

Aśvaghoṣa on Kings and Kingship

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of King Śuddhodana and Kapilavāstu, the latter's kingdom, in the Buddhacarita (BC) and the Saundarananda (SNa). As I shall try to demonstrate, the poet's depiction of Śuddhodana is strongly reminiscent of, and, I think, very likely based on, Brahmanical accounts of the rājadharmā (BC 9.48) and the dharmarāja (BC 1.75) as they can be found, first and foremost, in the Mahābhārata (MBh). As for his description of the Śākya kingdom, it is obviously meant to be evocative of the "golden age" or, conversely, of its lack of any characteristic of the kaliyuga, which again points to Aśvaghoṣa's likely acquaintance with epic descriptions of the kaliyuga and/or the yugānta as they can be found, e.g., in the so-called Mārkaṇḍeya section of the MBh (esp. 3.186 and 188).

Keywords

Aśvaghoṣa – Ancient Indian kingship – Yuga theory – Rājadharmā – Dharmarāja

1 Introduction¹

As was to be expected from a native of Sāketa/Ayodhyā who regarded Vālmiki as the *ādikavi* (BC 1.43) and "never wearies of reminding us that the Buddha belonged to the dynasty of his home,"² Aśvaghoṣa's extant works appear to

1 Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the BC, the SNa, MBh 3 and MBh 12 are borrowed from Johnston (1984 and 1932), van Buitenen (1975), and Fitzgerald (2004), respectively.

2 Johnston 1984: II.xlvii. The dynasty in question is, of course, the Ikṣvāku's. Cf. Johnston 1984: II.xlvii (also quoted in Hildebeitel 2006: 247): "The case is entirely different [from the MBh, VE] with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for which an inhabitant of Sāketa, the scene of its most poignant

be strongly indebted to the Brahmanical epics, something that has long been recognized by modern scholarship. Proposed first by E.B. Cowell (1893: xi–xii), the hypothesis was substantiated by Andrzej Gawroński (2012b: 89–102), C.W. Gurner (1927), and E.H. Johnston (1984: II.xlvi–I),³ and has received, in the

episodes and the capital of its dynasty, could not but keep a warm place in his heart, however his religious beliefs had changed.”

- 3 *Aśvaghōṣa's indebtedness toward the Rām. will be dealt with only marginally here. Pointing at BC 6.36, 8.8, 9.9 and 9.69, Cowell (1893: xi) remarked that “[t]he Rāma myth is several times referred to in the Buddha-karita,” but rightly added (1893: xii) that “these references are vague, and do not necessarily imply the previous existence of our present Rāmāyana.” From Cowell's treatment of the parallelism between BC 5.48–62 and Rām. 5.7–9 (5.10.34–49 in the old Bombay edition; see Biardeau/Porcher 1999: 726–729; the Bodhisattva's and Hanumān's vision of the women in the seraglios of Śuddhodana and Rāvaṇa), one is tempted to conclude that Cowell regarded the Rām. passage as indebted to the BC: “in the Hindu poem it is merely a purposeless episode, only introduced for the sake of ornament; in the Buddhist poem it is an essential element of the story [...] In the Rāmāyana the similarity is more evident, as the description there is only a continued repetition of two stanzas in the Buddha-karita [5.50 and 5.55, VE] [...]” (Brockington 1998: 485 and Hildebeitel 2006: 248 agree with V. Raghavan [1956] that the harem scene in the BC is borrowed from *Sundarakāṇḍa* 5.7–9.) In a chapter of his “Inaugural-Dissertation” (1904) entitled “Vālmiki and Aśvaghōṣa,” Otto Walter (a student of Ernst Leumann in Strasbourg) compared some stanzas by Aśvaghōṣa and Kālidāsa exhibiting similar motifs (pure wind, clear sky, flower rain, Indra's banner, “aufgeblühte Augen,” “das Trinken mit den Augen,” “die goldenen Krügen gleichen Brüste,” “das Lachen des Flusses mit dem Schaume der Wellen,” etc.) and tried to trace these descriptions back to the Rām. (“um zu zeigen, daß dieser [= Kālidāsa, VE] seine Gedanken nicht dem Buddhacarita entnommen zu haben braucht,” 1904: 11). In his “Gleanings from Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita” (2012 [1914]: 58), Gawroński noticed, in a “final remark,” that “[t]here are numerous points of contact between the Buddhacarita and the Rāmāyana (especially Book II), which seem to prove undisputedly that Aśvaghōṣa was intimately acquainted with the latter work.” Right after the war, Gawroński (2012 [1919]: 89) could substantiate his claim: “To say it at once, we are able, with the help of [these references, VE], to prove past all doubt that the author of the Buddhacarita was intimately acquainted not only ‘with the myth of Rāma’ as Cowell says, but with the Rāmāyana such as we know it to-day.” (On p. 96, Gawroński concludes that “the Rāmāyana as known to Aśvaghōṣa must have resembled our present text in such a degree that there is no reason to believe it was different from it.”) C.W. Gurner (1927) basically agreed with Gawroński's conclusions and extended the comparison beyond the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, pointing to resemblances in “stock topics” (pp. 349–355, among which the seraglio motif, pp. 352–354, and Indra's banner, pp. 354–355), “style and alankara” (pp. 355–359), “grammatical and verbal resemblances” (pp. 359–363), and “moral instances” (363–366). According to Gurner (1927: 349), “it is not exaggeration to say that, with the exception of technical passages of Buddhist doctrine, the whole range of topics made use of by Aśvaghōṣa, whether in the main current of his narrative or incidentally, is comprehended in the Rāmāyana.” Johnston regarded Gawroński's conclusions concerning the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* as convincing (1984: II.xlviii), and refrained from any judgment concerning the seraglio passage “till the epic is critically edited from the best surviving MSS of all recensions” (1984: II.xlviii). According to Johnston, Aśvaghōṣa knew the Rām.'s description of Ayodhyā, Daśaratha and his court; “the story of Vālmiki's*

past few years, sustained attention from scholars, including specialists of the Sanskrit epics, such as Muneo Tokunaga (2006, partly on the basis of Byodo 1928–1929), Alf Hiltebeitel (2006, 2010: 142–163), and Patrick Olivelle (2008: xvii–lv, 2016). Recently, Olivelle has even suggested, in part on the basis of the poet's use of vocabulary that (surprisingly) seems never to occur before the MBh, the Rām., and the *Mānavadharmasāstra* (MDhŚ, = *Manusmṛiti*), that Aśvaghōṣa “kept himself abreast of the latest developments in Brahmanical theology and was familiar with the thought of [MDhŚ] and the epics,”⁴ even though, as noticed by Johnston, Aśvaghōṣa's works lack clear references to the plot and the main characters of the MBh.⁵ According to these scholars, *dharma*—and especially its “unfolding from a Buddhist perspective”—must be

having taught the poem to Kuśa and Lava” (see SNa 1.26). According to Johnston, however, Aśvaghōṣa knew a *Bālakāṇḍa* different from the one we now have and there is nothing to suggest that he knew the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (1984: 11.xlix); moreover, Aśvaghōṣa's BC 9.9 (visit of Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva to Rāma in the forest) betrays his familiarity with another, earlier version of the story of Bharata's visit to his brother Rāma at the end of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (1984: xlix–l). The learned editor did not rule out the possibility that certain “interpolations in the epic may easily be later than Aśvaghōṣa and show his influence” (1984: xlix, n. 1). In what seems the most recent in-depth discussion of Aśvaghōṣa's indebtedness to the Rām., Hiltebeitel (2006), besides acknowledging Gawroński's and Johnston's results on the poetical and “narratological” aspects of the question, has laid emphasis on the ideological significance of the “comparison between the Buddha quitting his home and Rāma leaving for the forest” (2006: 248). According to him (2006: 248–249), “[w]hat interests Aśvaghōṣa is the opportunity Rāma's departure offers to draw a contrast between Brahmanical *dharma* and Buddhist *dharma*.” From among the thirteen “interlocutors with whom he [= the Bodhisattva] hones his views on *dharma*” (2006: 249) in the first fourteen cantos, four are explicitly connected with motifs borrowed from the Rām. (Daśaratha's grief, Chandaka's reference to Sumantra abandoning Rāghava, the chariot of the son of Daśaratha, Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva visiting Rāma in the forest). Further, according to Hiltebeitel, the BC also contains “indirect allusions to the Rāma story” (2006: 250), as in the episode of the prince's encounter with the forest ascetics in BC 7, “that Aśvaghōṣa builds up [...] to represent the *vānaprastha* (married forest dweller) mode of life idealized in the forest books of both epics”; similarly, “Yaśodharā's words in his absence are [...] also spoken in evocation of Sītā” (2006: 250, referring to BC 8.61–62).

4 Olivelle 2016: 402. This vocabulary includes words such as *dvija* and *dvijāti*, *trivarga* and *puruṣārtha*, which Aśvaghōṣa shares with roughly contemporary Brahmanical literature where they appear for the first time.

5 See Johnston 1984: 11.xlvi–xlvi. Johnston (1984: 11.xlvi) considered likely that Aśvaghōṣa knew the *Nalopakhyaṇa* (SNa 4.5 ≈ 1.30, SNa 4.42–44 ≈ 10.26–27, BC 8.18–19 ≈ 21.3, 6–7) and the *Bhagavadgītā* (SNa 16.38 ≈ BhG 13.10; SNa 11.33 ≈ BhG 2.66). However, Johnston concluded (1984: 11.xlvii): “[D]espite the many parallels we cannot establish that Aśvaghōṣa knew any portion of the epic in the form in which we now have it.” Hiltebeitel's detailed discussion (2006: 255–267; 2010: 147–155) of the parallelism between BC 10 (the Bodhisattva's arrival in Rājagṛha and his conversation with Bimbisāra) and the Jarāsandhavadhā episode in MBh 2.18–22 might point to a hypothetical influence of the MBh on Aśvaghōṣa.

considered Aśvaghoṣa's "central concern" in the BC.⁶ In other words, the BC "is concerned principally with the intellectual challenges to the Buddhist *dharma*, especially to the Buddhist view of the ascetic life as the highest religious aspiration and the only mode of life that can lead a person to final liberation from the phenomenal life of suffering."⁷

As a consequence, it is hardly surprising that the chapters most scrutinized so far have been BC 9 and 10, in which characters diversely connected to the royal function—Śuddhodana's minister/counselor (*mantrin*, *mantra-dhara*) and chaplain (*purohita*) in BC 9 ("as the seer, the son of Urvaśī, accompanied by Vāmadeva, approached Rāma when he was in the forest"⁸), Śreṇya Bimbāsāra in BC 10—try to dissuade the Bodhisattva from embracing renunciation and to convince him to come back to Kapilavāstu to assume kingship. For as pointed out by several scholars since Gawroński, whereas the Bodhisattva's departure from his home is strongly reminiscent of the epic scene of Rāma leaving Ayodhyā for the forest, these persons' arguments as well as the prince's replies find striking parallels in the *rājadharmā*- and the *mokṣadharmaparvan* of the Śāntiparvan of the MBh (MBh 12).

The present essay has nothing to contribute to this topic. Rather than dealing with competing ethical standards or with contradicting views of the legitimacy of kingship as they can be found in BC 9 and 10, it focuses on a concept of *dharma* that brahmins and Buddhists at least provisionally had in common, i.e., *dharma* in the sense of ethical and/or political righteousness as it is to be embodied and fostered by the ideal king, the "*dharma* king,"⁹ and as it is spelled out in BC 2 and SNa 2. There is indeed every reason to believe that Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of Śuddhodana and his kingdom in these chapters is strongly indebted to "epic" descriptions of the righteous king. If Aśvaghoṣa's Śuddhodana has long been recognized as an ideal king even by Brahmanical standards, surprisingly little has been written on the sources, the structuring features and the purpose of this description. In spite of the poet's overt (BC 28.74) and often remarkably close reliance on Buddhist canonical sources,¹⁰ these seem to be of very little help for identifying his sources concerning kings and kingship. Even the most detailed biographical accounts of the Bodhisattva, such as those found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (SBhV), the *Mahāvastu* (MV) and

6 Hiltebeitel 2010: 143.

7 Olivelle 2008: xxxi.

8 BC 9.9cd: *yathā vanasthaṃ saha vāmadevo rāmaṃ didṛkṣur munir aurvaśeyaḥ* // . On Vāmadeva and Aurvaśeya, see Johnston 1984: II.124–125, n. 9.

9 For different meanings of *dharma* in the BC, see Olivelle 2008: xliiv–xlix and Broquet 2015.

10 See Eltschinger 2012, 2013, forthc. a, b and c.

the *Lalitavistara* (LV), have very little to say about Śuddhodana and Kapilavāstu—both being described, at best, in terms of Ikṣvāku/Śākya genealogy and/or in relation to the *topos* of the Bodhisattva’s “four (MV, LV)/five (SBhV) considerations” as to the time, place, family, “continent,” caste (brahmin or *kṣatriya*) and mother best suited for his last existence;¹¹ in particular, Aśvaghōṣa’s description owes nothing to the motif of the sixty or sixty-four characteristic features of the eligible family¹² or to these sources’ rare descriptions of Śuddhodana and Kapilavāstu.¹³ In much the same way, the scriptures’ portrayal of other virtuous kings such as Bimbāsāra and Prasenajit seems not to have served as a model for Aśvaghōṣa’s Śuddhodana, and the same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of “canonical” descriptions of the *cakravartin* (universal/wheel-turning monarch), none of whose characteristic features match Śuddhodana’s.¹⁴ As for the AN’s enumeration of the five qualities of (the son of) a righteous king, it surely played no role in the picture.¹⁵ Of course, the figure of Aśoka, which so deeply impregnated the Buddhist *imaginaire* associated with kingship, immediately comes to mind as a possible influence on the poet’s depiction of Śuddhodana. This hypothesis raises several problems, however. First, Aśvaghōṣa’s allusion to Aśoka at the very end of the BC is too scant to

11 Four *vilokitas* in MV 11.1–3 (*kāla*-, *deśa*-, *dvīpa*-, *kula*-; Jones 1952: 1), with no detail; four *mahāvīlokita* in LV 19,6 ff. (*kāla*-, *dvīpa*-, *deśa*-, *kula*-; Foucaux 1988: 20 ff.); five (*vy*)*avalokanas* in SBhV I.36,5–7 (*jāti*-, *deśa*-, *kāla*-, *vaṃśa*-, and *strī*-), described in SBhV I.36,8–38,18. See Eltschinger forthc. d.

12 Sixty in MV 11.1,6 (Jones 1952: 1), detailed in MV 11.1,2–2,7 (Jones 1952: 1–2); sixty-four in LV 23,10–25,4 (Foucaux 1988: 24–25); I am not aware of any parallel in the SBhV.

13 LV 26,4–13 (Foucaux 1988: 26–27) and 28,1–6 (Foucaux 1988: 28). The SBhV and the MV apparently contain no such description of Śuddhodana.

14 See, e.g., DN 11.169–199 (Walshe 1995: 279–290), DN 11.58–79 (Walshe 1995: 395–405), and MN 111.172–178 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 1023–1028). As far as I can see, Aśvaghōṣa resorts to none of the clichés generally associated with the *cakravartin* (also termed a *rājarsi* or “royal seer,” *passim*, and *rājā dhammiko dhammarājā*, “a righteous king who rules by the Dhamma” [AN 111.149, Bodhi 2012: 746]): the seven treasures (wheel, elephant, horse, jewel, women, householder, and counsellor), the four properties (beauty, lifespan, health, nicety), the five moral precepts (abstaining from murder, theft, wrong sexual behavior, lying, and intoxication), which only come to be observed (rather: the ten *kuśalakarmapathas*) once the fully awakened Śākyamuni comes back to Kapilavāstu (see below). In much the same way, the interesting description of the duties of a *cakravartin* (e.g., DN 111.61, Walshe 1995: 396–397) has only little in common with Aśvaghōṣa’s Śuddhodana and the epic *dharmarāja*. The same can be said of the description of Kusāvati, the capital city of the *cakravartin* king Mahāsudassana (DN 11.169 ff., Walshe 1995: 279). The only clear convergence I can see relates to Śuddhodana’s (first unaccomplished) wish for renunciation, a characteristic feature of the *cakravartins* (DN 111.59 ff., Walshe 1995: 396 ff.)—but by far not only!

15 See, e.g., AN 111.149–151 (Bodhi 2012: 746–747) and AN 111.152–156 (Bodhi 2012: 748–751).

allow any clear parallel with his treatment of Śuddhodana in BC 2 and SNa 2.¹⁶ Second, his portrayal of Śuddhodana has little in common with the *literary* figure of Aśoka as it appears, first and foremost, in the *Aśokāvadāna*, an “early form” (Johnston 1984: II.xvii) of which most certainly influenced BC 28.63–67.¹⁷ However, the most striking resemblances are not those between Śuddhodana and the literary Aśoka, but those with Aśoka as he broadcasts himself in his edicts.¹⁸ Should we hypothesize that Aśvaghōṣa, possibly a wandering monk, poet and dramatist/musician,¹⁹ was ever in a position to *read* the Mauryan king’s rock or pillar inscriptions? Even in the (likely) affirmative, this would only account for a few aspects of his portrayal of Śuddhodana. Third, and maybe more importantly, Śuddhodana could hardly be considered, hence have for its model, an allegedly *Buddhist* king. Whatever the historical truth concerning the religion(s) of the Kāpilavāstu area at the time of the Buddha, Śuddhodana could only be interpreted as a non- or pre-Buddhist king, i.e., as a *Brahmanical* king, and this is exactly what he is in Aśvaghōṣa’s portrayal.

