us. To live by gleaning gatherings schools a needy man, Your Majesty, as a charioteer schools a horse. We are poor and we are tamed, for poverty has been our master. [730] But our flesh has wasted away because we have missed seeing our mother and father, as we led our life of sorrow in exile in the jungle, O great king.⁹¹

*tvaṃ ñeva Maddiyā channo Maddī ca patinā saha //636//
yathā payo ca saṃkho ca ubho samānavañṇino /
evaṃ tuvañ ca Maddī ca samānacetasā //637//
avaruddh’ ettha arañnasmiṃ ubho sammatha assame /
khattiyā gottasampannā sujātā mātupettito /
yathā puñṇāni kayirātha dadantā aparāparan ti //638//*
I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:107) and the *Chatthasaṅgāyana* in reading *sammatha assame* and *sujātā* in v.638 rather than the PTS *sammataassame* and *sajātā*.
⁹⁰ *amittā na ppasaheyyuṃ aggīva udakaṇṇave /
tad eva tvaṃ vicintehi api sotthi ito siyā ti //719//*
⁹¹ *atthi no jīvikā deva yā ca yādisi kīdisā /*

Indeed, Vessantara readily agrees to return to the Sivi kingdom and become king. Not only that, his adoption of kingship is, in one verse, seen as a form of relational sacrifice based upon filial love. Thus Sañjaya begs Vessantara to pardon him for his exile (v.748) and states (v.749): ‘One should destroy a father’s grief in any form, or a mother’s or a sister’s, even at the cost of one’s own life.’⁹² The word-commentary explains the verse thus (*J* 6.587.28ff.): ‘My child, a son should remove his parents’ grief and pain even if it means sacrificing his life [*jīvitam pariccajitvā*]. Therefore obey my command: take off this ascetic garb and put on the clothes of a king.’⁹³

Vessantara’s attachment to his family is also shown when his first question to Sañjaya is to ask for the children’s news (vv.730f.). Moreover, when the children are reunited with their parents, Vessantara along with everyone else faints. They are revived by a lotus-leaf shower sent by Sakka, which soaks those who wish to be soaked but not those who don’t. This miracle is said to occur ‘when relatives are reunited’ (*samāgatānaṃ ñātinam*, v.743), thus further highlighting the *VJ*’s concern with exploring the interaction between society and renunciation. Indeed the miracle is given particular emphasis by the fact that it recalls the *paccuppannavatthu*, in which the Buddha showers his relatives (the Sakyans) with lotus-leaves and red water. The Sakyans had initially refused to pay homage to the Buddha, but were then converted by the Buddha’s performance of the miracle of the pairs. This newfound devotion is paralleled in the *atītavatthu* by the Sivi’s approval of Vessantara’s gifts after their previous antagonism.⁹⁴

*kasirājīvikā homa, uñchācariyena jīvitam //728//
 aniddhinaṃ mahārāja damet’ assaṃ va sārathi /
 ty-amhā aniddhikā dantā, asamiddhi dameti no //729//
 api no kisāni maṃsāni pitu mātu adassanā /
 avaruddhānaṃ mahārāja araññe jīvisokinaṃ ti //730//*

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:108) and the *Chatṭhasaṅgāyana* in reading *kasirājīvikā* in v.728 rather than the PTS *kasirā hi jīvikā*.

⁹² *yena kenaci vaṇṇena pitu dukkhaṃ udabbahe /
 mātu bhagīniyā cāpi api pāṇehi attano ti //749//*

⁹³ *tāta puttana nāma jīvitam pariccajitvā mātāpitunnaṃ sokadukkhāṃ haritabbaṃ, tasmā mama vacanaṃ karohi: imaṃ isiliṅgaṃ haritvā rājavesaṃ gaṇha tātā ti.*

⁹⁴ Another shower falls on the Sivi kingdom at the very end of the story, when Sakka sends showers of jewels and gold in order to satisfy Vessantara’s desire for giving.

When performed properly, *dāna* results in fruit and, as we saw in the Chapter 4, this fruit is often conceived as a purified form of the object given away. Vessantara thus receives back everything he abandoned. Dressed once again in royal clothes, he returns to his kingdom. Not only that, his royal status becomes refined so that he is now crowned as king (*J* 6.588ff.).⁹⁵ Indeed, the kingdom itself becomes a haven of wealth, empty prisons and fertile abundance, which Collins (1998:112ff., 289ff., 555ff.) describes as a utopia, in the sense that it is an ideal which incorporates tensions and conflicts through being both a ‘good place’ (eutopia) and a ‘no-place’ (outopia). Emphasis is also placed on Maddī’s newly acquired royal clothes (vv.760ff.), and her refined role is shown by her abnormal fertility when she sprays her children with milk and is compared to the goddess Vāruṇī (v.742). Much attention is also given to the royal dress of the children, who, like the Sivi, now condone Vessantara’s *dāna* wholeheartedly. The children’s transformation is further suggested by the fact that, only a few months after he was given away, Jāli takes on the role of army commander, leading Sañjaya’s army into the forest and giving instructions on where to set up camp.

The ending to the *VJ* is thus optimistic: Vessantara’s conflict with society is resolved and everything that was given away has been restored. It is however important to stress that these restorations are themselves based upon renunciation, with all the pain and difficulty that this involves. Like many Indian stories, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* (see p.301), the *VJ* follows the classic pattern of separation and reunion.⁹⁶ For Vessantara and Maddī, their reunion does not occur in spite of separation but because of it. Their love becomes defined through renunciation and is transformed onto a new level of meaning. Thus, Vessantara has to renounce Maddī before they can truly be united. Moreover, it is Maddī’s love for Vessantara and her willingness to be given away which allows her to be renounced in the first place. Social and ascetic values are thus joined together in a tense and complex

⁹⁵ On the issue of whether Vessantara is a king before his exile, see Collins 1998:550.

⁹⁶ Siegel 1978:137ff.

relationship between renunciation and restoration, conflict and resolution, an interaction which forms the very basis of *dāna*.

The threatening side to Vessantara's *dāna* is expressed by the images of death that pervade the *VJ*. Vessantara's gifts involve the sacrifice of life, as does Maddī's love for her husband, and the *VJ* emphasises the hardships and moral ambiguities that such self-sacrifice involves. Ultimately, however, these gifts of life result in the return of a purified, refined form of life. Indeed, it may be no coincidence that Vessantara's residence in the forest lasts just over nine months: his return to the Sivi kingdom could itself therefore be viewed as a type of re-birth. This is further suggested by the fact that, in the *Jātakanidāna*, it is precisely when the Buddha conquers Māra (Death) that Vessantara's life is cited as an authority (*J* 1.74). As Gombrich states (1977:xxvi): '[*Dāna* is] the virtue which defeated the god of Death and Desire, the monk's favourite theme.' By sacrificing life, death becomes conquered and a new way of living is brought about.

In Chapter 4 we saw how this interplay between life and death informs the Brahmanical notion of sacrifice, *yajña*, which is connected with *dāna*. Underlying Brahmanical sacrifice is a cycle of disintegration and reintegration, destruction and resolution. This cycle is clearly depicted in the *VJ*, and it is noteworthy that Vessantara's *dāna* is twice described as a form of sacrifice (*yajamāno*, v.147, 163). Similarly, when Sañjaya asks Jūjaka how he obtained Vessantara's children, he immediately assumes it was because of a sacrifice (v.655). However, whereas in the *VJ* Vessantara's gifts result in a prosperous society, in stories like the *Mbh* it is the destructive aspect to sacrifice which is emphasised. This is particularly expressed by the *Sauptikaparvan*, in which the devastating catastrophe that afflicts the Pāṇḍava army is, as Will Johnson points out (1998:xl), portrayed as a sacrifice that threatens 'to run out of control and consume the entire world,' although there too 'order is finally restored.'⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The whole war in the *Mbh* is framed by a *rājasūya* sacrifice and an *aśvamedha* sacrifice. For a summary of the sacrificial imagery permeating the *Mbh* generally and the *Sauptikarvan* particularly, see Johnson

In the *VJ* sacrifice never spirals out of control, although one fears that it may do so, and the story is a far cry from the apocalyptic, self-doubting vision of humanity depicted by the *Mbh* (qualified to some degree by the *Bhagavad Gītā*). This contrast is also reflected in the difference between the *Rām* and the *Mbh*, which David Shulman describes thus (2001:24):

[The *Rāmāyaṇa*] creates a sustained, lyrical universe peopled by idealized heroes [...]. The *Mahābhārata*'s heroes, by way of contrast, are anything but perfect; they are deeply flawed human beings, torn by terrible inner conflicts, confused by reality, and driven by a combination of forces towards ultimate disaster.⁹⁸

At the same time, however, Shulman argues that the *Rāmāyaṇa* 'illustrates the tragedy always consequent on perfection or the search for perfection' and that the very perfection of its 'idealized heroes [...] involves them – and the audience – in recurrent suffering' (*ibid.*). As Steven Collins (1998:499f.) has shown, these comments can also usefully be applied to the *VJ*, which similarly emphasises how Vessantara's quest for perfection has painful repercussions on both him and those around him. The next chapter will discuss the relationship between the *VJ* and the *Rām* further.

6.5 The *VJ* and the Buddha's life

Richard Gombrich has pointed out (1977:xvi) that the *VJ* 'has a particularly close connection to the story of the Buddha'. The last but one of the Buddha's past lives, the *VJ* is one of the few *jātakas* that is situated in relation to the 'present'. The *VJ* itself alludes to the Buddha's life when it states that there are only three lives in which the Bodhisatta

1998:xxxvff. Van Buitenen (1972) demonstrates how the *Sabhāparvan* of the *Mbh* is structured on the *rājasūya* ritual.

⁹⁸ Shulman also contrasts the *Mbh* as an 'unbounded' text with the *Rām* as a 'bounded' one. He concludes (2001:39): 'The *Mahābhārata* is unbalanced, chaotic, dangerously expansive, and stubbornly reluctant to come to terms with the world and, above all, with its familiar cultural order; the *Rāmāyaṇa* offers a balance, refined limits [...], and a somewhat tragic portrait of cultural ideals in the near stillness of their presumed perfection.'

speaks as soon as he is born (*J* 6.485.16f.): the *VJ*, the *Ummagga Jātaka* (546), and his final birth as Gotama. Outside of the *VJ*, Vessantara’s perfection is referred to at a pivotal moment in the *Jātakanidāna* when Gotama calls the earth to witness his perfection of giving in front of Māra (*J* 1.74). Moreover, in medieval Pāli texts, listening to the *VJ* is said to facilitate the possibility of re-birth in the time of the Buddha Metteyya, a belief that appears to be particularly widespread in Thailand.⁹⁹

Steven Collins has argued that ‘the final nirvana of the Buddha Gotama is the story’s *raison d’être*, everywhere present as the implicit teleology of Vessantara’s sufferings’ (Collins 1998:553f.). For Collins, this teleological movement towards Buddhahood invests the *VJ* with an aspect of tragedy. He states (1998:531):

VJ seems to possess what Heilman sees as a central feature of tragedy: a feeling of ‘the inevitability of the avoidable.’ All the characters are in some way responsible for the course of events; with almost everyone there is a feeling of “if only he/she/they had not said/done this...”

Arguing that ‘there is a tragic mismatch between the demands of his [Vessantara’s] soteriological destiny and his immediate feelings’ (1998:531), Collins stresses the *VJ*’s emphasis on suffering (1998:538):

[The *VJ*] takes the giving away of the children as an inevitable, given moment of the story, and chooses to concentrate on it, to heighten the audience’s feeling both for the inner turmoil Vessantara suffers before and while doing so – he is at once Everyman in his suffering and Unique Hero in his fortitude – and for the straightforward grief of Maddi afterwards.

He concludes that, in a sense, ‘Vessantara suffers [...] for the sake of the future Buddha Gotama and all the beings to whom his salvific message will be brought’ (1998:540).

⁹⁹ See Collins 1998:375ff., 546.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to investigate further the *VJ*'s connection with the Buddha's life by concentrating on Maddī's relationship with Yasodharā (the Buddha's wife). This seems particularly appropriate given that Maddī has in many ways been the central focus of our discussion.

In the *Jātakas*, the Buddha's wife is invariably called Rāhulamātā rather than Yasodharā,¹⁰⁰ but Yasodharā is the name used for her in the *Apadāna*, a canonical Pāli text dating around the first or second century B.C.E.¹⁰¹ The context of the *Yasodharā-apadāna* (*YA*) is as follows: Yasodharā goes to the Buddha to inform him of her imminent *parinibbāna* and begs him to forgive any offence she may have committed. The Buddha asks her to perform miracles in front of the assembly, which she does while singing of various deeds she performed in past lives.

As has been pointed by Sally Mellick (1993:16f.), the concept of service (*adhikāra*) to various Bodhisattas and Buddhas is central to Yasodharā's story, as it is to the *apadāna* genre generally. Her devotion to the Buddha recalls Maddī's love for Vessantara. Some of the verses describing Yasodharā's self-sacrifice to the Buddha are translated by Mellick as follows (vv.33ff.):

[33] (I remember my) association with former Supports of the World (which has) been fully explained (by you), and **my abundant service (which was) for your benefit**, O Great Sage. [34] My former skilful actions which you remember, O Sage, the merit (from them) was accumulated by me **for your benefit**, O Great Hero. [35] Having abstained from the moral impossibilities and having prevented myself from immoral behaviour, **I gave up my life for you**, O Great Hero.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ On the history of Yasodharā, see Mellick 1993:426 and Tatelman 1996:II, xxvff.

¹⁰¹ See Mellick 1993:25 and Walters 1997:160. Sally Mellick (1993) has critically edited and translated the *Yasodharā-apadāna*. I have used her edition and translation in this chapter.

¹⁰² *pubbānaṃ lokanāthānaṃ saṅgamaṃ te sudassitaṃ /
adhikāraṃ bahuṃ mayhaṃ tuyh' atthāya mahāmune //33//
yaṃ mayhaṃ purimaṃ kammaṃ kusalaṃ sarase mune /
tuyh' atthāya mahāvira puññaṃ upacitaṃ mayā //34//
abhabbatthāne vajjetvā vārayitvā anācamaṃ /
tuyh' atthāya mahāvira saṃcattaṃ jīvitaṃ mayā //35//*

(My bold lettering.)

Like Maddī, Yasodharā thus describes her devotion to the Buddha in terms of a sacrifice of life (*jīvitapariccāga*, formulated in v.35 as *saṃcattam jīvitam*).¹⁰³ Moreover, just as in the *VJ* the sacrifice of life brings about a new refined form of life, so Yasodharā later speaks of how she attained ‘a release from danger’ (*bhayamokkham*, v.39) by giving up her life to the Buddha. The slave imagery in the *Jātakas* is also paralleled by Yasodharā’s emphasis upon being a servant to the Buddha. She states (v.48): ‘My abundant service is for your benefit, O Great Sage. Seeking the properties of a Buddha, I have been your servant [*paricārikā*].’¹⁰⁴ Like Maddī, Yasodharā consents to be given away as a servant (v.37). Not only that, she also agrees to become another man’s wife and even gives away her body as food at the Bodhisatta’s request (vv.36, 38):

Although you gave me away to be another’s wife many hundreds of thousands of times (in past existences), I was not distressed about that. It was for your benefit, O Great Sage. Although you gave me as food many hundreds of thousands of times (in past existences), I was not distressed about that. It was for your benefit, O Great Sage.¹⁰⁵

At one point, Yasodharā explicitly refers to the *VJ* (vv.44f.):

When you announced to me: ‘I will give alms to suppliants. Let me not see (you) despondent while I give the ultimate gift’, (I responded:) ‘When you are happy I empathise with you, and I am not downcast by my afflictions. I am content in every situation, for your benefit, O Great Sage.’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ In v.93, we are told that anyone who gives themselves up to the Buddha becomes his ‘companion’ (*sahāya*) and even reaches *nibbāna*.

¹⁰⁴ *adhikāraṃ bahuṃ mayhaṃ tuyh’ atthāya mahāmune /
gavesantī buddhadhamme ahaṃ te paricārikā //48//*

¹⁰⁵ *nekakoṭisahassāni bhariyathāya ’dāsi maṃ /
na tattha vimaṇā homi tuyh’ atthāya mahāmune //36//
nekakoṭisahassāni bhojanatthāya ’dāsi maṃ /
na tattha vimaṇā homi tuyh’ atthāya mahāmune //38//*

¹⁰⁶ *yaṃ mayhaṃ patimantesi dānaṃ dassāmi yācake /
vimaṇaṃ me na passāmi dadaṭo dānaṃ uttamaṃ //44//
sukhappattānumodāmi na ca dukkhesu dummaṇā /
sabbattha tusitā homi tuyh’ atthāya mahāmune //45//*

This last verse (v.45) reinforces how Yasodharā defines herself through the Buddha, just as Maddī defines herself through Vessantara.¹⁰⁷ As Mellick points out (1993:14): ‘The *apadāna* of the elder nun Yasodharā stresses the links between the Bodhisatta and herself during countless former births (also established in many *jātaka* stories), as well as in the birth in which he attained enlightenment and she *arahat*-ship.’ Indeed Yasodharā accompanies the Bodhisatta from the very moment when he, in his life as Sumedha, aspired to Buddhahood in front of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara (vv.49ff.). Inspired by her love for Sumedha, Sumittā (Yasodharā in a past life) gives a gift of flowers to the Buddha as a parallel offering to the gift offered by the Bodhisatta.¹⁰⁸ What is more, Dīpaṅkara makes a prediction to Sumittā as well as to Sumedha (vv.61-4). He states (v.61):

(She) will be your equal in thought, action and duty. She will be your beloved because of her actions for your benefit, O Great Seer.¹⁰⁹

Yasodharā’s companionship with the Buddha is therefore stressed in a similar manner to Maddī’s companionship with Vessantara.¹¹⁰ Both couples are ‘equal in thought’ (*samacittā*, *YA* v.61; *samānacetasā*, *VJ* v.637), and Yasodharā, like Maddī, is said to share her husband’s pleasure and pain (*samānā ca sukhe dukhe*, *YA* v.71; *samānasukhadukkh’ amhā*, *VJ* v.582).¹¹¹ Dīpaṅkara even predicts that Yasodharā (v.64), ‘being compassionate, will make you [the Bodhisatta] fulfil the thirty Perfections,’¹¹² a concept paralleled in the *VJ* by Maddī’s participation in Vessantara’s fulfilment of the perfection of giving.

¹⁰⁷ Compare Tatelman’s comments on Yaśodharā in the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna*. ‘First and foremost, Yaśodharā is a faithful and devoted wife, a *pativrātā*’ (1996:II, liii). ‘Our author has sought to portray the Buddhist feminine ideal. Like her earlier incarnations in the *Buddhacarita*, *Mahāvastu* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, like Rāma’s Sītā, she is above all the perfect wife and mother – faithful, beautiful, dutiful and self-effacing [...] Her life has meaning, purpose, puissance, only in relation to her lord’ (1996:II, lix).

¹⁰⁸ On this story in other texts and traditions, see Tatelman 1996:II, xxx, n.218.

¹⁰⁹ *samacittā samakammā samakārī bhavissati /
piyā hessati kammaena tuyh’ athāya mahāise //61//*

¹¹⁰ Tatelman (1996:II, xxix) describes Yaśodharā in the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* as ‘the feminine counterpart to the Buddha, his partner in the religious life’. However, he also stresses (1996:II, lii): ‘We are not presented with a model of powerful, independent feminine spirituality. While our text is a unique document in that it devotes much effort to making Yaśodharā the heroine of her own drama, she is in every way subordinated to her absent husband, the very model of the traditional South Asian wife.’

¹¹¹ The Buddha is not, however, said to share Yasodharā’s pleasure and pain, whereas Vessantara is said to share Maddī’s.

