

# Jain Answers to Vālin’s Death in the Rāmāyaṇa

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In the context of the rise of “popular” brahmanical traditions around divine individuals such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, Jainism integrated these characters into its universal history. Against this background Jain authors composed their own versions of the classical Sanskrit epics.<sup>1</sup> Jain Rāmāyaṇas are plenty and diverse, but nevertheless share some common features that distinguish them as specifically Jain. First and foremost, the three main characters Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa each belong to a category of heroes (*mahā-puruṣas*), respectively called *baladeva*, *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva*. This resulted in a certain streamlining of their characteristics in which the *baladeva* is the more temperate elder half-brother of the more fierce *vāsudeva*, who ultimately kills the antagonistic *prativāsudeva*. The latter two are destined to go to hell, whereas the *baladeva* either attains final emancipation or goes to heaven. In the Jain Rāmāyaṇas it is thus Lakṣmaṇa who kills Rāvaṇa, instead of Rāma. This change from Rāma to Lakṣmaṇa as Rāvaṇa’s killer has led some scholars to view these versions as ones representing an ideal nonviolent Rāma, paralleling the central Jain tenet of *ahiṃsā*.<sup>2</sup> This is an assumption that will be nuanced in this paper. A second common feature of most Jain Rāmāyaṇas is their portrayal of the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas: instead of monkeys and demons, the Vānaras and Rākṣasas are communities of humans, each representing an individual branch of the larger dynasty of Vidyādharas, humans in possession of one or more *vidyās*, sometimes translated as “genies” and personified as female beings that grant certain powers to their masters. The origin of the Vidyādhara dynasty goes back to the first

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1 Jaini (1993) and Cort (1993) provide excellent overview articles of the Jain Purāṇas; for a more extensive overview of the earliest Jain Rāmāyaṇas, see Kulkarni 1990.

2 E.g. Ramanujan 1991: 35; Jaiswal 1993: 94; Appleton 2017: 91.

Tīrthaṅkara, Rṣabha. Lastly, several Jain Rāma narratives, especially the earliest texts, openly question and refute “popular” (*laukika*) stories of Rāma, calling them “falsehood” (*mithyātva*).

In this paper, I focus on a famously contentious episode from the Rāmāyaṇa, the so-called *Vāli-vadha* or “death of Vālin” episode, and examine how two different Jain authors refashioned it, implicitly and explicitly rejecting in very different ways the “popular” account of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*. These different Jain responses reflect, on the one hand, the diversity of issues that people over time have had with this episode, and, on the other hand, the multiplicity of the Jain tradition, which still tends to be viewed as monolithic.

### **The problem of the death of Vālin in the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa***

Despite the fact that Rāma is since many centuries considered the *maryādā-puruṣottama* or “ideal man”, and his *rāma-rājya* reign as the ideal for political leaders to emulate, the best known versions of his story, with first and foremost the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, are characterized by several problematic episodes. Indeed, according to Paula Richman (2000), it is precisely these problematic episodes and the questioning of them that were a key generative feature of what she terms the “Rāmāyaṇa tradition”, the vast corpus of Rāma narratives that has existed for centuries and up to the present day in much of South and South East Asia as well as beyond. Episodes such as that of the death of Vālin contain instances of questionable behaviour by the hero-protagonists, especially Rāma, and over time have led to authors expressing unease with them, resulting in explanatory verses being anonymously interpolated into these passages, in commentaries vocally defending, nuancing, or altering them, or in later authors creating entirely new compositions that represent different views.

Before looking at the ways in which Jain authors dealt with the episode, a closer look at the account from Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* for its problematics is warranted.<sup>3</sup> After Rāvaṇa’s abduction of Sītā in Book 3, *Araṇyakāṇḍa*, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa head south on the advice of Kabandha to seek help from Sugrīva, the king of the Vānaras, a community of (human-like) monkeys. Book 4, *Kiṣkindhakāṇḍa*, begins with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa first encountering Hanumān,<sup>4</sup> minister of Sugrīva, who was banished from his kingdom by

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3 References are to the critical edition (Bhatt 1960–1975). Translations are by Lefebvre (1984).

