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Gods, Kings and Other Heroes

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Chapter 6
The Renouncing Royals of Videha

In the ninth chapter of the *Uttarajjhāyā* ('Later Chapters'), one of the scriptures of the Śvetāmbara Jains, we find the story of a king called Nami. Having recalled a past life,[1] Nami decides to renounce and so places his son on the throne before abandoning his kingdom for the solitary life. Indra (called Śakra or, in Prākrit, Sakka), disguised as a brahmin, approaches Nami to test his resolve. In an exchange of verses about the propriety of renunciation he tells Nami that his palace is on fire and exhorts him to look after his household. Nami replies:

> *suhaṃ vasāmo jīvāmo jesi mo natthi kiṃcaṇa*
> *mihilāe ḍajjhamāṇīe na me ḍajjhai kiṃcaṇa*
>
> We live happily, we who have nothing.
> Though Mihilā may be on fire, nothing of mine is burning.[2]

In this way he indicates his dedication to the path of the renouncer. The same verse, with minor variations, is also found in a Buddhist *jātaka* story as well as in the *Mahābhārata*. In these cases, however, the renouncing royal is King Janaka, not King Nami. A renouncing king of Videha named Nimi/Nemi, however, is also known from Buddhist narratives, where he is prompted into leaving his kingdom by the sight of a grey hair. As several lineages from within Indian texts show, Nami (or Nemi or Nimi) and Janaka are part of the same family of kings of Videha, several of whom are famous for renunciation.[3]

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[1] Recollection of past lives is a common prompt for renunciation in Jain narratives. On the role of past-life memory in Buddhist and Jain narratives see Naomi Appleton, *Narrating Karma and Rebirth: Buddhist and Jain Multi-life Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapter 6.

[2] My translation of chapter 9 verse 14, taken from Jarl Charpentier, ed., *Uttarādhyayanasūtra* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri, 1922), 96. See also Hermann Jacobi, trans., *Jaina Sūtras Part II,* Sacred Books of the East vol. XLV (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1895), 35-41. Because this chapter involes comparisons of the wording of verses and motifs I will generally cite the original text as well as the translation.

[3] For example the *Nimi-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 541) records Nimi's son's name as Kaḷāra-Janaka, and when King Janaka of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Sītā's father) recalls his

In chapter 18 of the *Uttarajjhāyā* we encounter King Nami again, though this time he is only briefly mentioned in a list of great renouncer kings of the past:

> Nami humbled himself,[4] urged by Sakka in person.[5]
> The Videhan abandoned his home and became a renouncer (*sāmaṇṇa*). (45)
> Karakaṇḍu of Kaliṅga, Dummuha of Pañcāla,
> King Nami of Videha, and Naggaī of Gandhāra: (46)
> These bulls among kings renounced in the dispensation (*sāsaṇe*) of the Jinas.
> Having placed their sons on the throne they became renouncers. (47)[6]

The King Nami mentioned here must be the same Nami as in chapter nine, given the reference to his encounter with Sakka. When he is mentioned again in the subsequent verse we hear even less of his story, only that he was one of four kings who went forth in the community of the *jina*s. In Devendragaṇi's commentary to the *Uttarajjhāyā*, however, we find the full stories of these four kings.[7] We also find their story – told slightly differently – in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 408), alongside a parallel verse to that listing the kings above. In these two stories we

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ancestral lineage in the *Bālakāṇḍa* (*sarga* 70) he notes both Nimi and Janaka amongst their names.

[4] There is a pun in *nami namei*, for the name Nami is taken as related to the verb √nam – 'to bow, submit to'. In the commentarial story about Nami's past, he is said to be named Nami because even as a child all the kings bowed before him. With the addition of *appāṇam*, the reflexive pronoun, Nami is bowing himself, or – as Jacobi neatly translated – humbling himself.

[5] *sakkhaṃ sakkena coio* – 'urged by Sakka himself'. This alliterative refrain is found in other verses too, and this whole verse is also found in the story of Nami in chapter nine of the *Uttarajjhāyā*.

[6] My translation from Charpentier, *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*, 141: *namī namei appāṇaṃ sakkhaṃ sakkeṇa coio | caiūṇa gehaṃ vaidehī sāmaṇṇe pajjuvaṭṭhio (45) karakaṇḍū kaliṃgesu paṃcālesu ya dummuho | namī rāyā videhesu gandhāresu ya naggaī (46) ee narindavasabhā nikkhantā jiṇasāsaṇe | putte rajje ṭhaveūṇaṃ sāmaṇṇe pajjuvaṭṭhiyā (47)* See also Jacobi, trans., *Jaina Sūtras Part II*, 87, where he has verses 45 and 46 in the reverse order.

[7] For an edition of this commentary see Hermann Jacobi, *Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshṭrī* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1886). An English translation of this may be found in John Jacob Meyer, trans., *Hindu Tales: An English Translation of Jacobi's Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshṭrī* (London: Luzac & co, 1909).

discover the prompts that led the four kings into renunciation: a bull, a bracelet, a mango tree and either a hawk or a banner of Indra. The signs of the mango tree and the bracelet are also found in the *Janaka-jātaka*, where they reinforce the determination of King Janaka to leave behind his kingdom, a determination already expressed through the verse:

> *susukhaṃ vata jīvāma yesaṃ no n'atthi kiñcanaṃ*
> *Mithilāya ḍayhamānāya na me kiñci aḍayhatha*
>
> Surely we live in great happiness, we who have nothing!
> Though Mithilā may be on fire, nothing of mine is burning.[8]

We have come full circle (appropriately enough, the Buddhist interpretation of Nimi's name[9]) and returned to where we started.

Thus we can see that there is an interconnected series of motifs associated with the renouncing kings of Videha that cuts across Buddhist and Jain texts; it is also known, though to a lesser extent, in Brahmanical texts.[10] This king may be called

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[8] My translation from V. Fausbøll, ed., *The Jātaka Together with its Commentary being Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha* (London: Trübner and co, 1877-96) vol. 6, 54. The *Janaka-jātaka*, also known as the *Mahā-janaka-jātaka* to distinguish it from a shorter version earlier in the collection, is *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 539.

[9] In the *Nimi-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 541), known more usually in the Southeast Asian tradition as the *Nemi-jātaka*, he is said to be named this because he brings the lineage full circle like the rim (*nemi*) of a carriage-wheel. See Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 96.

[10] I am by no means the first to have treated these various stories as part of the same network of motifs. Jarl Charpentier brought together many of the same sources in his doctoral dissertation *Paccekabuddhageschichten*, published in 1908. However, he, like K. R. Norman ("The Pratyeka-Buddha in Buddhism and Jainism," in *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Philip Denwood and Alexander Piatigorsky [London and Dublin: Curzon, 1983], 92-106; and Anālayo ("Paccekabuddhas in the *Isigili-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* Parallel," *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 6 (2010): 5-36), was primarily interested in the concept of a *pratyekabuddha* and the story of the four kings. Our focus here is more closely on the notion of a lineage that is associated with royal renunciation, whether this results in pratyekabuddhahood or full buddhahood / jinahood. As will become clear later in our discussion, the flexibility

Janaka or Nimi/Nemi/Nami, and he may be prompted into renunciation by a particular experience, or express his detachment through a verse about Mithilā burning, but we are dealing with the same lineage in each case. This is not just the lineage of kings of Videha, but the lineage of Videhan kings that are famous for their determined renunciation. In this chapter I would like to explore these interconnected narratives in an effort to understand how each of the three traditions – Brahmanical Hindu, Jain and Buddhist - used this lineage and the motifs associated with it to serve their own agendas. In so doing I will shed light on the connections between these traditions as well as their distinctive concerns. I will also address why a lineage offers something rather unique to storytellers working in a competitive narrative economy.

My exploration will take each of three related motifs in turn, starting with stories of King Nimi's grey hair, moving through a discussion of the four kings and the prompts for their renunciation, and ending with the great detachment of the king who views his city ablaze and yet feels nothing. Following this outline of the narrative sources, I will reflect on what they contribute to our understanding in relation to kingship, renunciation, and competing notions of lineage.

Part 1: The Motifs

King Nimi and the Grey Hair

Let us begin with an exploration of our lineage according to Buddhist stories of King Nimi/Nemi.[11] Three related stories are found in Pāli texts: the *Makhādeva Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 83), *Makhādeva-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 9), and *Nimi/Nemi-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 541). The two *jātaka*s between them tell basically the same story: King Makhādeva (who is the Bodhisatta or Buddha-to-be) has a long and just rule, then renounces at the sight of his first grey hair. Once reborn in the Brahmā heavens, Makhādeva sees that this practice is followed by all of his descendents,

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in terms of the type of awakening attained by these kings is of crucial importance to the development of this cluster of stories.

[11] Both Nimi and Nemi are present in the manuscript sources for the *jātaka*s, with Southeast Asian tradition generally preferring Nemi. Nimi has tended to be adopted in European publications, including in Fausbøll's edition of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* and the Pali Text Society edition and translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The only exception to this is a passing reference to a *paccekabuddha* called Nemi in a long list of such in *Majjhima Nikāya* 116.

through a lineage of 84,000 minus two. Makhādeva realises that he should take rebirth as the son of the current monarch, in order to complete the tradition. He is born as Nimi, his father renounces, and he becomes king. When he in turn sees his first grey hair he too renounces. While this same basic story is found in both *jātaka*s, the focus of the *Nimi-jātaka* shifts from renunciation at the sight of a grey hair, to the explorations of the heavens and hells made by King Nimi as he is being taken up to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (Pāli: Tāvatiṃsa) to visit Sakka.

These two *jātaka*s most likely have the *Majjhima Nikāya* story as their source. The *Makhādeva Sutta* tells of the Buddha's past birth as King Makhādeva and his initiation of the practice of renouncing at the sight of the first grey hair, which is then followed by 84,000 descendents. The last of these descendents is King Nimi, who is so famous for his good work that he is invited to visit Sakka in heaven. Nimi's tour of the heavens and hells is mentioned in the *Makhādeva Sutta* but not fully exploited as in the *Nimi-jātaka*. More importantly, while the *jātaka*s both declare Makhādeva *and Nimi* to be the Bodhisatta, the *sutta* only says this of the first king, Makhādeva. Thus in the *Makhādeva Sutta* the emphasis is on the Bodhisatta instituting a good practice that is then followed by his descendents, much as the Buddha later on institutes even better practices that are then followed by his monks and nuns.[12] Whether or not Nimi is identified as the Buddha-to-be will become important later in our discussion.

The stories of Makhādeva and Nimi are also found in Buddhist texts outside the Pāli collection. A parallel to the *Makhādeva Sutta* is found in the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* (67) and *Ekkotarika-āgama* (50.4), and the story is also referred to in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, preserved in the Tibetan translation. A related story is also found in a Chinese collection of *jātaka* tales whose title *Lie Du Ji Jing* (T152) is usually reconstructed into the Sanskrit *Satpāramitā Sannipāta Sūtra*, or 'Discourse on the Assembly of the Six Perfections'. The story of Nimi also has a separate existence within a Chinese *Dharmapada Avadāna* collection (T211, no. 38).[13]

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[12] For the idea that early *jātaka*s embedded in the *sutta*s tend to emphasise the contrast between the worldly good works of the Bodhisatta and the soteriologically transformative works of the Buddha, see Naomi Appleton, *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism: Narrating the Bodhisatta Path* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 47-51.