¹¹² *tiṃsa taṃ anukampantī pūrayissati pāramī /*

Yasodharā concludes her song with a list of services that she has performed on behalf of various Buddhas, *paccekabuddhas* and *sāvakas* (vv.73ff.), and in the final verse (v.94) she worships the Buddha’s feet. However, despite this devotional emphasis, Yasodharā is not depicted as entirely dependent on the Buddha. She enters the *saṅgha* and realises the four noble truths by herself (vv.86f.). But, most startlingly of all, she informs the Buddha (v.10): ‘My age is ripe. There is (now) little of my life (remaining) so I will abandon you and go. I have made myself my own refuge.’¹¹³ At her enlightenment, Yasodharā gives up the Buddha and becomes her own refuge. In this respect Yasodharā is very different from Maddī, for Maddī never takes this final renunciate step. She never leaves Vessantara of her own accord or without being asked to do so. Her refuge is always found outside herself in the Bodhisatta.

However, this difference aside, the theme of separation-in-love is central to the *VJ* and it is noteworthy that in a text called the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* (circa 1400-1650 C.E.)¹¹⁴ Yaśodharā is, as Joel Tatelman observes, described as *virahaśokārtā* (‘distraught from the grief of separation’). Tatelman states (1996:II, xxix, n.184):

The key word here is *viraha*, ‘separation’, especially a woman’s separation from her beloved. In certain Vaiṣṇava schools, the term is also used in the theological sense, not inapposite here, of the devotee’s separation from, and yearning for union with, his or her god.

Although the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* is several centuries later than the *VJ* and is a Newari Buddhist text in the Sarvāstivādin tradition, many of its themes are echoed by the *VJ* (and *YA*), and Tatelman’s remarks about the devotional connotations of separation are also ‘not inapposite’ with regard to Maddī’s relationship with Vessantara.¹¹⁵ As we saw,

¹¹³ *paripakko vayo mayhaṃ parittaṃ mama jīvitam /
pahāya vo gamissāmi kataṃ saraṇaṃ attano //10//*

¹¹⁴ Tatelman 1996:I, ii.

¹¹⁵ Tatelman also compares Sītā’s devotion to Rāma with Yaśodharā’s devotion to the Buddha (1996:II, liiif.). Chapter 7 will demonstrate Maddī’s similarity to Sītā.

Vessantara's gift of Maddī represents the structural crux of the narrative, and his reunion with his wife and children – along with all the other resolutions – is itself defined by his renunciation of them. Although much emphasis is placed on the Bodhisatta's companionship with Maddī, Vessantara always maintains a degree of distance from his wife, as he does from everyone else in the *VJ*. Separation is an inherent condition of Maddī's love for her husband. Indeed it is this factor that influences her to sacrifice herself for Vessantara in the absolute manner that she does.

In order to elucidate these themes further, let us now turn to comparing the *VJ* with the *Rām*.

Chapter 7

The *Vessantara Jātaka* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*

7.1 Background

When comparing the *Vessantara Jātaka* (*VJ*) and *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Rām*), it is important to bear in mind that the *Rām*, like the *Jātakas*, has undergone countless permutations throughout its long and varied history.¹ This capacity for adaptation and reinvention has been highlighted by a volume of articles edited by Paula Richman (1991) and entitled: *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Although Vālmīki's *Rām* is generally considered to be the 'classical' version or – as John Smith describes it (1980:48) together with the *Mbh* – the 'primary epic', Tulsidās' *Rāmcaritmānas* and Kampan's *Irāmāvatāram* are but two prominent examples of how the Rāma story spread and developed.² Indeed, even as early as the largely co-extensive *Mbh*, we find a version of the *Rām* in the *Rāmopākhyāna* (*Mbh* 3.257ff.).³ Nor was the *Rām* limited to India, but travelled into South-East Asia, including modern-day Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand.⁴

Vālmīki's *Rām* was composed roughly during the same period as the *VJ*. Smith (1980:48) dates it approximately between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., 'give or take a century or so in each direction – there are limitations on what we *can* know'.⁵ It is therefore Vālmīki's version, in the Baroda critical edition, which I shall use to compare with the *VJ*. There are of course potential pitfalls in such a project, not least because both the *Rām* and the *VJ* stand at the end of a long process of oral (and partly literary) development, making it

¹ Collins (1998:538) however points out that retellings of the *VJ* are not as varied in content as those of the *Rām*.

² For a detailed overview of different versions of the *Rām*, see Brockington 1984:226ff. See also Goldman 1984:40.

³ For the relationship between the *Rām* and *Mbh*, see Hopkins 1901:58ff.; Goldman 1984:16ff., 33ff.; and Brockington 1998a:473ff.

⁴ Brockington 1984:286ff.

⁵ Goldman (1984:23), however, dates the composition of the *Rām* as early as 750 to 500 B.C.E. See Brockington 1984:12, 307ff. for issues concerning the dating of the *Rām*.

unclear as to when or how they may have interacted. Nevertheless, the numerous similarities between the two compositions make it apparent that they evolved from a mutual narrative context.

Although the *Rām* is usually associated with ‘Hindu’ traditions, there are several Buddhist and Jain versions of the story. Among the 16 Jain versions described by V.M. Kulkarni (1959-60), Vimala Sūri’s *Paūma Cariya* is one of the oldest and is generally dated between the first and third centuries C.E.⁶ Particularly interesting are the objections made by Vimala Sūri to certain episodes in the *Rām*.⁷ These include doubts about some of the more fantastic events in the story, such as whether monkeys could have killed *rākṣasas*, whether Indra could have been overpowered by Rāvaṇa’s son, and whether monkeys could have built a bridge across the sea. Vimala Sūri also criticises Rāma’s moral behaviour. For example, he refuses to accept that Rāma, as a virtuous hero, could have killed Vālin in such an ignoble manner or that he could have hunted deer. In order to relieve Rāma of moral culpability, he omits certain scenes such as the hunting of the golden deer, Rāma’s killing of Rāvaṇa (Lakṣmaṇa kills him instead), and Sītā’s fire-ordeal.

To my knowledge, no Buddhist version criticises and reconstructs particular episodes of the *Rām* in quite the same overt and propagandistic manner as the *Paūma Cariya*. Nevertheless the *Rām* evidently wielded a strong influence over various Buddhist narrative traditions, which then adapted the story to their own specific ends. Buddhist versions of the Rāma story are found in South-East Asia, such as the Thai *Rāmakīen* tradition and the Laotian *Phra Lak Phra Lam* (‘*Rāma Jātaka*’).⁸ There are also Chinese,

⁶ Kulkarni (1959:191) on the one hand states that the *Paūma Cariya* is ‘not later than 2nd century A.D.’, but on the other hand (1990:51ff.) seems to accept Jacobi’s date of the third century C.E., although he points out (1990:12) that the traditional date for the text is the first century C.E. (4 C.E. or 62 C.E., depending on how Mahāvira is dated). Brockington (1998a:499) states that the date of the *Paūma Cariya* is ‘perhaps the end of the 3rd century A.D.’.

⁷ Kulkarni 1959:193ff. and Brockington 1984:267f.

⁸ Brockington 1984:298ff. and Reynolds 1991.

Japanese, Khotanese, Mongolian and Tibetan versions of the *Rām*.⁹ The *Rām* appears to have influenced Indian Buddhist literature as early as Aśvaghoṣa,¹⁰ and it has even been suggested that it may have served as a prototype for the Buddha's biography.¹¹

The interaction between the Rāma story and Buddhist narrative is particularly seen in the *Jātakas*, some of which represent versions of stories also found in the *Rām*. The most famous example is the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (461), in which Rāma (the Bodhisatta), Sītā (Rāma's wife *and* sister), Lakṣhaṇa, Dasaratha, and Bharata are all mentioned. The main event in the story involves Bharata informing Rāma of his father's death and Rāma urging his family not to grieve since death is inevitable. This is paralleled by *Rām* 2.93-98.

The *Dasaratha Jātaka* has been the subject of much debate, with scholars such as Weber (1870), Sen (1920:4f.) and Smith (1980:50, 62) viewing it as the oldest form of the Rāma legend and others such as Jacobi (1893:84ff.), Gombrich (1985) and Brockington (1984:260f.) viewing it as a later distortion of the *Rām*.¹² Both Lüders (1897:128f.), and Sircar (1976-7:52) point out inconsistencies between the prose and verse portions of the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, and therefore contend that the main bulk of the story (the prose) is late and unable to represent an early version of the *Rām*. Gombrich (1985:435) argues that the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is satirical of the *Rām* and that the verses on equanimity represent a Buddhist reaction against Rāma's extreme outburst of grief when he hears of his father's death (particularly *Rām* 2.95).¹³ Pollock (1986:504) on the other hand points out that in *Rām* 2.98.15ff. Rāma also sings verses on the inevitability of death and the pointlessness of grief.¹⁴ However, he argues (*ibid.*) that, in their particular context, these verses are *non*

⁹ Brockington 1984:262ff.

¹⁰ Gurner 1927 and Johnston 1936:xlviiff. See also Brockington 1984:261f. for minor references to the *Rām* in early Buddhist texts.

¹¹ Pollock 1986:4, n.5 and 1986:70.

¹² Goldman states (1984:16): 'There can be no doubt, however, that on the basis of the best historical and literary evidence available to us, the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is substantially later than the Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa* and that it is both inspired by and derived from it.' See also his lengthy footnote on the matter.

¹³ Cf. Lüders 1904:702ff., who points out that such verses are common in both Hindu and Buddhist literature.

¹⁴ Lüders (1904:713f.) compares *Rām* 2.98.20f. with vv.2-4 of the *Ananusociya Jātaka* (328).

sequitur and suggests that they are either out of place or that ‘maybe the poet has inserted here, rather awkwardly, material from a parallel legend, that of the Wise Rāma (*rāmapaṇḍitaḥ*), partly preserved also in the *Dasaratha Jātaka*’.¹⁵ The relationship between the *Dasaratha Jātaka* and the *Rām* is therefore potentially complex, with both texts perhaps interacting at different stages of development. Nor is this surprising, given that, as Pollock remarks (1986:42f.), ‘the oral traditions of all the various genres and particular works must have been continuously interactive and cross-fertilizing’.¹⁶

A similar complex relationship between the *jātaka* tradition and the *Rām* is seen in the *Sāma Jātaka* (540) and the related version found in *Rām* 2.57f.. Oldenberg (1918:456ff.) has noted verbal echoes between the two texts and, on the basis of style, has argued that the *Sāma Jātaka* is older than the *Rām* version.¹⁷ Sen (1920:15ff.) likewise on mainly stylistic grounds argues for an earlier date for the *Sāma Jātaka* and concludes that the Buddhist tale constitutes one of the ‘original materials out of which the poet [Vālmiki] built up his immortal epic’ (1920:22). However, although there are certainly correlations between the two texts, these do not prove that the *Rām* borrowed directly from the *Sāma Jātaka* rather than from a common source.¹⁸ As Brockington states (1984:261, n.3): ‘It is possible that it [the episode in the *Rām*] was taken from Buddhist literature [...], but more probably both borrow separately from folk tradition.’ In addition, arguments based upon style do not in themselves constitute definitive evidence for dating the stories,¹⁹ since the

¹⁵ See also Pollock 1986:38: ‘The tradition of *Rāmapaṇḍita*, “The Wise Rāma”, which is preserved in the *gāthās* of the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (#461), seems to have been adapted in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 98.15ff., where it is tacked onto the narrative.’ Cf. Winternitz 1927:509: ‘The fact that only one of the twelve ancient *gāthās* of the *Jātaka* appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, proves that our epic cannot be the source of these verses, but that the *Jātaka* is based upon an ancient Rāma ballad.’

¹⁶ Similarly, Pollock (1986:39) regards the *Mbh* and *Rām* ‘as more or less co-extensive and to a high degree interactive traditions’.

¹⁷ Oldenberg states (1918:458, n.2): ‘Dass dem Epos in irgend einer Fassung die altertümlichen Verse vorgelegen haben, die wir aus dem *Jātaka* kennenlernen, ist wahrscheinlich.’

¹⁸ See also Cicak-Chand (1974:lxiiif.), who compares the *Sāma Jātaka*, *Rām* and *Mahāvastu*, and states: ‘Abgesehen von schon besprochenen Übereinstimmungen, die zwischen HJM [*Haribhaṭṭajātakamālā*] und *Rām* zu bemerken waren, könnte ich noch feststellen, dass auch zwischen den Versen von Pāli-Ja, *Mvu* [*Mahāvastu*] und *Rām* eine klare Verwandtschaft erkennbar ist. Gewiss deutet ein solcher Zusammenhang auf eine den verglichenen Texten einmal gemeinsame Quelle hin.’

¹⁹ Oldenberg himself (1918:463) partly concedes that, in practice, texts may not always concord with theoretical models of chronology based upon stylistic development.

Sāma Jātaka may simply have been composed in an archaic style, or it may have fossilised earlier than the *Rām* and yet be derived from a common narrative cycle.

Pollock has also asserted that the *Sāma Jātaka* is ‘the prototype for that apparently rather late stratum of the text’ (1986:37), and argues (1986:62), ‘Vālmīki appears to have reworked and inserted a narrative derived from the folk tradition (preserved for us in the form of the *Sāmajātaka*), one that could be adapted to harmonize with the pervasive fatalism of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*.’ According to Pollock, the reason for Vālmīki’s adaptation of the story is to relieve Daśaratha of culpability for Rāma’s exile by transferring the blame onto the vagaries of *karma* and fate. However, while I do not deny the general validity of Pollock’s argument, the situation is complicated by the fact that the *Sāma Jātaka* may itself represent a retelling of a version (or versions) similar to that found in the *Rām*. My reasons for this hypothesis are as follows.

In the *Rām*, Daśaratha accidentally kills an ascetic youth while hunting and is cursed for his mistake by the youth’s parents. This curse is important for the teleology of the *Rām*, as it is one of the main factors causing Rāma’s exile and, consequently, Rāvaṇa’s destruction.²⁰ The *Sāma Jātaka* seems to allude to this event when the father of the youth urges his wife not to be angry with the king (vv.56ff.). Far from being cursed, the repentant king is instead forgiven.²¹ The theme of repentance, and resolution after conflict, is further emphasised by the fact that the king is initially portrayed as wicked. Not only does the king lie to the youth after wounding him (*J* 6.78.27ff.) but also, in marked contrast to the *Rām*, he is not described as shooting him unintentionally. On the contrary, the prose explicitly states that he shoots him purposefully (*J* 6.76.8ff.), while the verses

²⁰ See Smith 1980:69f.

²¹ The possibility of a curse is also alluded to and rejected in one of the two versions found in the *Mahāvastu*; see *Mahāvastu* 2.213f. and 217.

See also Schlingloff 1987:64: ‘In the Buddhist tradition thoughts of hate and revenge, which inspired the parents’ curse [in the *Rām*], cannot possibly determine the moral content of the story. Instead, the incident should serve to exemplify Buddhist virtues: the youth’s love of animals, his loyalty to his parents, his and their readiness to forgive the king, and then the king’s determination to atone for his act by serving his parents.’ Schlingloff compares Buddhist versions found in the *Jātakas*, *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and *Mahāvastu*, which he relates to the story’s depiction at Ajaṅṭā.

remain ambiguous, mentioning only that he was ‘overcome with anger and greed’ (*kodhalobhābhībhūto*, v.15).²² Despite this, the king is still given the opportunity to change his moral behaviour and the story ends happily with his taking refuge in the youth (who is the Bodhisatta). This is different from the *Rām*, in which Daśaratha not only kills the youth unintentionally (albeit carelessly) but is also cursed even though he is repentant.²³ Moreover, in the *Sāma Jātaka* the youth is revived by a series of acts of truth, which may constitute a form of one-upmanship over a version similar to that preserved in the *Rām*, in which not only the youth dies but also the parents. That the *Sāma Jātaka* knows of other versions in which the youth dies is further suggested by the fact that the story deliberately plays upon the ambiguity of whether he is dead or not.²⁴

In putting forward these arguments, I do not mean to suggest that the *Sāma Jātaka* necessarily responds specifically to the *Rām*. This would indeed be implausible given the complex flux of the oral narrative tradition. Instead, the *Sāma Jātaka* appears to rework various motifs belonging to a narrative cycle from which both the *Rām* and *Sāma Jātaka* derive their particular versions.

In addition to these two stories, the (or a) Rāma story is twice explicitly referred to in the *Jātakas*. In v.17 of the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* (513) the Bodhisatta’s mother blesses her son, who is on his way to the Daṇḍaka forest in order to confront a man-eating *yakkha*, thus:

Just as the fine-limbed mother of Rāma conferred safety upon him when he went to the Daṇḍaka forest, so I confer safety upon you. By this truth may the gods attend you. Return safely with [the *yakkha*’s] permission, my child.²⁵

²² Schlingloff (1987:65) argues that originally in the verses the king shot the youth unintentionally, but that this was then misinterpreted by the prose. He translates *kodhalobhābhībhūto* as ‘hunting fever’ and ‘hunting passion’. Schlingloff’s argument is however hampered by the fact that nowhere in the verses is the king explicitly said to have shot his arrow unintentionally, in contrast to the *Rām* (2.57.16, 2.58.1) and *Mahāvastu* (2.213). Indeed, when the king meets the youth’s parents in the *Sāma Jātaka*, he is silent about the intention underlying his act, whereas in the *Rām* (2.58.12ff.) and *Mahāvastu* (2.217) he is keen to inform them that it was an accident.

²³ The curse is however diluted by the fact that Daśaratha confesses his mistake to the parents (*Rām* 2.58.19ff.).

²⁴ See *Sāma Jātaka* vv.24, 32, 53ff., 66ff., and especially vv.110f.

²⁵ *yaṃ Daṇḍakāraññagatassa mātā Rāmass’ akā sothhānaṃ sugattā /*

This passage may be relatively late, since the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* also contains a rare example of a verse (v.30) which refers explicitly to another *jātaka* story (the *Sasa Jātaka* (316)) and summarises its events. Be that as it may, the above stanza clearly alludes to the scene in *Rām* 2.22 in which Kausalyā prays for Rāma as he leaves for the Daṇḍaka forest.²⁶ The *Rām* and *Jayaddisa Jātaka* have another parallel: both heroes leave for the forest in order to honour promises made by their fathers. They are however importantly different in that the Bodhisatta conquers the *yakkha* through non-violence, whereas Rāma defeats demons in the Daṇḍaka forest through battle.

That such relatively minor events are referred to by the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* shows that the Rāma story was well-known amongst *jātaka* composers. However, it is noteworthy that the prose commentary explains the above verse differently. It states (*J* 5.29.17ff.):

It is said that a certain inhabitant of Bārāṇasi called Rāma, a man who cared for his mother and looked after his parents, once set out to do some trade. He arrived in the city of Kumbhavati in the kingdom of King Daṇḍaki. When the whole kingdom was destroyed by a ninefold rain, he recollected his parents' virtue and, by the power of his mother's prayer, deities conveyed him back safely and returned him to his mother.²⁷

The commentary thus entirely ignores the story found in the *Rām* and instead revamps the verse so that it concords with the tale of King Daṇḍaki found in the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522; especially *J* 5.134f.). A possible reason for this invention could be that the composer of the commentary was unaware of the *Rām* version. This is corroborated by the fact that a similar misinterpretation occurs in the *Dasaratha Jātaka*. Thus, as Sircar points out (1976-7:52), the first verse of the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, in which Rāma tells Lakkhaṇa and Sītā to

*tan te ahaṃ sotthānaṃ karomi /
etena saccena sarantu devā, anuññāto sotthi paccehi putta //17//*

Pāda c is probably an interpolation; compare vv.18 and 19, in which there is no corresponding *pāda*.

²⁶ See also Pollock 1986:38.

²⁷ *eko kira Bārāṇasivāsi Rāmo nāma mātīposako mātāpitaro paṭijagganto vohāratthāya gato Daṇḍakirañño vijite Kumbhavatinagaraṃ gantvā navavidhena vassena sakalaraṭṭhe vināsiyamāne mātāpitunnaṃ guṇaṃ sari, atha naṃ mātupaṭṭhānadhammassa balena devatā sotthinā ānāyitvā mātu adamsu.*

descend into a pond, is misunderstood by the prose-composer, who, not realising that the verse refers to the water libation (*tarpaṇa*) performed at a funeral, instead explains that they are told to descend into the water in order to lessen their grief upon learning of their father's death.