4 For convenience’s sake I use the form Hanumān in this paper, rather than the grammatically correct Hanumat.

his elder brother Vālin and deprived of his wife (*sargas* 2–4).<sup>5</sup> Upon meeting Sugrīva himself, Rāma and he formally decide to become allies, and Sugrīva testifies to having seen Sītā dropping a shawl and jewels as she was being abducted in Rāvaṇa's flying chariot (s. 5–6). Sugrīva promises a lamenting Rāma that he will find Sītā for him, and even kill her abductor himself. He manages to help Rāma regain his composure, after which Rāma promises Sugrīva that in return for his pledge to help find Sītā he will do for Sugrīva whatever he requests (s. 7). Sugrīva then begins to explain his current situation, stating: “Mistreated by my brother, robbed of my wife, here I am, unhappy and tormented by fear, roaming this great mountain R̥śyamūka”<sup>6</sup> and requesting Rāma to protect him from his brother. Rāma responds: “This very day I shall kill your wife's abductor”<sup>7</sup>, thus pledging to kill Vālin, seeing in Sugrīva's deplorable situation a parallel to his own. Sugrīva's reaction at this is one of incomparable joy (*praharṣam atulam*, 4.8.24), stating moreover that his life and happiness depends on the destruction of Vālin.<sup>8</sup> It is only after Rāma has made the pledge, that he asks Sugrīva to explain the cause of the hostility. In two chapters Sugrīva then narrates how Vālin, as the elder brother, had succeeded their father as king. One night, Vālin had gone to pursue a demon (*asura*) who had come to challenge him. The demon fled into a cave, and Vālin went after him, ordering Sugrīva to wait outside the cave for his return. When after more than a year blood flowed from the cave, Sugrīva believed his brother was dead and blocked the entrance with a rock. Sugrīva returned to Kiṣkindhā and was then consecrated as the new king. However, Vālin had survived and killed the demon and flew into a rage when he returned to Kiṣkindhā, finding his brother on the throne. Sugrīva offered him back the kingdom, but Vālin suspected him of having evil intentions all along and banished him, taking his wife. Sugrīva reiterates his plea to Rāma to punish (*nigraha*) Vālin, and Rāma reaffirms that he will kill Vālin for taking his wife (*bhāryāpahāriṇam*, 4.10.28). Sugrīva then proceeds with a description of Vālin's might, by way of a story of how he vanquished the mighty *asura* demon Dundubhi (4.11). Rāma convinces him of his

5 Note that Sugrīva was initially very suspicious of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, referring to another inconsistency that some Jain authors explicitly indicate, namely that the two brothers have the appearance of forest hermits, dressing in bark garments, but at the same time bear weapons (4.2.1–6).

6 *ahaṃ vinikṛto bhrātrā carāmy eṣa bhayārditah; r̥śyamūkaṃ girivaram hṛtabhāryaḥ suduḥkhitah*. 4.8.16

7 *adyaiva taṃ haniṣyāmi tava bhāryāpahāriṇam*. 4.8.20b

8 *sukhaṃ me jīvitam caiva tadvināśanibandhanam*. 4.8.38b.

superior powers by piercing seven *sāla* trees with one arrow, and suggests to go to Kiṣkindhā where Sugrīva must draw Vālin out of the palace by challenging him to a fight, while the rest of the party hide behind trees. As Vālin and Sugrīva fight, Rāma is unable to distinguish between the two, and therefore does not shoot any of his deadly arrows, forcing Sugrīva to flee (4.12). Sugrīva then puts on a creeper as a distinguishing mark, and together with the others returns to Kiṣkindhā to again challenge Vālin to a fight, assured that Rāma will now be able to kill him (4.13–14). As Vālin prepares for battle, a conversation with his wife Tārā reveals her anxiety because of Sugrīva’s alliance with Rāma (4.15). Vālin however believes he has nothing to fear, because Rāma “knows what is right and his conduct is correct, so how would he do wrong?”<sup>9</sup> Besides, Vālin has no intention to kill Sugrīva, he says, only to beat him in a fight (4.16.7). Nevertheless, when confronted with Sugrīva, he does threaten to take his life (4.16.18). As the two fight, Rāma, who as we learn earlier was hiding behind trees together with the rest of Sugrīva’s followers (4.14.1), shoots Vālin with an arrow (4.16.25). The following two chapters (4.17–18), identified as later additions to justify this problematic event, contain words of reproach of the dying Vālin and Rāma’s response, revealing in essence two central criticisms of Rāma’s behaviour, namely (1) that Rāma shot Vālin while he was engaged in battle with someone else (4.17.13–17), and (2) that Rāma fatally shot him, even though Vālin had done him no wrong (4.17.20). In his reply, Rāma refutes Vālin’s conceptions of what is right (*dharma*), and states that he, as a representative of his brother, King Bharata, has the authority to punish sinners. Because Vālin lived in sin with his younger brother’s wife<sup>10</sup>, Rumā, he is a sinner and therefore has to be punished. The punishment for the sin of adultery with the wife of a younger brother is death, according to Rāma. Chapter 18 ends with Vālin accepting Rāma’s words, apologizing for his earlier reproaches, and pleading for Rāma to take care of his son Aṅgada. Hearing that Vālin has been fatally shot, Tārā rushes towards him, asking Vālin’s soldiers why they are fleeing: “Is it because, for the sake of the kingdom, a fierce brother has had Rāma strike down his brother with arrows shot from afar, striking from afar?”<sup>11</sup> and rejecting their pleas that she should now focus

9 *dharmajñās ca kṛtajñās ca katham pāpaṃ kariṣyati* 4.16.5

10 Note that the text qualifies Rumā as *smuṣā*, “daughter-in-law” (4.18.19), following the statement that a younger brother is like a son (4.18.14).

11 *rājyahetoḥ sa ced bhrātā bhrātrā raudreṇa pātitaḥ; rāmeṇa prasṛtair dūrān mārganair dūrapātibhiḥ.* (4.19.9)

on their son Aṅgada, rather than her dying husband, and work with them to make Aṅgada the new king. When Sugrīva sees Tārā and Aṅgada, for the first time he displays sadness (*viṣādam aḡamat kaṣṭam*, 4.19.28). When she addresses dying Vālin, she echoes what Rāma has said: “This is the fruit that you harvest, king of monkeys, for having exiled Sugrīva and taken his wife”,<sup>12</sup> and nowhere expresses anger over Rāma's actions. To Sugrīva she says: “Be content, Sugrīva: you shall have Rumā back again. Enjoy the kingship without anxiety. Your brother, who was your enemy, has been cut down.”<sup>13</sup> Despite a plea from Hanumān to devote herself to Aṅgada, who as the son of Vālin should now become king, Tārā remains intent on starving to death at the side of her husband (4.20–21).<sup>14</sup> Vālin then affectionately (*sasneham* 4.22.2) addresses Sugrīva, asking him to protect Aṅgada and Tārā, and to make good on his promise to Rāma (4.22), causing Sugrīva to abandon joy and feel wretched (*harṣam tyaktvā...dīno*, 4.22.17). After instructing Aṅgada to submit to Sugrīva, Vālin dies (4.22.24).