16 BC_{Tib} 28.63–67, D102b2–6/P123b5–124a3: |dgra¹ po kheñs pa rnams kyi mya ñan ster pa po²| |skye dgu sdug bñal rnams kyi mya ñan gcod pa po³| |me tog ’bras ldan mya ñan med tar bltan sdug| |dus su de⁴ gus sa bdag mya ñan med pa byuñ| |’phags pa mau rya’i⁵ dpal des⁶ skye dgu’i⁷ phan don du| |’jig rten kun la mchod rten mtshan ma byed du bcug| |gtum po mya ñan med ñid thob nas sa la ni| |chos rgyal mya ñan med ñid las de⁸ thob par gyur| |mñon du byas pa’i mchod rten bdun po de rnams las| |drañ sroñ de yi gduñ rnams mau rya⁹ des blañs nas| |dpal ldan mchod rten ston ka’i sprin gyi ’od rnams kyi| |stoñ phrag brgyad cur babs pa dus su žag gis byas| |dga’ byed groñ gnas mchod rten brgyad pa dañ po ni| |de yi dus su gus ldan klu rnams kyis bsruñs te| |de phyir gduñ rnams thob pa ma yin rgyal po des| |der byas pa la ma dad¹⁰ rgya chen gyur pa’o| |de phyir yid kyī¹¹ dgra po ’bras bu rnams la ni| |kun nas gnas śiñ g.yo ba’i dpal ni bsruñs na yañ| |mi skyoñ des ni ñur smrig gon pa las gžan du| |lta ba nam par dag ciñ ’bras bu dañ po thob|. ¹dgra P : dag D. ²po P : pho D. ³pa po D : pa’o P. ⁴To be read dad? ⁵rya’i em.: rya P, rgya’i D. ⁶des D : te P. ⁷dgu’i P : dgur D. ⁸de D : des P. ⁹rya P : rgya D. ¹⁰dad D : dañ P. ¹¹kyi P : kyis D. “In course of time king Aśoka was born, who was devoted to the faith; he caused grief to proud enemies and removed the grief of people in suffering, being pleasant to look on as an *aśoka* tree, laden with blossoms and fruit. The noble glory of the Maurya race, he set to work for the good of his subjects to provide the whole earth with stūpas, and so he who had been called Caṇḍāśoka became Aśoka Dharmarāja. The Maurya took the relics of the Seer from the seven stūpas in which they had been deposited, and distributed them in due course in a single day over eighty thousand majestic stūpas, which shone with the brilliancy of autumn clouds. The eighth of the original stūpas, situated in Rāmapura, was guarded at that time by faithful Nāgas, and the king therefore did not obtain the relics from it; but thereby his faith in them was much increased. Therefore, although the king retained the sovereignty, which is fugitive, and though he continued to abide among the enjoyments, which are the enemies of the mind, yet, without assuming the ochre-coloured robe, he purified his mind and obtained the first fruit.”

17 As far as I can see, BC 28.63–67 are discussed neither by J. Przyłuski nor by J. Strong.

18 I shall present these resemblances individually in footnotes.

19 See Lévi 1928 and Bansat-Boudon 2007: 37–50.

According to recent scholarship on the Sanskrit epics and juridico-religious literature, one thing Aśoka may well have been responsible for is a strong Brahmanical reaction that crystallized in new patterns of Brahmanical self-assertion and the development of new socio-political standards.²⁰ This resulted in the composition of the Dharmasūtras and early śāstras, in the Sanskrit epics and in the figure of the Dharma king as it is embodied in Rāma and described and theorized upon by Bhīṣma and others in the *Rājadharmaparvan* (= MBh 12.1–128). As I shall try to demonstrate, the closest parallels to Aśvaghōṣa's Śuddhodana are definitively to be found in the Śāntiparvan of the MBh and in the Rām. This is certainly not to say that Aśvaghōṣa knew this section of the MBh, and even less so in the form in which it has come down to us. For the core of the political theory spelt out in MBh 12 is said to stem from a *nīti-* or *rājaśāstra* ascribed to Śukra/(Kāvya) Uśanas and Bṛhaspati, and claimed to go back to Brahmā Svayambhū through successive abridgments by Śiva, Indra and Śaṅkara.²¹ Now it is well known that Aśvaghōṣa himself alludes to Śukra and Bṛhaspati in BC 1.41.²² One can thus easily imagine that Aśvaghōṣa and the compiler(s) of MBh 12.1–128 drew on (a) common source(s). Whatever the case may be, the MBh is the most ancient and the most extensive witness to these early layers of Ancient Indian political theory. The following consists for an important part in an inventory of the features Aśvaghōṣa's Śuddhodana and the epic *dharmarāja* have in common. Another striking aspect of Aśvaghōṣa's treatment of the Bodhisattva's birthplace is the repeated reference to past eras—in partic-

20 See Biardeau 2002: 11.136–161, Fitzgerald 2006, Hildebeitel 2005, 2006, 2010, Olivelle 2009a: xvii–lv, 2009b.

21 MBh 12.59.13–92. As a consequence of the degeneration of humans, the gods, worried that the humans, deprived of *brahman* = *veda* and *dharma*, might fail to sacrifice, asked Brahmā/Svayambhū for advice. Svayambhū composed a 100,000-lesson *Nitiśāstra* (*Treatise of/on Policy*, MBh 12.59.74) on religious law (*dharma*), politico-economic profit/interest (*artha*), and sensual pleasure (*kāma*; and *mokṣa* according to some passages), dealing mainly with the Veda (*trayī*), “methodology” (*ānvikṣiki*), economics (*vārtā*), and politics as the administration of justice (*daṇḍanīti*, MBh 12.59.33). The contents of this original *Nitiśāstra* are analyzed at length in MBh 12.59.34–70. In course of time, Śiva shortened the original treatise into a 10,000-lesson *Vaiśālākṣam iti proktaṃ* (*śāstram*), the *Teaching of the God of Far-seeing Eyes* (MBh 12.59.88). Indra later abridged it to a 5,000-lesson treatise titled *Bāhudantaka* (MBh 12.59.89); so did in turn Bṛhaspati (3,000-lesson work called the *Bārhaspatya*, *Teaching of Bṛhaspati*, MBh 12.59.90) and, finally, Kāvya (Uśanas) = Śukra (1,000 lessons). On this passage, see Kangle 1986: 111.5–9; on the schools and masters known to Kauṭilya, see Kangle 1986: 111.40–58.

22 BC 1.41: *yad rājaśāstram bhṛgur aṅgirā vā na cakratur vaṃśakarāv ṛṣī tau | tayoh sutau saumya sasārjatus tatkālena śukraś ca bṛhaspatiś ca ||*. “The science of royal policy which neither of these seers, Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras, the founders of families, made, was created, Sire, in the course of time by their sons, Śukra and Bṛhaspati.”

ular the *kṛtayuga*—and ideal kings and kingdoms of the past, as if the poet had deliberately endeavored to picture the king’s realm as a kingdom of the “golden age,” or at least as a kingdom similar to those of the golden age—a trope in the Sanskrit epics. Conversely, Aśvaghoṣa shows that Kapilavāstu exhibits none of the features characteristic of the *kalīyuga*. Here again, his description is best compared with epic descriptions of the *kṛtayuga* (positively) or the *kalīyuga* (negatively) as they appear, e.g., in the Mārkaṇḍeya section of the MBh (especially MBh 3.186 and 188).²³

2 Mythical Past, Ancient Paths

As stated above, Aśvaghoṣa’s description of Śuddhodana and Kapilavāstu is replete with allusions to mythical figures mentioned either by name or in more general terms. At BC 2.11, Śuddhodana’s realm is compared to that of King Yayāti the son of Nahuṣa, in which “no one was disrespectful to his elders, or lacking in generosity, or irreligious, or deceitful, or given to hurt.”²⁴ Four stanzas later, his kingdom is described as “at ease and independent, free from foreign rule, peaceful and prosperous, like the kingdom of Anaraṇya of old.”²⁵ In BC 2.16, Aśvaghoṣa compares it with that of Manu, son of the Sun, in which “joy prevailed, evil perished, *dharma* blazed forth, sin was quenched.”²⁶ To add depth in time and solemnity, it is with with the creator god Prajāpati that Śuddhodana is compared, who “performed works of great difficulty, like Ka in the primeval age when he wished to produce creatures.”²⁷ Aśvaghoṣa lays strong emphasis

23 Some of the features of the epic description of the degenerated *kalīyuga*/*yugānta* can be compared with DN 111.64ff. (*cakravartin* ruling the earth following his own personal ideas on kingship; Walshe 1995: 398ff.) and AN 11.74–75 (unrighteous king; Bodhi 2012: 458–459).

24 BC 2.11ab: *nāgauravo bandhuṣu nāpy adātā naivāvratō nānṛtiko na himsraḥ* /. The Rām. is replete with allusions to Yayāti (e.g., 1.69.30, 2.71.10, 3.62.7, 4.17.9).

25 BC 2.15bd: *svasthaṃ svacakraṃ paracakramuktam | kṣemaṃ subhikṣaṃ ca babhūva tasya purānaraṇyasya yathaiva rāṣṭre* //.

26 BC 2.16cd: *cacāra harṣaḥ praṇanāśa pāpmā jajvāla dharmah kaluṣaḥ śāsāma* //. Rāma’s father Daśaratha is also compared to Manu in his way of ruling the world (Rām. 1.6.4). Note also Rām. 1.5.5–23 and 2.6.8–28 for descriptions of Ayodhyā; in Rām. 1.5.6, Ayodhyā is reported to have been “built by Manu himself, lord of men” (*manunā mānavendreṇa* [...] *nirmitā svayam*, translation Goldmann 2005: 45); in 1.6.19, one learns that “the city was as well governed by that Lord of the Ikṣvākus as it had been long ago by the wise Manu, foremost of men” (*sā tenekṣvākunāthena purī suparirakṣitā yathā purastān manunā mānavendreṇa dhīmatā*, translation Goldmann 2005: 47).

27 BC 2.51cd: *cakāra karmāṇi ca duṣkarāṇi prajāḥ sisṛkṣuḥ ka ivādikāle* /. Rāma is often compared to the self-existent Brahman (e.g., Rām. 1.17.13, 1.76.13, 2.1.10, 2.27.25, 2.93.27).

on the continuity in political practice linking Śuddhodana to the glorious kings of the past—a feature that equally characterizes the political teachings of the Śāntiparvan and Aśvaghōṣa's treatment of the Bodhisattva/Buddha himself.²⁸ According to SNa 2.6, “[a]nxious to tread the path of righteousness taken by the kings of old, he imitated his ancestors in conduct, dedicating himself, as it were, to his kingdom.”²⁹ SNa 2.25 portrays the king as “abiding by the law of righteousness of the golden age,”³⁰ whereas BC 2.49 describes him as “abiding in the path of the great kings of the golden age.”³¹ In BC 13.10, Māra advises the Bodhisattva to renounce mendicancy and to follow his own *dharma* (*svadharma*, BC 13.9), “for this is the path to issue forth by, the famous one travelled by kings of olden times.”³² Other references to glorious figures of the past include the seers (*ṛṣi*) and the royal seers (*rājarṣi*), as in BC 2.43 where Śuddhodana is reported to have “carried out the most difficult vows of the ancient seers.”³³ According to SNa 2.29, “by his conduct as a royal seer he made his family fragrant with the odour of fame and dispersed his foes with courage.”³⁴ And as he finally renounced kingship, Śuddhodana “behav[ed] like a royal seer” when he “entered the stream of supreme deathlessness, and dead to attachment he handed over the realm to this brother and abode in the palace.”³⁵ Paradigmatic among the royal seers were the wheel-turning monarchs, to whom Aśvaghōṣa compares Śuddhodana in SNa 2.32 while saying that “[h]e was not full of questionings and he did not hold discourses against the Law of Righteousness, and (justifying the title of Cakravartin) he caused others to be drawn to the Law, as though he were turning the Wheel (of the Law).”³⁶

28 See, e.g., MBh 12.92.53ab: *tat kuruṣva [...] vṛttam rājarṣisevitam*, “Put into action the conduct to which the royal seers were devoted.” MBh 12.66.36cd: *anutiṣṭha tvam enam vai pūrvair dṛṣṭam sanātanam*, “You must carry out this everlasting Law which was seen by the ancients.” Claims to conformity with the ancestors' political practice are ubiquitous in the Rām.; see, e.g., 2.2.4, 2.15.5, 2.27.28–29, 2.35.8, 2.54.19, 2.55.17.

29 SNa 2.6: *yaḥ pūrvai rājabhīr yātām yiyāsūr dharmapaddhatim | rājyam dikṣām iva vahan vṛttenāmvagamāt pitṛn ||*.

30 SNa 2.25c: *sṭhitaḥ kārtayuge dharme*.

31 BC 2.49ab1: *sṭhītvā pathi prāthamakalpikānām rājarṣabhānām*.

32 BC 13.10ab: *panthā hi niryātum ayaṃ yaśasyo yo vāhitaḥ pūrvatamair narendraiḥ |*.

33 BC 2.43ab: *ārṣāṇy acārīt paramavratāni*.

34 SNa 2.29: *kulaṃ rājarṣivṛttena yaśogandham avīvat | [...] tejasārīn avīvat ||*.

35 BC_{Tib} 19.41bd, D71a4–5/P86a4–5: *|mchog gi bdun rtsi rgyun ni rab tu thob byas nas| |chags pa med par rgyal srid sbun zla la byin zin| |rgyal po'i dran sroñ spyod pas khyim rnam la bsñen to|*. Adapted from Johnston 1984: III.47. See, e.g., DN III.59–60 (the *rājarṣi cakravartin* Daḥhanemi; Walshe 1995: 396).

36 SNa 2.32: *adharmiṣṭhām acakathan na kathām akathaṅkathaḥ | cakravartīva ca parān dharmāyābhhyudasīśahat ||*. See, e.g., DN II.172–173 (Walshe 1995: 280–281) and MN III.172–173 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 1023–1024).

Aśvaghōṣa's description of the Bodhisattva/Buddha also abounds with references to the genealogical past. Just as his father, Sarvārthasiddha insists that he is following in the footsteps of his prestigious forefathers: "And since this, they say, was the firm determination of our ancestors, grief should not be felt for me who am travelling along the hereditary road."³⁷ These ancestors are none other than the Ikṣvākus, which explains why the Bodhisattva is styled "the lamp of the Ikṣvāku race,"³⁸ "the moon of the Ikṣvāku race,"³⁹ or, since the Ikṣvākus were *rājarṣis*, "the great sage, the scion of a line of royal seers."⁴⁰ To Śāradvatīputra who inquires about his teacher, Aśvajit replies that the Buddha "was born of the Ikṣvāku (Tib. *bu ram śin pa*) race and is omniscient and without peer."⁴¹ But as Aśvajit's answer suggests, by becoming a Buddha, Sarvārthasiddha went far beyond the ancient seers, a point made by the newly converted Śuddhodana himself: "For the good of the distressed world You have also obtained this final beatitude, which not even the divine seers or the royal seers arrived at in olden times."⁴² That Śuddhodana's son crowned, by his spiritual deeds, the heroic lineage of the Ikṣvākus, was not enough. Especially in Sāketa/Ayodhyā, the capital of the Ikṣvāku Rāma, the Buddha and his Law could only gain full legitimacy from being duly acknowledged by the Ikṣvākus themselves, which, according to Aśvaghōṣa, had indeed been the case shortly after awakening: "The seers of the Ikṣvāku race who had been rulers of men, the royal seers and the great seers, filled with joy and wonder at his achievement, stood in their mansions in the heavens reverencing him."⁴³

37 BC 6.19: *ayam ca kila pūrveṣāṃ asmākam niścayaḥ sthiraḥ | iti [...] na śocyo 'smi pathā vrajan ||*.

38 BC 7.6: *ikṣvākukulapradīpa*. Note that Rāma is referred to as "the delight of the Ikṣvākus" (Rām. 1.17.6, 2.44.6, *ikṣvākunandana*).

39 BC 12.1: *ikṣvākucandramas*.

40 BC 13.1: *rājarṣivamśaprabhave maharṣau*.

41 BC_{Tib} 17.6, D62b6/P76a1: *|bu ram śin pa'i rigs su rab 'khrwis thams cad mkhyen/ |[...]| bla na med pa [...]|*.

42 BC_{Tib} 19.32, D70b5-6/P85b2-4: *|lha yi drañ sroñ nmams sam rgyal po'i drañ sroñ nmams/ |de nmams sñon dus na yañ gañ la ma gśegs pa/ |ñam thag 'jig rten dag gi dge ba'i ched du lam/ |ñes par legs pa 'di dañ khyed kyis lhag par thob|*.

43 BC_{Weller} 14.94 [= Johnston 14.92]: *|de yi las kyis ya mtshan dga' bas gañ ba yi/ |bu ram śin pa'i rigs kyi mi skyoñ drañ sroñ nmams/ |rgyal po'i drañ sroñ nmams dañ drañ sroñ che nmams kyis/ |yañ dag mchod nmams mkha' la gśal med nmams su gnas|*.