However, although the *Rām* appears to have been diffused less in Sri Lanka than it was in India and South-East Asia,²⁸ that there was some access to the story is shown by the existence of commentarial references to the *Rām*.²⁹ As Gombrich notes (1985:436), the Pāli commentaries condemn the *Mbh* and *Rām*, arguing that the *Bhāratayuddha* (*Mbh*) and *Sītāharaṇa* (*Rām*) are 'trivial stories' (*niratthakakathā*) and a form of 'idle chatter' (*samphappalāpa*).³⁰ Such a desire to undermine the authority of the *Rām* probably represents more of a scholastic than a popular concern. After all, the very fact that the commentaries are keen to disparage the *Mbh* and *Rām* implies that they were enjoyed by some sections of society.

Perhaps a more likely explanation for the *Rām*'s lack of mention in the commentary to the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* is that the commentator wanted to make the stanza conform with the other *jātaka* stories, thereby creating the sense of a self-enclosed collection of texts, uninfluenced by 'external' non-Buddhist literature such as the *Rām*. This need for self-authorisation would have been all the more accentuated given the negative opinions expressed above about the Sanskrit epics. Moreover, the belief that the *jātaka* verses constitute *buddha-vacana* would have made it difficult for the commentator to accept that the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* referred to 'idle chatter' such as the *Rām*, since – as Sv 3.914 tells us

²⁸ Gombrich (1985:436) suggests that 'this reflects the hostility of Theravāda Buddhism [...] to the values embedded in the *Rāmāyana*'. Reynolds (1991:60, n.7) disagrees, arguing that Gombrich's view of Theravāda Buddhism is limited to Sri Lanka. He also disagrees with Gombrich's opinion that the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is a parody of the *Rām* (*ibid.*, n.8). Bechert (1978:230f.) contends that the *Rām* never attained an important position in Sri Lanka because it contradicted beliefs about the island's history.

²⁹ Kumāradāsa, who is considered to have been Ceylonese, composed a *mahākāvya* of the Rāma story called the *Jānakīharaṇa*. Lienhard (1984:197f.) dates him to around the seventh or eighth century C.E.

³⁰ See for example Sv 1.76, *Spk* II 2.148, *Ps* 1.301 and 3.95, *Nidd-a* 1.118 and 1.209, *Paṭi-a* 1.222 and 1.224. For further references to the *Mbh* and *Rām*, see also Sv 3.914, *Pj I* 118 and *Pj II* 1.300.

– ‘the Tathāgata does not tell stories that are spiritually unproductive, such as the *Battle of India* and the *Theft of Sītā*.’³¹

A similar phenomenon occurs in the *VJ*, in which there is also an allusion to the Rāma story in the verses. In v.541 Maddī explicitly compares herself to Sītā thus: ‘I am the wife of that glorious pince who was exiled, and I shall never desert him, just as the devoted Sītā never deserted Rāma.’³² The prose, however, interprets the verse in terms of the *Dasaratha Jātaka*. It states (*J* 6.558.21ff.):

By saying, ‘Just as the devoted Sītā never deserted Rāma,’ she means, ‘Just as Queen Sītā, the younger sister of Rāma, the royal son of Dasaratha, after becoming his chief queen, served him attentively with devotion and submission, so I too serve Vessantara and shall not desert him.’³³

Once again it seems unlikely that the commentator was ignorant of a Rāma story similar to the one now preserved in the *Rām*. On the contrary, the detail of the ‘younger sister’ may have been mentioned in order to emphasise that the verse refers to the Rāma story described in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* rather than the *Rām*. The awkward nature of the commentary’s explanation is also highlighted by the fact that Sītā’s devotion to Rāma is of little importance in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* itself.

The *Rām* itself mentions certain stories that are also found as *jātakas*. In *Rām* 2.12.4f., Kaikeyī states:

Śaibya, the lord of the world, once promised his very own body to a hawk, and he actually gave it to the bird, your majesty, thereby attaining the highest goal. The

³¹ *bhāratayuddhasītāharaṇasadisam aniyyānikakatham tathāgato na katheti.*

³² *avaruddhass’ aham bhariyā rājaputtassa sirīmato /
tañ cāham nātimaññāmi Rāmaṃ Sītā v’ anubbatā //541//*

Compare *Rām* 3.45.29ff., in which the refrain *aham Rāmam anuvratā* is used three times by Sītā in defiance of Rāvaṇa. See also *Rām* 5.17.7, in which Sītā is described as *Rāmaṃ anuvratām*.

³³ *Rāmaṃ Sītā v’ anubbatā ti yathā Dasaratha-rājaputtaṃ Rāmaṃ tassa kaniṭṭhā bhaginī Sītā devī tass’ eva aggamahesī hutvā taṃ anubbatā patidevatā hutvā appamattā upaṭṭhāsī tathā aham pi Vessantaram upaṭṭhahāmi nātimaññāmī ti vadati.*

same was true of mighty Alarka. When a brahman versed in the *Vedas* begged him for his eyes, he plucked them out, his own two eyes, and gave them unflinchingly.³⁴

As Pollock points out (1986:349), the first verse alludes to the famous story of King Śibi and the hawk, versions of which are found in the *Mbh* (3.131) and in Buddhist texts extant only in Chinese translation,³⁵ and the second verse to a version of the *Sivi Jātaka* (499), although the *Rām* knows the king's name as Alarka rather than Sivi/Śibi. It is possible that Alarka is connected with a certain king Arka mentioned in *Mahāvastu* 1.54, who is a Bodhisattva known for his generosity.

Finally, and most relevantly for our chapter, Gombrich (1985) has shown important links between the *VJ* and the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* of the *Rām*.³⁶ Although there are some verbal echoes between the two texts, the most striking similarities lie in their structure. Gombrich concludes that, despite their close relationship, the texts do not seem to have influenced each other directly. He states (1985:428): 'The evidence does not seem to me to show that either text has borrowed directly from the other, or that they depend on a common source; but I think that the affinities are too close to deny a common influence, which could even be a mutual influence.'

The *VJ*'s close relationship with the *Rām* is underlined by the fact that Winternitz (1933:152f.), Alsdorf (1957:70), Gombrich (1977:iii) and Collins (1998:498f., 530) all describe the *VJ* as an 'epic'.³⁷ Following Gombrich's hypothesis that one of the most famous Buddhist stories is connected to one of the most famous 'Hindu' stories, this

³⁴ *samśrutya śaibyah śyenāya svām tanuṃ jagatīpatiḥ /
pradāya pakṣiṇe rājañ jagāma gatim uttamām /4//
tathā hy alarkas tejasvī brāhmaṇe vedapārage /
yācamāne svake netre uddhṛtyāvimanā dadau //5//*

³⁵ See Chapter 1, n.82.

³⁶ Sen (1920:18ff.) and Winternitz (1927:509, n.3) also briefly remark on similarities between the *VJ* and the *Rām*.

³⁷ The longer verse-based *jātakas* could also be said to represent a kind of multi-story epic tradition. See von Hinüber 1996:57: 'It is not unlikely that the Theravāda Ja [*Jātaka*] is a composite collection consisting of 500 sets of verses plus 50 small epics.' Similarly he describes (1998:116) the *jātakas* with more than 100 verses as verse-stories ('Verserzählungen') or small epics ('Kleinepen'). Winternitz argues (1927:508) that the *ākhyāna* poetry of the *Jātakas* represents 'a forerunner of the epic'.

chapter aims to explore further possible relationships between the two texts. In particular, it seeks to elucidate the types of epic hero and heroine that are represented in the *VJ*. My investigation is divided into three sections. The first section explores various linguistic correspondences between the *VJ* and the *Rām*. The second section analyses the similarities between the ‘abduction’ scenes in the *VJ* and the *Araṇya Kāṇḍa* of the *Rām*. The third section offers a general overview of how the *Rām* and *VJ* relate to one another thematically. As in previous chapters, I do not intend to compare the *VJ* with the *Rām* from a text-historical approach.³⁸ Instead, I intend to explore how – in the complex flux of the oral tradition – the stories have used and adapted similar themes and motifs in order to produce their own distinct epic narratives.

In treating the *VJ* as an epic, two main purposes are achieved.³⁹ Firstly, it helps to redress the assumption that the *Mbh* and *Rām* are the only early examples of epic narrative. Smith’s comment (1980:49) that ‘these two compositions [the *Mbh* and the *Rām*] represent the only two surviving instances of early Indian epic’ would thus be challenged. Secondly, and more importantly, by connecting the *VJ* and other stories with the *Mbh* and *Rām*, the *Jātakas* become situated within a narrative context. The work of scholars such as Franke, Lüders and Oldenberg marked the end of a trend in comparative research between the *Jātakas* and the Sanskrit epics. Since then, Buddhologists have tended to see the *Jātakas* solely in terms of their position within Buddhist ideology and have lost sight of how they interact with related narrative traditions. Often in Indology the word ‘epic’ is simply equated with ‘Sanskrit’ or ‘Hindu/Brahmanical’. By treating the *VJ* as an epic,

³⁸ See Brockington 1984 for suggested stratifications of the *Rām*. The *VJ* generally corresponds to Brockington’s first and second stages (fifth to fourth century B.C.E. and third century B.C.E. to first century C.E. respectively).

³⁹ Several works debate the characteristics of the epic genre. On the role of oral performance and written texts in epic, see Blackburn and Flueckiger 1989 and Honko 1998. Smith 1977 has taken issue with Albert Lord’s notion (1960) that oral epic is improvisatory; Brockington 1998b has questioned whether formulaic expressions necessarily indicate orality in epic composition. Blackburn and Flueckiger (1989) analyse epic in terms of three features: ‘narrative’, ‘poetic’ and ‘heroic’; they divide heroic into ‘martial’, ‘romantic’ and ‘sacrificial’. Pollock (1991:11ff.) views the *Rām* as an epic which contains aspects of the romance genre; Blackburn and Flueckiger (1989:5, n.18) similarly state that the *Rāma* story ‘approximates a romantic epic’. This term could also be applied to the *VJ*, although the *VJ* also includes aspects of sacrificial epic. For a general discussion of the epic hero, see Miller 2000.

Buddhism is not erroneously seen as an isolated entity, condemned to act out its role in the wings of the Indian stage, but rather as a dynamic participant engaged in constant dialogue with its surrounding cultural and religious movements.

7.2 Style and Language

Stylistically, the *Rām* is more elaborate than the *VJ*.⁴⁰ Thus Pollock (1986:43) comments:

The reader who comes to it [the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*] with an awareness of the literary character of late vedic myth and legend, the *jātakas*, or other early Pāli or Sanskrit Buddhist narratives, or of the central portions of the *Mahābhārata*, must be struck by the sophisticated artistry of the book, which nothing in the antecedent or contemporary literature had prepared him to expect.

There is not the same dependency on refrains in the *Rām* as there is in the *VJ*.⁴¹ This is even the case in the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, which contains a higher density of refrains than other chapters. As Gombrich states (1985:429): ‘The *VJ* seeks its effect through *anaphora*, the *AK* [*Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*] through *varietas*.’ The metaphorical language employed by the *Rām* is also more dense than in the *VJ* (see, for instance, the ornate simile in *Rām* 5.12.29ff.).

Similarly, the characterisation in the *Rām* is far more detailed than in its Buddhist counterpart. This complex characterisation is partly achieved through a greater emphasis on individual psychology. However, characters are still largely defined through stock epithets and stereotyped expressions than by internal psychology,⁴² and the most effective technique employed by the *Rām* is its use of complementarity, whereby heroes are defined through others around them. This has been particularly noted by Goldman (1980), who describes Rāma as a ‘composite hero’, a prime example of which is provided by Rāma’s

⁴⁰ See Oldenberg 1918:443ff.

⁴¹ Refrains are of course commonly found in the *Rām* (see Brockington 1970: especially 222ff.), but, as Pollock points out (1986:43): ‘If the balladlike refrain style to which Vālmīki is especially partial in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* has antecedents in the folk tradition, nowhere else do we find it used with the same degree of skill.’

⁴² See Brockington 1970.

common epithet *sahalakṣmaṇaḥ* ('together with Lakṣmaṇa'). This tendency to portray heroes in terms of a group or set of interrelated qualities is also seen in the *Mbh*, in which for example Yudhiṣṭhira's neutral character is fleshed out by being complemented by his brothers.⁴³ Similarly Rāma's self-restrained nature is balanced by the passionate, martial characteristics of heroes such as Hanumān and Lakṣmaṇa. The fact that Vessantara does not have a corresponding 'pairing' or 'grouping' (with the exception of Maddī, and perhaps Jūjaka as his foil) not only points to a different type of characterisation in the *VJ*, but also emphasises the mainly individualist outlook of Vessantara as opposed to the relational outlook of Rāma. We will return to this theme later.

However, although there are differences in style between the *Rām* and the *VJ*, there are also many similarities, especially with regard to language and imagery. In order not to interrupt the flow of this chapter, I have placed a list of examples in Appendix A. Taken mostly from the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, *Aranya Kāṇḍa* and *Sundara Kāṇḍa* of the *Rām*, these examples show how the *Rām* and *VJ*, as well as other *jātakas*, often deal with similar themes and linguistic usages, which appear to be derived from a common 'storehouse' of epic material.

7.3 The Vessantara Jātaka and the Aranya Kāṇḍa

As mentioned above, Richard Gombrich (1985) has argued that there are various structural and verbal similarities between the *VJ* and the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* of the *Rām*. His findings are too detailed to do justice to them here but they can be summarised as follows.

In both texts an heir apparent is exiled, and the wives of both heroes insist on following their husbands into the forest, despite being told of the hardships of ascetic life. Songs are sung contrasting the forest with the city, and both wives declare that they will not burden their husbands, threatening suicide if they are refused. The kingdom laments the heroes'

⁴³ See Goldman 1980:150ff. and Smith 1980:56ff.

departure, and both heroes leave in a carriage, which they soon have to leave behind. Vessantara is offered kingship by the Cetas, just as Rāma is by the Niṣādas, and both are given directions to hermitages built by Viśvakarman. Bharata's journey to the hermitage is paralleled in various ways by the journeys made by Jūjaka and Sañjaya. Both stories describe 'the wicked designs of a stranger' (Gombrich 1985:427) against the hero's family. After various tests of virtue, both heroes return home triumphant to inaugurate a golden age of wealth and fertility.

Although Gombrich hints (*ibid.*) that Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sītā in the *Aranya Kāṇḍa* is paralleled by Jūjaka's abduction of Maddī and the children, he limits his article almost entirely to the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*. This is justified since most of the similarities between the *VJ* and the *Rām* are found in that section. However, as I hope to show, further echoes between the two works also occur in the *Aranya Kāṇḍa*.⁴⁴ The main event in this chapter is Rāvaṇa's kidnapping of Sītā (*Rām* 3.44ff.), which is perhaps the most famous scene in the whole epic. Similarly, the most important event in the *VJ* is when Jūjaka takes away Vessantara's wife and children. Although one might expect Sītā's abduction to be paralleled by the Maddī-giving scene, it is in fact Vessantara's separation from his children which bears the closest resemblance to Sītā's kidnapping. The reasons for this will become clear.

Some of the main aspects linking the passages are as follows.

⁴⁴ If the *VJ* does contain similarities with the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* as well as the *Aranya Kāṇḍa* then this could be used as evidence to undermine Jacobi's argument, on the basis of style, that the *Aranya Kāṇḍa* was originally distinct from the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*. See Pollock 1986:4ff.

7.3.1 The abduction scenes

- In the *VJ*, Jūjaka takes the children while Maddī is away from the hermitage foraging for food. Likewise, in the *Rām*, Sītā is abducted by Rāvaṇa while Rāma is absent from the hermitage hunting deer.
- Rāvaṇa is further linked with the brahmin Jūjaka by the fact that he approaches the hermitage in the disguise of a brahmin (*Rām* 3.44f.). Moreover, in a kind of ironic symmetry, Vessantara's children twice describe Jūjaka as a demon (*VJ* v.477, 517). Particularly noticeable is v.517, in which Jūjaka is said to be a 'demon in the disguise of a brahmin' (*yakkho brāhmaṇavaṇṇena*). As mentioned previously when we discussed Indra's manipulation of Karṇa in the *Mbh* (p.144), the theme of disguise is often found in epic literature in the context of deceiving or harming one's enemy. The notion that Jūjaka is a demon in the disguise of a brahmin serves to re-emphasise the underhand nature of his tactics. One may also note that, just as Rāvaṇa is wearing unfamiliar dress, so Jūjaka is wearing ascetic attire to which he is unaccustomed (see *J* 6.524.27).⁴⁵
- In accord with conventions of hospitality, both Rāvaṇa and Jūjaka are received as brahmin guests and are offered food, water and a foot-bath (*VJ* vv.441ff., *Rām* 3.44.32). Both villains' plans therefore involve violating the norms of hospitality. In addition, the two 'brahmins' are connected by the fact that they are both asked to spend one night at the hermitage and to wait for the respective absent spouse to arrive with food from the forest.

⁴⁵ Although largely favourable towards brahmins, the *Rām* also contains passages that satirise certain brahmin figures. See for example the roles played by Trijaṭa Gārgya and Jābāli in *Rām* 2.29 and 2.100ff.

Compare *Rām* 3.45.19:

Rest a moment; or you can even pass the night here if you like. My husband will soon return bringing an abundance of food from the forest.⁴⁶

And *VJ* vv.446ff.:

The princess went off in the morning, and she will return from gathering food in the evening. Stay for one night and go in the morning, brahmin. [...] Then when you go you will take them [the children] carrying a plentiful variety of roots and fruit.⁴⁷

Rāvaṇa and Jūjaka both refuse this offer, the former implicitly and the latter explicitly, since they desire to leave before Rāma and Maddī respectively return from the forest and obstruct their plans.

- Both Jūjaka and Rāvaṇa treat their victims violently. Jūjaka thrashes the children and binds their hands with a creeper (*VJ* vv.468f.); Rāvaṇa forcefully seizes Sītā by the hair and thighs (*Rām* 3.47.16).

Although the two villains of the *VJ* and *Rām* thus play closely related roles, the above evidence need not lead us to assume that the *VJ* is consciously equating Jūjaka with Rāvaṇa. Rather, Jūjaka is being ‘typecast’ as a demon through thematic associations deeply embedded in the narrative tradition. However, that said, the symmetry in plot-structure and imagery reinforces the hypothesis that the *VJ* and *Rām* have a common influence and underlines the fact that the two texts draw upon similar narrative conventions from which they formulate their own particular epic vision. Far from being accidental or insignificant, Jūjaka’s typological association with Rāvaṇa invests his role as

⁴⁶ *samāśvasa muhūrtaṃ tu śakyaṃ vastum iha tvayā /*

āgamiṣyati me bhartā vanyam ādāya puṣkalam //19//

⁴⁷ *pāto gatā rājaṣṭhī sāyaṃ uñchāto eḥiti //446//*

ekarattīṃ vasitvāna pāto gacchasi brāhmaṇa / [...] //447//

[...] / nānāmūlaphalākīṇṇe gacchiss’ ādāya brāhmaṇā ti //448//

villain with extra layers of meaning.

- Both Sītā and the children struggle against their captors. More significantly, Sītā’s lament at being abducted is echoed by the children. This is particularly the case when Kaṇhājinā calls upon the forest spirits and surrounding scenery (vv.519ff.) to tell Maddī that they have been led away by a brahmin (*ayaṃ no neti brāhmaṇo*, *VJ* v.520) and that she should follow them quickly. Similarly, Sītā calls upon the scenery, animals and spirits (*Rām* 3.47.29ff.) to tell Rāma that she has been seized by Rāvaṇa (*sītāṃ harati rāvaṇaḥ*) so that he may chase after her.

