

# Kṛṣṇa and his rivals in the Hindu and Jaina traditions<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper compares the relationship between the *vāsudeva* Kṛṣṇa and his *prativāsudeva* rival Jarāsandha in the Jaina tradition (primarily in Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*) with Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva's rivalries with Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas*. Three main points arising from this comparison are proposed. First, the Jains conflated characteristics of the Hindu figures Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka in order to create a new Jarāsandha, who was now a single powerful nemesis for Kṛṣṇa. Second, this new relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha provided the template for a new class of Illustrious Beings (*śalākāpuruṣas*) in the Jaina Universal History: the recurring and paradigmatic *vāsudevas* and *prativāsudevas*. And third, this evolution of Kṛṣṇa mythology in the Jaina tradition may have influenced the parallel development in the Hindu tradition, including the creation of the *vaiṣṇava* ten *avatāras* doctrine, and the expansion of the purāṇic mythology surrounding both Jarāsandha and Śiśupāla.

## Introduction

As the Supreme God who graciously bestows salvation upon his devotees, the importance of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in the Hindu tradition can scarcely be exaggerated. As a literary character, Kṛṣṇa also plays a fascinatingly formative and even paradigmatic, if non-soteriologic, role in Jaina mythology. This paper examines some aspects of the character Kṛṣṇa as developed in the hands of Jaina poets, and contrasts this “Jaina Kṛṣṇa” with the Kṛṣṇa of the Hindu tradition. Specifically, I will contrast the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and his rival Jarāsandha as depicted in Hemacandra's twelfth-century Śvetāmbara Jaina *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*<sup>2</sup> (TSPC) with the contentious relationships Kṛṣṇa has with Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, and Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas*. I propose that the Jains merged characteristics from the latter three Hindu characters in order to create for Kṛṣṇa a single rival and nemesis,

- 1 The author wishes to express his gratitude to Phyllis Granoff and Wendy Doniger for their kind review of prior drafts of this manuscript.
- 2 The first draft of this paper relied upon Helen Johnson's superb translation of the TSPC. Subsequently, I obtained a Sanskrit copy of the text (excluding the final book, i.e. *parvan* 10), and thus now refer to Johnson only for citations from *parvan* 10. All translations in this paper are my own.

a sort of anti-Vāsudeva, who like Kṛṣṇa himself eventually became a recurring character type in Jaina mythology. I will also offer some suggestions as to how and why Kṛṣṇa mythology developed as it did within the Jaina tradition, and how the Jainas may have influenced, in turn, the evolution of Kṛṣṇa mythology in the Hindu tradition.

It has long been known that Jainas possess their own versions of the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, and thereby regard such characters as Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas, and Draupadī, as well as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā, as their own. With few exceptions, however, the scholarly study of Kṛṣṇa mythology has all but ignored Jaina sources. Whether explicitly stated or not, Jaina purāṇic texts containing stories of Kṛṣṇa are typically viewed by scholars as being so late and so derivative as to merit little serious consideration, and are thought to offer us more insight into the evolution of popular Jainism than the larger Indian epic-purāṇic tradition. Kṛṣṇa mythology, however, evolved within the Hindu tradition throughout the medieval period, and the relative lateness of the Jaina sources (*vis-à-vis* the Hindu epics) does not rule out their possible influence in this sphere.

This paper has four main sections covering the following topics: (i) the story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha in the TŚPC; (ii) the stories of Kṛṣṇa and his rivals Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas*; (iii) the historical development of Jaina Kṛṣṇa mythology leading up to the TŚPC, including the influence of the Hindu epics and *purāṇas*; and (iv) the influence of the Jaina tradition upon the historical development of Hindu Kṛṣṇa mythology.

## I. Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha in the TŚPC

### Kṛṣṇa as a Vāsudeva Śalākāpuruṣa

According to the medieval Jaina tradition, the region of the universe roughly synonymous with India (i.e. Bharata-varṣa or -kṣetra on Jambūdvīpa)<sup>3</sup> is witness, in each and every epoch (i.e. in each *utsarpiṇī* and *avasarpiṇī*),<sup>4</sup> to a series of sixty-three (*triṣaṣṭi*) great (*mahā-*) or illustrious (*śalākā-*) persons (*puruṣas*),<sup>5</sup> each of whom falls into one of five paradigmatic categories: there are always twenty-four *tīrthaṅkaras* or universal saviours, twelve *cakravartins* or universal sovereigns, and nine *baladevas*, nine *vāsudevas*, and nine *prativāsudevas*.<sup>6</sup> Biographies of these *śalākāpuruṣas*, which taken together form the basis for