As it stands in the critical as well as other editions, the episode displays questionable and at times conflicting information. Both brothers Sugrīva and Vālin are ambiguously presented in both positive and negative light: Vālin may be a vindictive sinner with a short fuse, who abused his younger brother and stole his wife, he is also a righteous, competent king and a mighty warrior of superhero proportions. Sugrīva, on the other hand, may be a righteous friend and ally to Rāma, he is also fearful and unstable, and after Vālin's death soon forgets all about Rāma, while indulging in the sensual pleasures of his new position and the harem he inherited, including his wife Rumā, as well as Vālin's widows.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Rāma kills Vālin from cover while the latter was fighting Sugrīva, is moreover not really addressed by Rāma in his reply. That many later authors and commentators chose to interpret or refashion this episode in different ways, makes it clear that this reply was not entirely satisfying and leaves many loose ends.<sup>16</sup>

12 *sugrīvasya tvayā bhāryā hṛtā sa ca vivāsitaḥ;*

*yat tat tasya tvayā vyuṣṭiḥ prāpteyam plavagādhipa.* (4.20.11)

13 *sakāmo bhava sugrīva rumām tvam pratīpatsayse;*

*bhukṣva rājyam anudvignaḥ śasto bhrātā ripus tava.* (4.20.19)

14 Hanumān's words are probably a later addition (cf. Brockington 1984: 339).

15 Wurm (1976: 17–91) offers a more complete assessment of Vālin and Sugrīva's characters.

16 In the introduction (pp. 45–50) to her translation, Rosalind Lefebber (1984) offers an overview of some discussions on the critical points of this episode. She also includes many of the discussions of commentators in the notes to her translation (p. 197ff). Other critical and comparative discussions of the episode are found in Dubuisson (1986: 34–46), Shulman

## Jain *Vāli-vadha* I: passing along the karma

It seems common sense that in the Jain view, with *ahiṃsā* as its central tenet, the ideal layman Rāma would never commit murder. Indeed, the switch from Rāma to Lakṣmaṇa as Rāvaṇa's killer has been interpreted in this vain. In the first account under examination, that of Guṇabhadra (9<sup>th</sup> c.), this strategy is seen paralleled in its *Vāli-vadha* episode, where Lakṣmaṇa instead of Rāma kills Vālin. Closer examination of the episode reveals additional ways in which the author engaged with and criticized Vālmīki's account.

Guṇabhadra's Rāma story is an extended episode (*parvans* 67–68 in 1205 verses) of his *Uttarapurāṇa*, the second part of the *Mahāpurāṇa*, of which the *Ādipurāṇa* of Jinasena, Guṇabhadra's teacher, forms the first part. Jinasena was famously patronized by the great Rāṣṭrakūṭa emperor Amoghavarṣa I, who ruled from Mānyakheṭa in modern Karnataka. The *Mahāpurāṇa* is an encyclopaedic work narrating the biographies of the sixty-three *mahā-puruṣas* of the current time period. It contains a distinct Rāma telling, that was followed by Puṣpadanta in his reworking of the *Mahāpurāṇa* in Apabhramsha.<sup>17</sup> According to Guṇabhadra, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the future *baladeva* and *vāsudeva*, are installed resp. as ruler and heir apparent (*yuva-rāja*) in Vārāṇasī by their father Daśaratha (68.78–83). One day in Spring, Rāma takes Sītā and his other queens to a park called Citrakūṭa for leisure (68.126–148), and while there Sītā is abducted by Rāvaṇa the Vidyādhara king of Laṅkā (68.193–224). As Rāma, his brothers and father-in-law ponder what to do, Sugrīva and Aṇumān, two Vidyādharas arrive. Sugrīva narrates how his elder brother Vālin (here also Bālin) and he were installed respectively as king and heir apparent in Kiṣkindhā by their father. However, wicked Vālin ousted Sugrīva from the kingdom. He met up with Aṇumān, and Nārada prophesied that Sugrīva will regain his position after he does a service in Laṅkā for Rāma, whose wife was abducted by Rāvaṇa (68.269–289). After this initial introduction of Sugrīva, the story shifts to the main theme of Sītā's abduction. Aṇumān goes to Laṅkā and after witnessing Sītā's encounters with Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī, finally

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(1979), Srinivasan (1984), Steiner (1999), and Goldman (2004). Masson (1975) famously analyses the episode in the frame of psychoanalytic theory. See also Parameswaran's critical discussion of international academics assessment of the episode (2014).