3 A Golden-Age-Like Kingdom

By repeatedly comparing Śuddhodana with gods, kings, (royal) seers and wheel-turning monarchs of a distant and glorious past, by emphasizing the king's sense of his continuity with them, by making frequent use of expressions such as *prāthamakalpika*, *pūrvatama*, *ādikāla* and *kārtayuga*, Āśvaghōṣa places Śuddhodana on a par with these paragons of righteousness in whose reign piety, morality, virtue, and prosperity were flourishing. Śuddhodana is thus elevated to the dignity of a Dharma king whose policy conforms with that of undegenerated times. Does Śuddhodana (or maybe more generally the Śākya) cause the advent of a locally and historically circumscribed but altogether real *kr̥tayuga*? The MBh is adamant that, far from being the inescapable result of a cosmological process, the advent of any *yuga* whatsoever depends on the king's policy.⁴⁴ As we have seen, however, Āśvaghōṣa consistently *compares* Śuddhodana's realm to those of past kings, leaving little doubt that the events he narrates are not taking place in the *kr̥tayuga* or any kind of primeval/original age—to which Āśvaghōṣa at least twice refers in terms of *pūrvayuga*⁴⁵—, but in a later, probably degenerated era of world history, as expressions such as *kṣīṇe yuge* (BC 13.12) and especially *bhramṣīni yuge* (SNa 3.37) would seem to suggest. The comparison reaches its apex in Āśvaghōṣa's description of Kapilavāstu after the Bodhisattva's—now a Buddha—return to his father's capital city. The

44 Note MBh 12.70.25–28: *rājā kr̥tayugasraṣṭā tretāyā dvāparasya ca | yugasya ca caturthasya rājā bhavati kāraṇam || kr̥tasya karaṇād rājā svargam atyantam aśnute | tretāyāḥ karaṇād rājā svargaṃ nātyantam aśnute || pravartanād dvāparasya yathābhāgam upāśnute | kaleḥ pravartanād rājā pāpam atyantam aśnute || tato vasati duṣkarmā narake śāśvatīḥ samāḥ | prajānāṃ kalmaṣe magno 'kīrtiṃ pāpam ca vindati ||*. “The king is the creator of the Kṛta Age, and the king is the cause of the Tretā and the Dvāpara and the Fourth Ages too. For bringing about a Kṛta Age, a king attains endless heaven. For bringing about a Tretā Age, a king attains heaven, but it is not endless. For initiating a Dvāpara Age, a king attains what corresponds to his portion. For initiating a Kali Age, a king attains endless evil. Thus an evil-doing king dwells in the hell Naraka everlasting years; sunk in the mire of his subjects' evil, he finds disgrace and evil.” Note also MBh 12.70.6cd–7: *iti te saṃśayo mā bhūid rājā kālasya kāraṇam || daṇḍanītyā yadā rājā samyak kārtsnyena vartate | tadā kr̥tayugaṃ nāma kālaḥ śreṣṭhaḥ pravartate ||*. “Have no doubt about this, the king is the cause of the Time. When the king acts in full and perfect accord with the policy for administering royal punishment, then the most excellent Time, called the Kṛta Age, occurs.” Kalkin's victory and policy open a new *kr̥tayuga*; see MBh 3.189.7 ff.

45 BC 7.49cd: *dharme sthitāḥ pūrvayugānurūpe sarve bhavanto hi maharṣikalpāḥ ||*. “For you are all like the great seers, in that you take your stand on a *dharmā* that conforms with the primeval ages.” BC 7.57cd: *ācāryakaṃ prāpsyasi tat prthivyaṃ yan na ṛṣibhiḥ pūrvayuge 'py avāptam ||*. “You will obtain on earth a position as a teacher, such as was not won even by the seers of the golden age.”

citizens now renounce all ten evil ways of action (*akuśalākarmapatha*): “Thus from reliance on the Sage they followed the tenfold conduct which is powerful and good in the highest degree, though from the decadence of the age the people were little inclined to virtue.”⁴⁶ People now turn to liberation; some become stream-enterers (*srotaāpanna*) while others become once-returners (*sakṛdāgāmin*): “[T]he people rejoiced there as in the golden age of Manu, in happiness, plenty and virtue. Thus the city was joyful and free from epidemic or disaster, like the city of Kuru, of Raghu or of Pūru, with the great passion-free Seer dwelling there for their happiness as their guide to safety.”⁴⁷ To the best of my knowledge, Aśvaghoṣa does not assign the birth of the Bodhisattva to any specific era. Was the poet familiar with the four-*yuga* system as it appears in the MDhŚ and especially the MBh?⁴⁸ To begin with, the expressions *tretā(yuga)* and *dvāpara(yuga)* are apparently not to be found in Aśvaghoṣa’s extant writings. As we have seen, Aśvaghoṣa is well acquainted with the *kṛtayuga*, to which he alludes several times, e.g., while describing Śuddhodana as “abiding by the law of righteousness of the golden age,”⁴⁹ or the king’s subjects as rejoicing in Kapilavāstu “as in the golden age of Manu, in happiness, plenty and virtue.”⁵⁰ But what about the *kaliyuga*? As far as I can see, the expression does not occur in the Sanskrit segments of the BC and the SNa, but BC 21.64 likely reflects Aśvaghoṣa’s use of the expression, provided Tib. *rtsod ldan dus* renders Skt. *kaliyuga*.⁵¹ Negi (XI.4756a) records at least one occurrence of Tib. *rtsod ldan dus* used to translate *kali(yuga)*, and Tib. *rtsod pa’i dus* is well attested as a rendering of *kaliyuga* in other Tibetan/Sanskrit glossaries/dictionaries.⁵² And whereas, in BC 21.64, Tib. *rtsod ldan dus* likely renders the Sanskrit compound *kaliyuga*, its Tibetan expression *rdzogs ldan (gyi) dus* provides us with a third allusion to the *kṛtayuga* in Aśvaghoṣa’s extant writings.⁵³ The so-called Mārkaṇḍeya section of the MBh does not only describe, both cosmologically and eschatologically

46 SNa 3.37: *iti karmaṇā daśavidhena paramakuśalena bhūriṇā | bhraṃśini śīthilaḡuṇo ‘pi yuge vijāhāra tatra munisaṃśrayāḡ janaḡ ||*.

47 SNa 3.41cd–42: *tatra ca susukhasubhikṡaḡunair jahṛṡuḡ prajāḡ kṛtayuge manor iva | iti muditam anāmayaḡ nirāpatkururaghupūrupuopamaḡ puraḡ tat | abhavad abhaya-daiśike maharṡau viharati tatra śivāya vītarāḡe ||*.

48 See especially MDhŚ 1.81–86, MBh 3.186 and 3.188.

49 See above, n. 30.

50 See above, n. 47.

51 BC_{Tib} 21.24a₂b, D77b6–7/P94a3: *[[...] rtsod ldan dus ni nes par log pa na | rdzogs ldan dus ni onis nas slar yaḡ chos don bzin]*. “Just as, when the evil age passes away and the age of ascent begins, Law and Wealth increase.”

52 See MVy CCLIII, 81/8296, LCh 1913ab, Negi XI.4755b (*rtsod dus*).

53 = *kṛtayuga* in MVy CCLIII, 78/8293, LCh 2003a, and Negi XI.5102b–5103a.

(or apocalyptically), the *kaliyuga*, but also the even gloomier *yugānta* or “end of the (*kali*)yuga.” In BC 16.30, Aśvagoṣa compares the imperturbable Bud-dha with Brahmā who “at the end of the great eon [...] shines sitting when the conflagration dies down.”⁵⁴ The Tib. expressions Johnston translates with “(conflagration) at the end of the great eon” is *dus mtha*’(*i me*), which is attested as a rendering of Skt. *yugānta* as well as *kālānta*⁵⁵ and *adhvaparyanta*.⁵⁶ This usage is to be distinguished from conceptually close expressions such as Tib. *bskal pa jig pa*’(*i tshe*) (BC 23.35 and 25.72⁵⁷) and Skt. *kalpātyaya* (BC 13.41).

As we can see, Aśvagoṣa was familiar at least with the *kṛtayuga* and the *kaliyuga*, probably with the *yugānta*.⁵⁸ This gives us clues to interpret significant parts of his description of Kapilavāstu in BC 2.4–17: A significant number of the features involved in this portrayal find parallels in known descriptions of

54 BC_{Weller} 16.30ab: /*dus mtha*’*me ñid źi ba na*/ /[...] *bźugs pa mdzes pa* [...]/.

55 **kālānt*(*asy*)*āgni* is Weller’s reconstruction (1928: 162, n. 14) of the expression; Weller translates (1928: 162) “Wie wenn am Ende der Zeit das (Welten)feuer [...]”.

56 Negi IV.2227a: Tib. *dus mtha*’ = *yugānta*, *kālānta*, and *adhvaparyanta*; Negi IV.2227ab, LCh 1107b: Tib. *dus kyi mtha*’*me* = **yugānt*(*asy*)*āgni* (and *pralayāgni*, but no Skt. reference/quotation is provided for this equivalence).

57 BC_{Tib} 27.35, D96b1/P116a4–5: /*bskal pa jig pa*’*i tshe na chos bźin rab tu gzims*/, “as the Law passes away in that age of fear.” Johnston probably read *jigs* for *jig*, likely to be emended to: “as the Law passes away at the time of the destruction of an eon.” BC_{Tib} 23.72, D82b7/P99b7–8: /*bskal pa jig tshe jig rten bsreg par ’dod pa bźin*/ | *phyogs rnams thams cad rnams su me dag ’bar bar gyur* |, “and flames blazed everywhere, as if wishing to burn up the world at the end of an eon.” Cf. MBh 3.186.56 ff. on the final cataclysm.

58 The same seems to be true of the Rām., which never mentions the *tretā*- and *dvāparayugas*, is familiar with the *kṛtayuga* (e.g., 1.1.73, 1.44.14, 5.1.108) and contains abundant allusions (mostly in similes) to the fire destroying everything at the end of an aeon (*yugāntāgni*, *yugāntakālāgni*, e.g., 3.23.24, 4.15.15, 4.61.11, 5.45.8, 5.56.135); the fire is also called *saṃvartakam analam* at Rām. 3.61.1. On the *yugānta*, see also Rām. 4.11.2, 4.17.10, 4.30.20, 5.35.67; as suggested by Gonzáles-Reimann (2002: 71; quoted and discussed in Bronkhorst 2017: 31), the expression *yugānta* (1) is used predominantly in comparisons, as it is obviously the case here, and (2) refers to the end of a cosmic cycle (e.g., the four *yugas* as a collective whole) rather than to the end of a specific *yuga* (such as the *kaliyuga*). I have come across no allusion to the *kaliyuga* in the Rām. Rām. 6.35 (Bombay edition; see Biardeau/Porcher 1999: 950), which mentions the *kaliyuga*, has a different wording in the critical edition (6.26.17): *dharmo vai grasate ’dharmaṃ tataḥ kṛtam abhūd yugam | adharma grasate dharmo tatas tiṣyaḥ pravartate* |. “[When] *dharmo* eclipsed the *adharma*, then it was the *kṛta* age; [when] the *adharma* eclipses the *dharmo*, then the *tiṣya* [age] is at hand.” I am tempted to interpret this *kṛtayuga*-(*kaliyuga*)-*yugānta* structure as a step in the evolution of the four-*yuga* pattern. In a very stimulating paper, Bronkhorst suggests that insistence on the *yugānta*, or at least on a *kaliyuga* “thought of in manageable historical terms” (2017: 32), betrays millenarian inclinations, contrary, e.g., to the versions of an expanded *kaliyuga* developed in the classical Purāṇas. I do not see these two interpretative hypotheses as mutually exclusive.

the *yugas*—negative ones in descriptions of the *kaliyuga* and other representations of the corrupted present, and positive ones in descriptions of earlier eras. Our earliest and most important source for intertextual comparison are two chapters from the Mārkaṇḍeya section of the MBh, i.e., MBh 3.186 and 188.

Śuddhodana's kingdom had “many excellent cows [...] giving pure and abundant milk” (BC 2.5, *bahvyo bahukṣīraduhaś ca gāvaḥ*), as that of the son of Vena and Rāma, where “all the cows gave a full bucket of milk” (MBh 12.29.132 = 12.29.52, *sarvā droṇadughā gāvaḥ*), whereas in the *kaliyuga*/*yugānta*, the cows either “will have perished” (MBh 3.188.21, *goṣu naṣṭāsu*; cf. ViP 6.1.53 [Schreiner 2013: 536]) or “will yield little milk” (MBh 3.186.37, *alpakṣīrāḥ*).⁵⁹ According to Aśvaghōṣa, Śuddhodana's “enemies became neutrals, neutrality turned into alliance, allies were united to him with peculiar firmness. He had only two parties; but the third, enemies, did not exist.”⁶⁰ In much the same way, says the MBh, though not in an eschatological context, “[w]hen a man behaves this way and is never careless, his enemies grow quiet and even become his allies.”⁶¹ During Śuddhodana's reign, “heaven rained in due time and place” (BC 2.7, *kāle ca deśe pravavaṛṣa devaḥ*), as in the *ṛtayuga*, during which “Parjanya rains in season” (MBh 3.188.88ab, *kālavaraṣi ca parjanyaḥ*).⁶² In contrast to this, during the *kaliyuga*, “the punisher of Pāka [= Indra] will no more rain in the right season” (MBh 3.186.44, *yathartuvaraṣi [...] na tathā pākaśāsanaḥ*), “[t]he Rain God will not rain in season” (MBh 3.188.69, *akālavaraṣi parjanya bhaviṣyati*), “[t]he thousand-eyed God will not rain in season” (MBh 3.188.72, *akālavaraṣi ca tadā bhaviṣyati sahasradṛk*), and “all countries will equally suffer from drought” (MBh 3.188.71, *nirviśeṣā janapadā narāvṛṣtibhir arditāḥ*).⁶³ In Kapilavāstu, there are only “gentle winds and rumbling clouds, and with the

59 Note also MBh 12.15.37, *kalyāṇi gaur na duhyate*, “the lovely cow would not give milk” if the rod of force did not rule.

60 BC 2.6: *madhyasthatāṃ tasya ripur jagāma madhyasthabhāvaḥ prayayau suhrttvam | viśeṣato dārḍhyam iyāya mitraṃ dvāv aśya pakṣāv aparas tu nāsa ||*

61 MBh 12.81.40 ≈ 12.84.15: *tasyaivaṃ vartamānasya puruṣasyāprasādināḥ | amitrāḥ samprasidanti tathā mitribhavanty api ||*

62 Cf. MBh 12.92.1ab: *kālavaraṣi ca parjanya dharmacārī ca pārthivaḥ*, “Parjanya rains down at the right times and the king behaves Lawfully!” MBh 12.29.47–48: [...] *rāmo rājyaṃ yadā nvaśāt || kālavaraṣāś ca parjanyaḥ sasyāni rasavanti ca [...]*. “When Rāma ruled the kingdom, Parjanya rained down at the right times and the crops were robust.” MBh 12.139.9–10 (*āpad*^o): *rājamūlā mahārāja yogakṣemasuvṛṣṭayaḥ | prajāsu vyādhyas caiva maraṇaṃ ca bhayāni ca || kṛtaṃ tretā dvāparaś ca kaliś ca bhatarāṣabha ||*. “People's securing their property and a country's having good rains depend upon the king; so too the occurrence of diseases, death and dangers among beings. The Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali ages too, all depend upon the king.” See also above, n. 44.

63 Cf. MBh 12.70.23, ViP 6.1.24 (Schreiner 2013: 534), ViP 6.1.51 (Schreiner 2013: 536).

sky adorned with rings of lightning, but without the evils of showers of thunderbolts or falls of meteorite stones,”⁶⁴ whereas during the *kaliyuga*/*yugānta*, “[a]ll of space will blaze up, the constellations will move, the stars will bode evil, the winds will be turbulent, and there will be many showers, betokening great danger. [...] everywhere there will be terrifying thunder and conflagrations, twilight clouds will obscure the sun at dawn and dusk.”⁶⁵ More generally, “[g]reat problems arise when a kṣatriya is negligent. [...] It is cold during summer, it is not cold during winter; it does not rain, or it rains too much; diseases plague his subjects. Comets hover, and gruesome planets and many other king-destroying omens are seen.”⁶⁶ During the reign of Śuddhodana, “fruitful grain grew according to season, even without the labor of tilling,”⁶⁷ while in the *kaliyuga*/*yugānta*, “none of the seeds that are sown will grow right” (MBh 3.186.44, *na tadā sarvabījāni samyag rohanti*), “the crops will not grow” (MBh 3.188.72, *sasyāni ca na rokṣyanti*; cf. ViP 6.1.53 [Schreiner 2013: 536]), and “herbs will yield little fruit” (MBh 3.188.23, *auśadhīḥ | tās cāpy alpaphalās teṣāṃ bhaviṣyanti*). According to MBh 12.70.7–24, indeed, in the *kṛtayuga*, “the earth produces crops without tilling, and herbs grow likewise” (*akṛṣṭapacyā pṛthivī bhavanty ośadhayas tathā*);⁶⁸ in the *tretāyuga*, it “produces crops only when plowed, and herbs grow likewise” (*kṛṣṭapacyaiva pṛthivī bhavanty ośadhayas tathā*); in the *dvāparayuga*, “the earth produces crops when tilled, but the

64 BC 2.7: [...] *mandānilameghaśabdah saudāminikuṇḍalamaṇḍitābhrah* | *vināśmavarṣāsanipātadoṣaḥ* [...] |.

65 MBh 3.188.74–75: *diśah prajvalitāḥ sarvā nakṣatrāṇi calāni ca | jyotīmṣi pratikulāni vātāḥ paryākulās tathā | ulkāpātās ca bahavo mahābhayanidarśakāḥ* || [...] *tumulās cāpi nirhrādā digdāhās cāpi sarvaśah | kabandhāntarhito bhānur udayāstamaye tadā* ||. Cf. MBh 3.186.65–71 (*yugānta* stricto sensu): [...] *taḍīmālāvibhūṣitāḥ | uttiṣṭhanti mahāmeghā nabhasy adbhutadarśanāḥ* || [...] *vidyumnālāpinaddhāṅgāḥ samuttiṣṭhanti vai ghanāḥ* || *ghorarūpāḥ* [...] *ghorasvananināditāḥ | tato jaladharāḥ sarve vyāpnuvanti nabhas talam* || *tair iyaṃ pṛthivī sarvā saparvatavanākarā | āpūryate* [...] *salilaughapariplutā* || *tatas te jaladā ghorā rāviṇaḥ* [...] | *sarvataḥ plāvayanty āsu coditāḥ parameṣṭhinā* ||. “Wondrous-looking huge clouds rise up in the sky [...] in the finery of garlands of lightning [...]—clad in garlands of lightning, the clouds rise up. In their terrifying shapes, with their terrible echoing blasts, the clouds cover the entire expanse of the sky, they fill up all of earth and her mountains, mines and forests, and flood her with rains. At the command of Parameṣṭhin, the terrible thundering clouds inundate everything.”

66 MBh 12.91.33–35: *kṣatriyasya pramattasya doṣaḥ samprajāyate mahān* | [...] *aṣite vidyate śītaṃ śīte śītaṃ na vidyate* | *avrṣṭir ativrṣṭis ca vyādhiś cāviśati prajāḥ* || *nakṣatrāṇy upatiṣṭhanti grahā ghorās tathāpare* | *utpātās cātra dṛṣyante bahavo rājanāśanāḥ* ||.