3 For a description of Jaina geography, see, e.g., Glasenapp (1999: 252–8).

4 For Jaina descriptions of ascending (*utsarpiṇī*) and descending (*avasarpiṇī*) time cycles, including their six sub-divisions, see, e.g., Glasenapp (1999: 271 ff.). We are currently living in an *avasarpiṇī* period; it is with the sixty-three *śalākāpuruṣas* of our own epoch that the Jaina texts are primarily concerned, and which form the basis of the Jaina Universal History.

5 The names used to describe these cosmically significant individuals vary from text to text, and include *śalākāpuruṣas*, *mahāpuruṣas*, *uttamapuruṣas*, and *puruṣottamas*, as well as their Prākṛit equivalents. Merely for convenience, I will adopt the term *śalākāpuruṣas* as their generic title, unless specifically quoting from a given text.

6 The latter three may be considered together as nine *baladeva-vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* triads.

the Jaina Universal History, are found in medieval Jaina *purāṇas* and *carit(r)as*, as well as scattered throughout the canonical texts and their commentarial literature.<sup>7</sup> Hemacandra's TŚPC, however, gives complete and highly standardized biographies of all sixty-three *śalākāpuruṣas*. While some of the biographies are exceedingly brief, Hemacandra has been careful to include certain standard features for each. Some of the biographies, in fact, consist of little more than an enumeration of vital statistics and a brief rendition of the necessary and paradigmatic events required to constitute the status of an illustrious person.<sup>8</sup>

Kṛṣṇa is said to be the ninth and final *vāsudeva* of the current *avasarpinī*, and like all *vāsudevas*, many of the important events in his biography conform to the general paradigmatic characteristics of a *vāsudeva* in general. In contrast to Hindu tradition, none of these *vāsudevas* is considered a divine incarnation of Viṣṇu or any other god.<sup>9</sup> Jaina doctrine lacks the ontological distinction between the human and divine necessary to make such a phenomenon meaningful.<sup>10</sup> The Jaina *vāsudevas* are linked, however, by certain common traits, many of which have been borrowed directly from Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the Hindu tradition (e.g. they are always dark-complexioned and wear bright yellow robes). Their birth is heralded by seven auspicious dreams, and each *vāsudeva* is referred to by a host of familiar *vaiṣṇava* epithets often associated with the Hindu Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.<sup>11</sup> In both the Hindu and Jaina traditions, Kṛṣṇa's father is named Vasudeva, making the name Vāsudeva appear to be a patronymic.<sup>12</sup> The Jaina use of the term *vāsudeva*, however, as a generic title of a recurring class of beings of which Kṛṣṇa is merely one in an infinite series, also has its parallel in the Hindu tradition. In the Hindu *purāṇas*, for example, the majority of Viṣṇu's incarnations are referred to, at one time or another, by the epithet "Vāsudeva", as is celestial Viṣṇu himself. Thus, in both traditions, the term *vāsudeva* must be considered a

- 7 With a few minor qualifications, the Dīgambara and Śvetāmbara Jainas share this Universal History, though references to canonical texts and their commentaries obviously refer to the Śvetāmbaras alone.
- 8 The peculiarly Jainistic tendency of telling essentially the same story over and over, merely changing the names or geographical locations of the characters, is well attested in the canonical literature, particularly in the *upāṅgas*. For a discussion of the use of repetition in Jaina texts, see e.g., Bruhn (1983); Schubring (2000: 92).
- 9 While there is no creator god in Jainism, nor any god who can grant liberation, there occasionally are, in Jaina stories, "semi-divine or heavenly (to be distinguished from the liberated) beings and supernatural or miraculous powers [that] come to the rescue of religious people at critical moments" (Upadhye 1983: 74).
- 10 That is, Jainas believe all life to be constituted by individual souls or *jīvas*, which may take birth among hell-beings or plants/animals or humans or gods. Ontologically speaking, there is no essential difference between a god and a human being, and thus gods do not "incarnate" as humans; rather, after living life as a god, a soul will fall and be reborn as a human. Each *vāsudeva* is considered to be a separate and distinct soul, rather than a repeated incarnation of the same soul.
- 11 E.g. Viṣṇu, Hari, Śrīpati, Keśava, Janārdana, Hṛṣīkeśa, Narasimha, Śārṅgin, Adhokṣaja, Garuḍadhvaja, Mādhava, Govinda, Dāmodara, Puṇḍarikākṣa, Sudarśanabhṛt, Karṇisanisūdana.
- 12 Regarding the name of Kṛṣṇa's father, I tend to agree with the suggestion made by Basham (1967: 306): "it may be that the name [Vāsudeva], falsely interpreted as a patronymic, resulted in the tradition that Kṛṣṇa's father was called Vasudeva".