17 Significant differences compared to the *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* here is that Sītā is Rāvaṇa's biological daughter, and that there is no banishment to the forest. For a discussion, see Kulkarni 1990: 115–139. Note that Guṇabhadra's account does not list any explicit criticisms of the other Rāma stories; Puṣpadanta's does, perhaps inspired by Svayambhūdeva whom he mentions as a great Apabhramsha poet (cf. De Clercq 2001).

meets Sītā himself (68.290–375). Upon his return to Rāma, it is decided that Aṇumān, together with a party of other prominent Vidyādhara princes should go as an envoy to Rāvaṇa's court, where he talks with Vibhīṣaṇa and ultimately Rāvaṇa himself to negotiate Sītā's release. The diplomatic efforts fail and Rāma prepares his army for battle (68.376–439). Around this time, Vālin sends an envoy to Rāma, promising his help against Rāvaṇa on the condition that he cuts ties with Sugrīva and Aṇumān. Rāma deliberates with his ministers how to respond, and rejects Vālin's offer, following the advice of Aṅgada, who instead of being Vālin's son, is here transformed into the wisest and most esteemed of Rāma's ministers: if they would agree to Vālin's proposition, "then we certainly commit a wicked deed, lord, doing as Bālin says."<sup>18</sup> In addition, to avoid that Vālin in response to this rejection would join forces with Rāvaṇa, he must be killed (68.440–448). Rāma returns a message saying that he will only consider Vālin's proposal after Vālin gifts him his elephant Mahāmegha and goes with him to Laṅkā (68.449–450). Vālin is enraged by this message and challenges Rāma to a fight (68.451–459). Rāma dispatches his army, which includes Sugrīva and is led by Lakṣmaṇa, to meet Vālin's army. As the two armies battle, Lakṣmaṇa cuts off Vālin's head with an arrow (68.460–464). Immediately thereafter the story again reverts to the impending battle with Laṅkā, with Sugrīva and Aṇumān taking Rāma to Kiṣkindhā where they gather an army of fourteen *akṣauhiṇīs* (68.465ff).

At first glance this episode appears to solve the problem of the blood on Rāma's hands in a simple way, by making Lakṣmaṇa, who is destined to go to hell in his next life, the killer of Vālin. However, Guṇabhadra did more than just that: instead of Rāma's situation paralleling that of Sugrīva, it is Lakṣmaṇa who is here in the same position, namely that of *yuva-rāja*, heir apparent, and kills Sugrīva's enemy.<sup>19</sup> The author moreover is careful to portray Rāma as a ruler who on every important decision consults with his ministers, who in turn demonstrate their knowledge of political theory (e.g. 68.383–396). In the short section of just twenty-five verses (68.439–464) from the arrival of Vālin's messenger to Vālin's death, nineteen verses concern conversations with the messengers and the deliberations of the ministers. Minister Aṅgada

18 *atha bālīvacāḥ kurmaḥ karma tat tv ārya duṣkaram* (68.447b)

19 Note that in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, Sugrīva is nowhere explicitly said to have been Vālin's heir apparent, apparently leading to Hanumān's suggestion that Aṅgada should become king after Vālin's death. Moreover, Rāma insists on installing Aṅgada as heir apparent to Sugrīva. Guṇabhadra's explicit claim of Sugrīva's status as *yuva-rāja* may indicate that the absence of this status for Sugrīva in Vālmīki's text was also considered problematic.

begins his advice by describing three types of kings: friends, enemies and neutral kings. Rāvaṇa is clearly an enemy. Vālin is clearly the enemy of a friend, Sugrīva, and “if we do not act in favour of him (i. e. Vālin), he may join forces with our enemy (i.e. Rāvaṇa). Then our enemy (i. e. Rāvaṇa) will prosper and we will have difficulty defeating him.”<sup>20</sup> When receiving Rāma’s answer, Vālin becomes angry and in no uncertain terms declares war on him. Rāma’s messenger returns saying: “Unfortunately, Vālin has turned into an enemy for you.”<sup>21</sup> The length of this section, especially compared to the brevity of the subsequent six verses narrating the actual battle and death of Vālin, makes sense if one takes into account the intertextuality with *sarga* 17 of Vālmīki’s *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, where Vālin reproaches Rāma. Aṅgada’s words here clearly counter the argument of Vālmīki’s Vālin that Rāma personally had no reason to want Vālin dead: the enemy of a friend can easily become one’s own enemy. The messenger emphasizes this point by spelling out loud and clear that Vālin is indeed an enemy to Rāma.<sup>22</sup> This, together with the switch to Lakṣmaṇa as the one who kills Vālin, moreover in open combat, absolves this Jain Rāma from any wrongdoing in this matter.

### Jain *Vāli-vadha* II: from fratricide to Vālin uplifted

A different Jain account is that first found in Vimalasūri’s *Paūmacariyaṃ* (3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> c.) in Māhārāṣṭrī, which presents the dominant Jain Rāma narrative that was followed in a greater number of later reworkings (Kulkarni 1990: 240). Contrary to Guṇabhadra’s work which deals with the entire set of *mahā-puruṣas*, this text has the Rāma narrative as its sole focus. Vimalasūri introduces the two brothers Sugrīva and Vālin as part of his account of Rāvaṇa’s rise, which precedes the birth of Rāma. In the Vānara dynasty, a branch of the larger Vidyādhara dynasty, Vālin is born as the son of King Ādityarajas and Queen Indramālī of the city of Kiṣkindhi. He is described as mighty, handsome, skilled in the arts and *vidyās* and