[13] My information on the Chinese and Tibetan sources is largely thanks to Anālayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corporation, 2011), vol. 1, 466-74. For the Chinese *jātaka* collection *Lie Du Ji Jing* see also Édouard Chavannes, trans., *Cinq Cents Contes et Apologues: Extraits du Tripiṭaka*

The *āgama* parallels are close to the *Majjhima Nikāya* version, reinforcing the evidence for its antiquity. As with the adjustment from *sutta* to *jātaka* in the Pāli tradition, it is only in the *Lie Du Ji Jing* that Nimi is said to be the Bodhisatta as well as Makhādeva; according to the *Ekkotarika-āgama* version Nimi is a past life of the Buddha's attendant Ānanda, and Nimi's son – who discontinues the family practice of renunciation – is a past life of the Buddha's nemesis Devadatta.[14]

While I have not been able to find any parallel stories to that of King Nimi outisde the Buddhist tradition, the idea of renouncing at the sight of grey hair fits with the Brahmanical Hindu notion of the four *āśrama*s as four stages of life.[15] According to texts such as the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, a person who has fulfilled the stages of a celibate student and a householder knows that it is time to proceed to the third stage of a forest dweller when his hair turns grey.[16] This idea allows for two ideals to be combined: the same person can be a good king (the ideal form of householder) *and* a good renouncer. It is notable that many other Buddhist narratives are in

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Chinois (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962), vol. 1, 1-88. Chavannes was of the opinion that the text was not a simple translation of an Indian collection, but a compilation of Indian tales restructured to fit the six perfections. The Makhādeva story appears as number 84 in Chavannes (not 87 as Anālayo notes), and is roughly parallel to the *Makhādeva-jātaka*.

[14] See Anālayo *Comparative Study*, vol. 1, 473-4, n. 166. In the Pāli *jātaka* version Ānanda is identified as both the barber who finds Makhādeva's grey hair and the divine charioteer Mātali who later fetches Nimi to heaven. The Pāli sources do not provide any identification for Nimi's descendents.

[15] Olivelle has demonstrated that the idea of the *āśrama*s as stages in a single life is not the original form of the doctrine, which actually presents the different *āśrama*s as lifelong pursuits (Patrick Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). However, the idea that renunciation was suitable only for later life (after Vedic study, fulfillment of ritual obligations and the fathering of a son) developed as a key means for neutralising the rise in renouncer movements.

[16] See for example *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 6.2 – *gṛhasthas tu yadā paśyed valīpalitam ātmanaḥ | apatyasyaiva cāpatyaṃ tadāraṇyaṃ samāśrayet* || (Patrick Olivelle, ed. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005] 594.) Olivelle translates this (p.148) as 'When a householder sees his skin wrinkled, his hair turned gray, and his children's children, he should take to the wilderness.' A similar sentiment is expressed in *Viṣṇu Smṛti* 94.1. I am grateful to Patrick Olivelle for providing these references.

tension with this model, insisting instead that renunciation is necessary for the young, though of course grey hair can also prompt the young to renounce: the first of the 'four sights' that prompted the Buddha's final life quest was an old man with grey hair. The story of Nimi thus demonstrates the multiple perspectives on renunciation found even within a tradition that rejects the life-affirming ritual and social duties of Brahmanism.

The story of Makhādeva and Nimi sets the scene rather neatly for this study, for three reasons: First, it speaks of a famous lineage of Videhan monarchs who each renounced at the appropriate time; secondly, it speaks to a wider debate about the tension between fulfilling one's household duties and renouncing; and thirdly, it mentions a specific prompt for renunciation, in this case the appearance of grey hair, referred to as the 'messengers of the gods' (*devadūtā*).[17] That the notions of lineage and renuncation are important should already be clear. The use of particular external prompts for renunciation is another key theme that binds this lineage together. It is to this theme that we now must turn.

The Four Kings

While the *Nimi-jātaka* would appear to be unique to Buddhist texts, we have already seen that the character of a renouncing king of Videha named Nami appears in the Jain *Uttarajjhāyā*, both as an individual story (in chapter 9) and in a list of four renouncing royals (in chapter 18). The verse listing these four kings is shared by Buddhist and Jain traditions.[18] A comparison of the verses from the *Uttarajjhāyā* and the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* demonstrates just how close the similarity is:

> *karakaṇḍū kaliṃgesu paṃcālesu ya dummuho*
> *namī rāyā videhesu gandhāresu ya naggaī*
> (*Uttarajjhāyā* 18 v.46)
>
> *Karaṇḍu nāma Kaliṅgānaṃ Gandhārānañ ca Naggaji*

[17] For more on how birth, aging, sickness and death are the divine messengers that function as a warning to humans see *Devadūta Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 130) and its parallels.

[18] Although our focus is on the kings of Videha, it is notable that this list of four kings appears to be an attempt to be geographically inclusive (in North Indian terms) and mentions other regions strongly associated with the *śramaṇa* movements.

Nimirājā Videhānaṃ Pañcālānañ ca Dummukho
ete raṭṭhāni hitvāna pabbajiṃsu akiñcanā
(*Jātaka* 7 v. 94)

While the verse itself makes no reference to the cause of the kings' renunciation, their stories are found in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 408) and the commentaries to the *Uttarajjhāyā*. In each case there are several layers perceivable in the text. In the *jātaka* the verses are considered to be older than the prose, and similarly the verses of the Prākrit *Uttarajjhāyā-nijjutti* (many of which are also found in the *Āvaśyaka-bhāṣya*) are built upon by the much later prose commentary of Devendragaṇi.[19] It is therefore worth comparing the stories in the verse versions first, before moving on to consider the prose.

In the *Uttarajjhāyā-nijjutti* the following verse sums up the prompts that led each king to give up his throne:

> A bull, a banner of Indra, a bracelet and a blossoming mango were the awakening for Karakaṇḍu, Dummuha, Nami and the king of Gandhāra. (265)[20]

This is then followed by a series of verses specifically relating to King Nami, which takes pains to clarify the relationship between Nami the *pratyekabuddha* and another King Nami of Videha who became the twenty-first *jina* of our time cycle:

> Two Videhan Namis left the kingdom and went forth:

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[19] While the *jātaka* prose was fixed by around the fifth century CE, Devendragaṇi was working in the late twelfth century. However, the verses of the two texts are likely to be closer in date to one another. For the *jātaka* see Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 3, 375-83. For the *Uttarajjhāyā nijjutti* (Sanskrit: *Uttarādhyayana-niryukti*) see Willem B. Bollée, ed., *The Nijjuttis on the Seniors of the Śvetāmbara Siddhānta: Āyāranga, Dasaveyāliya, Uttarajjhāyā and Sūyagaḍa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995), and for Devendragaṇi's commentary see Jacobi, *Ausgewählte Erzählungen* and Meyer, *Hindu Tales*. I am grateful to Jonathan Geen for helping me to untangle the authorship and dating of the *Uttarajjhāyā* commentary.

[20] My translation from Bollée, *Nijjuttis*, 95: *Vasabhe ya Indakeū, valae ambe ya pupphie bohī | Karakaṇḍu-Dummuhassā, Namissa Gandhāra-raṇṇo ya.* See also Jacobi *Ausgewählte Erzählungen*, 34, where it is quoted in Devendragaṇi's commentary. Bollée (*Nijjuttis*, 95) notes that both this verse and that listing the kings are also found in the *Āvaśyaka* literature, as *Āvasyaka-Bhāṣya* 205-6.

One was Nami the ford-maker, and one was a *patteya-buddha*. (267)
The venerable Nami who was the ford-maker had a retinue of a thousand,
and having placed his son on the throne he abandoned his ties and went forth. (268)
And the second King Nami, having lived in the kingdom which was itself complete in all qualities,
abandoned his ties and went forth. This should be taken with reference to the the second [Nami]. (269)
Fallen from Puṣpottara [Heaven], having gone forth he bacame a solitary renouncer.
He achieved omniscience as a *patteya-buddha*, attained perfection as a solitary renouncer. (270)[21]

Finally we have some verses, also shared with the *Āvaśyaka-bhāṣya* and quoted in Devendragaṇi's commentary, which assign each of the four prompts to each of the four kings:

Having seen in the middle of the enclosure a bull,
white, well-born and with well-formed horns,
regarding prosperity and ruin as the same,
the king of Kalinga perceived the *dhamma*. (271)
Seeing the decorated banner of Indra
fallen and destroyed,
regarding prosperity and ruin as the same,
the king of Pañcāla perceived the *dhamma*. (272)
…[22]

[21] My trans. from Bollée, *Nijjuttis*, 96: *dunni vi Namī Videhā, rajjâiṃ payahiūṇa pavvaiyā | ego Nami-titthayaro, ego patteya-buddho ya ||267|| jo so Nami-titthayaro, so sāhassiya parivvuḍo bhayavaṃ | gantham avahāya pavvai, puttaṃ rajje ṭhaveūṇaṃ ||268|| Bīo vi Namī-rāyā, rajjaṃ caiūṇa guṇa-saya-samaggaṃ | gantham avahāya pavvai, ahigāro ettha biieṇaṃ ||269|| pupph'uttarāu cavaṇaṃ, pavvajjā hoi ega-samaeṇaṃ | patteya-buddha-kevali, siddhi gayā ega-samaeṇaṃ ||270||*

[22] I have ommitted v.273 from this translation, since it would appear to be an interpolation. It adds another set of experiences for the King of Pañcāla, who is said to have seen growth and depletion in the moon and then perceived impermanence and understood the *dhamma*. This sign is not mentioned elsewhere in the story, and is superfluous since we have already heard about the king's response to the broken

Having heard the sound of many bracelets
and the silence of one,
King Nimi, ruler of Mithilā, renounced. (274)
The mango tree was delightful,
with its beautiful sprouts, shoots and flowers;
Regarding prosperity and ruin as the same,
the king of Gandhāra perceived the *dhamma*. (275)[23]

The verses of the *jātaka* version also marry up the signs to kings, with each king declaring the reason for his decision to renounce:

I saw a mango inside a grove,
full-grown, dark and lustrous and fruiting,
and I saw it broken up for its fruit.
Seeing this I took up the life of a monk.
Two bracelets, polished and made ready by a skilled man,
a woman bore with little sound,
but bringing the two together made a noise.
Seeing this I took up the life of a monk.
Birds [attacked] a bird carrying carrion,
and many assembled like the one,
and attacked for the sake of meat.
Seeing this I took up the life of a monk.
I saw a bull in the middle of the herd,
with a quivering hump, splendid and strong,
and I saw him pierced because of lust.
Seeing this I took up the life of a monk.[24]

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banner. Unlike the four verses that surround it, verse 273 does not appear in the *Āvasyaka-bhāṣya*, adding further to the evidence that it is an interpolation.