broad epithet or title (rather than a patronymic) that may be applied appropriately to various beings or manifestations of a single being.

Each *vāsudeva* comes equipped with a similarly paradigmatic half-brother (same father, different mother),<sup>13</sup> known as a *baladeva*,<sup>14</sup> and an equally paradigmatic nemesis, the *prativāsudeva*, who conducts a cruel reign as an *ardhacakrin* (lit. “half-*cakravartin*”). In the case of Kṛṣṇa, his *baladeva*-half-brother is none other than Baladeva/Balarāma, and his *prativāsudeva*-rival is Jarāsandha. By way of comparison, the eighth *baladeva-vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* triad of the current *avasarpinī* was, according to Jainas, comprised of the *Rāmāyaṇa*’s Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Rāvaṇa.<sup>15</sup> Prior to their battle with one another, the *prativāsudeva* is the reigning *ardhacakrin* in the southern half of Bharatavarṣa; following the battle, the victorious *vāsudeva* assumes the position of *ardhacakrin*.

In Hemacandra’s TŚPC, the manner in which a *vāsudeva* kills a *prativāsudeva* is the same: after the requisite verbal jousting, the *prativāsudeva* hurls a *cakra* (discus)<sup>16</sup> that should never fail to kill the one at which it is aimed; nevertheless, it strikes the *vāsudeva* on the chest with the flat side, rather than with the sharp, cutting edge and merely knocks him temporarily unconscious. Regaining his wits, the *vāsudeva* grasps the *cakra*, hurls it back at the *prativāsudeva*, and decapitates him.<sup>17</sup> This same formulaic event has occurred an infinite number of times in the past, and will be repeated ever after into an infinite future. In the particular instance of Kṛṣṇa’s slaying of Jarāsandha, the decapitation takes place during a great battle in which the Pāṇḍavas are allies of Kṛṣṇa and the Kauravas allies of Jarāsandha. In fact,

- 13 As Klaus Bruhn (1961: 22) has noted, this supposed hallmark-feature of the *baladevas* and *vāsudevas*, scrupulously maintained by Hemacandra, is not strictly adhered to in some earlier texts, where they are merely said to be brothers.
- 14 The *baladevas* too are routinely referred to by a host of *vaiṣṇava* epithets commonly associated with the Hindu Baladeva, including Bala, Balabhadra, Balarāma, Rāma, Halin, Muśalin, Lāṅgalin, Śtrīn, and Muṣṭikāri.
- 15 As Lakṣmaṇa is assigned the role of *vāsudeva*, it is he, rather than the *baladeva* Rāma, who kills the *prativāsudeva* Rāvaṇa.
- 16 Possession of this *cakra* represents a sort of cosmic right to rule, and it appears on its own in the armoury of every *cakravartin*. The transfer of the *cakra* from the *prativāsudeva* to the *vāsudeva* might be viewed as a divine or cosmic transfer of legitimate worldly power. How and why the *cakra* first comes into the possession of the wicked *prativāsudeva* is little discussed in Jaina texts, with the exception of Rāvaṇa, who seems to get it by virtue of the fact that he became, through conquest, a de facto *ardhacakrin* (see, e.g., *Pañcamaṅga* 19; Kulkarni 1990: 24).
- 17 Of the nine triads, it should not surprise us that those associated with the ancient epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* should stray from the general pattern at times, even if they were the original inspiration for the patterns. For example, Lakṣmaṇa is the only *vāsudeva* who never “officially” becomes an *ardhacakrin* after killing the *prativāsudeva*. The slaying of Rāvaṇa by Lakṣmaṇa is another such instance: when Rāvaṇa hurls the *cakra* at Lakṣmaṇa, it does not strike him but merely circumambulates him; furthermore, Lakṣmaṇa, in turn, does not decapitate Rāvaṇa but rather splits open his chest with the *cakra* (see below for a discussion on this point). This may or may not be due to the fact that in the Hindu *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition, Rāvaṇa has ten heads, which grow back if decapitated (see, e.g., *Agnipurāṇa* 10.24–6).