20 *na kurmo yadi tatkāryaṃ sambadhnīyāt sa śatruṇā.  
tathā copacayaḥ śatror durucchedo hi tena saḥ;* (68.446b–447a)

21 *prātikulyena bālī vaḥ kṛtrimāḥ śatror utthitaḥ* (68.459b)

22 *Sarga* 34 of the Uttarakāṇḍa describes how earlier Vālin and Rāvaṇa had become friends, a theme also incorporated by Bhavabhūti in his *Mahāvīracarita* and others. See Lefebvre 1984: 40–41 and Steiner 1999.

focused on Jain morality, without compare.<sup>23</sup> Sugrīva is his younger brother. When Ādityarajas renounces the world, Vālin is crowned king, and Sugrīva installed as heir apparent (9.1–9). One day Rāvaṇa sends a messenger to Vālin, requesting Vālin to bow before him and to give him the hand of his sister in marriage because Ādityarajas had received the city of Kiṣkindhi as a gift from Rāvaṇa. Devout Vālin refuses, saying he only bows to the Jina, upon which Rāvaṇa marches on Kiṣkindhi with his army. Unwilling to wage war, Vālin appoints Sugrīva as the new king instructing him to bow before Rāvaṇa, and himself renounces the material world (9.24–49). We further learn about Tārā (also named Sutārā), a Vidyādhara princess who is desired by two men, Sugrīva and Sāhasagati. Her father follows the advice of a sage and gives her in marriage to Sugrīva. Sāhasagati retreats to a cave in the Himālaya to obtain a *vidyā* in order to win Tārā some other way. From Tārā, Sugrīva begets two sons, Aṅgada and Jayānanda (10.1–13). Prior to Rāma's birth, the Vānaras remain loyal to Rāvaṇa and join him on his conquests.

Right after Sītā's abduction, the story turns to Sugrīva again in chapter 47, when he, "saddened by being separated from his beloved"<sup>24</sup> arrives near the place where Lakṣmaṇa has fought Kharadūṣaṇa, who had come to avenge Lakṣmaṇa's accidental killing of his son Śambūka. Seeing the remains of a battle he asks someone for information, and is informed that Sītā has been abducted, and that Kharadūṣaṇa and Jaṭāyin are dead. He decides to ask the killer of Kharadūṣaṇa for help (47.1–6). With his retinue he approaches Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa<sup>25</sup> and when asked about his well-being, his minister Jāmbūnada explains that Sugrīva together with Tārā was ruling prosperously in Kiṣkindhi, until one day an imposter came who took on the form of Sugrīva and entered the palace. In an exhaustive account Jāmbūnada describes how the ministers did not recognize the false Sugrīva, though Tārā did and fled from the palace. When the real Sugrīva returned, a fight broke out between the two, and half the Vānara army joined the real Sugrīva while the other half chose the side of the false one, unable to recognize which one was the imposter (47.7–22). Tārā fled to Candrarāśmi, a son of Vālin, for protection. The real Sugrīva then approached Hanumān for help. With his army Hanumān arrived in Kiṣkindhi,

23 ... *balaviriyasampanno. rūveṇa paramarūvo vijjāna kalāṇa guṇasayāvāso; sammattabhāviyamā aṇannasariso vasaumāe* (9.1b–2)

24 *kantāviraḥhammi dukkhiḥ santo*; (47.1a)

25 After Sītā is abducted, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are taken by Virādhita to the underground city of Pātālapura.

but when he saw the two identical-looking Sugrīvas, he retreated and went back to his own city (47.23–28). At this point, Jāmbūnada says, he has come to Rāma for help.<sup>26</sup> Rāma replies: “I will make your cause a success, Sugrīva, and you bring me information about Sītā.”<sup>27</sup> Agreeing to this, Sugrīva takes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to Kiṣkindhi. When the false Sugrīva hears that Sugrīva has returned, he goes outside with his army, and the two parties begin to fight (47.29–35). Unable to distinguish between the two Sugrīvas, Rāma does not shoot any arrow. When the true Sugrīva is struck by a club, the false Sugrīva retreats inside the city (47.36–40). Reassured by Rāma, Sugrīva challenges the false one to a fight for a second time. As he reappears with his army, Rāma now steps forward, and the sight of Rāma causes the false Sugrīva’s *vidyā* to flee, revealing his true identity. Now able to recognize the true Sugrīva, the Vānaras all attack Sāhasagati (47.41–44). As the battle rages, Lakṣmaṇa protects Sugrīva. When Rāma observes that Sāhasagati is defeating the entire Vānara army, he himself enters the battlefield and attacks him with hundreds of arrows,<sup>28</sup> killing him.

Compared to Guṇabhadra’s version, this Jain version’s retelling appears to focus on a different set of issues. Where Guṇabhadra confronts head on Vālin’s criticisms from Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa – that Rāma had no personal reason to fight him –, and portrays Lakṣmaṇa as Vālin’s killer, Vimala’s concern is with issues that become clear from the changes implemented: the change from brother Vālin to an unrelated Vidyādhara as Sugrīva’s enemy indicates that Vimalasūri was preoccupied with Sugrīva’s fratricide, his requesting Rāma to kill his own brother. This preoccupation is already hinted at in one of the criticisms expressed in the narrative frame. The Rāmāyaṇa accounts of Vimalasūri, Raviṣeṇa (7<sup>th</sup> c.) and Svayambhūdeva (9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.) are framed as a dialogue between Mahāvīra’s principal disciple, Indrabhūti Gautama, and Śreṇika, the king of Rājagṛha (De Clercq and Vekemans: forthcoming). In this

26 Note the interesting deviation in Svayambhūdeva’s account (42.8), where it is stated that Sugrīva’s initial plan was to seek the help of Khara and Dūṣaṇa (who are here two individuals), but turned to Rāma upon hearing of their death.