67 BC 2.8: *ruroha sasyaṃ phalavad yathartu tadākṛtenāpi kṛṣīrameṇa* |.

68 Cf. MBh 12.29.19: *yasmīn prasāsati satāṃ nṛpatau akṛṣṭapacyā pṛthivī*, “[i]n his reign as ruler of the strictly virtuous the earth yielded crops without being tilled.” MBh 12.29.132, *akṛṣṭapacyā pṛthivī*, “the earth was productive without plowing.” See also above, n. 62.

yield is small” (*kr̥ṣṭapacyaiva pṛthivī bhavaty alpaphalā*); in the *kaliyuga*, “crops grow only in some places” (*kvacit sasyaṃ prarohati*).⁶⁹ In Kapilavāstu, “in the joy of deliverance from famine, peril and disease, the people were as happy as in Paradise,”⁷⁰ just as in the *kṛtayuga* during which “[t]here will be safety, plenty of food, and health, without sickness” (MBh 3.188.88, *kṣemaṃ subhikṣam ārogyaṃ bhaviṣyati*), or during the reign of the son of Vena, where “[t]here were no diseases, nor any old age, nor famines, nor anxieties” (MBh 12.59.124, *na jarā na ca durbhikṣam nādhayo vyādhayas tathā*).⁷¹ Under Śuddhodana’s rule, “[h]usband did not transgress against wife, nor wife against husband,”⁷² whereas during the *kaliyuga/yugānta*, “[t]he women are corrupt and, secretly deceiving their husbands, lasciviously fornicate with slaves and even cattle”;⁷³ “men shall be the enemies of their wives” (MBh 3.188.20, *bhāryāmitrās ca puruṣā bhaviṣyanti*), “not a wife will be obedient to her husband” (MBh 3.188.42, *bhāryā ca patīśūśrūṣāṃ na kariṣyati kācana*), “the women will at all times fail to obey their husbands” (MBh 3.188.77, *bhartṛṇāṃ vacane caiva na sthāsyanti tadā striyaḥ*), “women will kill their husbands” (MBh 3.188.78cd, *sūdayiṣyanti ca patīn striyaḥ*), “husband and wife will find no satisfaction in each other” (MBh 3.188.49, *patyau strī tu tadā rājan puruṣo vā striyaṃ prati / [...] na toṣam upayāsyati //*).⁷⁴ In Kapilavāstu, “[t]heft and the like disappeared” (BC 2.15, *steyādibhiḥ [...] naṣṭam*), in stark contrast to the *kaliyuga/yugānta*, in which “one hand will rob the other” (MBh 3.188.37, *hasto hastaṃ parimūṣet*), “men will be thievish” (MBh 3.188.23, *mānavāḥ [...] stenā bhaviṣyanti*), “[h]ouseholders will become thieves” (MBh 3.186.40, *grhasthāḥ parimoṣakāḥ*), and “men will

69 See also MBh 12.70.23: *kvacid varṣati parjanyaḥ kvacit sasyaṃ prarohati //*. “Parjanya rains only in some places; crops grow only in some places.”

70 BC 2.13: *muktaś ca durbhikṣabhayāmāyebhyo hr̥ṣṭo janaḥ svarga ivābhireme /*.

71 Cf. MBh 12.29.50: *arogāḥ [...] prajāḥ [...] rāme praśāsati*, “when Rāma ruled, his subjects never were ill.” MBh 12.68.29: *durbhikṣam āviśed rāṣṭram yadi rājā na pālayet*, “[w]ere a king not standing guard [...] famine would spread throughout the country.” MBh 12.70.22: *vyādhayas ca bhavanty atra mriyante cāgatāyusaḥ*, “There are diseases, and the energy of life leaves people and they die.” Note also Rām. 1.1.71 (description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *prahr̥ṣṭamudito lokas tuṣṭaḥ puṣṭaḥ sudhārmikāḥ / nīrāmāyo arogaś ca durbhikṣabhayavarjitaḥ //*. “His people are pleased, and joyful, contented, well fed and righteous. They are also free from physical and mental afflictions and the danger of famine.” Translation Goldmann 2005: 15. To be contrasted with ViP 6.1.24–26 (Schreiner 2013: 534). See also above, n. 62.

72 BC 2.13: *patnīm patir vā mahiṣī patim vā parasparaṃ na vyabhiceratūś ca //*. Cf. Rām. 1.1.72 (description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *naryaś [...] nityaṃ bhaviṣyanti pativratāḥ //*. “Women [...] remain always faithful to their husbands.” Translation Goldmann 2005: 15.

73 MBh 3.186.55: *viparītās tadā nāryo vañcayitvā rahaḥ patīn / vyuccaranty api duḥṣilā dāsaiḥ paśubhir eva ca //*.

74 Cf. ViP 6.1.11, 18 (Schreiner 2013: 533), 21, 28–29, 31 (Schreiner 2013: 534).

rob one another” (MBh 3.188.23, *anyonyaṃ parimuṣṇantaḥ* [...] *mānavāḥ*); “[a]s a rule, people will rob the possessions of the poor, and even of kinsmen and widows.”⁷⁵ In the reign of Śuddhodana, “[e]xcept for those who had taken vows of mendicancy, no one begged from others, however wretched his means might be,”⁷⁶ whereas during the *kaliyuga/yugānta*, “[b]rahmins will plunder the land bare for alms” (MBh 3.186.39, *bhikṣārthaṃ* [...] *cañcūryante dvijair diśaḥ*).⁷⁷ In his kingdom, “no man of position, poverty-stricken though he were, turned his face away when solicited,”⁷⁸ and “no one was lacking in generosity” (BC 2.11, *nāpy adātā* [...] *āsīt tadā kaścana*), whereas in the gloomy last age, humans are “greedy” (MBh 3.188.33, *lubdhāḥ*), “slaves of greed” (MBh 3.188.57, *lobhā-bhibhūtāḥ*), and “no one will be anyone’s benefactor” (MBh 3.188.50, *na kaścit kasyacid dātā bhaviṣyati*): “enslaved to greed, they will be delighted with gifts in name only” (MBh 3.188.31, *lobhamohaparāyaṇāḥ | tatkathādānasantuṣṭāḥ*).⁷⁹ At the time of the birth of the Bodhisattva, “no one was irreligious”⁸⁰ (BC 2.11, *naivāvratāḥ* [...] *āsīt tadā kaścana*), contrary to the situation prevailing during the *kaliyuga/yugānta*, where “seduced by argumentation, [the brahmins] will offer neither worship nor sacrifices” (MBh 3.188.26cd, *na yakṣyanti na hoṣyanti hetuvādivilobhitāḥ*) and “find fault with the Veda and abandon their vows” (MBh 3.188.26ab, *na vratāni cariṣyanti brāhmaṇā vedanindakāḥ*); “the entire world will be without rites and sacrifices” (MBh 3.188.29, *jagat sarvaṃ niṣkrīyaṃ yajñavarjitam*), “people will abandon the Gods and worship charnel houses” (MBh 3.188.64cd, *eḍūkān pūjayiṣyanti varjayiṣyanti devatāḥ*), “will be prayerless, creedless” (MBh 3.188.22, *ajapā nāstikāḥ* [...] *bhaviṣyanti*); and “[m]en who had always been firm at a *śrāddha* or sacrifice will be har-

75 MBh 3.188.30: *prāyaśaḥ kṛpaṇānāṃ hi tathā bandhumatām api | vidhavānāṃ ca vittāni hariṣyantīha mānavāḥ ||*.

76 BC 2.10: *prthag vratibhyo vibhave 'pi garhye na prārthayanti sma narāḥ parebhyaḥ |*. Cf. Rām. 1.6.6 (description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *tuṣṭa, alubdha*.

77 Cf. MBh 12.65.25–26: *vināṣṭīyāṃ daṇḍanītau rājadharme nirākṛte | [...] asaṅkhyātā bhaviṣyanti bhikṣavo liṅginas tathā ||*. “When the administration of the rod of force has disappeared, when the Law of the king has been repudiated [...] the number of mendicant holy men and ascetics will be innumerable.” MBh 12.89.15–16ab: *na kenacid yācitavyaḥ kaścid kiñcid anāpadi | iti vyavasthā bhūtānāṃ purastān manunā kṛtā || sarve tathā na jīveyur na kuryuḥ karma ced iha |*. “No one may beg for anything from anyone when it is not a time of emergency: this was a rule Manu made for people some time in the past. For none would survive if none did work in this world.” MBh 12.89.20: *mā te rāṣṭre yācanakāḥ [...] bhūyūḥ*, “let there be no beggars in your realm.”

78 BC 2.10: *abhyarthitāḥ sūkṣmadhano 'pi cāryas tadā na kaścid vimukho babhūva |*.

79 Cf. ViP 6.1.33, 37 (Schreiner 2013: 535).

80 Cf. Rām. 1.6.6 (description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *dharmātman*.

nessed with greed and exploit one another.”⁸¹ In Śuddhodana’s “realm, no one was deceitful”⁸² (BC 2.11, *nāṇṛtikaḥ* [...] *āsīt tadā kaścana*), whereas in the *kalīyuga/yugānta*, “all men in general become speakers of untruth” (MBh 3.186.24, *narāḥ sarve prāyaśo ’ṇṛtavādināḥ*), “people are rarely speaking the truth” (MBh 3.186.32, *satyālpabhāṣiṇāḥ*), “the students of the Brahman are false” (MBh 3.186.33, *vṛthā ca brahmacāriṇāḥ*; MBh 3.186.48, “vedic students will be false,” *vṛthā ca brahmacāriṇāḥ*); “[p]eople trade their wares mostly with false measures, and the merchants abound with tricks”;⁸³ “[w]hen it is time to buy and sell, everyone will cheat the other” (MBh 3.188.53ab, *krayavikrayakāle ca sarvaḥ sarvasya vañcanam*). At the time of Śuddhodana in Kapilavāstu, “no one was given to hurt” (BC 2.11, *na hiṃsraḥ* / *āsīt tadā kaścana*), whereas in the terrific last times, “men become gruesome and cruel murderers and harmers of living beings” (MBh 3.188.59ab, *jīvitāntakarā raudrāḥ krūrāḥ prāṇivihīṃsakāḥ*), “will wish each other dead” (MBh 3.188.17, *bhaviṣyanti parasparavadhepsavaḥ*), and “harm one another” (MBh 3.188.22, *hiṃsayantaś ca mānavāḥ*); “all people will be naturally cruel” (MBh 3.188.55, *svabhāvāt krūrakarmāṇas ca* [...] *janāḥ sarve*), “harmfulness will prevail” (MBh 3.188.50, *hiṃsā ca prabhaviṣyati*), and “[all] will be cruel in all their deeds” (MBh 3.188.53, *dāruṇāḥ sarvakarmāsu*). Under Śuddhodana, “no one was disrespectful to his elders” (BC 2.11, *nāgauravo bandhuṣu*), just as, in the MBh, everyone was “honoring one’s mother and father, and one’s teachers” (MBh 12.109.3, *mātāpitror gurūṇām ca pūjā*). Śuddhodana’s subjects, “by constructing there gardens, temples, hermitages, wells, water-halls, lotus-ponds and groves, [...] showed their devotion to *dharma*, as if they had seen Paradise before their eyes.”⁸⁴ In much the same way, “[r]esting-places, sanctuaries, temple tanks, wells, and the many ceremonies reappear in the Kṛta age.”⁸⁵ Śuddhodana’s “kingdom was at ease and independent, free from foreign rule” (BC 2.15, *svasthaṃ svacakraṃ para-*

81 MBh 3.188.24: *śrāddhe daive ca puruṣā ye ca nityaṃ dhṛtavratāḥ* / *te ’pi lobhasamāyuktāḥ bhokṣayantiha parasparam* // . Cf. ViP 6.1.11, 13 (Schreiner 2013: 533), 27 (Schreiner 2013: 534), 32, 39, 44–50 (Schreiner 2013: 535–536), 58 (Schreiner 2013: 537).

82 Cf. Rām. 1.6.6 (description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *satyavādin*.

83 MBh 3.186.46: *bhūyiṣṭhaṃ kūṭamānaiś ca paṇyaṃ vikriṇate janāḥ* / *vañjaś ca* [...] *bahumāyā bhavanty uta* // .

84 BC 2.12: *udyānadevāyatanāśramāṇām kūpaprapāpuṣkariṇīvanānām* / *cakruḥ kriyās tatra ca dharmakāmāḥ pratyakṣataḥ svargam ivopalabhya* // .

85 MBh 3.189.8: *ārāmāś caiva caityās ca taṭākāny avaṭas tathā* / *yajñakriyās ca vividhā bhaviṣyanti kṛte yuge* // . Note also, though without any eschatological connection, MBh 12.42.7: *sabhāḥ prapās ca vividhās taḍāgāni ca pañḍavaḥ* / *suhrdāṃ kārayām āsa sarveṣāṃ aurdhavadaihikam* // . “The son of Pāṇḍu had diverse traveler’s lodges, watering-stations and water-tanks built as a funeral offering for all his allies.” Cf. Aśoka’s Pillar Edict no. 7 (Bloch 1950: 170).

cakramuktam); in contradistinction to this, in the last era, “Andhras will be kings, Scythians, Pulindas, Greeks, Kambojas, Aurnīkas, serfs, and Ābhīras,”⁸⁶ “many barbarian kings will rule the earth with false policies” (MBh 3.186.29, *bahavo mleccharājānaḥ pṛthivyām [...] mithyānuśāsinaḥ*), “the entire world will be barbarized” (MBh 3.188.29, *mlecchabhūtaṃ [mlecchibhūtaṃ] jagat sarvam*, cf. MBh 3.188.37, 3.188.45, and *passim*). The Śākya realm was “peaceful and prosperous” (BC 2.15, *kṣemaṃ subhikṣaṃ ca*), as was that of the son of Vena where, “[b]ecause of the protection that king provided, there was never any fear of stealthy thieves, nor did one person fear another.”⁸⁷ Śuddhodana’s kingdom is equally characterized by safety, for “he put down nocturnal malefactors by his enlightened administration of justice” (SNa 2.28, *spaṣṭayā daṇḍanītyā ca rātrisattrān avīapat*); “[n]owhere in his realm had anyone occasion to lament injury at the hands of others; for the bow in his hand promised security to the oppressed.”⁸⁸ In the same way, “during the son of Vena’s rule[, p]eople had no fear of anything.”⁸⁹ On the contrary, the *kalīyuga*/*yugānta* is characterized by fear and terror: “Crying fie, the twice-born, fearful and oppressed by the serfs, will wander upon this earth without finding a savior”;⁹⁰ “the terrified twice-born will run and seek refuge, by rivers, in mountains and rough terrain.”⁹¹ Moreover, “people will be poor” (MBh 3.188.50, *alpadravyā [...] bhaviṣyanti*); “kings, too, will by any and all means steal the property of others” (MBh 3.188.36, *rājānaś cāpy [...] parārthān [...] sarvopāyair hariṣyanti*), and “mercilessly, they will time and again violate and enjoy the wives and the prosperity of the good”;⁹² “prosperity vanishes” (MBh 12.70.20, *yogaḥkṣemasya*

86 MBh 3.186.30: *āndhrāḥ śakāḥ pulindāś ca yavanāś ca narādhipāḥ | kāmbojā aurnīkāḥ śūdrās tathābhīrā narottama ||*

87 MBh 12.59.125: *sarīṣṭpebhyāḥ stenebhyo na cānyonyāt kadācana | bhayam utpadyate tatra tasya rājño 'bhiraḥṣaṇāt ||*. Cf. Rām. 1.7.12 (Description of Ayodhyā under Daśaratha): *praśānta*.

88 SNa 2.23: *nākrukṣad viṣaye tasya kaś cit kaiś cit kva cit kṣataḥ | adikṣat tasya hastastham ārtēbhyo hy abhayaṃ dhanuḥ ||*

89 MBh 12.29.132–133: *vainasyāsan praśāsataḥ [...] manuṣyā akutobhayāḥ*. Note also MBh 12.59.125: *sarīṣṭpebhyāḥ stenebhyo na nānyonyāt kadācana | bhayam utpadyate tatra tasya rājño 'bhiraḥṣaṇāt ||*. “Because of the protection that king provided there was never any fear of stealthy thieves, nor did one person fear another.” MBh 12.68.30: *manuṣyā rakṣitā rājñā samantād akutobhayāt |*. “Protected by a king, people feel completely secure.”