[23] My trans. from Bollée, *Nijjuttis*, 96: *seyaṃ su-jayaṃ su-vibhatta-singaṃ, jo pāsiyā vasahaṃ guṭṭha-majjhe | riddhiṃ a-riddhiṃ samupehiyāṇaṃ, Kalinga-rāyā vi samikkha dhammaṃ ||271|| jo Inda-keuṃ samalankiyaṃ tu, daṭṭhuṃ paḍantaṃ paviluppamāṇaṃ | riddhiṃ a-riddhiṃ samupehiyāṇaṃ, Pancāla-rāyā vi samikkha dhammaṃ ||272|| ... bahuāṇaṃ saddayaṃ succā, egassa ya a-saddayaṃ | valayāṇa Nimī-rāyā, nikkhanto Mihilâhivo || 274|| jo cūa-rukkhaṃ tu maṇâbhirāmaṃ, sa-manjarī-pallava-puppha-cittaṃ | riddhiṃ a-riddhiṃ samupehiyāṇaṃ, Gandhāra-rāyā vi samikkha dhammaṃ ||275||* Bollée notes that these verses are also found as *Āvasyaka-bhāṣya* verses 207, 210, 211 and 212.

As can be seen, although the wording of these verses is different, the pattern of listing a positive (such as a fruiting tree or a splendid bull) followed by a negative (a broken tree and injured bull) is common to many of them. The way in which signs prompted the kings' renunciation is also shared, though one sign is different – the banner of Indra in the Jain text, and the birds fighting over meat in the Buddhist. In addition, the association of each sign with a king is different, though this is not in any case made until the prose in the Buddhist version, which applies the kings to signs in accordance with the order of verses.

The verses, of course, only supply the bare bones of the stories surrounding these kings, and to find the full stories we must move onto later layers of commentary. The prose of the *jātaka*, which was likely finalised around the fifth century CE, supplies the stories fairly concisely, and places them in a larger narrative: the Buddha-to-be, we are told, had been born as a potter and encountered these four renouncers, who are said by this point to be *paccekabuddha*s (Sanskrit: *pratyekabuddha*s). He asked them to explain their reasons for going forth, and so they recounted the verses. Inspired by this, the Bodhisatta told his wife that he wished to go forth, but she snuck off to renounce herself before he could do so, and so he was left with the responsibility of bringing up their children. He finally renounced once he was sure his children could look after themselves.

The frame story as found in the *jātaka* would appear to be a Buddhist innovation. In the commentary to the *Uttarajjhāyā*, which dates from as late as the twelfth century but draws on some earlier material, the focus remains clearly on the stories of the four kings. However, the main aim seems to be to provide a back-story for each king and an explanation for their names, rather than an elaborate tale of their shocking experience of the sign that led to renunciation. As is common in Jain narratives, what we find here is a lot of mistaken identity and karmic confusion, as well as an emphasis on the importance of renunciation.

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[24] My translation from Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 3, 380: *Amb'āham addaṃ vanamantarasmiṃ, nīlobhāsaṃ phalinaṃ saṃvirūḷhaṃ; tam addasaṃ phalahetū vibhaggaṃ, taṃ disvā bhikkhācariyaṃ carāmi. || 90 || Selaṃ sumaṭṭaṃ naravīraniṭṭhitaṃ, nārī yugaṃ dhārayi appasaddaṃ; dutiyañ ca āgamma ahosi saddo, taṃ disvā bhikkhācariyaṃ carāmi. || 91 || Dijā dijaṃ kuṇapam āharantaṃ, ekaṃ samānaṃ bahukā samecca; āhārahetū paripātayiṃsu, taṃ disvā bhikkhācariyaṃ carāmi. || 92 || Usabh'āham addaṃ yūthassa majjhe, calakkakuṃ vaṇṇabalūpapannaṃ; tam addasaṃ kāmahetū vitunnaṃ, taṃ disvā bhikkhācariyaṃ carāmi. || 93 ||*

Since our focus is on the kings of Videha, let us take the story of Nami as an example. In the *Uttarajjhāyā* commentary this begins with his mother's loss of her husband (who is reborn as a god) and escape to the forest where she gives birth to a boy. She is then abducted by a *vidyādhara* (another common motif in Jain narratives) and her son is found by the king of Mithilā and raised as his own. The affection the king feels for the child is later explained as the result of them having had several past lives as brothers. Later this son – named Nami (Humbler) because all the other kings bow to him – wages war on the king of Sudaṃsaṇa, not realising that this is actually his older brother who has now ascended the throne. His biological mother, who has become a nun following her adventures, explains this and reconciles her two sons. However, while in many Jain stories this type of identity confusion is enough to prompt the main players to renounce, Nami continues to rule justly for many years, and it is only when he gets ill and is massaged with sandal by women wearing noisy bracelets that he decides it is time to give up his household life.

The bracelets that prompt King Nami to abandon the worldly life in the *Uttarajjhāyā* commentary, are said in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* to be the reason behind King Naggaji's renunciation. Although the king is different, the message is very much the same: Two bracelets make an annoying noise jangling against one another, but one is quiet, and similarly the solitary life is superior to life with another. This focus on the solitary life is a key feature of the *pratyekabuddha*, which is often translated is 'solitary *buddha*' on account of the idea that he is awakened by and for himself, and does not found a religious community like a full *buddha* or *jina*.[25] This idea of the

[25] For a useful, if slightly basic, study of the concept of a *paccekabuddha* in Pāli Buddhism see Ria Kloppenborg, *The Paccekabuddha: A Buddhist Ascetic* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). As Kloppenborg demonstrates, despite the understanding that *paccekabuddha*s are solitary and do not teach, in fact they often congregate together on Mount Gandhamādana and some do teach, though usually through signs rather than words. Kloppenborg also provides a translation of stories surrounding the *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. These tales of *paccekabuddha*s vary in their statement of the cause of *bodhi*, but in several we find the same sorts of experiences mentioned in the story of the four kings. Martin G. Wiltshire, *Ascetic Figures before and in Early Buddhism: The Emergence of Gautama as the Buddha* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990) is the only other book-length study of the concept of a *pratyekabuddha* in the English language, and while he provides some useful material his overall argument is flawed and his grasp of the sources inadequate (see the reviews, for example, of Collins and Norman).

solitary path is expanded upon in a key early Buddhist text, the *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta*. Here we find, in 75 verses, an exploration of the ideal of 'wandering lonely as a rhinoceros' (or, according to some commentarial traditions, as a rhinoceros *horn*).[26] Verse 48 contains the bracelet analogy:

> Having seen the shining [bracelets] of gold,
> well crafted by the goldsmith,
> knocking together when two on an arm,
> one should wander lonely as a rhinoceros.[27]

The commentary, which provides a number of stories of *paccekabuddha*s, explains that a king had become disgusted with the world after hearing bracelets jangling on the arms of a woman who was grinding sandal for him. However, this king is neither Nami nor Naggaji, but simply 'a certain king of Vārāṇasī' (*aññataro bārāṇasirājā*), as indeed the majority of kings in that text are denoted.[28] Yet another king of Vārāṇasī,

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[26] For a recent, and fairly comprehensive, discussion of this debate see Dhivan Thomas Jones, "Like the Rhinoceros, or Like its Horn? The Problem of the *Khaggavisāṇa* Revisited," *Buddhist Studies Review* 31/2 (2014): 165-78. Jones also summarises (p.165-6) the reasons for considering these verses to be early, including the presence of a commentary on them in the *Niddesa*, a text that is itself accepted as part of the scriptures, and the inclusion of parallel verses in the *Mahāvastu* and in a Gāndhārī manuscript from the first century CE.

[27] My translation from Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith (eds) *The Sutta-Nipāta* (London: The Pali Text Society, 1913), 8: *Disvā suvaṇṇassa pabhassarāni, kammāraputtena suniṭṭhitāni; saṃghaṭṭamānāni duve bhujasmiṃ, eko care khaggavisāṇakappo.* See also Kloppenborg *Paccekabuddha*, 99-100.

[28] These stories are recounted in Kloppenborg, *Paccekabuddha*. It is not clear how old the association between the verses and the stories is, though the commentary in its current form is probably from the fifth century CE and is ascribed – albeit problematically – to Buddhaghosa. The *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* itself has often been used by scholars who wish to argue that the earliest image of Buddhist renunciation was of the solitary ascetic, as helpfully discussed in Shayne Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 4-7. As Clarke points out (p.7), however, the fifth-century commentator associated this solitary renunciation not with ordinary Buddhist monks or even the Buddha himself, but with *paccekabuddha*s/*pratyekabuddha*s. It is clear that whenever this association between verses and stories was made, solitary wandering was understood to be a key feature of the *pratyekabuddha*.

this one named Brahmadatta, views a tree stripped of its blossoms and leaves, and decides to leave his kingdom and become a *paccekabuddha*, speaking another verse of the *sutta* to explain.[29] It is clear that these motifs had an ability to associate with a variety of characters, and indeed we will meet another occurrence of the bracelets later in this chapter.[30]

King Nami of Videha in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* is prompted to renounce by the sight of a hawk being mobbed by other birds until he drops his food, and the subsequent bird to catch the meat likewise being harrassed by the others. This is the one sign that is not shared between the Buddhist and Jain stories; the *Uttarajjhāyā* has in its place the story of a banner used in a festival for Indra lying broken in the filth and mud, which King Dommuha finds shocking. The two other motifs shared by the texts are a mango tree and a bull: One king (Karaṇḍu in the *jātaka*, Naggai in the *Uttarajjhāyā*) sees a lush mango tree and picks some fruit. Afterwards the people strip the tree bare, and seeing this the king decides to renounce. The other king (Dummukha in the *jātaka*, Karakaṇḍu in the *Uttarajjhāyā*) sees a noble bull gored and harrassed by another.[31]

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[29] In actual fact the link between story and verse (number 64) is rather tenuous. See Kloppenborg *Paccekabuddha*, 114-5.

[30] The signs in the story also feature in other lists of similes that are said to be instructive. Thus the hawk dropping meat is also mentioned in a list of similes about letting go of sense pleasures in *Majjhima Nikāya* 22 (*Alagaddūpama Sutta*, or 'Discourse on the snake simile') and expanded upon in *Majjhima Nikāya* 54 (*Potaliya Sutta*). The simile of a fruiting tree is also mentioned in *Majjhima Nikāya* 22, but *Majjhima Nikāya* 54 expands it into the story of a man who climbs a tree to reach the fruit and a second who takes an axe and chops it down, injuring the first. The image of burning, such a powerful part of the Janaka stories, is also used as a simile for the worldly life in the famous Fire Sermon (*Asittapariyaya Sutta*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 35.28). Quite how these lists of similes relate to the narratives is unclear and probably very flexible. It is perhaps possible that the presence of the hawk simile in the *Majjhima Nikāya* inspired its incorporation into the *jātaka*, for the Jain version has a festival banner of Indra in its place in the list.

[31] There is a different emphasis in each version: In the *jātaka* the bull is gored to death by another bull in competition over a mate, and so the perils of lust form the king's reflection. In the Jain version it is the sight of an old harrassed bull that used to be the prime bull that prompts reflection on the transitoriness of experience.

The differences in identification of kings and signs is complicated further by a version of the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* that is found in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, preserved in Tibetan. According to Panglung's German summary, four *pratyekabuddha*s pay a visit to a potter, displaying their supernormal powers, and the latter expresses curiosity about the reasons for their going forth.[32] The answers are familiar but in a different order to the *jātaka*: The king of Kaliṅga saw birds fighting over a piece of flesh, the prince of Mithilā saw a prime bull being injured, the son of King Brahmadatta saw a mango tree in bloom that had been destroyed, and another prince heard bracelets on a woman's arm making a din. Here we find the same four signs as in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka*, and indeed the same basic story, including the renunciation of the potter and his wife after their encounter with the *pratyekabuddha*s. However, the signs are once again flexible in their associations with specific kings, and some of the kings have been forgotten or adjusted.