not only is the great Bhārata war<sup>18</sup> of the *Mahābhārata* quietly subsumed here into the more cosmically-significant struggle between *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva*, but the Pāṇḍavas, unlike the heroes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are not even granted the status of *śalākāpuruṣas*. The most that can be said of the Pāṇḍavas, in this context, is that they were good Jaina laymen, and sometimes not even that. It was not until the thirteenth century that Jains began composing works devoted primarily to the Pāṇḍavas, and even then their status was far below that of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>19</sup>

### The story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha in the TŚPC

Despite the formulaic nature of their battle, the details of how and why each *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva* come to blows are particular to each instance.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa, it was the kidnapping of Sītā. In the case of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha, there is a rather lengthy and complex relationship that ranges across much of TŚPC 8, i.e. the *Nemināthacarita*. When it finally occurs, the slaying of Jarāsandha by Kṛṣṇa should come as no surprise: it is repeatedly foretold by astrologers, sages and ill omens. Some of the more salient points in this relationship, particularly those that emphasize the cosmically-fated nature of Kṛṣṇa's victory over Jarāsandha, will now be summarized, as they provide an interesting contrast to the versions found in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas*.

Long before Kṛṣṇa's birth, the *prativāsudeva* Jarāsandha had risen to become the king of Magadha as well as an *ardhacakrin*.<sup>21</sup> Kṛṣṇa's uncle Samudravijaya, king of the Yādavas and Jarāsandha's vassal, lived in Śauryapura (near Mathurā) together with his nine younger brothers, collectively known as the *daśārhas*, of which Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva was the youngest.<sup>22</sup> Several early indications

18 According to Hemacandra's TŚPC, the emancipation of Mahāvīra occurred 250 years after the emancipation of Pārśvanātha, whose emancipation occurred 83,750 years after the emancipation of Neminātha (TŚPC 9.4.319). Nemi is said to have lived 1,000 years, the first 300 as a prince. Assuming Nemi was roughly 300 years old at the time of the Bhārata War, and that Mahāvīra's emancipation took place roughly 2,500 years ago, this fixes a date for the war at roughly 84,200 BCE.

19 See Geen (2008) for a discussion of the relative status of Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas in the Jaina tradition.

20 According to Hemacandra's version of the Universal History, for seven of the nine triads of the current *avasarpinī* there was bad blood between *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva* in a past life, and in six of these cases, the future-*vāsudeva* made a vow (i.e. *nidāna*) to kill the future-*prativāsudeva*. Interestingly, no vengeful *nidāna* was made in the three most interesting cases: Triprṣṭha-Aśvagrīva; Lakṣmaṇa-Rāvaṇa; and Kṛṣṇa-Jarāsandha. In the first and last of these three instances, there is no indication whatsoever of any past-life interaction.

21 The TŚPC gives very little background information on Jarāsandha; in fact, his history is confined to three verses (8.2.80–82), where we learn that he lived in Rājagṛha, his father was Bṛhadratha, and that he was a *prativāsudeva* (*prativīṣṇu*) and thus lord of half of Bharatavarṣa (*trikhaṇḍabharateśvara*).

22 According to Jaina tradition, as reflected in Hemacandra's text (TŚPC 8.2.10–11), Kṛṣṇa's lineage is not to be traced to the Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi tribes, but rather to a man named Andhakavṛṣṇi, king of Śauryapura. Andhakavṛṣṇi had ten sons (known as the *daśārhas*), of whom Samudravijaya was the eldest and Vasudeva the youngest. He also had two daughters, Kuntī and Mādrī. Thus, Samudravijaya's son Nemi (the

that fate weighed against Jarāsandha came in the form of astrologers’ predictions. First, Vasudeva was warned off from marrying Jarāsandha’s daughter Jīvayaśas due to an astrologer’s prediction that she would be the ruin of both her husband’s and her father’s family.<sup>23</sup> In his stead, the ill-fated Kāṁsa, king of Mathurā, was wed to Jīvayaśas.<sup>24</sup> Next, Vasudeva went to Jarāsandha’s city, Rājagṛha, won a fortune in gold by playing dice all night, and at dawn gave it all away to beggars.<sup>25</sup> As it happened, an astrologer had previously predicted that the *son* of a man who did just that would be Jarāsandha’s slayer.<sup>26</sup> Soon thereafter, Vasudeva met and cured a particular ailment of Nandiṣeṇā, another daughter of Jarāsandha.<sup>27</sup> As before, an astrologer had predicted that Jarāsandha would be slain by the *son* of the man who cured Nandiṣeṇā.<sup>28</sup> On both occasions, Jarāsandha attempted to kill Vasudeva, but to no avail.<sup>29</sup>