27 *bhaṇāi tao paūmaṇābho ahayaṃ sāhemi kāraṇam tujjhaṃ; suggīva majjha vi tumaṃ sīyāe labhasu paḍivattim* (47.30).

28 *bhaggaṃ daṭṭhūṇa raṇe kaisennaṃ rāghavo sarasaesu; āhaṇāi sāhasagaī suiraṃ kāūṇa raṇalīlam* (47.46). Technically the Rāghava, descendent of Rāghu, mentioned in the verse could also refer to Lakṣmaṇa, but the epithet *rāghava* is a typical one for Rāma. Moreover the parallel episode in Raviṣeṇa’s *Padmapurāṇa* (47.121–128) and Svayambhūdeva’s *Paūmacariu* (43.18) leave no room for any doubt that Rāma, not Lakṣmaṇa, kills Sugrīva’s adversary.

frame narrative King Śreṇika expresses doubt about the veracity of popular Rāma stories that were circulating. About the *Vāli-vadha* episode Vimalasūri says "...how could Rāma have struck down Vālin, because of Sugrīva and Sutārā, through [such] flawed behaviour?"<sup>29</sup> The "flawed behavior" (*chidda*, < Sk. *chidra*-, "fault, blemish") most likely refers to Rāma striking Vālin while he was engaged in a duel with Sugrīva, a problem which moreover Vimalasūri, like Guṇabhadra, solves by situating the death of Vālin in an open battle of armies rather than individuals. Whereas Vimalasūri is not explicit about the fratricide, Raviṣeṇa's Sanskrit account is very clear: "Rāma, ...killed ... Sugrīva's older brother who was like a father [to Sugrīva] because of a woman."<sup>30</sup> Similar to Raviṣeṇa the Apabhramsha version of Svayambhūdeva reads: "How was Vālin killed by his brother, a monkey, because of a woman?"<sup>31</sup> The mention of the word "brother" by the authors emphasizes that Sugrīva's fratricidal nature is especially condemnable. This fratricidal aspect of Vālmīki's account has been discussed at some length by Masson (1975), and these Jain accounts confirm that his is indeed more than a "post-Freudian Western civilization" (p. 677) reading of the story. In Vālmīki's narrative Vālin and Sugrīva are described in both positive and negative terms. Sugrīva may have become Rāma's ally, but he is certainly not without flaws; and while Vālin is killed by Rāma, he is not devoid of qualities, and has over the centuries received sympathy from various artists and audiences because of it. In the Jain account of Vimalasūri both Vālin and Sugrīva are represented in a positive way: Sugrīva is a righteous – albeit perhaps physically not very strong – character suffering a deceitful attack from an imposter, whereas Vālin is portrayed as the greatest type of hero, a renouncer, leaving the kingdom to Sugrīva, and eventually attaining enlightenment.

The upliftment of the Vālin, a strategy observed in other Jain rehabilitations of villainous epic characters,<sup>32</sup> did not end with his renunciation. Vimalasūri uses the character Vālin to bring yet another episode from Rāvaṇa's biography as found in Vālmīki's *Uttarakāṇḍa*, criticized for the hyperbolic depiction of Rāvaṇa's might, more in line with the central Rāmāyaṇa narrative. In chapter 9 of the *Paūmacariyaṃ* we read that one day, when Rāvaṇa is flying

29 *rāmeṇa ... suggīva-sutāratthaṃ chiddeṇa vivāio vālī* (1.10)

30 *... rāmeṇa...sugrīvasyāgrajaḥ sṛy-arthaṃ janakena samas tathā* (1.248)

31 *kiha tiyamaī-kāraṇeṃ kavivareṇa ghāijjai vāli sahoṇareṇa* (1.10.5)

32 See, e.g. Śambūka from the Rāmāyaṇa (De Clercq 2015) or Kīcaka in some Jain versions of the Mahābhārata (De Clercq & Winant 2021)