While the exact signs and the identity of the kings differs, the process of being prompted to renounce by some sort of external sign of the dissatisfaction that comes from worldly life is found in all of the stories. Along with solitude, this process of learning from signs is arguably linked to the very notion of a *pratyekabuddha* (Sanskrit), *patteyabuddha* (Prākrit) or *paccekabuddha* (Pāli), a concept which is found in both Buddhist and Jain sources but with a certain lack of clarity over what distinguishes a *pratyekabuddha* from a full *buddha/jina* or any other awakened being. In his 1983 article on the subject, Norman argued on philological grounds that the term must predate Buddhist and Jain uses of it, rather than being borrowed from one by the other.[33] He further suggested that the term may have been an incorrect back-formation from *pratyaya-buddha*, or someone awakened by a cause (*pratyaya*).[34] This argument partly stems from a discussion in a commentary to the Jain *Āyāraṃga Sutta* (Sanskrit *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*) in which the word *buddha* is explained as being of three types: *svayam-buddha* (awakened by oneself), *pratyeka-buddha* (awakened by something), and *buddha-bodhita* (awakened by another awakened being). As Norman noted, in *Uttarajjhāyā* chapter nine, during the story of his renunciation, Nami is not called a *pratyekabuddha*, but rather a *saha-sambuddha*, equivalent to *svayam-sambuddha*, a term also used to refer to the *jina*s.[35] He argues that this reflects an earlier twofold distinction between those awakened

[32] Jampa Losang Panglung, *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya : analysiert auf Grund der tibetischen Übersetzung* (Tokyo: Reiyukai Library, 1981), 163.

[33] Norman, "Pratyeka-Buddha," 95.

[34] Norman, "Pratyeka-Buddha," 96-7.

[35] Norman, "Pratyeka-Buddha," 94.

by themselves (*svayam-sambuddha*, both *tīrthaṅkara*s and others who did not found a new dispensation) and those awakened by others (*buddha-bodhita*, also designated *śrāvaka*s – 'hearers' or disciples); the *patteya-buddha*, he suggests, may have been slotted in between these two categories later on, when the idea was absorbed from outside the tradition.

Through his careful exploration of the various terms in Prākrit and Pāli that are used to describe this type of awakened being, Norman poses the possibility that 'awakened by an external cause' was the original referent for what became known as a *pratyekabuddha*, though he is cautious in his conclusion, noting that the argument of back-formation could work both ways: 'Not only can *prace'a* (<Sanskrit *pratyeka*) be wrongly backformed into *pratyaya*, but *prace'a* (<Sanskrit *pratyaya*) can also be wrongly backformed into *pratyeka*.'[36] He also admits that 'the only criterion available for the assessment of the correctness or otherwise of the suggestion that the original form of the term was *pratyaya-buddha* is whether it makes better sense than the traditional derivation from *pratyeka-buddha*'.[37] While Norman clearly thinks a derivation from *pratyaya* does make better sense, other scholars have disagreed. Anālayo, for example, has put forward evidence that the idea of *pacceka* as 'solitary' makes good sense within the wider context of Pāli scriptures, and that 'tales of kings becoming Paccekabuddhas, common to the Buddhist and Jain traditions, may perhaps best be understood as specific instances where external conditions played a central role, rather than as the norm for attaining Paccekabodhi, at least from a Buddhist viewpoint'.[38] An alternative possibility, it would seem to me, is that there may have been several conflicting understandings of the term in circulation and that redactors chose the most appropriate to their context. This would account for the occasional presence of the term *pratyaya-buddha* in Sanskrit Buddhist texts, and for the dual association with causes and solitude.[39]

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[36] Norman, "Pratyeka-Buddha," 99.

[37] Norman, "Pratyeka-Buddha," 99.

[38] Anālayo, "Paccekabuddhas", 13-14. See also p.33 n.62. While Anālayo may be correct that *pacceka* has an established meaning of 'solitary' in Pāli contexts, this does not seem to me to devalue Norman's argument, which relies heavily in any case on Jain understandings of the term. Anālayo's disclaimer 'at least from a Buddhist viewpoint' would appear to acknowledge this.

[39] I am grateful to Giuliano Giustarini for a stimulating email exchange on this subject. For the occurrence of *pratyaya-buddha* in Buddhist texts see Norman "Pratyeka-Buddha," 96, where he comments that this has usually – but perhaps mistakenly – been assumed to be the result of an error of exegesis.

Since our interest in the story of the four kings is not the nature of *pratyekabodhi* but the idea of an interconnected network of narratives associating kings of Videha with renunciation, we need not engage further with this debate. One final observation is worth noting, however: in the earliest verses referring to the four kings and their reasons for renouncing, we do not find any reference to them becoming *pratyekabuddha*s; this term only creeps in in the later commentarial layers. Rather, the focus is on renunciation, or leaving behind the worldly life. Thus in the *Uttarajjhāyā* the kings are mentioned in a long list of eminent royals who renounced, and in the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* the renunciation of the four kings prompts the Buddha-to-be to follow their example, not to pratyekabuddhahood (an achievement that would be impossible for a future Buddha) but simply to the path of renunciation. Whether or not these four kings achieved awakening, and if so of what variety, is of secondary interest to the story in its earliest form.[40] The key association with the four kings in its early strand would appear to be renunciation, rather than any specific form of awakening. And whether this is prompted by a grey hair, a mango tree, a bracelet, a hawk, a banner, a bull, or something else entirely, these inspirations for renunciation tie together our Videhan lineage as well as link the kings of Videha to other eminent renouncing royals.[41]

"Though Mithilā May Be On Fire..."

We may now move onto our third motif, that of a king named Janaka or Nami who is unmoved by the sight of his burning city. This transition need not involve moving between stories, only within them, for in the *Janaka-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 539) the king in question is prompted to renounce by various external signs and then announces his detachment from the burning Mithilā, thus bridging the two motifs.

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[40] The declaration that the signs caused *bodhi* (Prākrit *bohi*) is found in the *nijjutti* verse quoted above, but the type of *bodhi* is not specified, and the original context in the *Uttarajjhāyā* is in a discussion of kings *renouncing*. Neither Nami nor Janaka is included in the list of seers given in the *Isibhāsiyāiṃ*, all of whom are traditionally understood to be *pratyekabuddha*s. See Nalini Balbir, "The Language of Ascetic Poetry in the *Isibhāsiyāiṃ* and its Parallels," in *Buddhist and Jaina Studies: Proceedings of the Conference in Lumbini, February 2013*, ed. J. Soni, M. Pahlke and C. Cüppers (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2014), 137-69.

[41] In this sense the list of four kings sits within a broader genre of king-lists, for example lists of kings who sacrifice, kings who conquer, kings who are generous. Such lists are found in all three traditions.

Before we examine the burning city motif in particular, it is worth summarising other aspects of the *Janaka-jātaka* in order to show how it stitches these various motifs together.

Initially it is the sight of two mango trees that causes Janaka to rethink his position as king: after he takes a fruit from a fruitful tree and enters a park for his enjoyment, the people behind him strip the tree bare. On his return journey he sees the sorry-looking tree, and next to it a barren tree that has been left to thrive. He reflects that kingship is like the fruiting tree and renunciation like the barren tree, and resolves to become like the latter. After living for a time as a renouncer (*samaṇa*) but within the palace, he decides to leave the kingdom altogether and walks away in the garb of a renouncer and carrying a begging bowl. His wife, initially mistaking him for a *paccekabuddha* (once again reinforcing the links between these Videhan monarchs and *paccekabuddha*s) realises he is her husband and follows him entreating him to change his mind. During this period in which his wife tracks him he also encounters the simile of the bangles, which a young girl explains to him in three verses:

> Renouncer, on this hand are fastened two bracelets.
> and coming together they produce sound: this is the effect of the second.
> On this hand, renouncer, a single bracelet is fastened,
> and not having a second it makes no sound, but remains silent as a sage.
> The second makes a dispute – for with whom would *one* quarrel?
> Solitude is pleasing for those who wish for heaven.[42]

Janaka tries to use this to persuade his wife to leave him alone, but she will not. Subsequently Janaka makes a similar point through an encounter with a fletcher who closes one eye in order to better make his arrows straight, but even then she refuses to leave him. He eventually has to sneak off into a forest while she is unconscious on the road, having fainted as a response to his efforts to send her away.

<Insert Figure 6.1 here>

[42] My translation from Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 64: *Imasmiṃ [me] samaṇa hatthe paṭimukkā dunīdhurā, saṃghātā jāyate saddo, dutiyass' eva sā gati. (277) Imasmiṃ [me] samaṇa hatthe paṭimukko ekanīdhuro, so adutiyo na janati, munibhūto va tiṭṭhati. (278) Vivādamanto dutiyo, ken' eko vivadissati, tassa te saggakāmassa ekattam uparocatan ti. (279)*

Clearly this story is closely linked to that of the four kings, as well as to the story of king Nimi who renounces after a grey hair. External prompts – some of them shared with other stories – play an important role not only in helping Janaka himself renounce, but also in helping his wife understand his decision. (She does eventually become a renouncer herself, and achieves a heavenly rebirth as a result.) They are therefore perhaps best viewed not always as prompts but also as similes, a role several of them also play in two *sutta*s of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.[43] And what these similes have in common is an ability to show the need for abandoning wealth and embracing the life of a solitary renouncer.

Two other motifs are found in the *Janaka-jātaka* that resonate with Jain sources about the renouncing royals of Videha. The first of these is the notion of a dialogue with someone who tests the king's resolve, for both King Janaka and King Nami have such an encounter shortly after their renunciation. In the *Uttarajjhāyā* (chapter nine) the focus is almost entirely on this conversation, in which Sakka-disguised-as-brahmin uses a variety of arguments to try and dissuade Nami from his quest. Their first exchange of words is somewhat cryptic, with Sakka asking:

> Why is Mihilā full of uproar today?
> Pitiless noises are heard from the palaces and houses.[44]

To this the king replies:

> In Mihilā is a delightful sacred tree that gives a cool shade
> and, with its various leaves, flowers and fruits, supports many.
> When the delightful sacred [tree] is shaken by the wind,
> the birds cry out, suffering and without refuge.[45]

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[43] See discussion in note 30.

[44] My translation from Charpentier, *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*, 96: *kiṇṇu bho ajja mihilā kolāhalagasaṃkulā | suvvanti dāruṇā saddā pāsāesu gihesu ya (7)*

[45] My translation from Charpentier, *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*, 96: *mihilāe ceie vacche sīyacchāe maṇorame | pattapupphaphalovee bahūṇaṃ bahuguṇe sayā (9) vāeṇa hīramāṇaṃmi ceiyaṃmi maṇorame | duhiyā asaraṇā attā ee kandanti bho khagā (10).* See also Jacobi, trans., *Jaina Sūtras Part II*, 36-7. Jacobi takes Maṇorama as the name of the tree, which is a possibility, though the meaning 'pleasing to the mind' also works adjectivally. The tree is a *ceie* 'shrine' (Pāli *cetiya*, Sanskrit *caitya*).