90 MBh 3.188.58: *hāhākrṭā dvijāś caiva bhayārtā vṛṣalārditāḥ | trātāram alabhanto vai bhramiṣyanti mahīm imām ||*

91 MBh 3.188.60: *āśrayiṣyanti ca nadīḥ parvatānviṣamāṇi ca | pradhāvamānā vitrastā dvijāḥ [...] ||*

92 MBh 3.188.34: *ākramyākramya sādḥūnāṃ dārāmś caiva dhanāni ca | bhokṣyante niranukrośāḥ [...] ||*

nāśaḥ). At the time when Sarvārthasiddha was born, “in the realm of that king, joy prevailed” (BC 2.16, *tasya rājño [...] rājye cacāra harṣaḥ*) and “evil perished” (BC 2.16, *pranānāśa pāpmā*), whereas at the end of times, “the evil prosper” (MBh 3.186. 47, *pāpīyām vardhate janaḥ*) and “the entire world will be without joy” (MBh 3.188.25, *jaḡat sarvam [...] nirānandam*).⁹³ Above all, in Kapilavāstu, “dharma blazed forth” (BC 2.16, *jaḡvāla dharmah*) as in the *kṛta* age, when “the Law was potent among men, intact in all its four quarters, without guile and devoid of obstruction.”⁹⁴ Contrary to this, in the last age, “no Law survives” (MBh 3.186.45d, *na hi dharmo ’sti kaścana*), “the Law loses strength, and lawlessness gains it” (MBh 3.186.47ab, *dharmasya balahāniḥ syād adharmas ca balī tathā*), “lawlessness looms large, no Law prevails” (MBh 3.188.40cd, *adharmo vardhati mahān na ca dharmah pravatate*), “lawlessness has overcome the world” (MBh 3.188.12, *adharmas tu lokān ākramya tiṣṭhati*); “in the Kali age there is mostly Lawless action” (MBh 12.70.19, *kalāv adharmo bhūyiṣṭham*). Even the name given to the newly born Bodhisattva, and the reasons for it, are not without interesting Brahmanical parallels. In BC 2.17, the last verse in the description of Kapilavāstu, Aśvaghōṣa says that, “[s]ince the prosperity of the royal race and the accomplishment of all objects had thus been brought to pass, the king named his son accordingly, saying ‘He is Sarvārthasiddha.’”⁹⁵ Now during the son of Vena’s as well as Rāma’s rule, “people [...] gained all their ends” (MBh 12.29.133 = 12.29.50, *sarvasiddhārthāḥ*). MDhŚ 1.83 provides an even clearer parallel, according to which “[i]n the Kṛta Age, people succeed in all their pursuits” (*sarvasiddhārthāḥ [...] kṛte* [Olivelle 2005: 91]).⁹⁶

A few motifs have resisted all my attempts to trace them to *yuga*(-like) sources. This is the case, in particular, of BC 2.14a (*kaścit siṣeve rataye na kāmam*, “None pursued love for sensual pleasure”) and BC 9 (“Though that hour brings as much danger to the body as the clash of armies, yet women were delivered in due time safely, easily and without disease”⁹⁷), although apocalyptic/eschato-

93 Cf. ViP 6.1.26 (Schreiner 2013: 534). For a *kaliyuga* parallel to “sin was quenched,” see ViP 6.1.56 (Schreiner 2013: 536).

94 MBh 3.188.10: [...] *catuṣpāt sakalo nirvyājopādhivarjitaḥ | vṛṣaḥ pratiṣṭhito dharmo manuṣyeṣv abhavat* [...] ||.

95 BC 2.17: *evamvidhā rājakulasya sampat sarvārthasiddhiś ca yato babhūva | tato nṛpas tasya sutasya nāma sarvārthasiddho ’yam iti pracakre* ||.

96 Cf. MBh 3.148.10: *kṛtam nāma yugaṃ tāta yatra dharmah sanātanaḥ | kṛtam eva na kartavyaṃ tasmīn kāle yugottame* ||. “That Eon is called the Winning Throw, my friend, in which the sempiternal Law holds reign. In that age, that best of Eons, things are done, not left to be done.”

97 BC 2.9: *śarīrasandehakare ’pi kāle saṅgrāmasammarda iva pravṛtte | svasthāḥ sukhaṃ caiva nirāmayaṃ ca prajājñire kālavaśena nāryaḥ* ||.

logical sources reflect a strong concern for issues of pregnancy.⁹⁸ As for BC 14cd (“none practised religion for the sake of riches; none did hurt on the plea of religion”⁹⁹), with its characteristic allusion to ritual *hiṃsā*, it could find parallels in Buddhist rather than Brahmanical accounts of human degeneration along the ages. Thus it is that the *Yogācārabhūmi* (YBh) associates ritual violence with *kaliyuga* brahmins,¹⁰⁰ echoing an interesting passage from the *Suttanipāta* (Sn) according to which the brahmins of old practised religion without blood sacrifices (“When the sacrifice occurred, *they* did not kill cows”¹⁰¹) and only later composed, out of greed and jealousy for the king’s wealth, Vedic formulas enjoining ritual *hiṃsā*: “[But] there was a change in them. [...] Having composed hymns for this purpose, they then went up to Okkāka. ‘You have much wealth and grain. Sacrifice, [for] your prosperity is much. Sacrifice, [for] your wealth is much.’ And then the king, the lord of warriors, induced by the brahmins, having performed these sacrifices, the assamedha, the purisamedha, the sammāpāsa, the vācapeyya, [and] the niraggaḷa, gave wealth to the brahmins.”¹⁰²

4 The Ideal King

The similarities between Aśvaghōṣa’s portrayal of Śuddhodana and Brahmanical conceptions of ideal kingship did not escape E.H. Johnston’s attention: “Every reader of Aśvaghōṣa must be struck by the number of his references to the theory of politics, which, especially in the *Saundarananda*, is his favourite source for similes. Twice, for instance (B., ii, and S., ii), he gives us a detailed description of the ideal king, which conforms to the ideas about kingship then current in India except among the exponents of the *arthaśāstra*. [...] His ideas keep within the limits of the *dharmaśāstra*, particularly, as hinted above, in the

98 MBh 3.186.52: *saptavarṣāṣṭavarṣās ca striyo garbhadharā nṛpa | daśadvādaśavarṣānām puṃsām putrah prajāyate ||*. “Girls get pregnant at the age of seven and eight [...] and boys of ten and twelve become fathers.” MBh 3.188.48: *pañcame vātha ṣaṣṭhe vā varṣe kanyā prasīyate | saptavarṣāṣṭavarṣās ca prajāsyanti narās tadā ||*. “Girls will give birth in their fifth or sixth years, and boys will be fathers at seven or eight.”

99 BC 2.14cd: *kaścid dhanārtham na cacāra dharmam dharmāya kaścin na cakāra hiṃsām |*.

100 YBh 146,3. On this passage, its possible sources and its parallels, see Eltschinger 2017.

101 Sn 295: *upaṭṭhitasmim yañnasmiṃ nāssu gāvo hanimsu te*. Translation Norman 1996: 50.

102 Sn 299–303: *tesam āsi vipallāso [...] te tatta mante ganthetvā okkākaṃ tad upāgamum: ‘pahūtadhanadhañño si, yajassu, bahu te vittam, yajassu, bahu te dhanam’ tato ca rājā saññatto brāhmaṇehi rathesabho assamedham purisamedham sammāpāsaṃ vācapeyyam niraggaḷam, ete yāge yajitvāna brāhmaṇānam adā dhanam*. Translation Norman 1996: 50.

form expounded for popular consumption in the *Mahābhārata*.¹⁰³ Johnston illustrated this conformity by alluding to a “numerical riddle,” formulated in BC 2.41, “some of [whose] numbers cannot be explained out of the *Arthaśāstra*,” whereas all “fit in fairly well with the teaching of the *Mahābhārata*” (Johnston 1929: 78). Here is this enigmatic stanza: “He disciplined the one; he protected the seven; seven too he abandoned and he observed five; he won the set of three; he understood the set of three; he knew the set of two and gave up the set of two.”¹⁰⁴ In a footnote, Johnston explains the numerical riddle as follows (1929: 78, n. 2): “The one disciplined is himself (xii, 2599), the seven protected the seven constituents of a kingdom (xii, 2659–2660), the seven abandoned the seven vices of kings (v, 1061–1062), the five observed the five measures (xii, 2156), the three obtained *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* (xii, 2150), the three understood *sthāna*, *ṛddhi*, and *kṣaya* (xii, 2152 and 2665), the two known are probably the frequently mentioned pair, *naya* and *apanaya* or *anaya*, and the two abandoned *kāma* and *krodha* (xii, 2721 and v, 1160).¹⁰⁵ Here as in almost every-

103 Johnston 1929: 78, who uses “*arthaśāstra* for the teaching of the school generally and *Arthaśāstra* for Kautilya’s work” (Johnston 1929: 78, n. 1). Johnston demonstrates, in my opinion convincingly, that Aśvaghoṣa was not familiar with the *Arthaśāstra*; according to him (1929: 81), “if Aśvaghoṣa was acquainted with the *Arthaśāstra*, he did not refer to it even in places where it would have strengthened his argument to do so.” Here is Johnston’s understanding of the distinction between *dharmaśāstra* in general (Aśvaghoṣa’s model according to him) and the *Arthaśāstra* (1929: 79): “Now the dividing line between the *dharmaśāstra* and the *Arthaśāstra* must be sought in the conception of the ultimate purpose of kingship. According to the former the institution of kingship exists for the maintenance of order and the preservation of the structure of society. The *Arthaśāstra* no doubt pays lip service to this ideal but the essential doctrine underlying the entire work is that a king’s sole preoccupation is with his own self-aggrandizement and that in its pursuit he should be restrained by no consideration except those of enlightened self-interest. The originality of the *Arthaśāstra* lies, in my view, not in the conception of this principle, which was probably already in the air, but in the relentless logic with which all its implications are worked out.”

104 BC 2.41: *ekaṃ vinīnye sa jugopa sapta saptaiva tatyāja rarakṣa pañca | prāpa trivargaṃ bubudhe trivargaṃ jajñe dvivargaṃ prajahau dvivargaṃ ||*

105 In a footnote of his translation (1984: 11.28, n. 41), Johnston gives a similar explanation and adduces roughly similar references, adding that “[t]his riddle has been variously explained.” He might have in mind Carlo Formichi’s explanation in his *Aṣvaghoṣa, poeta del Buddismo* (1912), who had already identified several of the numbers, and to whom he likely was indebted (Formichi 1912: 318–319, endnote to BC 2.41): “Sarei disposto a rinunziare anche io, come gli altri interpreti, a qualunque tentativo di spiegare questo strano indovinello. Tuttavia me pare che, trattandosi qui della condotta di un principe, sia lecito pansare ai precetti e alla terminologia dei *Nītiśāstra*. Quell’uno che *Ḷuddhodana* disciplinò sarebbe quindi *Ḷuddhodana* stesso, i sette che custodi sarebbero i ministri, i quali secondo *Manu* debbono essere appunto sette (vii, 54), gli altri sette che aban-

thing, Johnston was right, I think. In what follows, I would like to demonstrate what this truly remarkable Indologist only suggested, i.e., that the *Rājadharmaparvan* of the MBh, augmented with materials from the Rām., provides enough

donò alluderebbero ai sette vizi die quali è parola in *Manu* (vii, 50–52), e finalmente i cinque che difese adomberebbero i cinque elementi essenziali dello Stato: ministri, territorio, fortezze, tesoro ed esercito (*Manu*, vii, 157). Nel primo *trivarga* mi par di vedere il *dharma*, l'*artha* e il *kāma*, e nel secondo lo *kṣaya*, lo *sthāna* e la *vr̥ddhi*. Parimenti il *divarga* designerebbe la prima volta il *daivam* e il *puruṣakāra* e la seconda volta il *kāma* e il *krodha*. Posso ingannarmi nei particolari, ma credo fermamente che *Aṣvaghōṣa* qui adoperi il linguaggio dei *Nītiśāstra* il quali sono soliti attribuire determinati concetti a determinati numeri. Basti ricordare lo *çloka* 42 (viii) del *Nītiśāstra*: *aṣṭaçākhaṃ caturmūlaṃ ṣaṣṭipattraṃ dvaye sthitam ṣaṭpūṣpaṃ triphalaṃ vr̥kṣaṃ yo jānāti sa nītvit.*” Johnston’s interpretation differs from Formichi’s only concerning the seven to be protected and the two to be known. To the best of my knowledge, Andrzej Gawrónski never attempted to explain the riddle. In what follows, I provide Johnston’s above-quoted references according to the critical edition and provide a few additional references. (1) MBh 12.69.4ab: *ātmā jeyah sadā rājñā tato jeyāś ca śatravaḥ* |. “The king must always conquer himself, and then his enemies.” (7a) MBh 12.69.62–63: *rājñā saptaiva rakṣyāni tāni cāpi nibodha me | ātmamātyaś ca kośaś ca daṇḍo mītrāni caiva hi || tathā janapadaś caiva puraṃ ca kurunandana | etat saptātmaṃ rājyaṃ paripālyam prayatnataḥ* ||. “Pay attention to me—there are seven things the king must protect: himself, his ministers, his treasury, his army, his allies, the people of the kingdom, and the city, O joy of the Kurus. The kingdom, made up of these seven elements, must be guarded carefully.” Note also MBh 12.121.46: *sap- taprakṛti cāṣṭāṅgam śarīram iha yad viduḥ | rājyasya daṇḍa evāṅgam daṇḍaḥ prabhava eva ca* ||. “The rod of force is a limb of the kingdom, which they understand to be a body with seven basic elements and eight limbs.” (7b) MBh 5.33.73–74: *sapta doṣāḥ sadā rājñā hātavyā vyasanodayāḥ | prāyaśo yair vinaśyanti kṛtamūlāś ca pārthivāḥ || striyo ‘kṣā mṛgayā pānaṃ vākpāruṣyaṃ ca pañcamam | mahac ca daṇḍapāruṣyam arthadūṣaṇam eva ca* ||. “A king should at all times avoid the seven vices which spring from addiction and because of which otherwise firmly established princes mostly perish: women, dice, the hunt, liquor, abusive language in the fifth place, cruel punishment, and abuse of wealth.” Note also MBh 12.86.10: *vivarjitānāṃ vyasanaiḥ sughoraiḥ saptabhīḥ*, “[the king’s ministers should all be] free of the seven hideous vices.” According to Fitzgerald’s endnote (2004: 739), the commentator Nilakaṇṭha interprets this as referring to “the seven addictions [that] are hunting, dicing, women, drinking, punishing, speaking harshly, and squandering riches.” On (some of) these vices, see also MBh 12.28.31 (four vices), MBh 12.94.17 (four vices), and especially MBh 12.59.59–61 (ten vices). (5) Note, first, SNa 15.61: *sāmnā dānena bhedena daṇḍena niyamena vā | prāpto hi rabhaso mṛtyuḥ pratihantuṃ na śakyate* ||. “For Death arrives raging and cannot be combated by conciliation, gifts, sowing dissension, force of arms or abstinence.” MBh 12.59.35: *sāma copapradānaṃ ca bhedo daṇḍaś ca paṇḍava | upekṣā pañcamī cātra kārtsnyena samudāhṛtā* ||. “The conciliation of adversaries, giving gifts, dividing one’s adversaries, the use of force, and, fifthly, forbearance have been completely declared in it [= in Svayambhū’s original *Nītiśāstra*].” The Rām. knows of only four means/measures, i.e., *sāman*, *dāna*, *bheda*, and *parākrama* (Rām. 4.53.6, 5.2.7–8, 5.20.35, 5.39.2–3). There are other groups of five in the MBh, all of which are, however, less convincing than the one just referred to. Note, e.g., MBh 12.94.24: *raḁṣādhikaraṇam*

comparative evidence to suggest that Āsvaghoṣa, in passages such as BC 2.33–45, 2.49–55, and SNa 2.1–45, deliberately portrayed Śuddhodana in such a way that his description closely conformed to standard Brahmanical characteriza-

yuddhaṃ tathā dharmānuśāsanam | mantracintyaṃ sukhaṃ kāle pañcabhir vardhate mahī ||. “The land thrives in the course of Time with these five things: Defensive locations, war, government according to Law, the consideration of advice, and happiness.” Note also MBh 12.121.41–42ab: *adadad daṇḍa evāsmāi dhruvam aiśvaryaṃ eva ca | bale nayaś ca samyuktaḥ sadā pañcavidhātmaḥ || kulabāhudhanāmātyāḥ prajñā caktā balāni ca |*. “When joined with power it [= rod of force] always consists of five kinds of things: families, bodily strength, wealth, ministers, and wisdom are declared to be forms of strength.” (3a/b) Note first the closely parallel MBh 12.69.64–68: [...] *trivargaṃ ca trivargam aparāṃ tathā | yo vetti puruṣavyāghra sa bhunakti mahīm imām || trivargaś cāpi yaḥ proktas tam ihaikamanāḥ śṛṇu | kṣayaḥ sthānaṃ ca vṛddhiś ca trivargam aparāṃ tathā || dharmāś cārthaś ca kāmaś ca [...] | dharmeṇa hi mahīpālaś ciraṃ pālayate mahīm ||*. “O tiger among men, he who knows [...] the group of three, and the further Group of Three uses and enjoys this earth. About the group of three that was mentioned, listen to this with your mind focused: decrease, stasis, and increase. And hear too the further Group of Three—Law, Profit, and Love. [...] Really, by doing Meritorious, Lawful Deeds, the king guards the earth for a long time.” Note also MBh 12.59.30–31: *trivarga iti vikhyāto gaṇa eṣa svayambhuvā | caturtho mokṣa ity eva pṛthag arthaḥ pṛthaggaṇaḥ || mokṣasyāpi trivargo ’nyaḥ proktaḥ satvaṃ rajas tamaḥ | sthānaṃ vṛddhiḥ kṣayaś caiva trivargaś caiva daṇḍajahaḥ ||*. “This was called the Group of Three by the Self-Arisen One. And there is a fourth distinct general motive of life, Absolute Freedom, which forms a separate category. Another group of three is declared in connection with Absolute Freedom: Lightness, Energy, and Darkness. Stasis, increase, and diminution form a group of three that springs from use of the rod of force.” See also MBh 12.57.17 and 18. (2a) MBh 12.57.30, *nayāpanayavit*, “knows good policy from bad”; MBh 12.57.34, *nayāpanayavettāraḥ*, “know good policy from bad.” See also MBh 12.68.29. MBh 12.110.2–3 provides another, here also less likely, group of two: *satyaṃ caivānṛtaṃ cobhe lokān āvṛtya tiṣṭhataḥ | tayoḥ kim ācared rājan puruṣo dharmāniścitaḥ || kim svit satyaṃ kim anṛtaṃ kim svit dharmyaṃ sanātanam | kasmīn kāle vadet satyaṃ kasmīn kāle ’nṛtaṃ vadet ||*. “Truth and falsehood both pervade all realms. What might a man who is resolved to do what is Right do with regard to these two? What is truth, anyway? And what falsehood? And what is everlastingly Right? At what time should one speak what is true? And when might he speak what is false?” (2b) MBh 5.34.63: *kṣudrākṣeṇeva jālena jhaśāv apihitāv ubhau | kāmaś ca rājan krodhaś ca tau prajñānaṃ vilumpataḥ ||*. “Like two large fish held in fine-gauze net, desire and anger, O king, tear apart one’s wisdom.” Translation van Buitenen 1978: 264. MBh 12.59.59–61 connects *kāma* and *krodha* to the seven to be abandoned: *krodhajāni tathogrāni kāmajāni tathaiva ca | daśoktāni kuruśreṣṭha vyasanāny atra caiva ha || mṛgayākṣās tathā pānaṃ striyaś ca bhatararābha | kāmajāny āhur ācāryāḥ proktāniha svayambhuvā || vākpāruṣyaṃ tathogratvaṃ daṇḍapāruṣyam eva ca | ātmano vighrahas tyāgo ’thārthadūṣanam eva ca ||*. “Ten terrific vices that arise from anger and from desire are described there, O best of the Kurus: Hunting, dicing, drinking, and women are the vices teachers say arise from desire, and the Self-Arisen One has declared them here, along with harshness of speech, violence, harshness of punishment, masochism, suicide, and the ruining of one’s riches.” On *kāma* and *krodha*, see also MBh 12.21.17, 12.25.13, 12.72.6, 12.72.7.

tions of the “righteous king” (*dharmarāja*). As above, this is not to say that the poet directly borrowed from the Sanskrit epics as he knew or even as we have them, but at least that he relied on the same (kind of) sources as those available to the authors/compiler of the MBh, or that he drew from a shared descriptive repertoire of ideal kingship. Conformity with this normative type can be observed at the level of psychology, morality, political values and action and, above all, in a number of highly specific similes and metaphors that leave little room for coincidence.