Compare *Rām* 3.47.29ff.:

[29] Janasthāna, I call on you and you *karnikāra* trees in full blossom: Tell Rāma at once that Rāvaṇa is carrying off Sītā. [30] I greet you, Mount Prasravaṇa, with your flower garlands and massive peaks: Quickly tell Rāma that Rāvaṇa is carrying off Sītā. [31] I greet you, Godāvarī river, alive with the call of geese and cranes: Tell Rāma at once that Rāvaṇa is carrying off Sītā. [32] And you spirits that inhabit the different trees of this forest, I salute you all: Tell my husband that I have been carried off.⁴⁸

And *VJ* vv.519ff.:

[519] We cry out to the spirits of the mountains of the forest; we salute with bowed heads the spirits of the lake and the accessible rivers. [520] Grass and creepers, plants, mountains, and woods, please wish our mummy well. This brahmin is taking us away. [521] Please, sirs, tell our mummy, our mother Maddī, ‘If you want to catch us up, you must follow us quickly.’⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *āmantraye janasthānaṃ karnikārāṃś ca puspitān /*
kṣipraṃ rāmāya śaṃsadhvaṃ sītāṃ harati rāvaṇaḥ //29//
mālyavantam śikhariṇam vande prasravaṇam girim /
kṣipraṃ rāmāya śaṃsadhvaṃ sītāṃ harati rāvaṇaḥ //30//
haṃsasārasaṃghuṣṭāṃ vande godāvarīm nadīm /
kṣipraṃ rāmāya śaṃsadhvaṃ sītāṃ harati rāvaṇaḥ //31//
daivatāni ca yāny asmin vane vividhapādape /
namaskaromy ahaṃ tebhya bhartuḥ śaṃsata māṃ hṛtām //32//

⁴⁹ *okandāmasi bhūtāni pabbatāni vanāni ca /*
śarassa siraśā vandāma supatitthe ca āpake //519//
tiṅgalatā ca osadhyo pabbatāni vanāni ca /
ammaṃ ārogyaṃ vajjātha: ayaṃ no neti brāhmaṇo //520//
vajjantu bhonto ammañ ca Maddim amhāka mātaram /
sace anupatitukāmāsi khippaṃ anupatiyāsi no //521//

Both Sītā and Kaṇhājīnā are also compared to deer separated from their herd: *VJ* v.479; *Rām* 3.53, 5.15.28.

7.3.2 The madness scenes

When Rāma returns from the forest to find the hermitage empty, we enter upon one of the most striking scenes in the *Rām*, as we watch Rāma deteriorate from his usual self-restrained composure into a bewildered state of mind, which the text itself describes as a type of madness (*Rām* 3.58.10: *unmatta iva*).⁵⁰ The significance of this scene can be assumed from its length (*Rām* 3.56-62) and from the fact that even in the critical edition it has several ‘re-runs’. Indeed the story twice moves back a step in time in order to retell the events (*Rām* 3.57 and 3.59). Given the close relationship between the *VJ* and the *Rām*, it would be natural for this ‘madness scene’ to be represented in the Buddhist text.⁵¹ This appears to be the case when Maddī returns to the hermitage.

- When Maddī returns from the forest she is surrounded by bad omens: her spade falls from her hand, her basket-strap slips and her right eye throbs (*VJ* vv.573f.). Rāma experiences similar bad omens (*Rām* 3.55).
- In both the *VJ* and the *Rām*, the birds stop singing in the hermitage (*VJ* vv.560f.) and the surrounding nature loses its fertility (*VJ* v.530; *Rām* 3.58.6f.).
- Rāma is uncontrollable in his grief and is described as mad. Maddī is similarly hysterical and confused. She says that the directions are muddled (*VJ* v.530), that the hermitage appears to be spinning (v.559), and that she feels as if she is in a dream (vv.562f.). Both Rāma and Maddī desperately rush around the empty hermitage, as

⁵⁰ See Pollock 1986:55ff. Rāma’s madness is also paralleled by Sītā, who is described in *Rām* 5.24.2 as *unmatteva pramatteva bhrāntacitteva*.

⁵¹ Maddī is never actually described as mad, but I have kept the word, not only because Rāma is described as mad, but also because the texts may be influenced by the convention of depicting madness (*unmāda*) as one of the stages in separation-in-love (see p.278).

well as the surrounding rivers and trees, searching through all the places their loved ones used to be.

- Rāma and Maddī make several different searches, and the places they visit spark off memories of their loved ones. For example, a bilva tree reminds Rāma of Sītā because its fruits resemble her breasts and its shoots resemble her thighs. Similarly, deer remind him of Sītā’s eyes and elephant trunks of her legs (*Rām* 3.58.12ff.). Likewise in the *VJ* (vv.586ff.), Maddī comments upon the flowers the children used to wear and the fruits and animals they used to play with. Both Maddī and Rāma find traces of their loved ones: Rāma finds Sītā’s footprints, flowers and jewellery, as well as Rāvaṇa’s footprints and armour; Maddī finds sandcastles built by her children, which she compares to elephant tracks (*VJ* v.551). Maddī’s refrain: ‘Today I do not see my children’ (*ty-ajja putte na passāmi*, *VJ* vv.549ff., 553, 555ff.; also *te na passāmi dārake*, vv.552, 554, 558) is echoed by Rāma’s words: ‘I do not see Vaidehī’ (*neha paśyāmi [...] vaidehīm*, *Rām* 3.59.20; *na hi paśyāmi vaidehīm*, 3.59.24; also 3.60.3 *nainām paśyāmi*).

Both Rāma and Maddī wonder if their loved ones have simply wandered into the forest, and fear that they are dead, eaten, or snatched away (*Rām* 3.56.11, 3.56.16, 3.58.8, 3.60.35; *VJ* vv.560ff.).

Compare *Rām* 3.58.8, 3.59.3:

She must be lost or dead, carried off or devoured!⁵²

Has someone carried off my beloved, or devoured her, Saumitri?⁵³

And *VJ* vv.563f.:

⁵² *hṛtā mṛtā vā naṣṭā vā bhakṣitā vā bhaviṣyati /*
⁵³ *kenāhṛtā vā saumitre bhakṣitā kena vā priyā /*

‘My little ones must be dead! Perhaps wild beasts have eaten my children, noble lord. Or has someone carried them off into the jungle, the barren wilderness?’⁵⁴

Both have gory visions of the violence that may have been perpetrated against their loved ones (*Rām* 3.58.29f.; *VJ* v.566). Both deliriously address them as if they were still there (*Rām* 3.58.23ff.; *VJ* vv.577ff.). Both think that they will die because of this misfortune (*Rām* 3.56.4, 3.59.6 and 10; *VJ* v.569). Rāma says (*Rām* 3.56.10) that he will die if he returns to the hermitage and Sītā cannot speak to him, and Maddī says (*VJ* v.569) that she will die if Vessantara does not speak to her (although for very different reasons). Finally, both Maddī and Rāma faint and collapse on the ground (*Rām* 3.59.25f.; *VJ* v.602).

It could be objected that many, if not all, of the above parallels are simply conventions and that they therefore offer no proof of any interaction between the *VJ* and the *Rām*. Indeed, this objection could be supported by our analysis of the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519) in §5.4.3, which contains several of the motifs listed above (although I would argue that this is partly because it is linked to both the *VJ* and the *Rām*). Similar motifs are found in stories such as that of Nala and Damayantī in *Mbh* 3.50ff., in which the heroine hysterically wanders around a forest when she finds herself separated from her husband. Moreover, the conventional nature of the motifs is suggested by the fact that some of them coincide with the stages of love listed in texts such as the *Kāma Sūtra* (5.1.4ff.), the last three of which include madness (*unmāda*), fainting (*mūrcchā*), and death (*maraṇa*).⁵⁵

I would answer this objection in two ways. Firstly, although no single parallel in itself shows that there is a close relationship between the *VJ* and the *Rām*, the accumulative effect of numerous parallels suggests that there is. This is particularly the case when one

⁵⁴ [...] *matā me nūna dārakā* //563//
kacci nu me ayyaputtā migā khādīmsu dārake /
araññe īrine vivane kena nītā me dārakā //564//

⁵⁵ See Siegel 1978:153ff.

considers all the other similarities noted by Gombrich, as well as the fact that the *VJ* makes a direct reference to the *Rām* when it explicitly compares Maddī with Sītā (v.541). Secondly, even if the above parallels are only conventions, this does not undermine the main thrust of our analysis but rather bolsters it, since the primary concern of this chapter is to explore how the *VJ* uses and reworks the same kind of themes and motifs that the *Rām* also engages in.

Although the above correspondences show that the two texts employ similar motifs, the *VJ* manipulates them for very different ends. Contrary to expectations that Rāma should be paralleled by Vessantara, as he is in the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, the above discussion shows that, in the abduction scene, Rāma is more closely associated with Maddī than he is with Vessantara. The reasons for this are simple. Although Vessantara feels pain at losing his children, he ultimately not only consents to their abduction but also actively gives them away (although not without first being requested to do so). Indeed in the *VJ* it is hardly an ‘abduction’ at all, but rather an act of *dāna*. This willingness to abandon his children is highlighted when Vessantara asks Jūjaka to stay for the night and even imagines that Maddī will wash and anoint the children in preparation for their departure (*VJ* vv.447f.). Contrary to the purely renunciate approach espoused by Vessantara, Rāma and Maddī express the ordinary social attitude that separation from one’s family is abhorrent. Rāma’s normative reaction thus throws into relief the abnormality of Vessantara’s outlook. The contrast between Vessantara and Rāma is further accentuated by the fact that Vessantara considers grabbing his bow and sword and killing Jūjaka (*VJ* v.504), but restrains himself. Rāma on the other hand takes up his weapons and embarks on his quest to kill Rāvaṇa. Indeed this is the *raison d’être* of the *Rām*: Rāma’s exile and his separation from Sītā are all part of fate’s design to rid the world of Rāvaṇa’s presence. The *VJ* on the other hand rejects this martial outlook and instead centres around *dāna* and the intended acts of renunciation performed by Vessantara.

In the previous chapter we saw how Maddī adapts herself to Vessantara’s abnormal attitude towards separation. Rāma also restrains himself after the madness scene, but Maddī’s transformation is more startling. Whereas Rāma’s outburst of grief is channelled into a controlled form of fury, signalling his subsequent quest to destroy Rāvaṇa, Maddī’s distress has to be entirely dispelled so that she can approve of her husband’s *dāna*. Moreover, Maddī has to consent not only to Vessantara’s gift of the children, but also to his gift of herself. It is for this reason that the abduction scene in the *Rām* parallels Vessantara’s gift of the children rather than that of his wife. The scene in which Maddī is given away has a tone of tranquillity entirely different from the awful pathos pervading Vessantara’s gift of the children. Like Sītā, the children struggle against their captor and are terrified. They are at best reluctant gifts. Maddī on the other hand is a willing gift.

By contextualising the *VJ* within the oral epic tradition, and by examining how it adapts and reformulates motifs similar to those employed in the *Rām*, the *VJ*’s particular vision of epic heroism thus becomes more clearly articulated. The next section investigates this relationship further and expands upon the themes addressed above.

7.4 Comparing types of epic hero and heroine

John Smith (1980:56) has argued that ‘there is no one single type of epic hero in Sanskrit’ but that we find in the *Mbh* and *Rām* ‘a group of heroes characterized more or less sharply by differing sets of qualities’. He singles out three types of hero, which he claims ‘represent the complete span of possible epic heroes’ (*ibid.*). These include what he calls: the immense and the impetuous (e.g. Bhīma and Hanumān); the quiescent king (e.g. Yudhiṣṭhira and Rāma); and the warrior prince (e.g. Arjuna and Lakṣmaṇa). However, despite Smith’s claim that these three types embrace every heroic possibility, Vessantara seems to fit none of these categories easily. In order to understand the *VJ*’s notion of the epic hero, this section compares Vessantara with Rāma. The discussion also includes a comparison between Maddī and Sītā as epic heroines. In some respects Vessantara appears

to be influenced by a model of epic king similar to that represented by Rāma. In other respects, the *VJ* seems to have created its own concept of royal hero, which unites both the ascetic and the social through the image of a renunciate king.

7.4.1 The social hero and the quiescent hero

Apart from a few controversial episodes – such as Rāma’s brutal treatment of Śūrpaṅakhā, his ignoble killing of Vālin, and his harsh rejection of Sītā –⁵⁶ Rāma is considered to epitomise the moral hero, both in the *Rām* itself and in later commentaries. Repeatedly we are told of Rāma’s exceptional virtue. In *Rām* 2.1.12ff.,⁵⁷ for instance, his moral conduct consists of the fact that ‘righteous Rāma’ (*rāmo dharmātmā*) acts for the benefit of his people, follows the instructions of teachers and elders (especially his father), behaves with self-restraint and wisdom, takes the advice of good men, and follows the descending hierarchy of *dharmā*, *artha* and *kāma*, the last of which he never indulges immoderately.⁵⁸ In *Rām* 2.16.46 we are told that Rāma’s only concern is the *dharmā*, and he is even described as ‘righteousness incarnate’ (*rāmo vigrahavān dharmāḥ*, 3.35.13). He is said to have renounced (*parityajan*) everything for the *dharmā* (*Rām* 3.47.24), including kingship (2.18.39).

Like Vessantara, therefore, Rāma sacrifices himself for a higher cause. In Vessantara’s case, kingship is sacrificed in the name of *dāna*, whereas in Rāma’s case it is sacrificed in order to preserve his father’s promise. In both stories there is a debate over whether it is right for the hero to be exiled, and both texts stress the pain that results from their heroes’ determination to fulfil their respective notions of *dharmā*. This pain is suffered not only by the hero but also by those around him. As David Shulman states (1991:89): ‘Even

⁵⁶ See Erndl 1991; Lefebvre 1994:45ff.; Shulman 1991.

⁵⁷ See also the long list of Rāma’s virtues in *Rām* 1.8ff. and 5.33.8ff.

⁵⁸ See *Rām* 2.47.8ff., in which Rāma criticises Daśaratha for putting *kāma* before *artha* and *dharmā*. The notion of the *trivarga* is not unknown to the *Jātakas*. See for example *Mahānārada-kassapa Jātaka* (544), vv.10f. For a debate over the conflicting claims of *attha* and *dhamma*, see *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533), vv.1ff.

perfection has its problems. Especially vulnerable are those unfortunates who have to live beside or in relation to some paragon.’ Shulman’s remarks refer specifically to the passages in which Rāma, out of royal duty and a desire to satisfy popular demand, twice rejects Sītā.

The previous chapter discussed how Vessantara’s absolute form of giving conflicts with ordinary social values. Vessantara’s individualist tendencies also contrast sharply with Rāma’s social orientation. For example, Vessantara’s adamant defiance in the face of public disapproval is noticeably different from Rāma’s sensitivity to popular opinion, which leads him to reject Sītā.⁵⁹ Rāma’s difference in outlook is also shown by his manner of giving. Thus, as Gombrich points out (1985:430), whereas Vessantara simply abandons his possessions and gives to any recipient, Rāma gives in a relational manner to particular individuals.⁶⁰ Rāma’s relational attitude is further reinforced by the numerous passages in which he is said to sacrifice himself for other people, in contrast to Vessantara, who usually sacrifices for its own sake. In *Rām* 2.40.27, for example, Rāma is begged to reciprocate the devotion that is shown towards him: ‘All living things, moving and unmoving, are filled with devotion for you. Show your devotion [*bhakti*] to these devotees, who are pleading with you.’⁶¹ Below are some examples of how Rāma engages in this type of devotional interaction.

In *Rām* 2.4.43f., Rāma describes Lakṣmaṇa as his ‘second self’ (*dvitīyaṃ me 'ntarātmānam*), and says that he desires kingship and life only for Lakṣmaṇa’s sake (*tvadartham*). Sītā herself states that Lakṣmaṇa is dearer to Rāma than she is (*Rām* 5.36.48). A similar devotion is also shown towards Bharata. Thus in *Rām* 2.16.33f., Rāma declares that he would give (*dadyām*) his kingship, Sītā and life to Bharata.

⁵⁹ See also *Rām* 2.47.26, in which Rāma states that he fears *adharmā* and also ‘other people’ (*paralokasya*), although this could mean ‘heaven’.

⁶⁰ Vessantara’s advice to Maddī that she should give to the virtuous (*VJ* v.66) is paralleled by Rāma’s advice to Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa (*Rām* 2.27.31, 2.28.18ff.) that they should give to worthy brahmins.

⁶¹ *bhaktimanti hi bhūtāni jaṃgamājaṃgamāni ca /
yācamāneṣu teṣu tvaṃ bhaktiṃ bhakteṣu darśaya //27//*

Several passages describe Rāma's love for Sītā. He is repeatedly said to love Sītā more than life and to be unable to live without her (*Rām* 3.35.19, 3.56.4ff., 3.59.24, 3.63.26 (Sītā is *prāṇasamā*), 5.64.10). No-one is dearer to him than her (*Rām* 5.34.29), and he would not want kingship over all the three worlds without her (3.56.5). The thought of someone touching Sītā pains him more than the loss of his kingdom or even Daśaratha's death (*Rām* 3.2.19).⁶² Sītā relieves Rāma of his grief in exile (*Rām* 2.88.3 and 15ff., 3.60.12), and Rāma is said to forget about kingship and Ayodhyā when he is in the forest with her (*Rām* 2.50.22, 2.89.17). This sentiment echoes Maddī's song in the *VJ* that Vessantara will forget kingship when he is in the forest with his family (vv.76ff.). In both stories, however, this domestic bliss is interrupted by Rāvaṇa and Jūjaka. Neither hero is allowed to adopt the peaceful 'good life' of the married hermit but must have his virtue tested to the extreme.

Perhaps Rāma's most striking example of self-sacrifice is his filial obedience to Daśaratha. This is expressed for example in *Rām* 2.16.18, in which Rāma states that he would throw himself into a fire, drink poison, or drown at Daśaratha's bidding. In *Rām* 2.16.47, Rāma says that he wants to please Daśaratha even if it means giving up his life (*prāṇān api parityajya*). This filial piety is exemplified by the fact that he willingly enters exile in order to preserve his father's promise to Kaikeyī. As Goldman observes (1980:156f.): 'Far from being unhappy at the prospect of the loss of his rightful kingdom, the prince is delighted at the unexpected opportunity to demonstrate his astonishing capacity for self denial and filial subordination.' Thus Rāma states that, above even wanting Sītā, he wishes Daśaratha to be truthful (*Rām* 2.31.32), and that what matters most is following his father's command rather than kingship (2.97.24, 2.104.18).⁶³ Indeed,

⁶² These last few citations serve to qualify Goldman's contention (1980:161f.) that Sītā is often devalued by Rāma in favour of his affection for male friends or relatives.

⁶³ In *Rām* 3.9.18, Rāma says that he would give up his life, or even Sītā or Lakṣmaṇa, rather than break a promise. In *Rām* 2.12.3 truth is said to constitute the essence of *dharma*.