The king is presumably comparing himself to the tree, the loss of which makes the people (the birds) cry out. However, it also suggests an association with similes for renunciation, and perhaps hints at the prompt of the mango tree that appears so fruitful but has the potential to be stripped bare. Following this exchange, Sakka tells Nami that his palace is on fire, prompting the strong response that 'even if Mihilā is on fire nothing of mine is burning'; we will address this particular motif below. Thereafter Sakka uses a number of arguments about the duties of the *kṣatriya*s, suggesting that the king needs to build forts and palaces, punish wrongdoers, conquer foes, sponsor sacrifices, give alms and make wealth. The king rejects these duties of a householder, using a variety of similes to explain that he is making a fortress out of austerities and conquering the self. Unable to dissuade him, Sakka reveals himself and praises the king.

In the *Janaka-jātaka* the King of Videha's dialogues are considerably less prominent, but nonetheless form a significant part of the long renunciation attempt made by Janaka during this story. He encounters two ascetics in turn, firstly Nārada and then Migājina. In both cases he is prompted to explain his reasons for going forth and is given advice and encouragement by the sage. In discussion with Migājina, Janaka explicitly denies that he has any human teacher, stating rather that 'the fruiting mango and the fruitless are both teachers for me.'[46] Once again we see the association with the notion of a *pratyekabuddha* as one who has no human teacher but is prompted into *bodhi* by an external cause. However, while Janaka is described as looking like a *pratyekabuddha* he cannot be one, for he is the Buddha-to-be and thus destined to achieve full buddhahood in a later life. We will return to this important distinction later.

Janaka's other dialogue partner in the *Janaka-jātaka* is his wife Sīvalī, a past life of the Buddha's wife and thus Janaka's multi-life spouse. When Janaka goes forth dressed as a renouncer Sīvalī refuses to leave him, even after he uses various means to demonstrate his determination. It is in the early part of his encounter with Sīvalī that we find Janaka's declaration about Mithilā on fire. As a ruse to persuade him to return, Sīvalī orders that people should make fires. She then tells him that his city is on fire and all his wealth is being destroyed. He responds with the verse quoted above. She then stages a raid:

[46] My translation from Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 61: *phalī ambo aphalo ca te satthāro ubho maman ti.*

> At that very moment they showed the king men from here and there with weapons in their hands chasing and plundering. They sprinkled red lac dye on their bodies to make them look as if they had been wounded, and carried them away on planks as if they were dead.[47]

But even this cannot change the king's mind, for he declares:

> Surely we live in great happiness, we who have no possessions.
> While the kingdom is being destroyed nothing of mine is harmed.[48]

This is of course a parallel verse to that about Mithilā being on fire, and with a large portion of the narrative demonstrating the desperate attempts of Sīvalī to convince the king of his reponsibilities, the *jātaka* really hammers home the strength of Janaka's determination.

The verse about Mithilā being on fire is also found three times in the *Śānti Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. This book of the epic is situated just after the end of the catastrophic war that has all but annihilated the warriors of the earth. King Yudhiṣṭhira, the victor of the war, is so traumatised by the experience that he wants to give up his throne and become a renouncer. His brothers and other advisors urge him not to. The Mithilā verse is quoted during this debate, when Yudhiṣṭhira says:

> Now they say this verse was sung by King Janaka, who was beyond the pairs of opposites, who had gained Absolute Freedom, and who had Absolute Freedom in full view. "Yea! My possessions are endless though nothing at all is mine. Were Mithilā ablaze in flames, nothing of mine would be burning."[49]

While Yudhiṣṭhira holds this up as an example of strength of resolve by a fellow royal, his younger brother Arjuna is having none of it. He responds at length with

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[47] My translation from Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 55: *Taṃ khaṇaṃ yeva āvudhahatthe purise tato tato ādhāvante vilumpante sarīre lākhārasaṃ siñcitvā laddhapahāre viya phalake nipajjāpetvā vuyhante mate viya ca rañño dassesuṃ.*

[48] My translation from Fausbøll, ed., *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 55: *Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma yesaṃ no n'atthi kiñcanaṃ, raṭṭhe vilumpamānamhi na me kiñci ajīratha.*

[49] James L. Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 203. The verse in the Pune Critical Edition (12.17.18; vol.13 p.66) reads: *anantaṃ bata me vittaṃ yasya me nāsti kiṃcana | mithilāyāṃ pradīptāyāṃ na me dahyati kiṃcana ||*

the story of what Janaka's wife said to him, to dissuade him from renunciation. She, Arjuna reports, roundly criticised the king's decision, telling him he was neglecting his duties of supporting the gods, brahmins and ancestors, and only swapping one form of attachment for another – less appropriate – one. As the context of the argument suggests, renunciation was the *wrong* choice for King Janaka, as it is the wrong choice for Yudhiṣṭhira.[50]

The presence of Janaka and his verse of detachment in this *Mahābhārata* context was presumably inspired by the *Janaka-jātaka* or a similar narrative. It suggests that the association with Janaka the Videhan king and renunciation was well known and thus a point of reference in debate, and that the particular verse uttered by the king had become famous as a sign of his detachment. The *Mahābhārata* reference also demonstrates awareness of Janaka's wife's attempts to dissuade him, as found in the *Janaka-jātaka.* These links are clear, but another is more implicit, and helps to shed light on the structure of the *Janaka-jātaka* more broadly. While our focus has been on Janaka's renunciation, the first half of the *Janaka-jātaka* tells of the extraordinary efforts that Janaka went to to regain his rightful kingdom, which had been taken from his father by his uncle. One particularly iconic image of the *Janaka-jātaka* is that of Janaka shortly after being shipwrecked on a mission to earn sufficient wealth to muster an army. While the other merchants are being eaten by sea monsters, Janaka determinedly sets out for shore, even though he has no hope of reaching it. The goddess of the ocean Maṇimekhalā spots him after seven days, and is so impressed with his energetic determination that she rescues him and takes him to Mithilā. There he passes a number of tests in order to gain the throne and marry Sīvalī, his uncle's only surviving child.

<Insert Figure 6.2 here>

The extraordinary effort that Janaka makes to regain his kingdom in the *Janaka-jātaka* parallels in some ways the extraordinary effort that Yudhiṣṭhira has had to make in the *Mahābhārata*. Both men had lost out to relatives, and both had to endure a period of exile. While the epic's long battle books frame Yudhiṣṭhira's effort largely in martial terms, Janaka's effort is related more to his physical endurance and intellectual sharpness, but both become king only after a huge undertaking. It is

[50] For a discussion of the use of Janaka and his wife in the debate surrounding Yudhiṣṭhira's response to the war, see Simon Brodbeck, "Gendered Soteriology: Marriage and the *Karmayoga,*" in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 159.

the question of whether or not it is appropriate to give up a kingdom after it took so much effort to regain that sits in the shadows of both the *Mahābhārata* occurrence and the *Janaka-jātaka*. For the Buddhist audience the effort made to gain the kingdom serves to underline the greatness of the king's renunciation, for had he merely inherited it with no effort it would be less impressive to give it up. For the audience of the *Mahābhārata*, however, the fact that Yudhiṣṭhira has had to wait so long and work so hard is used as an argument for him *not* giving it all up.

The different points of emphasis in the *Janaka-jātaka* and *Mahābhārata* reflect a broader South Asian concern about the hierarchy of duties. While the *Mahābhārata* tends to present the duties of a king as above – or at least different to – those of a renouncer, the *Janaka-jātaka* emphasises the importance of one's personal quest over and above the worldly temptations of wife and kingdom. As part of a lineage of renouncing royals, stories of Janaka – and indeed of Nimi/Nami – have much to tell us about the traditions' views on royalty and renunciation. The verse of detachment expressed by a king looking back at his burning city makes a clear statement about the relative values of kingdom and forest. Dialogues with family members or ascetics or the god Indra also help to explore the merits of renunciation and demonstrate its superior value. The motif of the visual prompt for renunciation, as associated strongly with the story of the four kings, also compares the householder life – with kingship as its ultimate exemplar – with the higher path of a renouncer. The prompt of grey hair, however, suggests that renunciation is particularly suited to old age, thus serving to reconcile the two ideals of king and sage and make both possible for a single character.

Stories about Janaka and Nimi/Nami thus offer a rich tapestry of ideas concerning the crucial tension between worldly responsibilities and other-worldly pursuits. By so doing they also explore several notions of lineage, whether of kings or renouncers or religious leaders. Having explored the different motifs in turn, as summarised here in the table that forms Fig. 6.4, we must now turn to the broader notions of lineage that serve to connect them together.

<Insert Figure 6.3 here>

Part 2: The Lineage

What are we to make of this noble lineage of Videhan monarchs and all the interconnected narrative motifs associated with them? Why might we be interested in this lineage as scholars of early South Asian religion? Now that we have outlined

the stories and sources, I would like to explore the major themes associated with the lineage, and the ways in which the cluster of motifs speaks to the needs of Brahmanical Hindu, Jain and Buddhist communities. I will begin by looking at the key tension between kingly duties and renunciation that is found in all the motifs. While it might be assumed that in Jain and Buddhist sources this tension would be clearly resolved in favour of renunciation, this cluster of narratives is actually more open to the notion of household responsibility, as we will see. In the Brahmanical context, which we will then explore, the association between Janaka and the renunciation debate allows for a variety of different portrayals, all of which in some way speak to the Buddhist and Jain stories outlined above. In order to bring our discussion of worldly and renunciatory imperatives into a broader context, we will then briefly address the female characters in our stories, and how their approach to this tension compares to the kings who play the central role in the stories. Following this we will take a quick look at another narrative that is connected to this lineage, the story of King Arindama, and the flexibility in use of motifs that this story demonstrates. Finally we will address the Buddhist tendency to identify all heroes as the Buddha-to-be and the effect that this tendency has had on our narrative nexus. As will become clear, the notion of lineage is key in several different senses: concerns about the patriline and lineage of succession of kings interplay with the notion of a lineage of renouncers and the importance of the solitary life, and the lineage of the Buddha eventually trumps both of these in Buddhist retellings of the stories and motifs.

Kingship and Renunciation

In our study of renouncing royals two ideal types are obviously present: the king and the renouncer. Putting aside all discussion of *pratyekabuddha*s for the time being, all the interweaved motifs concerning the Videhan lineage have a clear focus on what it means to be a good king, and how that relates to the path of the renouncer. As the use of the Janaka story in the *Mahābhārata* makes clear, not all the religious traditions of early South Asia agree over the propriety of renunciation, nor on what form renunciation should take. Whereas Arjuna and others argue forcefully that Janaka was *wrong* to renounce, all the Buddhist and Jain sources just as strongly assert that he was *right*. Yet the question is not simply 'to renounce or not to renounce', but also *when* to renounce.