Aśvaghoṣa repeatedly describes Śuddhodana as “resplendent with self-control” (SNa 2.14, *vyakāśiṣṭātmavattayā*; BC 2.52, *vaśin*) and “practising self-restraint” (BC 2.33, *bheje damam*), “having subdued his senses” (SNa 2.1, *jitendriya*), “not being a slave to any object of sense” (BC 2.52, *kañcid viṣayaṃ na bheje*), and “indifferent to sensual pleasures” (SNa 2.25, *viṣayeṣv akutūhalaḥ*).¹⁰⁶ Now according to the *Rājadharmaparvan*, “self-control is the most ancient Law” (MBh 12.60.9, *damam eva [...] dharmam [...] purātanam*) in that “the king [...] who has conquered his senses is trusted by his subjects” (MBh 12.57.29, *jitendriyo rājā bhavati bhūtānāṃ viśvāyaḥ*); the king “must always conquer himself” (MBh 12.69.4, *ātmā jeyaḥ sadā rājñā*), “have himself under control” (MBh 12.57.23, *vaśyātman*) and be “self-possessed” (MBh 12.78.21, *svatantra*).¹⁰⁷ In short, “the one who is established in the kingship should be a *kṣatriya* who is always in control of himself.”¹⁰⁸ Śuddhodana “did not wish to bear wrath in his heart” (BC 2.44cd, *na cāvivakṣīd dhṛdayena manyum*). Similarly, the epic *dharmarāja* “does not anger” (MBh 12.57.29, *akrodhana*), “controls his

106 BC 2.34: *nādhīravat kāmasukhe sasañje na sañrarañje viṣamaṃ jananyām | dhṛtyendriyāśvāms capalān vijigye [...] ||*. “He did not, like one wanting in self-control, indulge in the pleasures of the senses, he cherished no improper passion for women, with firmness he overcame the rebellious horses of the senses”; BC 2.52: *śamaṃ siṣeve nīyamaṃ viṣeḥ*, “[h]e pursued holy calm, he undertook the law of restraint”; SNa 2.15: *araksīd dhairyavīryābhyaṃ indriyāṇi*, “he guarded his senses with steadfastness”; SNa 2.42: *tena satsv api bhogeṣu nāsevīndriyavṛttitā ||*. “He [...] did not indulge his senses, though possessed of the objects of enjoyment.”

107 Other occurrences of *jitendriya* include, e.g., MBh 12.56.19, MBh 12.67.38, MBh 12.69.5, MBh 12.76.37, MBh 12.93.11. Note also MBh 12.56.19 *dānta*, MBh 12.69.5 *pañcavargavinigraha*, MBh 12.120.35 *samyama*, MBh 12.21.18 *damam uttamam āsthitaḥ*. See also MDhŚ 7.30 and 44 (detachment from the objects of sense) and MDhŚ 7.34 (self-control). Self-control and victory over the senses are ubiquitous in descriptions of Rāma, Daśaratha and others in the Rām. See, e.g., Rām. 1.6.3, 2.2.21, 3.8.5, 3.31.19 (*vijitendriya*); 2.46.20, 2.50.21, 4.4.17, 3.41.43, 4.33.7 (*jitendriya*); 2.8.7, 2.16.60, 2.30.12, 3.39.7, 3.61.4 (*dānta, dama*); 1.1.4, 2.1.16, 2.16.60, 2.19.2, 2.28.17, 3.1.1, 3.6.13 (*ātmavat*); 1.1.8, 2.88.27, 3.8.27 (*nīyama, nīyatātman*); see also 2.3.26 and 5.36.34. Cf. Aśoka’s Rock Edicts 9 and 13 (*sa[m]yama*, Bloch 1950: 115 and 119), as well as Dhauli and Jaugaḍa Rock Edict no. 1 (*āsulopa* [irascibility], Bloch 1950: 138).

108 MBh 12.21.13: *yo hi rājye sthitaḥ śaśvadvaśi [...] kṣatriyaḥ |*

anger” (MBh 12.57.31, *jitakrodha*),¹⁰⁹ has “put anger far off and away” (MBh 12.59.110, °*krodham cotsrjya dūrataḥ*), for “no one hates the king who knows how to restrain his anger” (MBh 12.95.9, *krodham niyantum yo veda tasya dveṣṭā na vidyate*). Śuddhodana “did not let himself be overtaken by the pride of dominion” (SNa 2.20, *nārukṣan mānam aiśvaram*), “was not made insolent by accession to sovereignty, [and] did not despise others because of his prosperity” (SNa 2.2, *nāvamene parān ṛddhyā parebhyo nāpi vivyathe*). In being so, he complies with the behavior expected from the Brahmanical king, who “is not boastful” (MBh 12.57.31, *avikathana*) and has “put up pride far off and away” (MBh 12.59.110, *mānam cotsrjya dūrataḥ*).¹¹⁰ According to Aśvaghōṣa, the king of Kapilavāstu was impartial, who “gave no opening to feelings of partiality or the reverse, according as he liked or disliked his petitioners, and observed purity of justice as being holy.”¹¹¹ In the same way, in the MBh, “paying no heed to his own desires and aversions, that is said to be the Law of the king” (MBh 12.92.33, *kāmadveṣāv anādr̥tya sa rājño dharmā ucyate*); the *dharmarāja* “should cherish only Law, paying no heeds to his own likes or resentments” (MBh 12.91.18, *kāmakrodhāv anādr̥tya dharmam evānupālayet*); he should “for-sak[e his] likes or dislikes, acting the same toward every person” (MBh 12.59.110, *priyāpriye parityajya samaḥ sarveṣu jantuṣu*),¹¹² and, “detached from love and aversion as he watches over beings, equitably administe[r] the rod of punishment” (MBh 12.66.5, *akāmadveṣayuktasya daṇḍanīyā [...] samekṣiṇas ca bhūteṣu*). Inflicting mild punishments is a key aspect of Aśvaghōṣa’s and the epic’s ideal king. In administering justice, Śuddhodana “did not maltreat the few evildoers, even when they deserved cruel punishment” (SNa 2.21, *kleśārhan api kāṁscit tu nākliṣṭa kliṣṭakarmanah*); he “did not have the guilty executed, although he adjudged them worthy of death, nor did he even regard them with anger. And he inflicted mild punishments on them, since their release

109 MBh 12.57.13: *jitakrodha*, “having his anger under control.” See also MDhŚ 7.45–51 (wrath and pleasure), and Rām. 1.1.4, 2.1.25, 4.4.17 (*jitakrodha*), and 2.36.3 (*na krudhyati*, etc.). Cf. Aśoka’s Pillar Edict no. 3 (*kodha*, Bloch 1950: 163).

110 Note also MBh 12.91.26: *sa yathā darpasahitam adharmaṁ nānusevate | tathā vartasva māndhātāś ciraṁ cet sthātum icchasi ||*. “If you want to stand for a long time, Māndhātār, live without being a slave to Lawlessness and its companion, pride.” For similar ideas, see Rām. 2.1.25, 2.6.23, 3.15.26, 3.31.15. Cf. Aśoka’s Pillar Edict no. 3 (*māna*, Bloch 1950: 163).

111 BC 2.39: *iṣṭeṣv anīṣṭeṣu ca kāryavatsu na rāgadośāśrayatām prapede | śivam śiṣeve vyavahāraśuddham [...] ||*.

112 Note also MBh 12.65.5: *priyāpriye varjayann eva*, “eschewing his own likes and dislikes,” and Rām. 1.1.15 (*sarvasama*), 4.18.28, 33, 43, 54–55. On impartiality, cf. Aśoka’s Dhauli and Jaugaḍa Rock Edict no. 1 (Bloch 1950: 138–139); on Aśoka’s policy towards prisoners, see, e.g., Pillar Edicts no. 4 and 5 (Bloch 1950: 165 and 167).

too was looked on as bad policy.”¹¹³ In the same way, the *dharma* king is “gentle with the rod of punishment” (MBh 12.57.29, *mṛdudaṇḍa*) and sees to “the appropriate application of punishment” (MBh 12.59.69, *yuktyā daṇḍa-nipātanam*); “he should not mete out punishment without careful examination” (MBh 12.71.7, *nāparikṣya nayed daṇḍam*) and should “cause punishments that suit the crime to befall the wicked” (MBh 12.86.20, *aparādhānurūpaṃ ca daṇḍam pāpeṣu pātayet*), for “[t]he rod of punishment is to be applied differentially and according to Law, not haphazardly: Punishment may be censure, imprisonment, gold, expulsion, severing a limb from the body, or execution. Banishment, death, and the various corporeal afflictions should not be imposed for any trivial reason”;¹¹⁴ the king “by himself is Law, namely, the king who protects his subjects perfectly with punishments applied well and equitably both to those he likes and those he dislikes.”¹¹⁵ In SNa 2.17, Aśvagoṣa states that “[t]he compassion, innate in [Śuddhodana’s] nature, overflowed at the sight of distress” (*duḥkhitān paśyan prakṛtyā karuṇātmakaḥ*). Similarly, the epic “king should be gracious, and, if able to do so, he should offer compassionate relief to those in distress” (MBh 12.94.7, *śaktaḥ syāt sumukho rājā kuryāt kāruṇyam āpadi*), for “[t]he king should recognize his principal Duties of Law to be [...] compassion for all beings” (MBh 12.65.2, *vidyād rājā sarva-bhūtānukampāṃ [...] dharmam agryam*).¹¹⁶ Aśvagoṣa puts great emphasis on

113 BC 2.42: *kṛtāgaso 'pi pratipādya vadhyān nājighanan nāpi ruṣā dadarśa | babandha sānvena phalena caitāms tyāgo 'pi teṣāṃ hy anayāya dṛṣṭaḥ ||*. A case in point is the king’s treatment of the Bodhisattva’s charioteer, whom a wrathful, resentful king certainly would have punished more severely: BC 3.49: *śrutvā nimittaṃ tu nivartanasya santyaktam ātmānam anena mene | mārgasya śaucādhikṛtāya caiva cukrośa ruṣṭo 'pi ca nogradaṇḍaḥ ||*. “But when he learnt the reason for his return, he felt himself already abandoned by him. And he merely reprimended the officer in charge of clearing the road, and angry though he was, imposed no severe punishment on him.”

114 MBh 12.122.40–41: *vibhaja daṇḍaḥ kartavyo dharmeṇa na yadṛcchayā | durvācā nigrāho bandho hiraṇyaṃ bāhyataḥ kriyā || vyaṅgatvaṃ ca śarīrasya vadho vā nālpakāraṇāt | śarīrapīḍās tās tās tu dehatyāgo vivāsanam ||*. On the (non-)punishment of brahmins, see MBh 12.56.34 and 12.59.69.

115 MBh 12.121.10: *supraṇītena daṇḍena priyāpriyasamātmanā | prajā rakṣati yaḥ samyag-dharma eva sa kevalaḥ ||*. Note also MBh 12.86.22–23: *samyakpraṇayato daṇḍam bhūmipasya viśāṃ pate | yuktasya vā nāsty adharma dharma eveha śāsvataḥ || kāmākāreṇa daṇḍam tu yaḥ kuryād avicakṣaṇaḥ | sa ihākīrtisamyukto mṛto narakam āpnuyāt ||*. “O lord of peoples, when a king applies the rod of punishment rightly, or when he has done so with due seriousness, he acquires no Evil, only everlasting Merit. But he who punishes without careful discernment, acting only on his own whims, becomes infamous in this world and goes to the hell Naraka when he dies.” See also MDhŚ 7.27.

116 See also MBh 12.80.16. Compassion is ubiquitous as a quality of the king in the Rām.; see 2.1.31, 2.5.11 (*sarvabhūtānukampana*); 2.30.12, 2.43.6, 2.55.2, 4.33.7 (*anukrośa, sānukrośa*);

Śuddhodana's virtues (*guṇa*), thanks to which the king "conquered his kinsmen and subjects" (BC 2.34, *bandhūṃś ca paurāṃś ca guṇair jigāya*) and "rejoiced his kinsfolk" (SNa 2.27, *guṇair bandhūn arīramat*); the Buddha's father "ever grew in virtue" (SNa 2.26, *avardhiṣṭa guṇaiḥ*), "caused his virtues ever more and more to purify his race" (SNa 2.34, *svair evādidapac cāpi bhūyo bhūyo guṇaiḥ kulam*).¹¹⁷ Needless to say, the *dharma* king is "endowed with fitting virtues" (MBh 12.57.30, *nyāyaguṇopeta*),¹¹⁸ and "[t]he king who does kindness regularly because of his virtues has all his works succeed."¹¹⁹ Among his many virtues, Śuddhodana is generous: "That he was ever charitable to the needy was due to generosity, not to a desire for renown, and, however great the substance of his gifts, he did not blazon them abroad."¹²⁰ Similarly, the Brahmanical prince is generous (MBh 12.93.16, MBh 12.118.22, *dātṛ*), for "people are devoted to a king who is generous" (MBh 12.72.12, *dātāram [...] anurajyanti mānavāḥ*): "Benevolence toward all beings in deed, in thought, in speech, and doing favors and making generous gifts—this is what is praised as virtue."¹²¹ According to MBh

2.93.5, 5.28.6 (*dayāvān sarvabhūteṣu, sarvasattvadayāvat*); 4.33.16 (*karuṇavedin*); 1.1.3, 1.1.12, 3.45.11, 4.4.10 (*sarvabhūteṣu hitaḥ, prajānāṃ hite rataḥ, sarvabhūtahite rataḥ, sarvabhūtahitātman*); 1.3.3 (*sarvānukūlatā*); see also 5.36.34.

117 Note also SNa 2.30: *apaprathat piṭṛṃś caiva satputrasaḍṣair guṇaiḥ*, "[h]e spread abroad his ancestors' renown by the virtues suitable to a good son." SNa 2.45: *evamādibhir atyaktō babhūvāsulabhair guṇaiḥ | aśakyāḥ śakyasāmantaḥ śākyarājāḥ sa śakravat ||*. "This invincible king of the Śākyas, to whom the vassal princes were submissive, was endowed like Śakra with these and other rare virtues." BC 2.43: *yaśāṃsi cāpad guṇagandhavanti*, "he obtained renown, made flagrant by virtue." Śuddhodana is exemplary for his virtues, according to Aśvaghōṣa: BC 2.45: *tasmiṃś tathā bhūmipatau pravṛtte bhṛtyāś ca paurāś ca tathaiva ceruḥ | śamātmake cetasi viprasanne prayuktayogasya yathendriyāni ||*. "Since the monarch behaved thus, his servants and the citizens followed the same course, just as, when the mind of a man in mystic trance has become wholly calm and is compact of tranquillity, his senses become so likewise." SNa 2.11: *prāyeṇa viśaye tasya tacchīlam anuvartinaḥ | arjāyanto dadṛśire dhanānīva guṇān api ||*. "In general in his dominions men, by imitating his conduct, were seen to accumulate virtue, as if it were wealth."

118 Note also MBh 12.56.19, *guṇavat*.

119 MBh 12.94.12: *yaḥ priyaṃ kurute nityaṃ guṇato vasudhādhipaḥ | tasya karmāni sidhyanti [...] ||*. See Rām. 1.1.2, 1.2.31, 3.45.11 (*guṇavat*); 1.1.16 (*sarvagūṇopeta*); 1.1.19, 2.1.26 (*śreṣṭha-guṇair yuktaḥ*); 1.1.18, 2.1.29 (*guṇasampanna*), etc.

120 SNa 2.40: *ānṛśaṃsyān na yaśase tenādāyi sadārthine | dravyaṃ mahad api tyaktvā na caivākīrti kiñcana ||*. Note also SNa 2.18: *sauhārdadāṛḍhabhaktivān maitreṣu viguṇeṣv api | nādidāsīt aditsit tu saumukhyāt svam svam arthavat ||*. "Out of his firm devotion to amity with those who were his allies by traditional friendship he would not be dejected, even when they were worthless, but out of graciousness would give them his wealth according to their needs."