Rāma defines *dharma* as submission to his parents (*Rām* 2.27.29: *eṣa dharmas tu suśroṇi pitur mātus ca vaśyatā*).⁶⁴

As we saw in the previous chapter, Vessantara's character is not entirely individualistic and does contain social qualities which are similar to those found in Rāma. For example, Vessantara feels pain at giving away his children and great emphasis is placed upon his relationship with Maddī. Moreover, he needs Maddī in order to fulfil the Bodhisatta path. When Maddī is reunited with his children, Vessantara like everyone else faints at the pathos of the scene (*J* 6.586). This notion of mass empathy is comparable with *Rām* 5.11.23ff., in which Hanumān worries that if he tells Rāma that Sītā is not found, Rāma will die, which will then lead to the deaths of Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Śatrughna, their mothers, Sugrīva, and all the monkeys!⁶⁵

However, Vessantara's absolutist approach towards renunciation is radically different from Rāma's relativist viewpoint that *dharma* consists of submission to one's parents. When Vessantara is exiled, far from being the picture of passivity represented by Rāma, he is defiant, declaring that he will carry on performing *dāna* even if it entails death (*VJ* v.60). Whereas Rāma is not responsible for his exile but is simply the victim of fate, Vessantara is the cause of his own banishment. The difference between the two heroes is symbolised by the contrasting significance underlying the motif of the earthquake. In *Rām* 2.36.17, Ayodhyā shakes like an earthquake at Rāma's departure. Similarly in the *VJ* the earth shakes whenever Vessantara makes a momentous gift. Indeed in a structurally parallel situation to the *Rām*, an earthquake occurs when Vessantara makes his gift of the seven hundreds upon his departure (*VJ* v.159). However, whereas in the *Rām* the earthquake signifies the *undesired* misfortune suffered by Ayodhyā at losing its prince, in the *VJ* it signifies the magnitude of Vessantara's *intended* act of giving, which – both awful and awe-inspiring in its extreme nature – itself constitutes the basis of his exile.

⁶⁴ Compare *Rām* 2.35.6: *eṣa loke satām dharmo yaj jyeṣṭhavaśago bhavet*.

⁶⁵ See also *Rām* 5.35.60f.

It is the active and deliberate way in which Vessantara ‘offends’ against social norms which makes it unsuitable for him to be described in terms of Smith’s category of the ‘quiescent hero’. Indeed, it is the threatening aspect to his renunciate outlook which invests him with what Dean Miller (2000:xi) has described as the ‘agonistic forcefulness’ of the epic hero. As Miller states (2000:187), ‘The destructive potentiality of the hero [...] produces typical scenarios in which every attempt at social stability, any demanded obedience to rule and order, is dissolved.’ Miller also points out (2000:185) that the hero ‘often violates [...] those rules creating and governing familial solidarity’, a quality most clearly seen in Vessantara’s gift of the children. Furthermore, Vessantara’s willingness – even desire – to sacrifice his life for *dāna*, coupled with the prevalence of death-imagery that surrounds his acts of renunciation, closely connects Vessantara with what Miller describes as ‘the implacable thrust of the hero toward death’ (2000:323).

Rāma’s quiescence on the other hand is accentuated all the more by his repeated remarks concerning the need to succumb to one’s fate.⁶⁶ For example, in *Rām* 2.98.15, Rāma states: ‘No one acts of his own free will; man is not independent. This way and that he is pulled along by fate.’⁶⁷ Although Rāma later realises that he is in fact the unwitting agent of a largely beneficent fate, and although Rāma’s suffering is ultimately seen as a type of hidden blessing,⁶⁸ Rāma’s passive attitude towards the events surrounding him stands in marked contrast to Vessantara’s ‘offensive’ outlook.⁶⁹ However, that said, the next section will discuss how Rāma’s agonistic tendencies are revealed in his martial qualities.

⁶⁶ For references to fate, see *Rām* 2.41.32, 2.53.17, 2.82.10f., 3.5.20, 3.47.27, 3.48.16, 3.49.22, 3.51.16, 3.51.21, 3.60.51, 3.62.11, 3.64.21, 3.65.28ff., 5.14.3, 5.35.4. See also Smith 1980:61ff., 1989:185ff., and Pollock 1986:35ff. Fate also plays a significant role in non-Indian epics like the *Iliad*.

⁶⁷ *nātmanah kāmākāro 'sti puruṣo 'yam anīśvaraḥ / itaś cetarataś cainaṃ kṛtāntaḥ parikarṣati //15//*

⁶⁸ For example, Rāma’s exile is necessary so that he can kill Rāvaṇa. Indeed in *Rām* 2.86.28, Bharadvāja tells Bharata that ‘the banishment of Rāma will turn out to be a great blessing’ (*rāmapravṛjanam hy etat sukhodarkam bhaviṣyati*). Similarly, in *Rām* 5.20.21, Sītā tells Rāvaṇa that she cannot be taken from Rāma and that everything has been ordained by fate (*vidhi*) for Rāvaṇa’s doom. See also *Rām* 3.50.10, in which Brahmā says *kṛtam kāryam* when Rāvaṇa kidnaps Sītā.

⁶⁹ Collins 1998:531f. however observes that the events of the *VJ* are driven by a sense of inevitability. This is highlighted when some of the characters are said to be affected by divine influence (*devatāvattanena*, *J* 6.489.22; *devatāya niggahīto hutvā*, *J* 6.493.25; *devatādhiḡgahīto*, *J* 6.574.3).

7.4.2 The renunciate hero and the martial hero

A period of exile in the forest often helps to define the Indian epic king. For example in the *Mbh* the Pāṇḍava princes, like Rāma, have to suffer life in the forest before they can reclaim their right to kingship.⁷⁰ Nor is the concept of entering an ‘other world’ limited to the Indian epic hero, but constitutes a common motif in several epic traditions, an example of which is Aeneas’ descent into the underworld.⁷¹ Indeed a sense of otherness is part and parcel of the epic hero’s identity as an extra-ordinary figure, both separate from and yet informing normal humanity. This tendency to portray the epic hero as a liminal or mediating figure explains why heroes, such as Rāma and Vessantara, are frequently depicted as kings.⁷² Thus Miller remarks (2000:178):

[Kings and heroes] clearly emerge from the same *genus*, of that “powerful” individual detached from the norms of social practice, standing “apart” from, and “above” the field of normative, cooperative social interaction.

This liminal quality is accentuated even further in the case of the ascetic, who has renounced ordinary conventions. Vessantara and Rāma incorporate characteristics from both the royal and ascetic models. However in Vessantara’s case the renunciate aspect is so pronounced that it becomes the defining trait of his heroic nature, which, in true heroic fashion, transgresses ordinary humanity both in the literal sense that it ‘goes beyond’ it and in the extended sense that it ‘offends’ against it.

Rāma’s exile in the forest is not the only sense in which he is endowed with renunciate traits. We saw above how Rāma is often depicted as sacrificing himself for others. Other renunciate characteristics are seen in his reputation for controlling his anger. Thus in *Rām*

⁷⁰ See however Pollock 1986:70, n.10, who points out that the ascetic aspect of these exiles can be overdetermined since the Pāṇḍavas, like Nala and Triśaṅku, do not undergo any ascetic practice.

⁷¹ See Miller 2000:152ff.

⁷² Miller states (2000:148): ‘The place of the hero on the border is thus almost a cliché: liminality is all but a given.’ For further discussions on liminality, see Miller 2000:296ff.

2.7.7 he is described as ‘one who has mastered his anger’ (*jitakrodham*). Similarly, in *Rām* 2.36.3 he is said to never grow angry, whatever the insult. The ideal of a king untouched by anger is also a common theme in the *Jātakas* and is one of the ten *rājadharmas*,⁷³ a fact which, incidentally, qualifies Pollock’s contention (1986:19) that the *Rām* ‘constitutes the first literary attempt in India to “moralize” the exercise of political power’.

Although Rāma occasionally betrays signs of emotion, such as his grief at Daśaratha’s death and at Sītā’s abduction,⁷⁴ he is generally remarkable for his self-restraint.⁷⁵ This is exemplified by *Rām* 2.16.59ff, in which Rāma’s concern for society and his tendency to sacrifice himself for others is again stressed:

[59] Though he was on the point of leaving his native land and going to the forest, he was no more discomposed than one who has passed beyond all things of this world. [60] Holding back his sorrow within his mind, keeping his every sense in check, and fully self-possessed he made his way to his mother’s residence to tell her the sad news [of his exile]. [61] As Rāma entered her residence, where joy still reigned supreme, as he reflected on the sudden wreck of all his fortunes, even then he showed no sign of discomposure, for fear it might endanger the lives of those he loved.⁷⁶

Rāma’s self-restraint is also shown in his emphasis on non-violence. He explicitly rejects the *kṣatriya* code of self-interest and violence (*Rām* 2.18.36, 2.101.20), a sentiment also propounded by *jātaka* stories such as the *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528, *J* 5.240). *Kṣatriyadharmā* is instead transformed into *rājadharmā*, a new code of kingship based on ethics usually associated with the Brahmanical sphere.⁷⁷ Thus Pollock remarks (1986:70):

⁷³ See Collins 460f. for the *rājadharmas* and 448ff. for various notions in Buddhist texts of the ‘Good King’. Regarding such concepts, I agree with Collins that ‘it is more sensible to speak of shared South Asian (in some cases, simply, human) values and value conflicts, than to draw contrasts between essentialized entities such as “Buddhism” and “Hinduism”’.

⁷⁴ See also *Rām* 2.16.7 and 2.23.6f.

⁷⁵ See Goldman 1984:54f.

⁷⁶ *na vanam gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasumdharam / sarvalokātīgasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā //59// dhārayan manasā duḥkham indriyāni niḡrḥya ca / praviveśātmavān veśma māturapriyaśamsivān //60// praviśya veśmātibhr̥ṣaṃ mudānvitam samikṣya tām cārthavipattim āgatām / na caiva rāmo 'tra jagāma vikriyāṃ suhr̥jjanasyātmavipattiśaṅkayā //61//*

⁷⁷ For a lengthy passage on *rājadharmā* see *Rām* 2.94.

‘[Rāma’s code] is made to intersect and so absorb brahmanical *dharma* and its legitimizing ethics, non-violence, and spirituality. In this way the kshatriya becomes self-legitimizing, and the “full potential” of kingship as an integrating power can at last be activated. The political and spiritual spheres may now converge in a single locus: the king.’

This tendency towards non-violence is most startlingly expressed when Rāma refuses to engage in dynastic internecine strife, despite the fact that he is wrongfully disinherited.⁷⁸ Although there are constant allusions to the possibility of such a dynastic struggle,⁷⁹ this eventuality is always avoided. As Goldman points out (1984:50), Rāma’s refusal to fight his family is in marked contrast to the *Mbh*, in which ‘the central narrative of the epic depends upon the Pāṇḍavas’ insistence on asserting their rights, even where this involves armed confrontation with their brahman preceptor and the patriarchs of their clan’. Rāma’s remarkable divergence from the standard kshatriyan ideology is for example conveyed when Bharata arrives at Citrakūṭa with his army. Lakṣmaṇa immediately assumes that Bharata’s intentions are aggressive, but Rāma disagrees and prescribes that one should never kill a brother (*Rām* 2.91.6). Indeed, far from enmity, it is instead mutual devotion which characterises Rāma’s relationship with Bharata.⁸⁰ Goldman’s comments are again instructive (1984:53): ‘Rāma’s unwavering deference to Daśaratha and his reluctant successor Bharata is matched only by the latter’s deference to Rāma himself. Thus the confrontation at Citrakūṭa is the very opposite of what is represented as having taken place at Kurukṣetra. Here it is a contest of self-denial, a virtual battle of mutual deference, with the two princes each urging the other to accept the throne.’

Vessantara shows a similar opposition to violence (except, that is, self-violence).

Echoing Rāma’s aversion to dynastic strife, Vessantara refuses to become king of the

⁷⁸ See Goldman 1984:49ff. and Pollock 1986:13ff. on this issue.

⁷⁹ See *Rām* 2.2.16f., 2.4.25ff., 2.18.2ff. (Lakṣmaṇa suggests usurpation); 2.31.23 (Daśaratha asks Rāma to depose him); 2.78.4f., 2.79.7 (Guha worries about Bharata’s intentions against Rāma); 2.90.10ff. (Lakṣmaṇa thinks Bharata is attacking Rāma); 3.43.20ff. (Sītā accuses Lakṣmaṇa of treachery).

⁸⁰ See Pollock (1986:16): ‘For civilized society the poet inculcates, by positive precept and negative example, and with a sometimes numbing insistence, a powerful new code of conduct: hierarchically ordered, unqualified submission.’

Cetas because he worries it will cause conflict with the Sivis (*VJ* vv.247ff.).⁸¹ Indeed, far from feeling a warrior's lust for war, Vessantara's first reaction is fear when he hears Sañjaya enter the forest with his army; moreover, it takes Maddī to calm him down (*VJ* vv.715ff.).⁸² Vessantara is therefore hardly a martial hero – although he does, as discussed above, contain certain agonistic qualities. However, in contrast to Vessantara, Rāma is not always non-violent. While Rāma is an epitome of quiescence when it concerns Ayodhyā, he is martial and violent when his attention is 'directed outward' (Goldman 1984:53) to the demonic sphere governed by Rāvaṇa.⁸³ Whereas Vessantara's agonistic tendencies are revealed in his extreme acts of renunciation, Rāma's are revealed in his battle with demons.

When confronted by demons, Rāma suddenly gives way to the anger he was previously so eager to suppress. For example, in *Rām* 3.23.25 he fills himself with a violent rage (*krodham āhārayat tīvraṃ*) in order to kill *rākṣasas*. Similarly in *Rām* 3.29.20 he kills Khara in a fury (*roṣāt*), which is defended by some commentarial literature as being mere acting on Rāma's part.⁸⁴ In his new destructive role Rāma becomes compared with Śiva,⁸⁵ and his anger at Sītā's abduction is such that he even threatens to destroy the gods and the whole universe (*Rām* 3.60.39ff.). Rāma's martial exploits are often coloured by black humour, such as in *Rām* 3.25.13, in which Rāma is said to receive

⁸¹ 'The Sivis, both army and townsfolk, would be displeased if the Cetans were to anoint me as king, since I have been banished from that kingdom. There would be great dissension between you because of me, and strife with the Sivis. And I do not like war. There would be terrible strife and great conflict. Because of me, one man, many people would be hurt.'

*atuṭṭhā Sivayo assu balatthā negamā ca ye /
pabbājitassa raṭṭhasmā, Cetā rajje 'bhisecayum //247//
asammodiyam pi vo assa accantaṃ mama kāraṇā /
Sivīnaṃ bhaṇḍanañ cāpi, viggaho me na ruccati //248//
ath' assa bhaṇḍanaṃ ghoram sampahāro anappako /
ekassa kāraṇā mayham himseyya bahuko jano //249//*

I follow Cone and Gombrich (1977:105) and the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* in reading 'bhisecayum rather than the PTS *hi secayum* in v.247 and *himseyya bahuko jano* rather than the PTS *himseyyum bahuke jane* in v.249.

⁸² Cf. the parallel scene in *Rām* 2.90f., in which Lakṣmaṇa sees Bharata's army, assumes its intents are aggressive, and gears himself up for war. Here it is Rāma who calms Lakṣmaṇa.

⁸³ See Pollock 1986:14: 'For Vālmiki, violence becomes, quite literally, the strategy of the inhuman.'

⁸⁴ See Pollock (1986:289). See also his notes on *Rām* 3.29.12 for a commentarial attempt at reinterpreting Rāma's wrath.

⁸⁵ *Rām* 3.23.27, 3.29.27, 3.61.2. See also Pollock 1986:65f.

demons with his arrows as if they were guests (*samprāptān atithīn iva*). Similarly in *Rām* 3.29.1ff., Rāma smiles (*smayamānaḥ*) as he stands over the defeated demon Khara and boasts that, after his throat has been slit, Khara ‘will sleep embracing the earth, as if she were some hard-won woman’ (*svapsyase gāṃ samāśliṣya durlabhāṃ pramadām iva*, *Rām* 3.29.7). Rāma also uses viciously caustic humour in his harsh treatment of Śūrpaṅkhā (*Rām* 3.16ff.).

Sītā proves herself to be a suitable companion for this violent side to Rāma’s character. She frequently tends towards anger (*Rām* 2.24.1, 2.26.21f.) and her vicious criticisms of Lakṣmaṇa in *Rām* 3.43 are at least partly responsible for her abduction by Rāvaṇa. In *Rām* 5.49.35, Hanumān warns Rāvaṇa that his city will be crushed by Rāma’s wrath (*kopa*) and burnt by Sītā’s power (*tejas*),⁸⁶ and Sītā repeatedly fantasises about Rāma’s imminent slaughter of Laṅkā (e.g. 5.24.21ff., 5.34.12, 5.54.10). Similarly, in *Rām* 5.25.28ff., Sītā’s destructive power is highlighted when demonesses state that they can only survive death if they propitiate her.

This violence is sanctioned by the *Rām* in various ways. Most obviously, it is glossed as a method of protection. Thus in *Rām* 3.8.2ff. Sītā tells Rāma that he should only be violent if provoked and to protect those in distress. Rāma agrees with this advice (*Rām* 3.9.2ff.) and, in 3.28.10, justifies his killing as a necessary response to evil. Similarly in *Rām* 5.32.29 he is said to ‘strike at those who deserve anger’ (*sthānakrodhahartā*). Religious authority is sometimes invoked to justify Rāma’s violence, as in *Rām* 3.25.20 when slaughtered demons are compared to *kuśa* grass on an altar. A similar form of authorisation is provided by the comparisons between Rāma’s battles and the gods’ conquests over the *asuras* (e.g. *Rām* 3.11.32, 3.59.22).

The uneasy balance between Rāma’s renunciate and martial attributes is shown by his lifestyle in the forest. On the one hand he possesses standard ascetic qualities. Thus in

⁸⁶ See also *Rām* 5.20.20.

Rām 2.60.8 he is described as ‘dead in life’ (*jīvanāśam*). Similarly in *Rām* 2.16.59 he is said to be no more discomposed at the prospect of entering the forest than ‘one who has passed beyond all things of the world’ (*sarvalokātigasyeva*). He is said to have given up (*tyaktvā*) his kingship (*Rām* 2.82.16), and in 2.17.15 he undertakes to live in the forest, subsisting on honey, fruit and roots, ‘giving up meat like a sage’ (*hitvā munivad āmisaṃ*).⁸⁷ Likewise in *Rām* 2.33.2 Rāma refers to himself as *tyaktabhojasya* and *tyaktasaṅgasya*. Elsewhere he is described as a sacred fire (*Rām* 2.73.11, 2.96.29).

On the other hand Rāma’s ascetic status is continuously rendered ambiguous by his martial tendencies.⁸⁸ Thus in *Rām* 2.48.8f. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa enter Bharadvāja’s hermitage carrying bows as well as wearing barkcloth and matted hair.⁸⁹ As they enter the hermitage they frighten the deer. Similarly in *Rām* 2.93.17ff., Rāma’s hut is said to resemble a sacred altar and yet has bows, arrows and swords hanging from it. Jaṭāyus hints at this ambiguity when he tells Rāvaṇa (*Rām* 3.48.23): ‘Rāma, who has often killed *daityas* and *dānavas* in battle, this man clad in barkcloth, shall soon slay you in combat.’⁹⁰ Similarly, although Rāma is meant to abstain from eating meat, there are several passages in which he hunts wild animals. Most famously Rāma hunts the beautiful deer which is actually Mārīca in disguise (*Rām* 3.41f.). Rāma tries to justify his actions by arguing that, if the deer is Mārīca, then it is his duty to slay him (*Rām* 3.41.36).⁹¹ However this is undermined by the fact that, directly after he kills Mārīca, he goes on to kill another deer before returning to the hermitage (*Rām* 3.42.21). Similarly, in *Rām* 2.46.79, soon after they have donned their ascetic garb, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa kill four animals.⁹² The contradiction underlying Rāma’s asceticism is also alluded to by Śūrpaṅkhā, who comically says that Rāma looks like the god of love (*kandarpa*) though dressed in bark (*Rām* 3.32.5) and points out that Rāma wears matted hair and yet also has a wife and

⁸⁷ See also *Rām* 5.3.39, in which Rāma is said to consume no meat or wine.

⁸⁸ On this issue, see Pollock 1986:70, especially n.11.

⁸⁹ See Pollock’s notes on this verse (1986:414), as well as his notes (1986:409f.) on *Rām* 2.46.58.

⁹⁰ *asakṛt saṃyuge yena nihatā daiṭyadānavāḥ /
nacirāc cīravāsās tvām rāmo yudhi vadhiṣyati //23//*

⁹¹ See also *Rām* 3.41.29ff. for other justifications.