One of the curious features of the Buddhist story of King Nimi, who renounces at the sight of his first grey hair, is that this model of renunciation is contradicted by other stories telling of the urgency of renunciation even for the young. Thus, for

example, the *Temiya-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 538) tells of the Buddha-to-be's birth as a prince, his memory of the hellish suffering caused by a past life as a king, and his subsequent determination to avoid inheriting the kingship in his current life. His desire to renounce – or, more immediately, to avoid becoming king – leads him to pretend to be deaf, mute and crippled despite horrific torments. Eventually he renounces and his family and most of the citizens follow him. The Buddha's final lifestory, in which he renounces as a young man despite the promise of a luxurious adult life, would appear to support the perspective of the story of Temiya. The story of Nimi stands in contrast to these and other stories, for in it we find renunciation as an ideal activity for later in life, after one has fulfilled the duties of a householder, in Buddhist terms giving gifts and encouraging morality. This same notion is also found in the related story of Daḷhanemi in the *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 26), in which a wheel-turning monarch knows it is time to renounce when his wheel-treasure disappears; at such a time he installs his son on the throne and goes forth. It is surely no coincidence that he shares his name with our Videhan royals, though Videha is not mentioned as his kingdom.

Of course it is only the grey hair motif – and, linked to it, the story of Daḷhanemi's renunciation when his wheel of kingship disappears – that associates renunciation with old age. The other stories of Janaka and Nami do not explicitly state that the kings renounced only in old age, though they do show the kings getting on with royal duties first. As we have already commented, in the *Janaka-jātaka* the Buddha-to-be is first shown going to great efforts to regain his kingdom, and only later – after fathering a son to continue the preservation of the lineage – do his thoughts turn to renouncing. Similarly the four kings of the famous verse were all observing their duties before deciding to renounce; indeed the very fact of their being kings suggests a certain maturity of age. It is a curious feature of the story in Devendragaṇi's commentary to the *Uttarajjhāyā* that while various shocking things happen to King Nami during his lifetime – perhaps most significantly the revelation that a rival king is actually his brother – it is only late on in his story that he finally decides he has had enough of ruling and wishes to renounce. The story would appear to suggest that it is okay to dispatch one's kingly duties first and renounce later. The usual Jain urgency to abandon one's household duties – which inevitably result in great acts of harm – is not present in this narrative motif.

The perceived appropriate moment for renunciation, at least in a Brahmanical context, is closely related to the question of lineage. It is not considered appropriate to leave a kingdom without a protector, and so a king should father a son before renouncing. It is therefore significant that our renouncing royals even in Buddhist

and Jain texts are said to place their sons on the throne before going off into the forest: King Nami and the other three kings do so in the *Uttarajjhāyā*, as do King Makhādeva and King Nimi in the *Nimi-jātaka*, while King Janaka in the *Janaka-jātaka* uses the suitability of his son to rule as one justification for his abdication of responsibility.[51] The preservation of the lineage is interpreted slightly differently in the *Nimi-jātaka*, however, in which it is said that Nimi's son Kaḷārajanaka did not go forth and thus severed the lineage; clearly the Buddhist authors saw the lineage as being specifically of *renouncing* kings, and not just of kings.

An emphasis on renouncing only after having first fulfilled one's worldly duties might seem to sit uncomfortably with broader Buddhist and Jain ideals, and may indeed indicate that the stories originated outside these traditions. However, by demonstrating that fulfilling the duties of kingship and pursuing a personal path to liberation can both be achieved in a single lifetime, the stories of the Videhan royals have several key advantages for the storyteller. Firstly, the stories are appropriate for a world-embracing audience, including kings, since they do not belittle the responsibilities of royalty. Thus powerful patrons can be instructed by stories of a royal exemplar, while never denying the ultimate superiority of renunciation. Secondly, the stories demonstrate that renunciation need not destroy a lineage, since it can be achieved *after* fathering a son, even in old age. Indeed, the lineage of Videhan monarchs who renounce would have been rather a short lineage were it not for this accommodation of worldly duties! The danger of the renouncer movements to families and lineages is thus played down, making the stories palatable to a wide audience. Thirdly, the contrast that is set up between kingship and renunciation serves to instruct the audience in the need to give up even the greatest of enjoyments and responsibilities. This contrast plays out most strikingly in the *Janaka-jātaka*, in which the great efforts Janaka made to regain his kingdom were outstripped by the even greater efforts he made to give it all up again. This creative tension is perhaps best summed up by a series of 90 verses that he utters before his renunciation, in which he praises Mithilā at the same time as stating his desire to leave it. The series begins:

> O when will I give up prosperous Mithilā, broad and radiant all around,
> and go forth into homelessness? When indeed will this be?
> When will I give up prosperous Mithilā, evenly laid out and partitioned,

[51] *Uttarajjhāyā* chapter 9 v. 2 and chapter 18 v. 47; *Nimi-jātaka* Fausbøll, *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 96 (Makhādeva) and 129 (Nimi); *Janaka-jātaka* Fausbøll, *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 62, especially v. 152.

and go forth into homelessness? When indeed will this be?[52]

While painting a picture of a magnificent kingdom filled with many riches and good citizens, and a palace containing all the comforts one could expect, the repeated refrain of these verses reminds the audience that the greatness of the city is only serving to strengthen the king's resolve. It is perhaps this ability of the stories to praise kingdoms and renunciation simultaneously that best explains the presence of the Videhan monarchs in Buddhist and Jain narrative traditions.

Janaka and Renunciation in Brahmanical Literature

Not all the King Janakas of early Indian religious literature are famous for renunciation, of course. Indeed, since Janaka denotes a lineage as much as it does an individual, the variety of King Janakas should be no surprise. The two most famous Janakas who are not strongly associated with renunciation are King Janaka of the early *Upaniṣad*s and Sītā's father in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. However, I would argue that even for those kings in this lineage who do *not* renounce, the association of the lineage with renouncing allows us to understand their position better. While the Upaniṣadic king would appear to foreshadow some of the later motifs associated with Janaka, the *Rāmāyaṇa* speaks to the tension between royalty and renunciation largely through other characters, but both are illuminated by our cluster of motifs. And these motifs are more directly relevant to understanding the kings of Videha that appear in the *Mahābhārata*, one example of which we have already discussed. It is clear that at least some of the Brahmanical narrative tradition was aware of the widespread association between Videhan monarchs, and used this association for their own various purposes.

King Janaka is a famous dialogue partner in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, such that Black describes him as 'the ideal Upanishadic king, as he is cast as both the generous patron and the knowledgeable monarch'.[53] He is not, however, famous for renunciation, and he neither sees signs suggesting the necessity of renunciation or benefits of the solitary life nor declares his detachment towards the burning city of Mithilā. Instead he offers gifts to, and discusses key ideas with, the brahmin teacher

[52] My translation from Fausbøll, *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 46: *Kadāhaṃ Mithilaṃ phītaṃ visālaṃ sbbatopabhaṃ | pahāya pabbajissāmi, taṃ kadāssu bhavissati. Kadāhaṃ Mithilaṃ phītaṃ vibhattaṃ bhāgaso mitaṃ | pahāya pabbajissāmi, taṃ kadāssu bhavissati.*

[53] Brian Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India: Priests, Kings, and Women in the Early Upaniṣads* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 106.

Yājñavalkya, though Janaka often ends up teaching the brahmin rather than vice versa.[54] Given that the early *Upaniṣad*s are generally considered to predate the Buddhist and Jain traditions, the portrayal of Janaka in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* perhaps allows us to glimpse Janaka *before* he became associated with the narrative motifs we have been exploring. Intriguingly, three parallels link Janaka of the *Upaniṣad*s to the later stories of Janaka and Nimi, and these are suggestive of the influence of the Upaniṣadic king on his later narrative associations.

The first parallel between the Upaniṣadic Janaka and the other royals of Videha is his generosity and patronage of teachers. In the *Upaniṣad*s Janaka is associated with lavish gifts of a thousand cows to his favoured teacher.[55] This great generosity and patronage of course parallels the great generosity of King Nimi in the Buddhist sources, and indeed the general association of good kingship with gift-giving. While Janaka of the *Janaka-jātaka* might prefer to support *pratyekabuddha*s, and Janaka of the *Upaniṣad*s supports brahmins, the patronage of learned and soteriologically-advanced figures is the same mark of a good monarch. Secondly, King Janaka of the *Upaniṣad*s is associated with dialogic exchanges with learned partners, in which he often has the upper hand. Similarly, as we have seen, the notion of dialogue between the king and another being – whether this be his wife, the god Śakra, a sage or a potter – is a key motif in our stories. While dialogue is one of the basic structures of the *Upaniṣad*s, it is somewhat less common in narrative genres such as *jātaka*s, so influence from the Upaniṣadic form on these later sources is a possibility. Thirdly, more than any other figure it is King Janaka's own priest Yājñavalkya who is most associated with the teaching – and practice – of renunciation.[56] Janaka himself comes close to a form of renunciation when he offers to give the Videhans to the brahmin after a long teaching in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV, 4.

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[54] Janaka also appears in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, in which he defeats Yājñavalkya in debate. The reversal of the teaching relationship to show kings teaching brahmins is a key feature of the *Upaniṣad*s.

[55] This association even leads to King Ajātaśatru thinking that his own gift of a thousand cows to the brahmin teacher Gārgya will lead people to cry out "a Janaka, a Janaka!" *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II, 1 and *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad* IV, 1.

[56] Significantly he is the only character in the principal *Upaniṣad*s to deny the need for a son. Yet, as we have seen, even the Janakas of Jain and Buddhist texts acknowledge the need to continue the lineage, even as they promote the ideal of renunciation. See discussion in Black, *Character of the Self*, 92-96 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22.

It would seem, therefore, that the dialogic form of the *Upaniṣad*s, the generosity of the ideal Upaniṣadic king Janaka, and the associations – albeit at this stage vague – between the king and the ideal of renunciation, might have had an influence on the formation of the narrative motifs found within Jain, Buddhist, and later Brahmanical sources. While influence cannot be proven, ignorance of this prominent king's presence in the *Upaniṣad*s by later storytellers seems unlikely. However, since the motifs of the response to signs and detachment from a burning city are completely absent, we must assume that these stories surrounding the renouncing royals must have entered the tradition from elsewhere. Given the preponderance of these motifs in Buddhist and Jain literature, the stories' origins in the northeast, amongst the various renouncer movements flourishing there, seems likely. That said, in addition to the three specific ways in which the Upaniṣadic Janaka appears to foreshadow the later motifs, one other contribution of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is clear: it establishes King Janaka of Videha as a prominent monarch, whose intelligence and patronage of teachers make him worthy of featuring in more stories.

Janaka is also a keen dialogue partner in the *Mahābhārata*, where he receives a number of teachings on a variety of topics during the *Śānti Parvan*. In many cases his appearance in the epic bears no resemblance to the renouncing royal we know so well, though in some cases there are suggestive parallels and in others clear evidence of intertextuality.[57] We have already noted the use of Janaka's renunciation by Yudhiṣṭhira in his attempt to justify his plans to give up his kingdom in 12.17.18. The verse in which Janaka expresses his detachment is in fact found three times more during the *Śānti Parvan*, suggesting widespread awareness of the extent of Janaka's detachment. In a use of the verse in 12.171.56 we also find

[57] I will not attempt a complete study of the Janakas of the *Mahābhārata* here, though there are several suggestive parallels with our Jain and Buddhist sources. For example, in 12.28 Janaka is taught about the sufferings inherent in life, and urged to stop grieving for his relations, a form of detachment also demontrated in some of the motifs we have studied. Similarly suggestive but inconclusive is *Mahābhārata* 12.100, in which King Janaka of Mithilā is said to have conjured up images of heavens and hells to encourage his warriors to excel themselves in battle; is this in awareness of King Nimi's tours of heavens and hells in the Buddhist sources? For a useful overview of Janaka's role in the dialogues immediately preceeding his debate with Sulabhā, which suggest his association with renunciation, see James L. Fitzgerald, "Nun Befuddles King, shows *Karmayoga* does not work: Sulabhā's Refutation of King Janaka at MBh 12.308." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30 (2003): 647-8.

evidence of wider awareness of the motifs associated with Janaka: Here it is Bhīṣma who mentions Janaka's verse in his teaching to Yudhiṣṭhira about the importance of detachment. Immediately following his quoting of the verse, Bhīṣma notes that the story of the seer Bodhya is also pertinent, and proceeds to narrate a dialogue in which Bodhya discusses his detachment with King Nahuṣa. In a clear resonance with our narrative cluster, Bodhya declares that he has no teacher, but only learns from images, which include that of an osprey who was killed by other birds for the sake of stealing his meat, and a fletcher who was so engrossed in making arrows that he failed to notice a king in his midst. There is no doubt that the compiler has some awareness of the wider literature surrounding Janaka, though the idea of being prompted into renunciation through signs is here offloaded onto a neighbouring character.