121 MBh 12.124.64: *adrohaḥ sarvabhūteṣu karmaṇā manasā girā | anugrahaś ca dānaṃ ca śīlam etat praśasyate ||*.

12.57.22, the king “is a man whose conduct has been purified” (*śuddhācāra*); true to this, Śuddhodana “gladdened his subjects by his conduct, like a cloud gladdening them with rain”;¹²² “no unfitting action was observed in him on any occasion” (SNa 2.43, *na tenādarśi viṣamaṃ kāryaṃ kvacana kiñcana*), “in whom deeds were pure” (SNa 2.1, *śuddhakarman*) and who “did not enter on low paths of conduct” (SNa 2.26, *nāvṛtad garhite pathi*). Śuddhodana and the Brahmanical king are truthful. Thus it is that the king of Kapilavāstu “adhered with constancy to his promises, just as a good horse suffers cheerfully the upraised yoke; for he did not desire life for even a moment at the price of falling away from the truth.”¹²³ Or else, “[h]e spoke what was pleasant and not unprofitable; he stated what was true and not disagreeable; for self-respect made him unable to say even to himself a pleasant falsehood or a harsh truth.”¹²⁴ Similarly, the epic *dharmarāja* “tells the truth” (MBh 12.57.12, *satyavāc*) and is “committed to truthfulness” (MBh 12.89.29, *satyārjavapara*), for “[t]he king who is dedicated to Law and speaks the truth at all times delights his subjects” (MBh 12.56.36, *dharmātmā satyavāk caiva rājā rañjayati prajāḥ*).¹²⁵ And just as Śuddhodana “placed his reliance on the aged” (SNa 2.26, *avartīṣṭa ca vṛddheṣu*), the epic *dharmarāja* is advised to “revere the aged” (MBh 12.57.20, *upāsītā ca vṛddhānām*).¹²⁶ Śuddhodana “studied many sciences” (SNa 2.25, *bahvīr adhyagamād vidyāḥ*), “pondered on the *śāstra*” (BC 2.52, *vimamarśa śāstram*) and “honoured the wise; like the moon in the month of Āśvina he was pleasing to the cultivated” (SNa 2.14, *viduṣaḥ paryupāsīṣṭa [...] vyarociṣṭa ca śiṣṭebhyo māsiṣe candramā iva*); he “did not learn science to cause suffering to others, but studied only the knowledge that was beneficent” (BC 2.35, *nādhyaiṣṭa duḥkhāya parasya vidyāṃ jñānaṃ śivaṃ yat tv adhyagiṣṭa*), so that “[b]y his wisdom he obtained what was useful in this world and by his learning he knew what was fitting for the hereafter.”¹²⁷ In much the same way, the epic king praises learning (MBh 12.23.10, 12.120.43,

122 SNa 2.30cd: *salileneva cāmbhodo vṛttenājihladat prajāḥ ||*

123 SNa 2.13: *dhrtyāvākṣit pratijñāṃ sa sadvājīvodyatām dhuram | na hy avāñcīc cyutaḥ satyān muhūrtam api jīvitam ||*

124 Cf. BC 2.38: *sāntvaṃ babhāṣe na ca nārthavad yaj jajalpa tattvaṃ na ca vipriyaṃ yat | sāntvaṃ hy atattvaṃ paruṣaṃ ca tattvaṃ hrīyāśakann ātmana eva vaktum ||*

125 MBh 12.21.11 and 17, MBh 12.58.5, MBh 12.80.16, and MDhŚ 7.26 and 31. See Rām. 1.1.3 (*satyavākya*); 1.1.12, 2.2.20, 2.19.7 (*satyasandha, satyābhisandha*); 1.1.18, 2.39.7 (*satya*); 1.3.3 (*satyaśīlatā*); 1.69.32, 2.31.6, 4.33.7 (*satyavādīn*); 2.1.18, 2.8.7 (*satyavāc*); 2.36.6 (*satyavrata*), 1.10.21 (*satyapratīśrava*), etc. Cf. Aśoka’s Pillar Edict no. 2 and 7 (*sacca*, Bloch 1950: 162 and 171).

126 Cf. Rām. 2.94.52 and 4.18.5.

127 SNa 2.15: *avedīd buddhiśāstrābhyām iha cāmutra ca kṣamam | arakṣīd dhairyavīryābhyām indriyāṇy api ca prajāḥ ||*

vidyā) and “is conversant with all the learned treatises” (MBh 12.16.5, *sarvaśāstraviśārada*); at MBh 12.19.2, Yudhiṣṭhira claims to “know the multitudinous treatises illustrated with reasoned arguments” (*ākulāni ca śāstrāṇi hetubhīṣ citritāni ca [...] veda*).¹²⁸ Āsvaghoṣa’s Śuddhodana is not greedy, never levies too heavy taxes, and never seizes any good in an unfair manner: “he did not distress his subjects with taxes” (SNa 2.27, *karair nāpīḍat prajāḥ*), “he did not make the land pay anything beyond the legal revenue” (SNa 2.33, *rāṣṭram anyatra ca baler na sa kiñcid adīdapat*), “he did not desire to exact revenue beyond the amount due, he had no wish to covet the good of others” (BC 2.44ab, *na cājihīrṣid balim apravṛttam na cācikirṣit paravastvabhidyām*), and “he did not imperil his fame through covetousness in the unjust acquisition of riches” (SNa 2.17, *nādhauṣīc ca yaśo lobhād anyāyādhighatair dhanaiḥ*).¹²⁹ The epic *dharmarāja* has “put greed far off and away” (MBh 12.59.110, *lobham cotsṛjya dūrataḥ*), for “[t]he greedy king who takes everything, is quickly checked by his own people”;¹³⁰ the king “should take taxes from his subjects for their protection,” but he should take “only a sixth portion” (MBh 12.69.24, *ādadīta balim prajābhyaḥ [...] ṣaḍbhāgam*),¹³¹ for “the king whose subjects are constantly worried, or oppressed by the burden of taxes [...] goes to perdition.”¹³² The king “should never harm the goods of others” (MBh 12.57.12, *na hiṃsyāt paravittāni*) and especially “should never seize property from the hands of the strictly observant” (MBh 12.57.21, *na cādadīta vittāni satām hastāt kadācana*). In MBh 12.72.13, Bhīṣma exhorts Yudhiṣṭhira “not [to] seek to gain revenues through any Unlawful acquisition” (*mā smādharmena lābhena lipsethās tvam dhanāgamam*); in MBh 12.58.5, he advises him to be “free of envy” (*amatsara*) and to seize “only by proper means, never seizing by improper means” (*yuktyādānam na cādānam ayogena*).¹³³

128 Note also MBh 12.25.31 = 12.26.35, *śāstrāṇy adhītya*, “having studied the learned teachings.” Cf. MDhŚ 7.31 and 43 (conformity to treatises), and Rām. 1.1.14 (*sarvaśāstrārthattva-jña*); 2.1.20 (*śāstrajña*); 3.4.27 (*sarvaśāstraviśārada*); 2.1.21 (*śraīṣṭhyam śāstrasamūheṣu prāptaḥ*); 2.30.12 (*śruta*); 2.94.9 (*arthaśāstraviśārada*); 5.33.13 (*rājavidyāvinīta*).

129 Note also SNa 2.22: *parasvam bhuvi nāmṛkṣan mahāviṣam ivoragam* // “[H]e avoided touching the property of others on earth, as one avoids touching a venomous snake on the ground.”

130 MBh 12.57.27: [...] *nṛpatir yaś ca sarvaharo bhavet / sa kṣipram anjur lubdhaḥ svajanaenaiva bādhyate* //.

131 Note also MBh 12.72.10: *balīṣaṣṭhena* [...] *lipsethā vetanena dhanāgamam*, “you should seek to gain revenues through taxes of a sixth portion.”

132 MBh 12.137.105 (*āpad*^o): *nityodvignāḥ prajā yasya karabhāraprapīḍitāḥ / [...] na gacchati parābhavam* //.

133 Note MDhŚ 1.81–82: [...] *kṛte yuge / nādharmenāgamaḥ kaścit* [...] // *itareṣv evāgamād dharmāḥ pādaśas tv avaropitāḥ* // “In the Kṛta Age, people never acquire any property through unlawful means. By acquiring such property, however, the Law is stripped of one

Śuddhodana may well have fathered the future Buddha, still he is a pre-Buddhistic, Brahmanical king characterized by his piety,¹³⁴ his adhesion to the Veda and his sincere reverence for brahmins. In this, he conforms with the epic *dharma* king, for “only a king who wants to please the Gods and the brahmins may do it properly” (MBh 12.56.12, *rājñā* [...] *devānām dvijānām ca vartitavyam yathāvidhi*). His religious practice and policy ultimately rely on the Vedic scriptures. Śuddhodana “studied the supreme religious lore” (SNa 2.12, *adhyaiṣṭa paraṃ brahma*), “he continually repeated the Vedas and observed the law laid down in them” (SNa 2.44, *vedaś cāmnāyi satataṃ vedokto dharma eva ca*); “it was for the sake of religion and not to gain repute that he impregnated his mind with the scriptures” (SNa 2.20, *āgamair buddhim ādhikṣad dharmāya na tu kīrtaye*); “[h]e was not full of questionings and he did not hold discourses against the Law of Righteousness” (SNa 2.32, *adharmiṣṭhām acakathan na kathām akathaṅkathaḥ*).¹³⁵ In short, he “performed the manifold *dharma*, which is observed by the religious and established through revelation” (BC 2.54, *sa dharmam vividham cakāra sadbhir nīpātaṃ śrutitaś ca siddham*). In the same way, the *dharma* king “should know the Vedas and their auxiliary texts” (MBh 12.69.30, *vedavedāṅgavid*), for “study [is] enjoined upon him” (MBh 12.60.18, *adhyayanam vidhīyate*); he will rely upon rectitude (*ārjava*) “by staying within the confines of the three Vedas” (MBh 12.56.20, *trayīsaṃvareṇa*).¹³⁶ Śuddhodana makes generous gifts to the brahmins and protects them. He “presented the twice-born with gold and cattle” (BC 2.36, *dadau dvijebhyaḥ kṛṣanam ca gāś*

foot in each of the subsequent Ages.” Translation Olivelle 2005: 91. On greed, see also MDhŚ 7.30 and 49. The issue of taxes, especially the taxes of brahmins, is a cliché in eschatological/apocalyptic literature. Note MBh 3.186.40ab: *karabhārabhayād grhasthāḥ parimoṣakāḥ* /. “Householders, out of fear of the burden of taxes, will become thieves.” MBh 3.188.61bd: *kāka iva dvijottamāḥ / kurājabhiś ca satataṃ karabhāraprapīditāḥ* //. “The brahmins will become like crows [...], are constantly oppressed by evil kings with the burden of taxes.” MBh 3.188.70: *karabhārabhayād viprā bhajiṣyanti diśo daśa* /. “The brahmins, out of fear of the tax burden, will flee in all ten directions.” Cf. ViP 6.1.34 and 38 (Schreiner 2013: 535). See Rām. 2.1.21, 2.69.18, 2.98.32, 3.5.10.

134 Note BC 2.53: *babhāra rājaṃ sa hi putrahetoḥ putram kulārtham yaśase kulaṃ tu / svargāya śabdaṃ dīvam ātmahetor dharmārtham ātmasthitim ācakāṅkṣa* //. “For he maintained the kingdom for the sake of his son, his son for his family and his family for his renown, his fame for heaven, heaven for the sake of his self; he only desired the continuance of his self for the sake of *dharma*.”

135 Cf. Rām. 1.1.13 (*vedavedāṅgatattvajña*); 1.6.1 (*vedavid*); see also 5.33.14.

136 Note also MBh 12.60.14, *nādhīyāpayed adhīyita*, “he may not teach the Vedas, but he should recite them”; MBh 12.63.16–21, *vedān adhītya dharmēna*, “having studied the Vedas in a Lawfully Ritual Way.” Other allusions to the king’s mastery of the Veda include MBh 12.23.11, *vedajñānam* [...] *kṛtsnam*, “complete knowledge of the Veda,” and MBh 12.25.31 = 12.26.35, *samyag vedān prāpya*, “having acquired the Vedas perfectly.”

ca); “[w]ith gifts continuous and great he caused the Brahmans to press *soma*” (SNa 2.31, *dānair ajasravipulaiḥ somaṃ viprān asūṣavat*), and “by his protection he enabled the Brahmans to meditate without impediment on the Absolute” (SNa 2.35, *pālanāc ca dvijān brahma nirudvignān amīmapat*). The MBh repeatedly enjoins the ideal king to revere and to protect the brahmins: “pay homage to the brahmins” (MBh 12.56.26, *namasyā eva te dvijāḥ*); “the brahmins must be protected” (MBh 12.56.31, *rakṣyā eva dvijātayaḥ*); “the king should protect brahmins” (MBh 12.78.32, *dvijātīn rakṣeta*). The king is expected to “give the brahmins presents” (MBh 12.63.18, *viprebhyo dattadakṣiṇaḥ*), to “bestow opulent present on the priests” (MBh 12.92.33, *āptadakṣiṇa*), and to “giv[e] safety as the present to the priests” (MBh 12.98.9, *abhayadakṣiṇa*).¹³⁷ Śuddhodana sacrifices and causes others to sacrifice. The king of Kapilavāstu “offered oblations in a huge fire” (BC 2.36, *juhāva havyāny akṛṣe kṛśānau*), “he drank *soma* as enjoined by the Vedas” (BC 2.37, *vedopadiṣṭam somaṃ papau*) and “according to the ritual” (SNa 2.44, *apāyi yathākālpaṃ somaḥ*); “[h]e scattered the *bali* oblation according to rule” (SNa 2.20, *nāsrkṣad balim aprāptam*) and “caused the sacrificial ground to be laid out” (SNa 2.35, *yajñabhūmim amīmapat*); “[b]enignly at the due time with the due ceremony he caused his priests to measure out the *soma*” (SNa 2.36, *gurubhir vidhivat kāle saumyaḥ somam amīmapat*). Sacrifice (*yajña*, *kratu*, etc.), including *soma* ritual,¹³⁸ also belongs to the most important duties of the *dharma* king,¹³⁹ for it is “by rites of sacrificial worship [that] kings become pure and free of taint” (MBh 12.98.3, *yajñair [...] rājāno bhavanti śucayo ’malāḥ*); “sacrificial worship [is] enjoined upon him” (MBh 12.60.18, *yajño vidhīyate*), and “the king should be a habitual performer of the sacrificial rites of worship” (MBh 12.69.30, *nṛpo bhavet [...] satataṃ yajñāśīlaḥ*);¹⁴⁰ as stated by Bhīṣma, “[t]hose kings well versed in Holy Learning who worship with sacrificial rites [...] are the best winners of heavenly worlds.”¹⁴¹ Śuddhodana practises austerities and ablutions. According to BC 2.49, “he practised austerities without even doffing the white garment of ordinary life” (*śuklāny*

137 Cf. Rām. 1.5.23, 2.2.22., 5.33.13.

138 Note MBh 12.63.16: *somaṃ niṣevya*, “having performed the Soma rites.”

139 Note also “worshipping with all the rites of sacrifice” (MBh 12.98.9, *sarvayajñair ijānaḥ*); “he worships with the rites of sacrifice” (MBh 12.92.33, *yajñair yajate*); “he should regularly worship the Gods with the sacrificial rites” (MBh 12.87.23, *yaṣṭavyaṃ kratubhir nityam*); “he should worship with sacrifices, but he may not officiate at the sacrifices of others” (MBh 12.60.13, *yajeta na tu yājayet*).

140 Note also MBh 12.76.2: *bhaved rājā yajñāśīlaḥ*, “a king should be habitually given to worshipping with sacrificial rites.”

141 MBh 12.60.15: *ye ca kratubhir ijānāḥ śrutavantaś ca bhūmipāḥ | [...] ta eṣāṃ lokajit-tamāḥ ||*.

amuktvāpi tapāmsy atapta) and “shone forth gloriously with the splendour of asceticism” (BC 2.50, *ajājvaliṣṭātha sa [...] tapaḥśrīyā*); he “bathed to purify his body with the waters of the sacred bathing-places” (BC 2.37, *sasnau śarīraṃ pavituṃ [...] tīrthāmbubhiḥ*); he “did not touch anything to eat till he had performed his ablutions and assigned the first portion to holy persons” (SNa 2.19, *anivedyāgram arhadbhyo nālikṣat kiñcid aplutaḥ*). Similarly, the great epic contains repeated injunctions to the effect that the “king should be habitually given to asceticism” (MBh 12.76.2, *bhaved rājā [...] tapaḥśīlaḥ*), or that he “should be very ascetic” (MBh 12.69.30, *sutapasvī nṛpo bhavet*).

Virtuous as he may be, king Śuddhodana wages war and defeats enemies (though Aśvagoṣa nowhere alludes to bloodshed or killing in this particular context, as far as I can see¹⁴²). He is the “invincible king of the Śākyas, to whom the vassal princes were submissive” (SNa 2.45, *aśakyaḥ śakyaśāmantāḥ śākyarājāḥ*), who “favoured those who submitted to him [and] waged war on the enemies of his race” (SNa 2.10, *praṇatān anujagrāha vijagrāha kuladvīṣaḥ*). He “did not tremble before his foes” (SNa 2.2, *parebhyo nāpi vivyathe*), “dispersed [them] with courage, as the sun disperses the darkness with its brilliance” (SNa 2.29, *dīptyā tama ivādityas tejasārīn avīvapat*), so that “[t]he entire earth was conquered through his heroism” (SNa 2.28, *śauryāc ca nikhilāṃ gāṃ avīvapat*). The MBh’s *Rājadharmaparvan* abounds with exhortations to heroism: “Slay enemies, [...] be heroic and fight in battles” (MBh 12.90.9, *śatruṇī jahi [...] yudhyasva samare vīro bhūtvā [...]*); “[I]et people live in your train, a bold, heroic warrior” (MBh 12.76.37, *dhr̥ṣṭaṃ sūraṃ prahartāram [...] anujīvantu tvam̐ janāḥ*). “[I]n battle,” a king “should act with bold courage” (MBh 12.60.15, *raṇe kuryāt parākramam*), for “[t]hose familiar with ancient times do not praise the deeds of a *kṣatriya* who withdraws from battle when his body has not been badly wounded.”¹⁴³ In doing so, Śuddhodana “took away from his foes their mighty fame” (SNa 2.16, *dviṣatāṃ corjitaṃ yaśaḥ*), but did not “bec[ome] arrogant on conquering his foes, however insolent they might be” (SNa 2.41, *jitvā dr̥ptān api ripūn na tenākāri vismayaḥ*). Similarly, the epic *dharmarāja* is expected to “[b]low away the pride of our enemies” (MBh 12.67.28, *mānaṃ vidhama śatruṇām*). In both Aśvagoṣa’s works and the MBh, however, war is not the best way to win victory. Just as Śuddhodana “laid aside weapons” (BC 2.52, *tatyāja śāstram*), the epic’s “wise king who loves his kingdom should always avoid war” (MBh 12.69.22, *varjanīyaṃ sadā yuddhaṃ rājyakāmena dhīmatā*).