through the air in his Puṣpaka-vimāna, the celestial chariot refuses to fly over Mount Aṣṭāpada. Mārīci informs him that this is due to the penance of a great renouncer on the mountain and that Rāvaṇa should go and honour him (50–56). Rāvaṇa descends and sees that the renouncer is none other than Vālin. Remembering their past animosity, Rāvaṇa scolds Vālin and threatens to uproot the mountain and throw it into the ocean (57–66). Using his *vidyās*, Rāvaṇa then takes on a frightening form, tears open the earth and descends below the mountain. With all of his might, he starts to lift up the mountain, causing the ground to shake, the surroundings to darken, rivers and oceans to overflow, etc. (67–73). Using his supernatural faculty of clairvoyance (*avadhi*), Vālin realizes what is happening, and to protect the Jain temples that were built on the mountain by the first *cakravartin* Bharata, he presses down on the top of the mountain with his big toe causing Rāvaṇa to stoop. As Rāvaṇa struggles he lets out a terrible cry, explaining why he is called *rāvaṇa*, “the resounder” (76–79). When the gods drop a rain of flowers to celebrate the power of his penance, Vālin releases the pressure from his toe and Rāvaṇa escapes. He approaches Vālin, bows to him, apologizes and praises his discipline, and then conducts an homage ritual in a temple on the mountain. With his sword he cuts out tendons from his arm and creates a lute with them, singing praise of the Jinas (80–95). When Dharaṇendra, the prince of the Nāgas, hears of this, he gifts Rāvaṇa a *śakti*, a supernatural projectile weapon, called Amoghavi-jayā, “of unfailing victory” (96–102). Vālin himself eventually obtains omniscience and final liberation (103–106). This story corresponds to a famous episode from Rāvaṇa’s life narrated in Vālmīki’s *Uttarakāṇḍa sarga* 16. Here Rāvaṇa’s celestial chariot also halts in the sky on its way to visit the birth place of Skanda. Nandīśvara appears and reveals that the mountain is forbidden terrain because of Śiva’s love play on the site. In his arrogance, Rāvaṇa decides to lift up the mountain, but Śiva presses it down with his big toe. As his arms are crushed, Rāvaṇa lets out a terrifying cry, on account of which Śiva bestows on him the name *rāvaṇa*. Similar to the rehabilitation of Śambūka, this popular account from the life of Rāvaṇa told after the main events of the story in the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*, has been brought forward in the Jain narrative, and was given a firmer embedding within the Rāma story by substituting Śiva with Vālin, a proper Rāmāyaṇa character.

Doubtlessly the most striking aspect of this account is that Vimalasūri and his followers agree with Vālmīki and leave Rāma as the killer of Sugrīva’s adversary, despite there being ample opportunity to pass on the bloodshed to

others, such as Lakṣmaṇa or any member of Sugrīva's army. What is more, Vimalasūri appears to be explicit that Rāma enjoys fighting: "When Rāghava (i.e. Rāma) saw that the army of the Monkeys was defeated in the battle, he killed Sāhasagati with hundreds of arrows, after amusing himself in battle for a very long time."<sup>33</sup> Raviṣeṇa is even more graphic and elaborate in his depiction of Sāhasagati's death: "Then, after fixing an arrow to his bow, the powerful [Sāhasagati] ran towards Padma (i.e. Rāma) like a cover of thick clouds. As he (i.e. Sāhasagati) violently dispatched a stream of arrows without interruption, the son of Kākustha (sic., i.e. Rāma) stood firm, creating a pavilion with arrows. Padma fought a supreme battle with Sāhasayāna (i.e. Sāhasagati), because Padma had such joy that allowed for an extended battle. Then after amusing himself in battle for a while, the mighty joy of Raghu (i.e. Rāma) split his (i.e. Sāhasagati's) armour with arrows. Then his body was riddled by sharp arrows. The one who went boldly (i.e. Sāhasagati) embraced the earth (i.e. died), his radiance gone."<sup>34</sup> Whereas Raviṣeṇa adds the nuance that Sāhasagati took the initiative of coming for Rāma in the battle, thus himself sealing his fate, both he and Vimalasūri underline Rāma's joy in fighting.<sup>35</sup> The element of joy and play during the fight conveys Rāma's great skilfulness as a warrior, battling without great effort, and moreover not overcome by passions or emotions. The desire to portray Rāma as a playful (and thus skilful) warrior may be explained from the broader mythological frame within which the characters figure: Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are a *baladeva* and *vāsudeva*, respectively. As such, both will become *ardhacakravartins*, each ruling one half of Bhāratavarṣa, after the death of Rāvaṇa. Being an *ardhacakravartin* implies being a warrior, and hence the episode provides an opportunity to display the warrior-side of the Jain Rāma. Another reason for the author's deliberate choice of portraying Rāma as the killer of Sāhasagati may have been a sense

33 See note 28.

34 *tāvat saśāyakaṃ kṛtvā dhanur uddhatavikramaḥ; adhāvat padmam uddiśya ghanāghanacayopamaḥ.*

*śaradhārām kṣipaty asmin bhṛṣatvād rahitāntaram; vidhāya maṇḍapaṃ bāṇair asthāt kākusthanandanaḥ.*

*samaṃ sāhasayānena padmasyābhūt paraṃ mṛdham; ānando hi sa padmasya ciraṃ yah kurute raṇam.*

*tataḥ kṛtvā raṇakṛīḍāṃ ciraṃ ūrjitavikramaḥ; kṣuraprair asya kavacaṃ ciccheda raghu-nandanaḥ.*

*titavākāradeho 'tha kṛtas tīkṣṇaiḥ śilīmukhaiḥ; gataḥ susāhaso bhūmim ālīṅga gataprabhaḥ (122–126).*

35 Note that this suggestion of joy in fighting is absent from Svayambhūdeva's version (43.18.8–9).

of a need to stress the parallel between Rāma and Sugrīva, who have both lost their wives to a powerful enemy who tricked them with his *vidyās*. Similarly, in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* the parallels of Rāma's and Sugrīva's situations are thought to be the essential basis of their friendship and alliance (Lefebvre 1984: 41–2). The Jain Rāma does not get to kill the abductor of his own wife, as this task is Lakṣmaṇa's, the *vāsudeva* who is always the killer of the *prativāsudeva*, here Rāvaṇa. To allow Rāma some agency to act out punishment, the Jain authors may have found it more fitting to let Rāma kill at least this pursuer of another man's wife. Sugrīva's initial introduction as a man "saddened by being separated from his beloved"<sup>36</sup> and Rāma's response to his plea for help after hearing his story,<sup>37</sup> is clear about the reciprocity between Sugrīva and him. The fact that Guṇabhadra nowhere describes Sugrīva as being separated from his beloved, and only mentions him as having been ousted from his position as heir apparent, thus paralleling Lakṣmaṇa, seems to support this argument.