⁹² See also *Rām* 2.49.14 and 2.50.15f.

weapons (*Rām* 3.16.11). Similarly the demon Virādha accuses Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa of being ‘evil men impersonating sages’ (*pāpau* [...] *munidūṣakau*, *Rām* 3.2.12), since they wear ascetic clothes and yet seem to share a wife.

Rāma’s ambiguous status as a royal renunciate (*rājarsi*, e.g. *Rām* 5.24.40) is resolved to some extent by his role as protector of ascetics. For example, in *Rām* 3.1.17ff., ascetics ask Rāma to protect them, since he is their king and they his children. In *Rām* 3.5.13, we are even told: ‘A king who protects his subjects as he rightly should acquires a fourth part of the supreme righteousness amassed by a sage who lives on nothing but roots and fruit.’⁹³ This interactive relationship between ascetics and kings is further accentuated by the fact that Rāma receives a bow from the ascetic Agastya (*Rām* 3.11).⁹⁴

Vessantara, himself a royal sage (*rājisi*, *VJ* v.639), is also not fully at ease with asceticism. As we saw in Chapter 6 (pp.242f., 249), he repeatedly speaks of his displeasure at being in the forest and immediately accepts his father’s offer to become king. Moreover, as mentioned above, Vessantara possesses several social characteristics which preclude him from being seen purely as a renunciate figure. Indeed this ambiguity is suited to the liminal role of the epic hero: Vessantara is king and yet ascetic, husband and yet celibate, human and yet mediator with the gods, father and yet willing to sacrifice his children. However, the significance of Vessantara’s ambiguous ascetic status differs from Rāma’s. Whereas for Vessantara the tension is between social and ascetic values, for Rāma it is between martial and ascetic values. Rāma’s social concerns are never in doubt and Vessantara is situated further along the renunciate scale than Rāma. This contrast is seen in their foils. Whereas Rāma’s foil is an impetuous king, Vessantara’s is a dissolute brahmin. Both heroes return home to become kings and inaugurate a golden age of social

⁹³ *yat karoti param dharmam munir mūlaphalāśanaḥ /
tatra rājñās caturbhāgaḥ prajā dharmeṇa rakṣataḥ* //13//

⁹⁴ Sītā also makes an ambiguous renunciate. On the one hand, she is said to be living like an ascetic (*Rām* 5.13.21 *tapasvinīm*, 5.13.29 *niyatām iva tāpasīm*). On the other hand, she desires to touch Rāma with her limbs (*Rām* 5.38.3), and insists that Rāma attains her through battle (*Rām* 5.37.28, 5.66.12ff.). In *Rām* 5.24.47f., she praises ascetics who have self-control, the meaning being that she herself is deficient in this respect.

harmony and fertility. However, whereas Rāma returns as a triumphant warrior, Vessantara returns as one who has fulfilled the perfection of giving. Indeed, in the *VJ*, kingship and society have themselves become defined around renunciation and giving.

As a final note on the similarities and contrasts between Rāma and Vessantara, it is noteworthy that Vessantara's foil is utterly bereft of any heroic qualities. Jūjaka's immoral and comically sordid character cannot but cast a good light on Vessantara, despite the problematic nature of the latter's acts of giving. This deprecating portrayal of Jūjaka contrasts sharply with the common epic tendency to portray a hero's opponent as also heroic. As Miller states (2000:222f.): 'The hero fights his own – even himself, in a sense. The hero's opponent may wear or declare some *differentia* identified with the Other, or even of evil, but usually he is simply the hero's mirror image.' Examples of this are provided by Akhilles and Hector or Aeneas and Turnus. Similarly, it has often been noticed that in the *Mbh* the 'villains' of the story possess several heroic aspects and the 'heroes' are often as villainous as the 'villains'.⁹⁵ On the divine level, this is mirrored by the interchangeable characteristics often possessed by gods and demons in Vedic and post-Vedic literature, who fight over the acquisition of power. In contrast to this amoral power struggle, Buddhist texts usually portray the gods' victory over the demons as based on ethical superiority (§2.4.1).

A further difference between the *VJ* and the *Mbh* lies in their endings. Whereas the *Mbh* concludes with the disastrous destruction of 'villains' and 'heroes' alike, the *VJ* ends with the idealistic image of a prosperous kingdom. Although this resolution is itself shot through with a sense of the cost of renunciation, and although, as Collins observes (1998:501), it is a utopian image embracing several tensions and even contradictions, the *VJ*'s ending is nevertheless remarkably different from the *Mbh*. As Miller comments (2000:323), 'The "happily ever after" of the fantasy folklore is decidedly the exception and not the rule [of the epic genre].'

⁹⁵ See for example Smith 1980:66f.

The *Rām* appears to lie somewhere in between these viewpoints. Thus Rāvaṇa is similar to Jūjaka in that his demonic nature, which he himself cites as an excuse for his actions (*Rām* 5.18), contrasts with Rāma's virtue. In terms of kingship, Rāvaṇa represents the 'bad king', who seeks only self-gratification and leads his kingdom to destruction. However, Rāvaṇa still possesses certain heroic features which are not found in Jūjaka. For example, he is often compared with Indra,⁹⁶ and Hanumān himself expresses wonder at Rāvaṇa's glorious demeanour (*Rām* 5.47.15ff.). Rāvaṇa is also admired for his martial prowess, despite aspects of cowardice. Moreover, his power initially derives from a special relationship with the gods. Rāma also is not without his villainous side, as is shown by his killing of Vālin and his treatment of Śūrpaṇakhā (although Vessantara's actions too are not without their moral ambiguities). Indeed this even leads Smith to say (1980:67): 'There is no implicit compulsion upon the Pāṇḍavas or upon Rāma to act virtuously: their job is the battle.' Finally, although the *Rām* concludes like the *VJ* with the arrival of a utopian society, its ending is still marred by Sītā's tragic disappearance into the earth.

7.4.3 The hero as refuge

As we saw in the previous chapter, Vessantara is often described as a source of refuge and fertility, qualities which derive from his status as a renunciate king. A similar emphasis is placed on Rāma's kingship. Thus, in *Rām* 2.61.7ff. we are told that a kingless kingdom is doomed to destruction, and that a king is essential for grain, family respect, wealth, marriage, sacred rites, festivals, asceticism and every aspect of general welfare.⁹⁷ Desiring the world's prosperity and compassionate to all creatures (*Rām* 2.1.31, *vr̥ddhikāmo hi*

⁹⁶ See *Rām* 3.30.4, 5.16.10, 5.47.13. In *Rām* 3.46.10 Laṅkā is likened to Amarāvati, and in 5.16.2 *rākṣasa* brahmins recite the *Vedas* in Laṅkā.

⁹⁷ See *Rām* 2.61.7ff., 3.39.10, 3.48.8f. for passages describing how a king is responsible for his kingdom's moral and religious practices.

lokasya sarvabhūtānukampanaḥ), Rāma is said to protect the earth (2.3.28) and to be a refuge to every being (3.61.10: *sadā tvaṃ sarvabhūtānām śaranyāḥ paramā gatih*). He is often described as acting like a father to his people,⁹⁸ and the people of Ayodhyā in turn treat him as their son.⁹⁹ Like Vessantara (*VJ* vv.140ff.), Rāma is compared with a fertile tree, (*Rām* 2.30.14, 2.98.8ff.), a notion that is linked to the common *jātaka* simile of kings protecting their kingdom like a tree with its shade.¹⁰⁰

In both the *Rām* and the *Jātakas*, a king's virtue is considered to influence the rainfall.¹⁰¹ Thus Rāma is compared with rain or a rain-cloud (*Rām* 2.1.31, 2.61.8, 2.3.13; also 2.28.3 of Daśaratha). Likewise in the *VJ*, when the family is reunited and Vessantara returns to his kingdom, Sakka sends showers of rain and jewels (*J* 6.586, 593). However, whereas Vessantara's fertility is derived primarily from his acts of renunciation, Rāma's lies in his role as a socially virtuous king. It is also interesting to note that, according to Miller, Greek heroes often play a similar role of fertility. Thus Miller states (2000:5): 'In the mediating mode he [the hero], even anonymously, acts from within his postmortem place (the *heroôn*) to fertilize and protect society.'

The devotion shown towards Vessantara in the *VJ* is paralleled to an even greater extent by that shown towards Rāma. In the *Rām*, as in the *Jātakas*, this devotion is often expressed in the language of renunciation (often the verb (*pari-*) *ṛtyaj*) and, in particular, the giving up of one's life. Such forms of relational sacrifice are, for example, seen in Daśaratha's love for Rāma, who in many ways parallels Sañjaya as the weak king tormented by his son's exile (although Sañjaya is not as responsible as Daśaratha for his son's exile). Thus Daśaratha says that he wants to renounce (*parityajya*) his kingdom and wealth and join Rāma in the forest (*Rām* 2.32.22), and that he would rather renounce (*tyajeyam*) Kausalyā, Sumitrā, his kingship or life, than Rāma (2.10.37). Repeatedly we

⁹⁸ See *Rām* 2.2.35ff., 2.40.5, 2.51.12.

⁹⁹ See *Rām* 2.42.26, 2.46.31f., 2.53.13. Compare this sentiment with *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528), vv.45ff.

¹⁰⁰ For example, *Temiya Jātaka* (538), vv.10f.

¹⁰¹ See Collins 1998:464ff.

are told that he will die if he is without Rāma,¹⁰² and ultimately he dies of a broken heart with Rāma's name on his lips (*Rām* 2.58.56). Kausalyā, like Phusatī in the *VJ*, similarly declares that she cannot live without Rāma (*Rām* 2.38.18, 2.54.2f.).¹⁰³ In the *Rām*, as in the *VJ*, citizens lament their king's exile, and in *Rām* 2.41.17f., we are told that the people of Ayodhyā would rather give up their lives than not follow Rāma into exile. After Rāma's departure the city is said to be in chaos (*Rām* 2.36.9ff., 2.51.11).

Of the four brothers, Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa are the most densely characterised and their devotion to Rāma (and Sītā) is thus more pronounced. However, Sumantra's love for Rāma is also expressed for example in *Rām* 2.46.50, where it is described as the 'ultimate devotion' (*paramā bhakti*) and Sumantra is said to treat Rāma as his 'master' (*bhartṛ*). Similarly, Śatrughna is said to be mad with grief at Rāma's exile (*Rām* 2.71.12) and declares that without Daśaratha or Rāma he will enter fire or become an ascetic (2.71.17f.). In the *VJ*, Phusatī similarly states (v.100) that she will take poison, hang herself or jump off a cliff as a result of Vessantara's exile.

Both Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa express extreme devotion to Rāma. Bharata sees Rāma as his refuge (*gati*, *Rām* 2.66.27) and as the further shore of the ocean (2.92.14). He wants to give up (*tyaktuṃ*) his kingship to Rāma (*Rām* 2.79.12, 2.76.10ff) and even wishes to take over Rāma's misfortune and become an ascetic 'on his behalf' (*tasyārthaṃ*, 2.82.24ff.).¹⁰⁴ Similarly we saw in the previous chapter that, in the *Yasodharā Apadāna*, Yasodharā (Maddī's future rebirth) performs austerities for the sake of the Buddha ('for your benefit', *tuyh' atthāya*). Even when Rāma refuses to return home, Bharata decides to wait for Rāma's return wearing bark and matted hair (*Rām* 2.107). In *Rām* 3.15.25 we are told that Bharata practises mortification out of *bhakti* for Rāma, and in 3.15.31 that Bharata will

¹⁰² *Rām* 2.10.39, 2.53.19, 2.53.21f.

¹⁰³ Compare Kausalyā's words in *Rām* 2.21.6: 'I must follow you, son, wherever you go' (*aham tvānugamiṣyāmi yatra putra gamiṣyasi //*) with Maddī's words in *VJ* v.71: 'Where you go, sir, I go also' (*aham pi tena gacchāmi yena gacchasi khattiya //*). See also Kausalyā's verses on the austerities she has undergone in rearing Rāma (*Rām* 2.17.27, 31) and *VJ* v.757, in which Maddī describes the sacrifice she has made for her children.

¹⁰⁴ Likewise in *Rām* 5.38.4, we are told that Sītā endures hardship for Rāma's sake (*tvatkr̥te*).

win a place in heaven by emulating Rāma's asceticism. Like Maddī, Bharata thus views asceticism entirely in relational terms. The very meaning of his renunciation lies in his self-sacrifice to Rāma.

Lakṣmaṇa similarly views Rāma as his refuge (*gati*, *Rām* 2.35.6) and says that he cannot live without him (2.47.31). He is said to have given up (*tyaktvā*) everything to follow Rāma into the forest and treats Rāma and Sītā like a father and mother (*Rām* 5.36.43ff.). In *Rām* 2.18.4, he declares that if Rāma were to enter the forest or a fire, he would enter it first. His subordination to Rāma is often stressed. Thus in *Rām* 2.81.18ff., Lakṣmaṇa drinks the remnant of Rāma's water and washes his feet. In *Rām* 2.54.6 we are told that Lakṣmaṇa is achieving heaven (*paraloka*) by serving Rāma's feet, as well as by being self-restrained (*jītenḍriyaḥ*) and virtuous (*dharmajñāḥ*).

This emphasis on service can extend to the use of slave imagery (*dāsa*), a metaphor associated with the concept of *bhakti*.¹⁰⁵ As shown previously, such slave imagery is also used in the *Jātakas* in similar devotional contexts. However, although devotional sentiments are expressed in the *Jātakas*, they are developed to a more extreme level in the *Rām*. A striking example of this is found in *Rām* 3.3 and 3.66f., in which two demons are freed from their curses when they are slain by Rāma. Similar devotional concepts are expressed in *Rām* 3.70, in which Śabarī tells Rāma that the ascetics she served reached heaven on the very day that Rāma arrived in Citrakūṭa, and that she herself will join them after she has entertained him as a guest. After asking for Rāma's consent, Śabarī reaches heaven by entering a fire. Likewise in *Rām* 3.5, the ascetic Śarabhaṅga only enters the Brahmā heaven after he has seen Rāma, whereupon he sacrifices himself on a fire. As Pollock argues (1991:50), these passages appear to indicate an association between Rāma's kingship and divinity.¹⁰⁶ He states (*ibid.*): 'The divine king is a spiritual redeemer [...], who not as an intercessor with the gods but directly secures the spiritual welfare of

¹⁰⁵ See *Rām* 2.66.26, 2.97.8 and 12f., 3.17.9.

¹⁰⁶ See Pollock 1991:15ff. for a detailed discussion of the concept of the divine king in the *Rām*.

his people.’ In the *Jātakas*, the ideology of the divine king is not expressed to the same degree. Although the worship shown towards kings such as Vessantara can reach devotional heights, it does not extend to the type of ‘spiritual emancipation’ (Pollock *ibid.*) suggested by the above passages.

7.4.4 The devoted heroine

It is Sītā who especially exemplifies the theme of devotional love towards Rāma. As mentioned above, Maddī explicitly compares herself with Sītā (v.541), and there are several important similarities between the two heroines. In Chapter 6 (p.227), we saw how Maddī’s expression of love for Vessantara is described in the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* as a form of *bhatti* (Sanskrit: *bhakti*). Likewise Sītā’s love for Rāma is often described as *bhakti* (e.g. *Rām* 5.35.62, 5.57.15, 5.63.17; in 2.26.18 Sītā is *bhaktā*). Both heroines also assert that they will die without their husbands.¹⁰⁷ Some of these passages suggest verbal resonances.

For example, *Rām* 2.27.17, 19:

‘To be with you is heaven, to be without you hell. [...] Afterwards I could not live anyway, my lord, for the sorrow of being deserted by you. Better to die that very instant.’

yas tvayā saha sa svargo nirayo yas tvayā vinā / [...] //17//
paścād api hi duḥkhena mama naivāsti jīvitam /
ujjhitāyās tvayā nātha tadaiva maraṇaṃ varam //19//

Rām 5.24.43:

‘It would be better for me to die than to live without the great hero Rāma, tireless in his actions, destroyer of his foes.’

śreyo me jīvitān martuṃ vihīnā yā mahātmanā /
rāmād akliṣṭacāritrāc chūrāc chatrunibarhaṇāt //43//

¹⁰⁷ *VJ* vv.72f.; *Rām* 2.24.18, 2.26.19, 2.27.18f., 2.54.11, 3.43.24 (she will give up (*tyakṣe*) her life for Rāma), 3.51.8, 5.23.19, 5.24.8, 5.24.43, 5.24.49, 5.26.15ff. 5.38.10.

Compare *VJ* vv.72f.:

‘If the choice is death with you or life without you, such a death is better than living without you. It is better to die on a flaming fire, one blazing mass, than to live without you.’

marañam vā tayā saddhiṃ jīvitam vā tayā vinā /
tad eva marañam seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //72//
aggim ujǵalayitvāna ekajālasamāhitam /
tattha me marañam seyyo yañ ce jīve tayā vinā //73//

Maddī’s vision of entering fire for her husband’s sake is of course realised by Sītā in her fire-ordeal, and earlier in the *Rām* (2.26.19) Sītā also threatens to kill herself by various means including fire. Both Maddī and Sītā envisage a blissful existence in the forest so long as they are with their husbands,¹⁰⁸ and both insist that they will not be a burden (*VJ* v.75: *na te hessāmi dubbharā*; *Rām* 26.26: *na bhaviṣyāmi dubbharā*).¹⁰⁹ Both also declare that they will follow their husbands whatever the situation.¹¹⁰ Compare *Rām* 2.34.21: ‘He [Rāma] is your [Sītā’s] deity, whether rich or poor’ (*tava daivatam astv eṣa nirdhanaḥ sadhano ’pi vā*), and *VJ* v.192: ‘That woman is honoured who shares the poverty of her husband as well as his riches’ (*yā daliddī daliddassa aḍḍhā aḍḍhassa kittimā*).¹¹¹

According to Gombrich (1985:436), Vessantara’s statement (v.168) that Maddī should herself choose whether she accompanies him into the forest stands in marked contrast with Rāma’s comment that Sītā should follow the duties of her station and remain with his family (*Rām* 2.25.2). This, he contends, is symptomatic of the ‘Hindu’ relativistic notion

¹⁰⁸ *VJ* vv.76ff., 182f., 193ff. *Rām* 2.24.4ff., 2.27.9ff., 2.54.7ff. 2.82.15. This sentiment is summed up by Sītā in *Rām* 2.27.9: ‘Let it be austerities, or the wilderness, or heaven, but let it be with you.’ *tapo vā yadi vāraṇyam svargo vā syāt saha tvayā //*

¹⁰⁹ Gombrich 1985:429.

¹¹⁰ For passages in the *Rām* emphasising the importance of serving one’s husband, see *Rām* 2.21.9, 2.21.17, 2.24.2ff., 2.55.18, 2.109.22-2.110.12, 5.22.7. See also *Rām* 2.110.9, which states that a woman need perform no other *tapas* than obeying her husband.

¹¹¹ See also *Sambulā Jātaka* (519), vv.31ff. on how it is better to be poor and loved than rich and unloved.

of *svadharmā* conflicting against the Buddhist universalistic concept of *dhamma*.¹¹² However, while I agree that the notion of *svadharmā* is stressed and formalised to a greater degree in ‘Hinduism’ than it is in Buddhism, there are still aspects of svadharmic thought expressed in Maddī’s attitudes towards Vessantara. Maddī, like Sītā, embodies the ideal of the devoted wife and sees herself as defined through her husband. She states that ‘a husband gives meaning to a woman’ (v.191, *bhattā paññāṇaṃ itthiyā*); compare *Rām* 2.55.18: ‘A woman’s first recourse is her husband’ (*gatir ekā patir nāryā*). Indeed it is precisely this relational framework which informs her acts of self-sacrifice. Moreover, that the *Jātakas* contain themes associated with *svadharmā* has been pointed out by Collins (1998:414ff.), who shows how several stories depict the conflicting demands of relativist and universalist modes of morality, particularly in regard to kingship and its use of violence. He remarks (1998:466f.):

It is certainly true that many Brahmanical texts espouse the relativist morality of *svadharmā*, against which one can set Buddhist universalism. [...] But in some cases, of which kingship is one, to oppose a “Hinduism” to a “Buddhism” in this way is to occlude important aspects of the matter, in relation both to the internal complexity of the two traditions and to what similarities and contrasts there are between them.