In time, Vasudeva married Rohiṇī and she bore him a son named Baladeva, the ninth *baladeva*.<sup>30</sup> Vasudeva then went to Mathurā where he married Kāṁsa’s cousin Devakī.<sup>31</sup> Kāṁsa held a festival in their honour, but during the festival, Kāṁsa’s younger brother Atimukta, a Jaina monk, arrived and was subjected to the unbidden flirtations of Kāṁsa’s wine-intoxicated wife Jīvayaśas. Atimukta then declared to her<sup>32</sup> that the seventh child (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) of the couple in whose honour the festival was prepared (i.e. Vasudeva and Devakī) would be the destroyer of the families of both her husband (Kāṁsa)

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twenty-second *tīrthaṅkara*), is Kṛṣṇa’s first cousin, as are the five Pāṇḍavas, sons of Kuntī and Mādṛī (not Kuntī’s sister Mādṛī, but rather Mādṛī sister of Śalya).

23 In private, King Samudravijaya said to Vasudeva: “An astrologer named Kroṣṭuki told me something for my own welfare indeed: [he said] ‘This inauspicious daughter of Jarāsandha, named Jīvayaśas, shall surely cause the destruction of the families of both her husband and her father.’” (*vasudevaṁ rahasya ūce samudravijayo nṛpaḥ | yad jñānī kroṣṭukir nāmāsaṁ san mama hitaṁ hy adaḥ || jarāsandhasya kanyeyam nāmnā jīvayaśā iti | alakṣaṇā patipitṛkulakṣayakarī khalu ||* TŚPC 8.2.95–6).

24 TŚPC 8.2.106.

25 TŚPC 8.2.454.

26 *te ‘py ūcur jñāninākhyātaṁ jarāsandhasya yaḥ prage | koṭim jītvārthinām dātā tatsūnur vadhakas tava ||* TŚPC 8.2.456.

27 TŚPC 8.2.580.

28 “Being arrested there by the guards, [Vasudeva] inquired about the cause of his detention. They narrated to him what an astrologer had told Jarāsandha: ‘the son of the man who will restore to health your daughter Nandiṣeṇā shall surely be your killer’. You have been found out [by your actions], and thus are to be killed.” (*baddhas tatra sa āraḥṣair aprcchad bandhakāraṇam | te ‘py ācakhyur jarāsandhasyākhyātaṁ jñāninā hy adaḥ || nandiṣeṇām duhitaraṁ yas te sajjikariṣyati | hantā te tatsuto ‘vasyam jñātaś cāsīti hanyase ||* TŚPC 8.2.583–4).

29 In neither of the latter two episodes is there any indication that Jarāsandha knew Vasudeva’s true identity, as Vasudeva was travelling incognito at the time.

30 Vasudeva’s wife Rohiṇī had four dreams prior to Baladeva’s birth: she saw an elephant (*gaja*), ocean (*abdhi*), lion (*simha*), and moon (*śaśin*) entering her mouth in the last part of the night which indicated that a *halabhr̥t*, i.e. a *baladeva*, would be born (TSPC 8.5.23–4). (For the story of Balarāma’s most immediate and virtuous past lives, see TSPC 8.5.1–22.)