### Many Jain Rāmāyaṇas and a multifaceted Vāli-vadha

Though there is a more or less common basic Jain Rāma story – one in which the *prativāsudeva* Rāvaṇa is killed by the *vāsudeva* Lakṣmaṇa who is the brother of the *baladeva* Rāma –, in the episode about the death of Vālin there are markedly different accounts. Moreover, these two are not the only Jain accounts of this episode.<sup>38</sup> Opinions about which Jain Rāmāyaṇa account came first, differ. Kulkarni (1990: 214–239), for instance, considers the *Paīmacariyaṃ* to be the earliest. Others believe that Guṇabhadra's account represents an older tradition, because of its correspondence with the relatively early Rāma story of the *Dasaratha Jātaka*.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear where the differences between the two come from. They do not follow sectarian division: Guṇabhadra and Puṣpadanta are Digambara authors, but Vimalasūri's successors are both Śvetāmbara and Digambara and some of the texts of this lineage are of considerable authority for each of the sects, such as the Digambara Raviṣeṇa's *Padmapurāṇa* and the Śvetāmbara Hemacandra's

36 *kantāviraḥammi dukkhiṃ santo*; 47.1a

37 See note 27.

38 A survey of Kulkarni 1990 suggests that at least the versions of the *Vasudevahiṇḍi* and *Caūpaṇṇamahāpurisacariyaṃ* offer still different accounts, seemingly identical to the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*. These differences in the *Vāli-vadha* episode are not always paralleled in the remainder of the Jain Rāma story. *Caūpaṇṇamahāpurisacariyaṃ*, for example, overall follows the narrative of Vimalasūri.

39 E.g. Chandra 1970: 270–272 ; Premi 1942: 282.

*Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacaritra* (12<sup>th</sup> c.). Although it is possible that Guṇabhadra was unaware of Raviṣeṇa's account, his successor Puṣpadanta certainly knew the Rāma story of Svayambhūdeva, a version very close to that of Vimalasūri: he celebrates Svayambhū twice in his *Mahāpurāṇu*, once in the beginning of the text and once before the start of his Rāma narrative. Nevertheless, Puṣpadanta gives the Rāma account of Guṇabhadra, and includes some borrowings from Svayambhū in the details (De Clercq 2001), seemingly without this needing any justification. This multiplicity of Jain Rāmāyaṇas serves first and foremost as a reminder that the Jain tradition is not singular, nor rigidly divided into Śvetāmbaras and Dīgambaras in its narratives of the universal history. Jain responses to popular brahmanical stories were not one of a strictly united front. The Jain Rāmāyaṇas are indeed "counter traditions" to the brahmanical or, as they call it, "popular" accounts, but in addition they are also literary compositions, often *kāvya*, with an aesthetic as well as instructive purpose, where poets are allowed a certain degree of liberty with their subject matter to find greater appeal among their audience. So around the basic tenet from the universal history that Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa were the eighth *baladeva*, *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva*, and that the latter was killed for abducting Sītā, the early Jain poets constructed sound and appealing accounts as they saw fit bearing in mind their audience and their personal intent, negotiating the popularity of dominant (mostly brahmanical) Rāma stories, on one hand, and Jain doctrine, on the other. In time some story-lines proved more popular than others, and were adopted in new compositions. Different Jain Rāma stories have come down to us and exist side by side, without engaging in any obvious way with one another's accounts.

The differences in the Jain retellings moreover highlight the scope of the *Vāli-vadha* episode and its problematics, extending beyond the criticism of Vālin's reproach in the critical edition of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* and suggestive of the variety of the issues it raised in debates. The element of fratricide, central to the account of Vimalasūri and his successors, is not even hinted at in Vālmīki's account except perhaps in the words of Tārā, nor is it raised by Guṇabhadra. The latter was more concerned with the culpability of the *baladeva* Rāma, and passed the bad karma from killing Vālin on to hell-bound *vāsudeva* Lakṣmaṇa, but in view of Vimalasūri's version still left Sugrīva stained with indirect fratricide. Vimalasūri's Rāma, on the other hand, is still guilty of murder, yet this does not stand in the way of him reaching final

emancipation. No author<sup>40</sup> sought the middle ground, replacing Vālin with an imposter and having Lakṣmaṇa kill him and absolving both Sugrīva and Rāma from sin. What all the texts agree on, however, is that the fight with Sugrīva's adversary took place in open battle, rather than the treacherous way in which Vālmīki's Rāma kills Vālin.<sup>41</sup>

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40 Limited to the earliest texts, i.e. those analysed by Kulkarni (1990).

41 Bhavabhūti and Murāri also altered the episode in this way (Steiner 1999).

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