Janaka's verse of detachment is also mentioned at the end of a dialogue between the teacher Pañcaśikha and King Janaka, which is present in the Vulgate but not in the main text of the Critical Edition.[58] Here it sits alongside a long narration of rival and erroneous teachings, which are cleared away by Pañcaśikha. And finally the verse appears at 12.268.4, when Bhīṣma relates how King Janaka declared his detachment to Māṇḍavya, and taught him the perils of attachment; Māṇḍavya achieved liberation as a result. In all these cases in which the verse about Mithilā burning is mentioned, Janaka's detachment makes him a significant positive example, but it does not equate to renunciation. On the one occasion that it is linked with giving up the kingdom – when Yudhiṣṭhira uses it in 12.17.18 – it is firmly rebuffed. Through these and other episodes involving Janaka, the *Mahābhārata* paints him as a king interested in and committed to detachment, if not actually renunciation.

This question of whether detachment necessitates renunciation is a moot one in the *Mahābhārata*, and in relation to Janaka it comes to a head in yet another episode of the *Śānti Parvan*. In 12.308, Janaka is presented as an advocate of the idea that one can be a renouncer at heart without giving up outward ties, that one can act without attachment and attain perfection that way. This idea, more widely known as *karmayoga*, is promoted by such texts as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which itself of course

[58] In the Clay Sanskrit Library edition and translation (Alex Wynne, *Mahābhārata Book Twelve, Peace, Volume Three "The Book of Liberation"*, New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2009) it is at 219.50. It is included in the Pune Critical Edition in Appendix 1, no. 19, verse 35 (vol.16, p.2036).

is an attempt to dissuade a royal warrior from shirking his duties.[59] To show King Janaka achieving *mokṣa* through the practice of *inner* renunciation would appear to be the perfect way to challenge śramaṇic stories of Videhan kings renouncing their thrones, while maintaining the idea that Janaka was impressively detached. It is therefore curious that the text actually questions whether or not Janaka is right in his assumption that he has achieved perfection, for he is challenged – and apparently defeated – by the female ascetic Sulabhā, an adept in yoga.

Many scholars, perhaps most notably Fitzgerald in his 2003 translation of this episode, have noted that Sulabhā appears to win the argument with King Janaka, for the narrator (Bhīṣma) speaks approvingly of her, and Janaka is silenced by her arguments.[60] However, the lesson may be more complex. Black notes that Bhīṣma is – in the larger narrative frame – discoursing on the importance of correct kingship, which is more in line with Janaka's view, even though he appears to endorse Sulabhā's view in recounting the debate. In addition, Janaka appears to be acknowledged as having attained *mokṣa* as well as Sulabhā, since Bhīṣma introduces the debate as being 'between a man who had attained *mokṣa* and a woman who had attained *mokṣa'*.[61] Indeed, elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata* Janaka is said to have attained liberation. Black concludes that 'the text seems to endorse both arguments: within the context of the dialogue itself, Sulabhā appears to be the clear winner of the argument; yet within the context of Bhīṣma's instruction to Yudhiṣṭhira, Janaka's view seems to be preferred.'[62] The debate, therefore, may have a clear rhetorical victor, but the notion of renunciation *during* kingship is not defeated.

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[59] It is not clear that Arjuna is planning to renounce and pursue a spiritual life, however. Rather, he states he would rather beg for his food, which for a *kṣatriya* – the givers and providers – would be the ultimate humiliation.

[60] Fitzgerald even entitles his translation and study of this episode according to this assumption: "Nun Befuddles King, shows *Karmayoga* does not work."

[61] Brian Black, "Dialogue and Difference: Encountering the Other in Indian Religious and Philosophical Sources," in *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Traditions*, ed. Brian Black and Laurie Patton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 255, quoting *Mahābhārata* 12.308.19. See also Simon Brodbeck, "Ekalavya and *Mahābhārata* 1.121-28," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10/1 (2006), 17 n. 36, where he notes that Sulabhā's criticisms of the king are, in a sense, as damning of herself as they are of him. I am grateful to both Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black for fruitful discussions of this debate and for helping me to appreciate its nuance.

[62] Black, "Dialogue and Difference," 255.

This episode may, therefore, be a Brahmanical attempt to neutralise the famous lineage of renouncing kings being promoted by Jain and Buddhist stories.

While Janaka seems to be strongly associated with renunciation (at least the inward variety) in the *Mahābhārata*, as he is in the Buddhist and Jain sources, the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not betray any awareness of the wider narrative nexus surrounding the kings of Videha. A King Janaka is a central character in this smaller epic, as he is the father of Sītā – who is herself also called Janakī – and oversees her marriage to Rāma. However, he does not appear to be interested in renunciation, and during his recounting of his eminent lineage he does not mention, for example, that his ancestors Nimi and Janaka were famous for their renunciation. The associations that play such a strong role in the *Mahābhārata* and other sources seem to be absent here, perhaps suggesting the *Rāmāyaṇa* is, like the *Upaniṣad*s, earlier than these strong narrative threads.[63]

This appearance of Janaka in Brahmanical texts is therefore more complex than in the Jain and Buddhist sources that have occupied us thus far. While the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* appears to set up King Janaka as a generous and intelligent king dedicated to hearing about renunciation, the *Mahābhārata* builds on this image, sometimes demonstrating awareness of the wider narrative motifs that have – by this point – built up around him. The association between the lineage of Janaka and the ideal of renouncer is clearly strong within Brahmanical as well as Buddhist and Jain sources, but in the former context his renunciation tends more often to be of an internal, rather than external, variety. Buddhist and Jain texts stick with a more standard portrayal that emphasises the importance of physical renunciation of worldly life, all the while preserving the complementary emphasis on correct royal behaviour prior to renouncing.

What About the Women?

The lineage of renouncing kings of Videha is of course a lineage of men. Yet as we have already seen, several important female characters feature in these narrative sources, and suggest that the lineage's leaning towards renunciation might also

[63] Or perhaps, as Hiltebeitel suggests, the author was simply not that interested in the Videhans, viewing them simply as 'a collateral line to the Ikṣvākus who can supply brides to Rāma and his brother': Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 488.

benefit the women in the family.[64] Before we proceed to an examination of another use of our narrative motifs, therefore, it is worth taking a small diversion into the women's stories.

If we want to explore women and renunciation in relation to Janaka then we might immediately think of the Janaka-Sulabhā dialogue discussed above. There Janaka's ability to renounce inwardly while continuing to rule is challenged – apparently successfully – by the female renouncer Sulabhā. As Black argues, the role of gender in this debate is key, for it sits in a wider set of stories in the *Mahābhārata* in which women challenge men and assert their own right to be heard.[65] Perhaps, therefore, the story is as much about Sulabhā proving her own *mokṣa* as it is about her challenge of the king's claim. Either way, the presence of a strong female character who is acknowledged by the narrator as having achieved liberation through renunciation suggests that the debate over the abandonment of worldly duties is as relevant to women as it is to men.

Another female character who insists on making herself heard – and who is praised for her careful arguments in the *Mahābhārata* – is Sīvalī, wife of Janaka in the *Janaka-jātaka*. When she discovers that her husband has left the palace, she follows him and uses a number of ruses and arguments to try to tempt him back. During this part of the story she demonstrates her own difficulty in letting go of her husband, as well as her wit in striving to retain him. After he eventually outwits her and succeeds in disappearing into the forest alone, she also pursues the life of a renouncer, in a park outside the city, and she herself attains rebirth in a Brahmā realm, the same achievement as her husband.

In the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka*, by contrast, it is the woman who outwits the man, rather than vice versa. After the four *paccekabuddha* kings have declared the reasons behind their renunciation, both the potter (the Buddha-to-be) and his wife wish to go forth, but it is she who manages it first through sneaking off and leaving the potter to bring up their children. While this little narrative twist is not directly related to the renouncing kings, it does demonstrate three things: firstly, sometimes worldly duties, including the raising of children, must take priority over renunciation, at least temporarily; secondly, renunciation is the ideal for potters as

[64] I am grateful to the audience at the 2014 meeting of the Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions in Manchester, including Simon Brodbeck, Sarah Shaw and Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, for a fruitful discussion of this possibility.
[65] Black, "Dialogue and Difference", 254.

much as it is for kings; and thirdly, renunciation is the ideal for women as well as men. Overall, then, the more mundane characters in this story of the four *paccekabuddha* kings, help to bring the renunciatory ideal back down to earth for every member of the audience.

Looking at the female characters involved in the stories of the Videhan royals thus helps us to see that their portrayals of renunciation have a wider reach than at first glance.[66] It is the stories' ability to speak to this key value of renunciation that gives them so much currency within all three religious traditions. And the teachings are not simply aimed at kings, but rather at every member of the audience – male or female – who is grappling with the competing demands of worldly duties and a personal religious quest.

Playing with Motifs and Lineages: The Story of King Arindama

As the Brahmanical sources highlight, the central concern of the motifs associated with the Videhan lineage is the question of whether, how and when to renounce, a question that dominates much religious discourse in early South Asia, not just the stories of a single lineage. It is no surprise, therefore, that some of these motifs were also used by narrative composers and compilers in a context not directly relating to the Videhan kings. A complex picture of the flexibility of the various motifs surrounding this lineage is painted by the *Sonaka-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 529) and its parallel in the *Mahāvastu*, in which it is known as the Arindama story and features at the end of the text (III, 449-461). Both stories tell of a king called Arindama whose childhood friend Sonaka/Śroṇa renouces and later teaches the king about the benefits of renunciation. Within this basic framework are several motifs familiar from other stories, though these vary across the two versions, and so it is best to treat them separately in the first instance.