Collins also goes on to point out that the tension found in many Pāli texts between a king’s duty to punish wrongdoers on the one hand and his subscription to non-violence on the other is also visible ‘in the dilemmas of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*’ (*ibid.*).¹¹³

¹¹² Gombrich also argues (1985:429) that Vessantara’s advice (v.68) that Maddī should look for a new husband reveals different social mores from the *Rām*, in which no such possibility is entertained. This may be true, although, as Gombrich notes (*ibid.*), it is relevant that Rāma’s exile is temporary whereas Vessantara’s is permanent. However, it should be pointed out that the issue of remarriage was debated in Brahmanical thought and that treatises such as the *Arthaśāstra* (3.4.37ff.) allow women to remarry if their husband becomes a renunciate or is absent for a long time. See Olivelle 1993:207.

On the Buddhist side, see also *A* 4.214, in which Ugga of Hatthigāma states that, when he undertook the five precepts, he told his wives that they could enjoy his property, return home to their families, or marry another man of their choice. One of his wives asks to remarry and Ugga willingly gives her away. Like Vessantara, Ugga is said to give away (*pariccajanto*) his wife unflinchingly. I am grateful to William Pruitt for this reference.

¹¹³ Collins refers to Pollock 1986:64ff.

Sītā and Rāma are frequently said to fix their thoughts on one another,¹¹⁴ and their unity is often emphasised. Thus, *Rām* 5.19.4 states that Sītā is no different from Rāma (*ananyā rāghaveṇa*), just as radiance is inseparable from the sun. Their companionship is paralleled by Maddī and Vessantara, who are said to be ‘alike in heart and thoughts’ (*samānamanacetasā*, *VJ* v.637). However, in both the *Rām* and *VJ*, the theme of separation-in-love is also prominent; indeed epic heroes – for example Odysseus, Nala, or Aeneas – are often separated from their lovers.¹¹⁵ In the *Rām*, the very origin of poetry (*kāvya*) is said to have originated from the grief felt by Vālmīki when he sees a hunter killing a male *cakravāka* bird while it is making love with its mate (*Rām* 1.2). Sītā herself is compared with a female *cakravāka* bird separated from its lover (*Rām* 5.14.30), and her separation from Rāma is essential for him to conquer Rāvaṇa and prove his virtue. Even after Rāma returns to his kingdom, he rejects Sītā twice and the second time Sītā disappears into the earth to be reunited with Rāma only in heaven.

However, in the *VJ* separation is itself the teleological aim of the story. Vessantara cannot become the Buddha unless he fulfils the perfection of giving. Moreover, Maddī’s love for Vessantara reaches its peak when she consents to be separated from him. It is only then that reunion can occur. Both Maddī and Sītā are defined by their devotional love for their husbands, but the *VJ* takes this theme a step further: as a devoted wife, Maddī lets herself be renounced by her husband. This conceptual shift is conveyed by the different attitudes expressed by Sītā in *Rām* 2.27.8 and Maddī in *VJ* v.629. When Rāma urges Sītā to stay in Ayodhyā, she refuses, saying:

Like a procurer, Rāma, you are willing of your own accord to hand me over to others – your wife, who came to you as a virgin [*kaumārī*] and who has been a good woman all the long while she has lived with you.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ See *Rām* 5.13.50, 5.14.25, 5.32.25, 5.34.40, 5.57.8ff., 5.63.14.

¹¹⁵ See Tattelman1996:II, vñ. In fact, the *Aeneid* shares several similarities with the *VJ*. Like Vessantara, Aeneas makes personal sacrifices for the sake of a greater goal (in his case, the Roman Empire) and both protagonists are accused of being cold and insensitive. The pathetic suffering endured by victims such as Dido and Turnus is paralleled to some degree by the children in the *VJ*.

¹¹⁶ *svayaṃ tu bhāryāṃ kaumārīṃ cīram adhyuṣitāṃ satīm / śailūṣa iva māṃ rāma parebhyo dātum icchasi //8//*

By contrast, Maddī agrees to be given to Jūjaka with the following words:

He whose virgin wife [*komārī*] I became is my master and my lord. Let him give me away or sell me to whomever he wishes; let him kill me!¹¹⁷

However, while different in these ways, Maddī and Sītā are also closely linked in that they are both instrumental in their husbands' fulfilment of their soteriological goals. Just as Vessantara calls upon his children to help him fulfil his perfection by becoming willing gifts, so Maddī has to agree to be given away before Vessantara can complete the Bodhisatta path. Similarly, Rāma tells Sītā (*Rām* 2.27.30): 'Follow me, my timid one, be my companion in righteousness.'¹¹⁸

Sītā's role as Rāma's 'companion in righteousness' reaches its peak when, as Shulman shows (1991), she becomes the catalyst for Rāma's realisation of his own divinity. This pivotal moment occurs during Sītā's ordeal by fire (*agniparīkṣā*). As was discussed in §5.4.3, when Sītā is accused by Rāma of impurity, she attacks Rāma for speaking to her inappropriately 'like a common man to a common woman' (*prākṛtaḥ prākṛtām iva, Rām* 6.104.5).¹¹⁹ Her fire ordeal goes on to prove that she herself is an extra-ordinary woman, unjustly accused of the normative value of female fickleness.¹²⁰ However it also reveals Rāma's extra-ordinary nature. This occurs when the gods ask Rāma how he can treat Sītā in this way and whether he does not realise that he is 'the lord of the gods' (*devaganeśvaram, Rām* 6.105.5). Rāma replies in bewilderment that he wants to know who he really is (*yo 'haṃ yasya yataś ca, Rām* 6.105.10), whereupon Brahmā reveals his divinity (6.105.12ff.). Shulman explains the passage thus (1991:93):

¹¹⁷ *komārī yassāhaṃ bhariyā sāmiko mama issaro /
yass' icche tassa maṃ dajjā vikkineyya haneyya vā //629//*

¹¹⁸ *anugacchasva mām bhīru sahadharmacarī bhava //30//*

¹¹⁹ See also *Rām* 6.105.8, in which the gods tell Rāma that he has acted like a 'common man' (*mānuṣaḥ prākṛto yathā*) in his treatment of Sītā.

¹²⁰ See *Rām* 6.104.7, in which Sītā says that Rāma doubts her 'because of the behaviour of ordinary women' (*prthakstrīṇāṃ pracāreṇa*).

Sītā's trial by fire is actually more of a testing of Rāma than of her. By undergoing this ordeal, she precipitates the momentary switches in levels that presents the hero with his own divinity. His anamnesis proceeds directly from her suffering, the cost of his obsession with dharma as defined, rather narrowly, in wholly normative and human terms.

Maddī plays a similar pivotal role in helping Vessantara to realise his path to Buddhahood. It is through her extra-ordinary devotion to her husband that Maddī agrees to become Vessantara's gift and the perfection of giving is fulfilled. Just as Sītā throws herself into the fire, so Maddī sacrifices herself for Vessantara. Indeed it is through this act of self-sacrifice that the *VJ* finally achieves its complex resolution of ascetic and social values. In the *VJ*, the Bodhisatta path is not trodden by the Bodhisatta alone but also by those around him.

This chapter has set out to explore various ways in which the *VJ* interacts with epic motifs in order to produce its own particular notion of epic hero. By comparing Maddī with Sītā, her heroic status becomes more pronounced. Similarly, by comparing Vessantara with Rāma, one is able to throw into relief the *VJ*'s portrait of a Buddhist epic hero defined through renunciation and yet integrated with society.

Concluding remarks

This study has aimed to investigate the theme of renunciation in the *Jātakas*. In particular, it has examined the tensions and ambiguities involved in asceticism's dialectic with the world around it. While Chapter 2 discussed the various conflicts and resolutions involved in the relationship between ascetics and gods, the other chapters have explored how asceticism interacts with society. This focus on the relational aspect of asceticism has meant that I have tended to concentrate on renunciate figures who traverse the ascetic and social spheres. One such figure is the outcaste Mātaṅga, who continuously leaves the forest in order to tame wrongdoers in society; Chapter 3 examined how Mātaṅga's taming methods are ambiguously squared with his claims to non-violence. Another such liminal figure is Vessantara, whose fulfilment of the perfection of giving as a type of lay ascetic is intricately bound up with his wife's devotion to him.

A topic that has emerged in this thesis as a particularly fertile area for probing the boundaries between asceticism and society is that of giving (*dāna*). In Chapter 4, I analysed *dāna* in terms of two categories: individualist and relational giving, which I connected with related notions in Brahmanical sacrifice. I argued that the donor's renunciate desire to acquire a future refined reward in return for his gift, coupled with the recipient's concern with maintaining a distance from the donor, results in a relationship of non-reciprocal exchange between layman and ascetic. At the same time, however, the texts often suggest an ambiguous degree of integration between donor and recipient; this is most clearly illustrated by the notion that the gift – and by extension the donor himself – is said to be purified through the recipient's virtue.

While some *jātakas* set up a dichotomy between society and asceticism, others treat their relationship as one of complex interaction. Indeed, a central argument of this thesis is that renunciate values work on several different levels in the *Jātakas*, including both the social and the ascetic. This is especially illustrated in Chapter 5, which examined how the

language of giving permeates several social contexts in the *Jātakas*, such as the act of sacrificing oneself for one's friend, family, or king. I argued that this social form of giving, and the devotional connotations that it contains, has several important links with the type of giving that occurs between layman and ascetic. The complex dialectic between the social and ascetic spheres comes to the fore in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, in which, as argued in Chapter 6, Maddī's self-sacrificing love for her husband – which is infused with renunciate values – plays a crucial role in resolving the conflict between asceticism and society that is produced by Vessantara's extreme acts of giving.

A key aspect of my investigation has been to elucidate the values in the *Jātakas* by comparing them with stories and motifs found in Brahmanical epic literature. In Chapter 2, I compared the *Jātakas*' portrayal of Sakka with the depiction of Indra in the *Mbh* and *Rām*. In Chapter 3, I argued that the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* incorporates and modifies motifs associated with the figure of the wrathful ascetic in epic literature. In Chapter 5, I compared the abduction and testing of Sambulā in the *Sambulā Jātaka* with Sita's abduction and testing in the *Rām*, and argued that the two heroines belong to the same narrative type. In Chapter 7, I attempted to clarify the *VJ*'s concept of epic heroism by comparing the story with parallel motifs found in the *Rām*. In particular, I argued that Maddī and Sītā are both integral to their husbands' realisation of perfection.

Throughout the thesis I have therefore treated the *Jātakas* as Buddhist stories which evolved from a similar narrative context to the Brahmanical epics. This approach, however, differs from that of scholars who have argued that the *Jātakas* contain values which are essentially non-Buddhist and that their connection with the Brahmanical epics emphasises their non-Buddhist character. W.B. Bollée, for example, points out that a series of 'misogynist' verses in the *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536) are echoed by a passage in the *Mbh* (13.38.11ff.) and states (1970:121):

The sharp tone of the misogynous stanzas in the *Jātakas*, which resembles that in the *Mbh* passage quoted above, underlines once more the mainly non-Buddhist

character of the *Jātaka* Pāḷi because the Buddhist attitude towards women is less severe than that of Brahmanical ascetics.

Heinrich Lüders has a similar viewpoint. After demonstrating that the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (526) is closely related to the *Mbh* story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (3.110ff.), he argues that the bawdy tone of the *jātaka* – citing in particular the passage in which Isisiṅga is ridiculed for his ignorance about sex and female anatomy – indicates that the story must originally have been composed in a pre-Buddhist context. He states (1897:124f.):

Now, however, the question arises, are the verses collected here the work of a Buddhist poet or are they old *ākhyāna* verses of pre-Buddhist times? I believe that the latter is quite definitely true. These verses do not contain anything related to Buddhism. On the contrary, it seems to me completely out of the question that a Buddhist should have composed verses with the content of, for example, verses 13-17. Furthermore, the verses show throughout, in their partly indecent humour, the character of folk songs from a raw period of literature.¹

The problem I have with both these arguments is that they are based upon preconceptions about Buddhist values. Motivated by their restrictive notions of Buddhism, both Bollée and Lüders attempt to deny these stories a Buddhist role by arguing that they derive from non-Buddhist or pre-Buddhist origins. This argument however confuses the issue of origins with that of identity. Even if the passages in question originally derive from a non-Buddhist context, the *Jātakas* have been enjoyed by Buddhists for centuries and therefore have a thoroughly Buddhist function. Rather than reading the *Jātakas* in terms of presuppositions about what constitutes Buddhist identity, it is, I believe, important to start from the premise that the *Jātakas* have an unrivalled popularity within Buddhism and therefore have much to tell us about Buddhist values. The fact that the *Jātakas* may challenge our notions of Buddhism – after all, the Bodhisatta is explicitly said to break

¹ Nun erhebt sich aber die weitere Frage: Sind diese Gāthās das Werk eines buddhistischen Dichters oder sind es alte Ākhyānastrophen aus vor-buddhistischer Zeit, die hier gesammelt sind. Ich glaube, dass das letztere ganz entschieden bejaht werden muss. Jene Strophen enthalten auch nicht das mindeste, was irgendwie auf den Buddhismus hinwiese. Im Gegenteil, es scheint mir geradezu ausgeschlossen, dass ein Buddhist Verse solches Inhalts, wie ihn z. B. G. 13-17 aufweisen, gedichtet haben sollte. Die Strophen zeigen vielmehr in ihrem teilweise überderben Humor durchaus den Charakter des Volksliedes einer literarisch rohen Zeit.

four of the five precepts (*J* 3.499.5ff.) – is no reason to deny their Buddhist validity. On the contrary, it serves to accentuate even further their importance as complex discursive sites. This thesis has attempted to elucidate some of the values expressed in the *Jātakas*; however, much further research still needs to be done on this undeservedly neglected area.

Appendix A

Linguistic correspondences between the *Jātakas* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*

- **Introductions to speeches.**

Like the *Mbh*,¹ the *Jātakas* use a mixture of *extra-metrum* prose comments such as ‘Jūjaka said’ (*Jūjako āha*), ‘The Teacher said’ (*satthā āha*), ‘X said this verse’ (...*imaṃ gātham āha*), and *intra-metrum* verse comments like ‘Then the princess Maddī, on whose every limb sat beauty, answered’ (*tam abravī rājaputtī Maddī sabbaṅgasobhanā*). Other *intra-metrum* phrases include *idaṃ vacanaṃ abravī*, as well as xxx *etad abravī* (xxx signifies three syllables, which in this case often give a name). The *Rām* is exclusively *intra-metrum*, a feature which has been used by some scholars to argue that the *Rām* is later than the *Mbh*.² Some of these phrases include: *idaṃ vacanaṃ abravīt*, xxx *idaṃ abravīt*, and xxx *vākyam abravīt*.³ *Tassa taṃ vacanaṃ sutvā* is also found several times in the *Jātakas*, and is paralleled by *tasya tad vacanaṃ śrutvā* in the *Rām*.⁴

- **The phrase: ‘Not able to live without you’.**

See *Rām* 2.37.18: *na hi taṃ puruṣavyāghraṃ vinā jīvitum utsahe*; 2.38.18: *na hi [...]**vinā putraṃ ahaṃ jīvitum utsahe*; 2.53.19: *na śakṣyāmi vinā Rāma muhūrtam api jīvitum*; 2.54.2: *taṃ vinā kṣaṇam apy atra jīvitum notsahe hy ahaṃ*; 3.56.4: *yaṃ vinā notsahe vīra muhūrtam api jīvitum*; see also 5.24.4: *cintayantī suduḥkhārtā nāhaṃ jīvitum utsahe*. See also *Rām* 2.10.39, 3.43.24, 5.38.10 and 5.64.10.

Compare *Cullasutasoma Jātaka* (525), v.27: *na ussahe tayā vinā ahaṃ ṭhātun ti*; and *Sonaka Jātaka* (529), v.56: *tayā vinā ahaṃ tāta jīvitum hi na ussahe*.

¹ See Brockington 1998:130 and Goldman 1984:17.

² See Goldman 1984:17.

³ See Brockington 1970:216f. and 1998:130f.

⁴ See Brockington 1970:218 and 1998:130.

- **The phrase: ‘Dearer to me than life’.**

See *Rām* 3.56.6: *prāṇaiḥ priyatarā mama*; 3.35.19: *prāṇebhyo 'pi priyatarā*; 3.38.6: *prāṇaiḥ priyatarā sītā*; 4.22.9: *mama prāṇaiḥ priyataram*. See also *Rām* 3.59.24: *prāṇebhyo 'pi garīyasīm*.

Compare *Sāma Jātaka* (540), vv.92, 100: *pāṇā piyataro mama*, and *VJ* v.107: *pāṇā piyataro hi me*.

- **‘Whose life has departed’.**

In *VJ* v.569, Maddī’s phrase for death is *ukkanta-satta* (‘one whose *satta* has gone’). The use of *satta* (Sanskrit: *sattva*) in the sense of ‘life-breath’ is uncommon in Pāli, although the *PED* does refer to *Pv* 1.8, in which *satta* is taken to mean *jīvita* or *viññāṇa* (see *s.v.*). In the epics, on the other hand, *sattva* commonly means ‘spirit, courage, life’ etc. (see Monier-Williams 1899 *s.v.*). Indeed a direct parallel to Maddī’s phrase is found in *Rām* 2.42.1, in which the people of Ayodhyā feel as if their *sattva* has gone: *udgatānīva sattvāni*.

- **‘Like a god in Nandana’.**

See *Rām* 2.85.75: *devānām iva nandane*; 2.92.9: *kubera iva nandane*; 5.28.2: *devatām iva nandane*. See also *Rām* 4.28.5: *krīḍantam iva deveśam nandane*.

Compare *Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka* (542), v.69: *nandane viya devā*; *Mahāummagga Jātaka* (546), v.130: *devaputtā va nandane*; *VJ* vv.343, 379: *devānam iva nandane*; *VJ* v.765: *devakaññā va nandane*.

- **Bearded brahmin.**

In *Rām* 3.44.10, Rāvaṇa’s bearded face when he is disguised as a brahmin is said to look like a well covered by grass: *ṛṇaiḥ kūpa ivāvṛtaḥ*. This simile is also used of brahmin ascetics in the *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), v.22: *jarūdapānaṃ va mukhaṃ*

parūlham, which the commentary glosses as: *tiṅgahaṇena jinṇakūpe viya mukham dīghamassutāya parūlham* (*J* 4.387.19f.).

- **Female epithets.**

In Chapter 5, it was discussed how in the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519) the heroine Sambulā shares certain epithets with Sītā. Other female epithets found in both the *Jātakas* and the *Rām* are listed below.⁵ Many of them are used of both Sītā and Maddī.

- ***Tanumadhyamā*** (‘thin-waisted’).

Used of Sītā in *Rām* 3.32.14, 3.56.3, 3.60.4, and 5.32.25. In *Rām* 5.8.33 it is used of Rāvaṇa’s wives (*tanumadhyamāḥ*).

In the *Jātakas*, *tanumajjhimā* is found in the phrase *susaññā tanumajjhimā* (sg.): *Mahāummagga Jātaka* (546), vv.167f. and *VJ* v.167 (of Maddī). Also: *susaññā tanumajjhimā* (pl.): *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539), vv.76, 107, 117, 120, and *VJ* v.155; *susaññaṃ tanumajjhimāṃ*: *Kusa Jātaka* (531), v.46.

- ***Susaññā*** (‘fine-buttocked’).