142 In spite of SNa 2.27, *śarair aśīśamac chatrūn*, “[w]ith his arrows he kept his enemies quiet.”

143 MBh 12.60.16–17ab: *avikṣatena dehena samarādhyo nivartate | kṣatriyo nāśya tatkarma praśamsanti purāvidaḥ || vadhaṃ hi kṣatrabandhūnām dharmam ahuḥ pradhānataḥ ||*. Cf. MBh 12.65.2–3.

Indeed, “[t]he king should make his victory greater by not using warfare. King, they say the victory won by war is the worst kind.”¹⁴⁴ Finally, and interestingly, both texts stress the analogy between internal victory over the senses and external victory over one’s foes. Thus it is that Śuddhodana, “by his holiness[,] put down the army of internal foes, and by his courage his external foes.”¹⁴⁵ In the same way, “[a] king must always conquest himself, and then his enemies” (MBh 12.69.4, *ātmā jeyaḥ sadā rājñā tato jeyās ca śatravaḥ*); or, “[h]aving conquered the set of the five senses, a king should be able to stop his enemies.”¹⁴⁶ Maybe the most important duty of the ancient Indian king is to establish the four social classes (*varṇa*) in their own specific duties ([*sva*]dharma) and to prevent the mixing up of castes and their occupations.¹⁴⁷ Śuddhodana appears to be no exception to this, who “by his delimitation of the duties of all classes [...] did not let his subjects come to harm” (SNa 2.34, *prajā nādīdapac caiva sarvadharmavyavasthaya*).¹⁴⁸ Needless to say, the MBh is replete with allusions to this all-important royal prerogative, “because [the Law of *kṣatriyas* is to] fix the system of the four orders of society” (MBh 12.65.5, *cāturvarṇyasthāpanāt*): “Having fixed all his subjects in their proper Lawful Deeds, the king must make

144 MBh 12.95.1: *ayuddhenaiva vijayaṃ vardhayed vasudhādhipaḥ | jaghanyam āhur vijayaṃ yo yuddhena narādhipa ||*

145 SNa 2.36cd: *tapasā tejasā caiva dviṣatsainyam amūmapat ||*

146 MBh 12.69.4: *etāvān ātmavijayaḥ pañcavargavinigrahaḥ | jitendriyo narapatir bādhituṃ śakmyād arin ||*

147 A king’s failure to establish the caste-classes (*varṇa*, *jāti*) in their respective *svadharmas* and the mixing up of the caste-classes (*varṇasaṅkara*) are sure tokens of the end. Note MBh 3.186.26: *brāhmaṇāḥ śūdrakarmāṅsas tathā śūdrā dhanārjakāḥ | kṣatradharmeṇa vāpy atra vartayanti gate yuge ||*. “Brahmins do the work of serfs, as the Eon expires, serfs become gatherers of wealth or practice the Law of the baronage.” MBh 3.186.31: *na tadā brāhmaṇaḥ kaścit svadharmam upajīvati | kṣatriyā api vaiśyās ca vikarmasthā narādhipa ||*. “Not a brahmin then lives by his own Law and likewise the barons and commoners work at the wrong tasks, O king.” MBh 3.188.14: *rājāno brāhmaṇā vaiśyās caiva yudhiṣṭhira | vyājair dharmam carisyanti dharmavaitaṃsikā narāḥ ||*. “Kings, brahmins, commoners, and serfs will only pretend at their Law and be hypocrites.” MBh 3.188.19: *brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyā vaiśyāḥ saṅkīryantaḥ parasparam | śūdratulyā bhaviṣyanti [...] ||*. “Brahmins, barons, and commoners will mix marriages and become like serfs.” MBh 3.188.41: *brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyā vaiśyā na śiṣyanti janādhipa | ekavarṇas tadā lokaḥ [...] ||*. “No brahmins, barons, or commoners will be left, overlord of men: the world will all be one class.” MBh 3.186.99–100: *yajante hi tadā rājan brāhmaṇā bahubhiḥ savaiḥ | kṣatriyās ca pravartante sarvavarṇānurañjane || vaiśyāḥ kṣiṃ yathānyāyāṃ kārayanti narādhipa | śuśrūṣāyāṃ ca nīratā dvijānāṃ vṛṣalās tathā ||*. “The brahmins are giving worship with many soma pressings, the barons are at work to make friends of all the classes, the commoners carry out in proper fashion their plowing, O king, and the serfs are bent upon obedience to the twice-born.” Cf. ViP 6.1.10–11 (Schreiner 2013: 533).

148 Note the absence of any explicit reference to the caste-classes here.

them perform all their duties in accordance with Law”;¹⁴⁹ “[t]he king must guard the Laws of the Four Orders. The eternal Duty of kings is guarding against the mixing up of Laws”;¹⁵⁰ “after the king of Law [...] acquired the kingship, he made all the four Orders of society each follow its own proper Law.”¹⁵¹

Finally, two similes point to the remarkable affinities of the two (or more) texts. To begin with, it is well-known that the protection of his subjects is the most important duty and prerogative of the *dharmarāja*. Thus according to MBh 12.58.4, “authors of Learned Teachings for kings [...] proclaimed protection alone to be the Lawful Duty of kings” (*rājasāstrapraṇetāro [...] rakṣām eva praśaṃsanti dharmam*).¹⁵² “The king has fully accomplished his duties by protecting his subjects” (MBh 12.60.20, *pariniṣṭhītakāryaḥ syān nṛpatiḥ paripālanāt*), and “[t]he king who fails to serve as a refuge for his subjects is considered to be the demon Kali” (MBh 12.12.27, *aśaraṇyaḥ prajānām yaḥ sa rājā kalir ucyate*). Now of course, Śuddhodana “guarded his subjects with courage” (SNa 2.15, *arakṣīd [...] vīryābhyām [...] prajāḥ*), and in doing so, “he looked like a father on all his domains” (BC 2.52, *piteva sarvān viśayān dadarśa*). Comparing the righteous king to a loving father is commonplace in the MBh, according to which “[a]ll creatures, as they move about in the world, are to be protected like children by the king” (MBh 12.64.28, *putravat paripālyāni [...] loke bhūtāni sarvāṇi vicaranti*). “Without a doubt the citizens should be seen as his children” (MBh 12.69.26, *yathā putrās tathā paurā draṣṭavyās te na saṃśayaḥ*), and “the *kṣatriya* who knows how to get rid of problems of behavior is the father, he is the progenitor” (MBh 12.92.5, *yaḥ kṣatriyo veda [...] / śīladoṣān vinirhantum sa pitā sa prajāpatiḥ* //). Asked by Yudhiṣṭhira how he should rule, Mārkaṇḍeya answers as follows: “Have compassion and profit all creatures lovingly, content-

149 MBh 12.60.19: *sveṣu dharmeṣv avasthāpya prajāḥ sarvā mahīpatiḥ | dharmena sarvakṛtyāni samaniṣṭhāni kārayet* //.

150 MBh 12.57.15: *cāturvarṇyasya dharmās ca rakṣitavyāḥ mahīkṣitā | dharmasaṅkararakṣā hi rājñām dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ* //.

151 MBh 12.45.4: *prāpya rājyaṃ dharmarājo [...] cāturvarṇyaṃ yathāyogaṃ sve sve dharme nyaveśayāt* // . Note also MBh 12.25.31, *cāturvarṇyaṃ sthāpāyitvā svadharme*, “having established the four Orders of society in their proper Laws.” MBh 12.68.29, *varṇasaṅkaraḥ [...] yadi rājā na pālayet*, “were a king not standing guard [...] there would be intermixing of the orders of society.” Cf. Rām. 1.1.75, 5.3.11.

152 Note also MBh 12.24.29: *eṣa dharmāḥ kṣatriyānām prajānām paripālanam* /. “This is the Law of *kṣatriyas*: Watching over subjects.” MBh 12.32.2: *prajānām pālanaṃ dharmo rājñām*, “the Lawful duty of kings is to protect their subjects.” MBh 12.21.18, *prajānām pālanayuktāḥ*, “engaged in the protection of subjects”; MBh 12.23.10, *prajānām paripālanam*, “the protection of subjects.” Cf. Rām. 1.1.13, 5.33.10 (*rakṣitā jīvalokasya*), 2.94.41, 4.4.15 (*lokānātha*).

edly, and devote yourself to your subjects as though they were your children.”¹⁵³ In short, “[h]e in whose realm people move about without fear—like children in their father’s house—he is a king, the most excellent of kings.”¹⁵⁴ The second simile pertains to the *dharma* king’s refraining from overly exploiting his subjects while levying taxes and acquiring wealth. In SNa 2.19, Aśvaghōṣa reports that Śuddhodana “did not milk the earth unrighteously, as one might a cow in thirst for milk” (*gām adharmaṇa nādhukṣat kṣīratarṣeṇa gām iva*). The very same simile recurs times and again in the MBh, which advises the king to “suck the milk from the country, lest he leave that honey to the ‘bees’ that wander in and out. Let him milk the cow with the calf in mind and not bruise her teats. Let him suck the country gently, like a leech.”¹⁵⁵ Or else: “Milking the earth day by day, like a cow, the king of intelligent understanding should appropriate what he acquires in the course of Time.”¹⁵⁶ One of the epic’s most explicit formulation of this simile occurs at MBh 12.72.15–18: “The king, whose very foundation is wealth, harms his own self when in delusion he oppresses his subjects with taxes not countenanced in the Learned Teachings. A man who cuts open the cow’s udder to get milk gets no milk. So a country that is plagued with bad policies does not grow prosperous. Indeed, he who attends upon the cow gets milk regularly, so he who exploits a country in a methodic way gets results. And the country that is well protected and exploited in a methodic way regularly produces unequalled growth of the treasury.”¹⁵⁷ Similarly, “[a] king of sound mind

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- 153 MBh 3.189.21ad: *dayāvān sarvabhūteṣu hito rakto ’nusūyakaḥ | apatyānām iva sveṣām prajānāṃ rakṣaṇe rataḥ* /. Note also MBh 12.137.100, *pitā hi rājā rāṣṭrasya*, “[i]n deed, the king is the father of the country.” MBh 12.25.13: *pīteva samadarśanaḥ*, “if he has an equal regard for all, like a father.” Cf. Aśoka’s Dhauḷi and Jaugaḍa Rock Edict no. 1 and 2 (e.g., *sarve munisse pajā mama*, “Tout homme est mon enfant,” Bloch 1950: 137, 141–142).
- 154 MBh 12.57.33: *putrā iva pitur gehe viṣaye yasya mānavāḥ | nirbhayā vicariṣyanti sa rājā rājasattamaḥ* //. Note also MBh 12.56.44–45: *bhavitavyaṃ sadā rājyaṃ garbhiniṣahadharmiṇā | [...] yathā hi garbhīṇī hitvā svaṃ priyaṃ manaso ’nugam | garbhasya hitam ādhatte [...]* // “A king should always follow the same rule a pregnant woman does [...] A pregnant woman forsakes the lover who pleases her heart and devotes herself to the welfare of the baby.” MBh 12.137.101: *sambhāvayati māteva*, “he nurtures his subjects like a mother.” Cf. Rām. 2.2.28, 2.69.17, 2.8.8, 3.1.20, 3.5.10–12.
- 155 MBh 12.89.4–5: *madhudohaṃ duhed rāṣṭraṃ bhramarān na vipātayet | vatsāpekṣī duhec caiva stanāṃś ca na vikuṭṭayet || jalaukāvat pibed rāṣṭraṃ mṛdunaiva narādhipa* //.
- 156 MBh 12.120.31: *kālaprāptam upādadyān nārthaṃ rājā prasūcayet | ahany ahani sanduhyaṃ mahiṃ gām iva buddhimān* //. Note also MBh 12.59.126, *teneyaṃ pṛthivī dugdhā sasyāni daśa sapta ca*, “[m]ilked by him, the earth yielded seventeen kinds of grain.”
- 157 MBh 12.72.15–18: *arthamūlo ’pahinsāṃ ca kurute svayam ātmanaḥ | karair aśāstradrṣṭair hi mohāt sampiḍayan prajāḥ || ūdhas chindyaḍ dhi yo dhenvāḥ kṣīrārthi na labhet payaḥ | evaṃ rāṣṭram ayogena piḍitam na vivardhate || yo hi dogdhrīm upāste tu sa nityaṃ labhate*

should milk the country according to the calf analogy: Nurtured, the calf gains strength and is able to withstand hardship, Bhārata. But the calf that has sucked too much cannot work, Yudhiṣṭhira, and the country that has been overmilked cannot do much work.”¹⁵⁸

5 Concluding Remarks

Aśvaghōṣa’s depiction of Śuddhodana and Kapilavāstu bears striking resemblances with normative descriptions of the *dharmarāja* and the *rājadharma* as they can be found in the twelfth book of the MBh and, albeit in a less systematic manner, in the Rām. These similarities are noticeable at all levels: terminology, phraseology, “political” doctrine, and metaphorical repertoire, most of the images being drawn from the predominantly common cosmological and eschatological frame provided by (an early stage in the development of) the *yuga* system. This cannot be purely coincidental and can be accounted for in various ways without having to postulate any direct borrowing on the part of the Buddhist poet, at least as far as the MBh is concerned. Let it be reminded that the BC and the MBh avowedly depend on common sources and traditions of political thinking; moreover, the poet’s traditional and quite plausible association with Ayodhyā, a traditional stronghold of Rāma cult and culture, could have motivated him to lay claim, on epic models, to Ikṣvāku lineage and thus legitimation for the Buddha. Whatever the case may be, Aśvaghōṣa certainly endeavored to describe Śuddhodana’s reign and personality so as to warrant his and his remarkable son’s dharmic nature according to commensurable standards, possibly regarding this common ethical background as an important asset in the perspective of the more controversial issues he was to deal with in later sections of the two poems.

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payah | evaṃ rāṣṭram upāyena bhuñjāno labhate phalam || atha rāṣṭram upāyena bhujyamānaṃ surakṣitam | janayaty atulāṃ nityaṃ kośavṛddhiṃ yudhiṣṭhira ||

158 MBh 12.88.18–19: *vatsaupamyena dogdhavyaṃ rāṣṭram akṣīṇabuddhinā | bhṛto vatso jātabalaḥ pīḍāṃ sahati bhārata || na karma kurute vatso bhṛṣaṃ dugdho yudhiṣṭhira | rāṣṭram apy atidugdham hi na karma kurute mahat ||*

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Abbreviations

- AN II—Richard Morris: *The Āṅguttara-Nikāya*. Part II: *Catukka nipāta*. London 1888: Pali Text Society.
- AN III—E. Hardy: *The Āṅguttara-Nikāya*. Part III: *Pañcaka-nipāta*, and *Chakka-nipāta*. London 1896: Pali Text Society.
- BC—*Buddhacarita* (Aśvaghōṣa). See Johnston 1984.
- BC_{Tib}—*Buddhacarita* (Aśvaghōṣa), Tibetan version, cantos 18–28. D 4156, Ge 1–103b2/ P 5356, Ne 1–124b8.
- BC_{Weller}—*Buddhacarita* (Aśvaghōṣa), Tibetan version, cantos 1–17. See Weller 1926–1928.
- BhG—J.A.B. van Buitenen: *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata, A Bilingual Edition*. Chicago/London 1981: The University of Chicago Press.
- D—*Derge (sDe dge) Edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon*. A.W. Barber: *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Taipei Edition*. Taipei 1991: SMC Publishing Inc.
- DN II—T.W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter: *The Dīgha Nikāya*. Vol. II. London 1947 (1903): Pali Text Society.
- DN III—J. Estlin Carpenter: *The Dīgha Nikāya*. Part III. London 1911: Pali Text Society.
- LV—Salomon Lefmann: *Lalita Vistara. Leben und Lehre des Çākya-Buddha*. Erster Teil: Text. Halle 1902: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses.
- MBh—Vishnu S. Sukthankar and S.K. Belvalkar: *The Mahābhārata. For the First Time Critically Edited*. 19 vols. Pune 1933–1959: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- MDhŚ—Patrick Olivelle: *Manu's Code of Law. A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānavadharmasāstra*. Oxford 2005: Oxford University Press.
- MN III—Robert Chalmers: *The Majjhima-Nikāya*. Part III. London 1899: Pali Text Society.
- MV—Émile Senart: *Mahāvastu Avadānam. Le Mahāvastu. Texte sanscrit publié pour la première fois et accompagné d'introductions et d'un commentaire*. Parts II and III. Paris 1890 and 1897: Imprimerie nationale (Société asiatique, Collection d'ouvrages orientaux, seconde série).
- MVy—*Mahāvastu*. Sakaki Ryōzaburō 榊亮三郎: *Bon-zō-kan-wa shiyaku taikō Hon'yaku myōgi taishū 梵藏漢和四譯對校翻譯名義大集*. [= *Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology Collated with the Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese*.] 2 vols. Tokyo 1962 (Kyoto 1916): Suzuki Research Foundation.

- P—Daisetz T. Suzuki: *The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, Kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto*. Tokyo/Kyoto 1957: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute.
- Rām.—J.M. Mehta, G.H. Bhatt, P.L. Vaidya: *The Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa, The National Epic of India*. 6 vols. Baroda 1960–1971: Oriental Institute.
- SBhV—Raniero Gnoli: *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu. Being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*. Part 1. Roma 1977: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Serie Orientale Roma 49/1).
- Sn—Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith: *Suttanipāta*. London 1965 (1913): Pali Text Society.
- SNa—Johnston, E.H.: *The Saundarananda of Aśvaghōṣa*. London 1928: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press (Panjab University Oriental Publications).
- ViP—M.M. Pathak: *The Critical Edition of the Viṣṇupurāṇam/Viṣṇupurāṇam (samīkṣitā vṛttih)*. 2 vols. Vadodara 1997: Oriental Institute.

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