In the *Sonaka-jātaka* we find that Arindama is consecrated as king of Rājagaha (notably not Mithilā) after being found lying on an auspicious stone slab in a park, as happens also in the *Janaka-jātaka*. His friend Sonaka renounces after seeing the withered leaf of a *sāla* tree and becomes *paccekabuddha*, in a clear resonance with the stories associated with the four kings and with the *Janaka-jātaka*. When, much

[66] Given this interest in the female characters, it is worth noting the possibility that it is Sītā – also known as Janakī – who carries the renunciatory tendencies in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. However, it seems more likely that this epic dates to before a time when the renunciatory associations with the lineage were widespread.

later, the king seeks out Sonaka, the latter tells him of the benefits of renunciation, and a familiar line is present in an explanation of the seven blessings of being a monastic:

> *Pañcamam bhadram adhanassa anāgārassa bhikkhuno:*
> *nagaramhi ḍayhamānamhi nāssa kiñci aḍayhatha.*
>
> The fifth blessing for a possessionless homeless monk:
> When the city is on fire, nothing of his is burning.[67]

He also tells the king the story of a crow who became so absorbed in the pleasure of eating his way through an elephant carcass that he failed to notice that it was being swept out to sea. The king decides to crown his son (named Dīghāvu, the same as Janaka's son in the *Janaka-jātaka*), renounces and attains rebirth in a Brahmā realm. He is identified as the Bodhisatta (Buddha-to-be).

In the *Mahāvastu* we find ourselves a few steps closer to the motifs surrounding the renouncing royals of Videha. Importantly, in this version King Arindama rules in Mithilā, and so the verse spoken by his friend is closer to other versions:

> *mithilāyāṃ dahyamānāyāṃ nāsya dahyati kiṃcana*
> *caturthaṃ khu bhadram adhanasya anāgārasya bhikṣuṇo*
>
> When Mithilā is on fire, nothing of his burns:
> This is the fourth blessing for a possessionless homeless monk.[68]

References to *pratyekabuddha*s are, however, absent: Śroṇaka renounces simply because he sees the peril in sense pleasures, with no external prompt, and he is said to become a seer (*ṛṣi*), not a *pratyekabuddha*. This suggests that perhaps the connection with the *pratyekabuddha* ideal was made within the Pāli tradition, in response to close connections between the different motifs in circulation. The *Mahāvastu* version adds another layer to Śroṇa's teaching, for the story of the crow is followed by a series of verses describing the hells that are rather reminiscent of the *Nimi-jātaka*. He also makes this teaching after the king has been ruling for 84,000

[67] My translation from Fausbøll, *Jātaka*, vol. 5, 252.
[68] My translation from Émile Senart (ed.) *Mahāvastu* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1882-1897), vol. 3: 453.

years (the same number of years Nimi is said to have ruled) in the mango grove known as Mahādeva, which is presumably the same as Makhādeva grove, in which the Buddha is said to have told the *Makhādeva Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya.*

As well as demonstrating the flexibility of the interconnected motifs surrounding the renouncing royals of Videha, the story of Arindama suggests some differences in interpretation of these motifs in different Buddhist traditions. The Pāli tradition appears to have forgotten – or perhaps deliberately elided – the association with Mithilā by placing Arindama on the throne of Rājagaha. It has combined the well-known verse about a city in flames with the motif of the *paccekabuddha*. The *Mahāvastu*, on the other hand, does not associate the story with *pratyekabuddha*s, and keeps the focus firmly on the ideal of renunciation itself. That it is renunciation and not immediate awakening that is the ideal propagated by the story is clear from the identification of the characters: in the *Mahāvastu* the sage *Śroṇa* is the Buddha-to-be, and cannot therefore be awakened within the story. In this sense it is Śroṇa's presence in the lineage of past lives of the Buddha that is significant to the narrative, rather than King Arindama's presence in the lineage of renouncing royals of Videha.

Lineages of Buddhas

The difference between the character identifications of the Arindama story in its *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* and *Mahāvastu* versions is relevant to our other motifs as well, and takes us back to the question of whether the focus of our stories is on the achievement of awakening or simply renunciation. As we have seen, the four kings are closely associated with the idea of pratyekabuddhahood in both Jain and Buddhist sources, suggesting that this association is rather old. When King Nami is singled out for individual treatment in the *Uttarajjhāyā* he remains a *patteyabuddha*, and his renunciation is part of the story of his awakening. In the *Kumbhakāra-jātaka* the four *pratyekabuddha* kings are joined in the story by the Bodhisatta, identified as a potter who is inspired by his encounter with the four to renounce himself. He does not, of course, become a *pratyekabuddha*, for if he did this would prevent him from his eventual attainment of full buddhahood in a later life. The kings cease to be the ideal in this context, for instead the real hero is the Bodhisatta, and this is made clear by the story's continuation through the narration of his determination to renounce and his wife's sneaky attempts to beat him to it.

It is this tendency of Buddhist stories to identify all heroes as the Bodhisatta that probably accounts for the situation we find in both the *Nimi-jātaka* and *Janaka-jātaka*.

In the *Janaka-jātaka* the king is clearly identified with the Bodhisattva, and he is understood to be demonstrating the energetic determination that is required of an aspirant to buddhahood. It is thus impossible to identify Janaka as a *pratyekabuddha* despite clear connections with that character and with the stories of the four kings. That *pratyekabuddha*s are still central to the story is clear both from the presence of several external prompts that are elsewhere said to lead to pratyekabuddhahood, as well as from the presence of *pratyekabuddha*s at the court of King Janaka. Janaka himself is mistaken for a *pratyekabuddha* when he leaves the palace, and his solitary ideal of renunciation contrasts with the more sociable forest-dwelling that we find in many other *jātaka*s. It seems likely that the story was adapted from one in which Janaka was understood to become a *paccekabuddha*, in order to create a *jātaka* story that suitably augments the lineage of the Buddha by showing him supporting and emulating *pratyekabuddha*s.[69]

A similar tension is visible in the various versions of the story of King Nimi and his ancestor King Makhādeva. As noted above, in the *Makhādeva Sutta* only King Makhādeva is identified as the Bodhisatta, and the identification of King Nimi with the Bodhisatta is subsequently made in the *jātaka*s. Thus the earlier version, in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, allows for the idea that Nimi may have been another famous hero, though admittedly not a *paccekabuddha* since he is said to achieve rebirth in a Brahmā realm. We find a similar scenario in the Chinese sources: while the *Āgama* versions only identify Makhādeva as the Bodhisattva, Nimi also gains this identification in the *Lie Du Ji Jing*. However, the *Ekottarika-āgama* demonstrates the flexibility of associations by identifying that king as a past life of the Buddha's attendant Ānanda, and declaring Nimi's son, who brings to an end the eminent lineage of renunciation, to be an earlier rebirth of Devadatta, the Buddha's nemesis. The idea that King Nimi – a clear hero and thus a prime candidate for *jātaka* inclusion – is the Buddha-to-be seems to have evolved gradually. Nimi was initially some other famous hero, disassociated from the Buddha's biography, though the idea of Nimi as *pratyekabuddha* that is so strong in Jain stories is not present even in the earlier extant layer.

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[69] This is one area in which I am in agreement with Wiltshire, who also makes this argument: *Ascetic Figures*, 159. However, he is surely overstepping his evidence when he argues that the extensive shared mythology surrounding Nami/Janaka is evidence of a shared origin for Buddhist and Jain traditions, and that *pratyekabuddha*s were a 'proto-*śramaṇa*' ascetic group originating in Videha that gradually resulted in the sectarian traditions of Buddhism and Jainism.

We can see, therefore, that the needs of the *jātaka* genre – namely the identification of one character, ideally the hero, with the future Buddha – do not fit easily with the narrative motif of a king who renounces and achieves awakening in his current life. In a sense what we find in the Buddhist sources is a subordination of the lineage of renouncing kings to the lineage of the Buddha. It is this key figure, whose *jātaka* stories extoll his many virtues and achievements, who is lauded as the renouncer *par excellence*. Sometimes, therefore, he must take over the identification of King Janaka even though the latter is already understood to have been a *pratyekabuddha*, and sometimes he must learn from his encounters with *pratyekabuddha*s who had formerly been kings. The Jain sources, with no developed notion of a *jātaka* genre and a tendency towards lauding a number of omniscient beings alongside one another, make no such restrictions. However, it is notable that Nami the *pratyekabuddha* shares his name with the twenty-first Jina of this time cycle, who is also king of Mithilā. The *Uttarajjhāyā-nijjutti* takes pains to point out the parallel but also the distinction: Nami the *pratyekabuddha*, we are assured, is a separate character to the Jina, and considerably later in time.[70]

Conclusion

During this chapter we have established that there is a shared association between the royals of Videha and the ideal of renunciation, sometimes expressed also through the character of the *pratyekabuddha*. This association is present in both Buddhist and Jain sources largely through two narrative clusters, the first surrounding the four kings, and the second surrounding the king of Videha alone, variously called Janaka or Nimi/Nemi/Nami, who renounces usually at the prompt of an external sign, enters into dialogue about the propriety of his renunciation, and declares that even if Mithilā is burning nothing of his is destroyed. These intertwining motifs and associations are then played with in a variety of other stories, such as those surrounding Nimi, Makhādeva and Arindama in Buddhist texts, and the many references to King Janaka in Brahmanical sources.

On a very basic level, the presence of this association in all three traditions once again speaks to the shared heritage of early South Asian narrative. Many different storytellers and textual redactors and commentators were aware of the Videhan lineage's propensity for renunciation, and used characters from that lineage to

[70] *Uttarajjhāyā-nijjutti* 267-9; Bollee, ed., *Nijjuttis*, 96. In Devendragaṇi's commentary we hear mention of the past Jina Nami when the mother of the *pratyekabuddha* Nami visits Mithilā: see Meyer, *Hindu Tales*, 162.

explore how renouncing the throne could – and should – be undertaken. That the lineage speaks to two key values of early South Asian religious discourse – worldly duty and the need to renounce, whatever form this renunciation may take – enables wide use of the narrative motifs to prove one or other perspective on this tension. For Brahmanical sources this often means showing the possibility of internal renunciation through detachment, though the use of the motifs in Brahmanical contexts is by no means uniform. In Jain and Buddhist contexts we find a clear emphasis on the need for renunciation and the benefits of the solitary life, but alongside this an acknowledgement that fulfillment of worldly duties *before* renunciation is acceptable, even admirable. The lineage, ensured by this careful balance that allows for the fathering of sons before their abandonment, continues, we are told, through many generations.

The Videhan royal family is not of course the only lineage with a particular association; the other major example that also cuts across all three traditions is that of the Śibis/Śivis, who are renowned as extraordinarily generous. Stories abound of King Śibi, who variously gives away his eyes, allows insects to drink his blood, or cuts off his flesh to ransom a dove; the latter motif is found across all three traditions, and is – like the Videhan lineage – adjusted to suit each particular context. It is surely no coincidence that the most popular Buddhist story of a generous king, the *Vessantara-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 547), is set in the kingdom of the Sivis. Both the Sivis and the Videhans are lineages of very impressive kings, the former famous for their extraordinary generosity, the latter for their determined renunciation and detachment. As such they have great narrative appeal.

The ability of a lineage to carry a particular association is of great benefit to the narratives, for it provides both weight and flexibility. The weight comes from the long-standing association, one that is even accepted by rival traditions. The flexibility comes from the fact that it is a *lineage* rather than an individual who carries the association, and so a whole variety of stories can abound and interlink without fear of contradiction. Janaka is at once the king who thinks he has achieved *mokṣa* without renouncing, and a *pratyekabuddha*, and the future Buddha. Nimi renounces having seen his first grey hair, or bracelets jangling and making a racket, or birds fighting over a piece of meat. These characters are one and the same yet also independent, and so a cluster of inter-related motifs emerges, each one speaking back to the central concerns of the lineage: royalty and renunciation.