In the above examples, *susaññā* is a form of *sussoṇī* (Sanskrit *suśroṇī*); see *J* 6.504.30: *susaññā ti sussoṇiyo*.⁶ For *sussoṇi*, see *Culladhanuggaha Jātaka* (374), v.3 and *Kusa Jātaka* (531), v.5. For *puṭhusussoṇi*, see *Kimchanda Jātaka* (511), v.21.

For forms of *susroṇī* in the *Rām*, see *susroṇī*: 3.41.1, 5.18.32, 5.57.85, 5.64.12 (all of Sītā) and 5.8.44 (of a courtesan); *susroṇīm*: 5.16.28 (of Sītā); *susroṇi*: 1.47.21 (of Ahalyā), 2.11.13 (of Kaikeyī), 2.27.29 and 3.53.29 (of Sītā).

⁵ Some of these are mentioned by Brockington 1970:213.

⁶ See Norman 1991c:176f.

See also *sussoṇi subbhuru*: *Saṅkha Jātaka* (442), v.7. The Sanskrit for *subbhuru* ('well-eyebrowed') is *subhru*, forms of which are found in *Rām* 2.58.52 (of Rāma); 5.13.27, 5.18.32, 5.21.17, 5.27.6 (of Sītā).

- ***Sumadhyamā*** ('fine-waisted').

Used of Sītā in *Rām* 3.10.1, 3.18.13, 3.35.19, 3.41.33, 5.10.21, 5.11.16; *sumadhyamāṃ*: 5.28.13, 5.56.46; *sumadhyame*: 3.59.10, 5.31.8. The epithet is also used of others. For example, *sumadhyame*: 1.20.15 (of Dakṣa's daughters); *sumadhyamā*: 1.34.13 (of Menā); *sumadhyame*: 1.47.18 (of Ahalyā); *sumadhyamā*: 1.76.8 (of Kaikeyī); *sumadhyamāḥ*: 5.7.59 (of Rāvaṇa's courtesans).

In the *Jātakas*, *sumajjhime* is found twice in the *Kimchanda Jātaka* (511), vv.8, 22 and once in the *Sambulā Jātaka* (519), v.2.

- ***Sarvāṅgaśobhanā*** ('beautiful in every limb').

Used of Sītā in *Rām* 5.11.3 and 5.40.8.

Compare *sabbaṅgasobhanā* in *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), v.7 and *Mahāummagga Jātaka* (546), vv.165f. In the *VJ* the epithet is found in v.12 and is then used eleven times of Maddī (vv.63, 65, 70, 171, 182, 197, 198, 207, 208, 224, 636), usually in the set-phrase *tam abravī rājaputtī Maddī sabbaṅgasobhanā*.

- ***Yaśasvinī*** ('glorious').

Instances of the adjective being used of Sītā in the *Rām* include: *yaśasvinī*: 2.27.33, 3.32.14,⁷ 3.47.20, 3.48.5, 3.67.19, 5.1.139, 5.19.5, 5.28.9, 5.55.34; *yaśasvinīm*: 3.1.10, 3.2.16, 3.44.10, 4.42.15, 5.11.52. It is however far from

⁷ This verse contains a string of standard epithets used for Sītā:

*Rāmasya tu viśālākṣā dharmapatnī yaśasvinī /
Sītā nāma varārohā vaidehī tanumadhyamā //14//*

⁸ *Raktāntalocana* is used of Rāma as well as Sītā. See Brockington 1970:212, who cites *Rām* 3.19.12 and 5.24.331.

exclusive to her. For example, *yaśasvinī*: *Rām* 1.42.24 (of Gaṅgā); *yaśasvinaḥ*: 2.2.32 and 3.47.28 (of Rāma); *yaśasvinī*: 2.22.12 and 16 (of Kausalyā); *yaśasvinam*: 2.66.4 (of Bharata); *yaśasvinam*: 5.44.32 (of Hanumān).

The Pāli *yasassinī* is used to describe Sambulā in *Sambulā Jātaka* (519), vv.15, 17, 24. For Maddī, see *VJ* vv.570, 602, 611 (in all cases: *varārohā rājaputtī yasassinī*). The epithet is found several times in the *Jātakas* for both male and female figures.

- *Varārohā* ('fine-hipped').

For the *Rām*, see *varārohā*: 2.35.12, 3.2.13, 3.32.14, 3.48.5, 3.52.2, 5.17.2, 5.19.2, 5.56.57, 5.56.85, 5.64.15 (all of Sītā); *varārohe*: 2.44.16, 3.17.5, 3.17.12, 3.43.16, 3.44.16, 3.44.26, 3.47.11, 3.53.31, 3.58.24, 3.59.10, 5.31.5, 5.33.61, 5.37.42 (all of Sītā); *varāroham*: 2.89.2, 3.56.18, 5.12.9 (all of Sītā). In *Rām* 5.10.21 *varārohāḥ* is used of *nāga* maidens who are Rāvaṇa's courtesans.

Varārohā is used only of Maddī in the *Jātakas* and is found three times in *VJ* vv.570, 602, 611.

- There are some correlations between Rāvaṇa's description of Sītā in *Rām* 3.44 and a passage in the *Alambusā Jātaka* (523, vv.14-25), in which an ascetic describes the beauty of a nymph disguised as a male ascetic youth. For example, in *Alambusā Jātaka* v.22 the nymph's eyes are described thus: *lohitantā* [...] *visālā ca nettā*. Compare *Rām* 3.44.17: *visāle* [...] *netre raktānte*.⁸ The nymph, like Sītā, is praised for her even white teeth (*Alambusā Jātaka* v.21, *Rām* 3.44.17), and the thighs of both females are compared with elephant trunks: *ūrū nāganāsasamūpamā* (*Alambusā Jātaka* v.17); *ūrū karikaropamau* (*Rām* 3.44.8). In *Alambusā Jātaka* v.19, the nymph's swelling breasts (*payodharā*) are likened to half pumpkins, and in *Rām* 2.44.19 Sītā's breasts (*payodharau*) are compared with two palm fruits. Both the ascetic and Rāvaṇa declare that their minds have become captivated: *te*

haranti ñeva me mano (Alambusā Jātaka v.16), mano harasi me (Rām 3.44.20).

Compare also *Alambusā Jātaka* vv.24f.:

‘Wherever there are farmers and cowherds, or wherever merchants travel, or wherever ascetics tread who are disciplined and austere, I have never seen your equal on this sphere of the earth. Who are you? Or whose son? How am I to know you?’⁹

And *Rām* 3.44.21f., 30:

‘No goddess, no *gandharva* woman, no *yakṣa* or *kinnara* woman, no mortal woman so beautiful have I ever seen before on the face of the earth. [...] Who are you, to whom do you belong, where do you come from?’¹⁰

- **Refrains.**

For refrains starting with *kadā*, see *Rām* 2.38.10ff. and *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539), vv.25ff. *Mahājanaka*’s description of the city is comparable to passages in the *Rām* such as 2.45.19ff; see for example *Rām* 2.45.19: *suvibhaktamahāpathaṃ* and *Mahājanaka Jātaka* v.29: *suvibhattaṃ mahāpathaṃ*.

For refrains starting with *kaccit*, see *Rām* 2.64.6ff., 2.94.4ff., 3.70.8ff., 5.34.14ff. Compare *VJ* vv.230ff., 357ff., 436ff., 613ff., 726ff. See also *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533), vv.58ff. and *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* (538), vv.75ff.

For refrains starting with *adya eva*, see *Rām* 2.16.46ff. and (*ajj’eva*) *Sonaka Jātaka* (529), vv.37ff.

⁹ *yāvatā kasigorakkhā vañijānañ ca yā gati /
isīnañ ca parakkantaṃ saññatānaṃ tapassināṃ //24//
na te samasamaṃ passe asmim puthuvimaṇḍale /
ko vā tvaṃ kassa vā putto, kathaṃ jānemu taṃ mayan ti //25//*

¹⁰ *naiva devī na gandharvī na yakṣī na ca kimnarī //21//
naivaṃrūpā mayā nārī dṛṣṭapūrvā mahītale / [...] //22//
kāsi kasya kutaś ca tvaṃ [...] / [...] //30//*

Compare also *Kimchanda Jātaka* (511), v.10.

- **Lightning similes.**

In *Rām* 3.50.22, when Sītā is kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, her pale body against Rāvaṇa’s dark body is compared with a ‘streak of lightning caught within a storm cloud’: *vidyud ghanam ivāviśya*. For similar passages using this play on colours, see *Rām* 2.20.29: *meghā iva savidyutaḥ*, in which the lightning/cloud simile describes elephants being struck by swords, and 5.52.6: *savidyud iva toyadaḥ*, which describes Hanumān’s burning tail flashing against buildings. See also *Rām* 5.8.27 and 5.1.50.

There are similar passages in the *Jātakas*. See *Bhūridatta Jātaka* (543), v.192, in which the flash of earrings against a brow is said to be ‘like lightning bursting from the sky’: *nabhā vijju-r-iv’ uggatā*. See also *Nimi Jātaka* (541), v.140, in which palaces in the sky are said to shine like ‘lightning in a thunder cloud’: *vijju v’ abbhaghanantare*. In *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545), v.31 a *nāginī* is said to be ‘like lightning bursting from a thunder cloud’: *vijjut’ abbhaghanā va nissaṭā*. However here the simile appears to have been employed as a cliché, since there is no context of darkness.

See also *Alambusā Jātaka* (523), v.14 and *Campeyya Jātaka* (506), v.1, in which lightning is used of female beauty (*vijjur ivābhāsi*).

- **Moon similes.**

Examples of Sītā’s face being compared with the moon include: *Rām* 2.54.10: *bālacandranibhānanā*; 2.89.2: *cārucandranibhānanam*; 3.58.22 and 5.35.1: *pūrṇacandranibhānanā*; 2.95.18, 3.32.19, 3.44.11, 3.60.21, 5.15.3: *pūrṇacandranibhānanām*. See also *Rām* 5.10.21: *pūrṇacandranibhānanāḥ* (of Rāvaṇa’s courtesans); 5.28.10: *pūrṇacandranibhānanāḥ* (of Rāma); 5.34.37: *pūrṇacandram ivoditam* (of Rāma’s face).

Similarly, see *Ummadantī Jātaka* (527), v.6, in which Ummadantī is compared with the moon; *Sāma Jātaka* (540), vv.66 and 72: *cando/-am va patito/-am chamā* (of

Sāma); *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544), v.21: *cando va sobhatha* (of the king of Videha); *Mātaṅga Jātaka* (497), v.14: *pannarase va cando* (of Mātaṅga); and *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (522), v.3: *pannarase va cando* (of Sakka).

- **The eclipse of the moon by Rāhu.**

See *Rām* 3.34.19, in which Rāvaṇa imagines carrying off Sītā ‘as Rāhu does the moonlight’: *rāhuś candraprabhām iva*. In *Rām* 5.17.13 Sītā is compared to a night on which the moon is eclipsed: *paurṇamāsīm iva niśāṃ rāhugrastendumaṅḍalāṃ*. In *Rām* 5.27.7, Sītā’s face is compared to the moon escaping from Rāhu: *rāhor mukhācandra iva pramuktaḥ*; also 5.34.4: *rāhumukta ivoḍurāt*. See also *Rām* 5.1.154: *muktaṃ candraṃ rāhumukhād iva* (of Hanumān).

Compare *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536), v.69: *rāhunā upagato va candimā*; *Pañcuposatha Jātaka* (490), v.10 and *Jayaddisa Jātaka* (513), v.31: *cando yathā rāhumukhā pamutto*.

- ***Sarvābharaṇabhūṣita*** (‘adorned with every ornament’). See *Rām* 2.72.5, 3.18.13 (-ā); 3.42.16 (-aḥ); 2.9.39, 2.13.11, 3.45.27 (-āḥ); 1.72.8 (-aiḥ).

For ***sabbābharaṇabhūṣita***, see *Nimi Jātaka* (541), v.87 (-o); *Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka* (544), v.74 (-ā); *VJ* vv.675f. (-e), v.751 (-o).

Pāda endings with (vi)bhūṣita are commonly found in the *Rām*. Compare also phrases such as *sabbālaṅkārabhūṣita* in the *Jātakas*; for example, *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539), vv.72, 75, 79, 81.

- ***Rāṣṭravardhana*** (‘increaser of the kingdom’).

See *Rām* 2.32.16 (-a of Daśaratha) and 2.61.13 (-āḥ of festivals). –*vardhana* is a common compound word at the end of a *pāda*; for example *lakṣmīvardhana*, *rativardhana*, *prītivardhana* etc.

Ratṭhavaddhana is found several times in the *Jātakas*, especially in the *VJ* in the phrase *Sivīnaṃ ratṭhavaddhan-*. See for example *VJ* vv.21, 23, 29, 37, 145, 172, 196, 199, 240, 244.

- ***Samānasukhaduḥkhin*** (‘sharing pleasure and pain’).

This phrase is used of Sītā’s devotion to Rāma (*Rām* 2.26.18: *samānasukhaduḥkhinām*) and in the *VJ* of Maddī and Vessantara (v.582: *samānasukhadukkh’ amhā*).

- **Plucked lotus.**

Used of Sītā in *Rām* 3.50.17: *vinālam iva paṅkajam*. Compare *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* (545), v.4: *padumaṃ hatthagataṃ va te mukhaṃ*.

- **Cows and calves.**

In her separation from Rāma, Kausalyā is likened to a cow bereft of her calf in *Rām* 2.17.32: *vinā tvayā dhenur ivātmajena*. In *Rām* 2.21.6 Kausalyā wishes to follow Rāma like a cow does its calf: *kathaṃ hi dhenuḥ svaṃ vatsaṃ gacchantam nānugacchati*. In *Rām* 2.36.7 the queens are said to wail ‘like cows who have lost their calves’: *vivatsā iva dhenavaḥ*. See also *Rām* 2.81.7 and 2.38.16 for related calf-cow imagery.

Similarly, in *VJ* vv.546 and 741, Maddī is likened to a cow to whom her children run as calves after they have been separated: *vacchā bālā va mātaraṃ*. Compare also *Rām* 2.17.9, in which Kausalyā is likened to a mare running to a colt (Rāma): *kiśoraṃ*

vaḍavā yathā. See also *VJ* vv.124ff., in which Phusatī pictures herself as a bird whose chicks have been killed: *sakkunī hataputtā va*.

- **Fallen trees.**

In both the *Rām* and the *VJ* people who have fainted are compared to fallen trees. See for example, *Rām* 2.17.17: *patitāṃ kadalīm iva*; 2.95.9: *puspitāgro yathā drumah / vane paraśunā kṛttas*.

Compare *VJ* v.135: *sālā va sampamathitā mālutena pamadditā*.

- **Comparisons between kings/princes and Indra.**

Rāma is repeatedly likened to Indra. For example, *Rām* 2.1.26, 2.22.13, 2.81.23, 2.88.2, 2.96.25, 3.11.33. Rāma's battle with Rāvaṇa is also often linked with the gods' victories over the demons: for example, 3.11.32, 3.59.22. Others such as Bharata (2.75.13) and Daśaratha (2.3.9) are also compared with Indra.

Compare *Sonaka Jātaka* (529) v.61: *yathā Sakkaṃ*; *Mahābodhi Jātaka* (528) v.59: *Indo va asurādhipo*; and *VJ* v.50: *tidasānaṃ va Vāsavaṃ*.

- **Hard-heartedness.**

Rām 2.17.30: 'My heart must surely be hard and made of iron that it does not split and shatter upon the ground.'¹¹ See also very similar passages in *Rām* 2.17.28, 2.35.20, 2.55.9, 2.96.12, 5.26.4.

VJ v.478: 'Your heart must be made of iron or strong bonds, if you do not care that we have been tied up by a brahmin greedy for money [...]'¹² See also *Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka*

¹¹ *sthiraṃ hi nūnaṃ hṛdayaṃ mamāyasam na bhidyate yad bhuvī nāvadīryate / [...]* //30//

¹² *asmā nūna te hadayaṃ āyasam dalhabandhanam / yo no baddhe na jānāsi brāhmaṇena dhanesinā / [...]* //478//

(542), v.143: ‘My heart must be made of strong bonds that it does not break.’¹³
Compare also *VJ* v.195.

- **Royalty and beggars.**

Rām 2.38.4: ‘If only Rāma could have lived at home, though it meant his begging in the city streets! You had the freedom to grant such a boon, which at worst had made my son a slave.’¹⁴

Compare *Khandahāla Jātaka* (542), v.59: ‘If only I had been born in the house of a cobbler, an outcaste, or a merchant, then the king would not today be killing me in sacrifice.’¹⁵

- **Golden statue.**

In *Rām* 7.89 Rāma substitutes Sītā with a golden statue at a sacrifice. Compare the motif in the *Jātakas*, whereby a golden statue depicting a beautiful woman is sent all over Jambudīpa in order to find its human equal. See *Udaya Jātaka* (458), *J* 4.105, and *Kusa Jātaka* (531), *J* 5.282ff.

- **Theme of a woman desiring a beautiful animal.**

Sītā’s desire for Rāma to hunt the beautiful deer in *Rām* 3.40ff. leads to her abduction and thus initiates the imbalance which the rest of the story seeks to redress. Similarly in the *Jātakas* it is often a woman’s desire for a beautiful animal that causes the conflict necessary for narrative momentum, which is then resolved by the Bodhisatta’s virtue. See for example the *Cullahaṃsa Jātaka* (533) and *Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka* (534).

¹³ *atha mama hadayaṃ na phalati /*

tāva dalḥbandhanañ ca me āsi //143//

¹⁴ *atha sma nagare rāmaś caran bhaikṣaṃ grhe vaset /*

kāmakāro varaṃ dātum api dāsaṃ mamātmajam //4//

¹⁵ *yan nūnāhaṃ jāyeyyaṃ rathakārakulesu vā /*

pukkusakulesu vā vesesu vā jāyeyyaṃ /

na h’ ajja maṃ rājā yaññatthāya ghāteyyā ti //59//

- **Pathetic fallacy of nature responding to heroes.**

In *Rām* 2.42.8ff. the people of Ayodhyā imagine that the hills welcome Rāma and that the trees blossom for him even out of season. Similarly in 3.50.32ff. the whole scenery, including trees, animals and mountains is said to grieve for Sītā.

Similarly in the *VJ*, trees bend down to give the children their fruit (*J* 6.513) and animals are said to feel *mettā* for one another under Vessantara's influence (6.520).

- **Idyllic hermitages and forest scenes.**

See *Rām* 2.48.36, 2.49.15, 2.50.6ff., 2.87.7ff., 2.88.3ff., 2.111. Compare *Sudhābhōjana Jātaka* (535), vv.68ff. and *VJ* vv.76ff., 251ff., 326ff., 370ff..

- **Contrasts between royal luxury and forest hardship.¹⁶**

See *Rām* 2.21.2f., 2.30.9, 2.33, 2.52.4ff., 2.55.4ff., 2.82, 2.93.14, 2.93.30ff., 2.96.9ff., 2.99.17f. This theme is sometimes reversed for special effect. For example, in 2.54.11 Sumantra says that Ayodhyā would be like a wilderness for Sītā if she was separated from Rāma. See also *Rām* 2.27.17, 2.54.16, 2.99.17f., 5.17.5 for similar examples.

For similar passages see *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (539), vv.25ff.; *VJ* vv.108ff., 173ff., 200ff.

Compare also *Rām* 2.93.34:

‘It had always been precious sandalwood that coated my noble brothers’ limbs.
How is it possible they are now coated with dirt?’¹⁷

¹⁶ See Gombrich 1985:428ff. for similar passages on this theme in the *VJ* and *Rām* .

¹⁷ *candanena mahārheṇa yasyāṅgam upasevitam /
malena tasyāṅgam idaṃ katham āryasya sevyate //34//*

And *VJ* v.205:

‘The children are used to fragrant aloe and sandal rubbed on their bodies: how will they manage when they are covered with dust and muddy dirt?’¹⁸

¹⁸

*gandhikena vilimpitvā agarucandanena ca /
rajojallāni dhārentā kathaṃ kāhanti dārakā //205//*

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