31 TŚPC 8.5.43–70.

32 In accordance with the astrologer’s prediction noted above.

and her father (Jarāsandha).<sup>33</sup> As in the Hindu accounts, Kāṁsa strove to evade this eventuality by killing each of Devakī's children as soon as they were born, but fate was inexorably against him. Having had seven dreams heralding the birth of a *vāsudeva*,<sup>34</sup> Devakī gave birth to Kṛṣṇa.<sup>35</sup> For safety, Kṛṣṇa was taken to Nanda's cattle station Gokula, where Nanda's wife had just given birth to a girl. Vasudeva traded children and put Nanda's daughter next to Devakī in place of Kṛṣṇa. When this child was taken to Kāṁsa, he saw it was a girl and thus believed that the sage's prediction must have been wrong.<sup>36</sup>

While residing as an infant in Gokula, Kṛṣṇa gained a reputation for amazing feats that were actually brought about by his guardian deities.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Kāṁsa, still agitated about the prediction of his death, asked his astrologer if Atimukta's prediction was false; the astrologer said it was not, and that Devakī's *true* seventh child must be somewhere else. After fulfilling various predictions of the astrologers, Kṛṣṇa killed Kāṁsa.<sup>38</sup> Kāṁsa's father carried out the funeral rites, something Kāṁsa's wife Jīvayaśas refused to do until she had first seen the death of Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa, and the *daśārhas*.<sup>39</sup> In the meantime, Jīvayaśas returned to her father Jarāsandha in Rājagṛha and relayed to him the prediction made by Atimukta, and about Kāṁsa's death at the hands of Kṛṣṇa. Jarāsandha sent a messenger to Samudravijaya demanding that both Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva be surrendered; Samudravijaya refused. After Jarāsandha's messenger had departed, the Yādavas consulted the astrologer Kroṣṭuki: while predicting the eventual victory of Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa, the astrologer suggested that the Yādavas travel west to the shore of the ocean and establish a city (Dvārakā) there.<sup>40</sup>

At this time, Jarāsandha sent his son Kāla with 500 kings to destroy the Yādavas, but the guardian deities of Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa tricked him into committing suicide.<sup>41</sup> Jarāsandha was distraught at the loss of his son, but he now, presumably, believed Kṛṣṇa dead. As the Yādavas were fleeing westwards, the Jaina sage Atimukta appeared once again. The sage informed them that Samudravijaya's own son Ariṣṭanemi would be the twenty-second *tīrthāṅkara* (*tīrthakṛt*), while Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa would be a *baladeva* (*bala*) and a *vāsudeva* (*viṣṇu*), respectively, destined to be, from the city of Dvārakā, lords of half of Bharata through the slaying of Jarāsandha.<sup>42</sup>

33 so 'pi jñānī śaśaṁsaiva yan nimitto 'yam utsavaḥ | tadgarbhaḥ saptamo hantā patipitros tvadīyayoḥ || (TŚPC 8.5.74).

34 Devakī dreamt of a lion (*simha*), sun (*arka*), fire (*agni*), elephant (*gaja*), banner (*dhvaja*), aerial car (*vimāna*) and a lotus pool (*padmasaras*) (TŚPC 8.5.98).

35 For the story of Kṛṣṇa's most immediate and less than virtuous past lives, see TŚPC 8.5.1–22.

36 TŚPC 8.5.114–5.

37 *kṛṣṇasānnidhyakāriṇyo devatās* (TŚPC 8.5.126).

38 TŚPC 8.5.313.

39 *gopāv etau rāmakṛṣṇau daśārhas ca sasantaīn | ghātayitvā pretakāryaṁ kariṣye svapater aham* || (TŚPC 8.5.331).

40 TŚPC 8.5.358–62.

41 TŚPC 8.5.367–80.

42 *ṛṣir babhāṣe mā bhaiṣir dvāvimśo hy eṣa tīrthakṛt | kumāro 'riṣṭanemis te trailokyādvaitapauruṣaḥ || rāmakṛṣṇau balaviṣṇū dvārakāsthāv imau punaḥ | jarāsandhavadhād ardhabharateśau bhaviṣyataḥ* || (TŚPC 8.5.388–9). As described in their biographies (TŚPC 4.1–4.4), the first four *vāsudevas* all ruled from Dvārakā.

Similar to Hindu accounts, Kṛṣṇa snatched away and married Rukmiṇī, despite the fact that she had been promised already to Śiśupāla, king of the Cedis. Rukmiṇī accepted Kṛṣṇa due to the Jaina sage Atimukta's prediction that she was destined to be Kṛṣṇa's wife. Believing her to have been abducted, her brother and Śiśupāla, together with large armies, pursued them. Baladeva crushed them, and sent Śiśupāla and others fleeing.<sup>43</sup> This brief episode is the only interaction Kṛṣṇa had with Śiśupāla prior to the final battle. Sometime thereafter, some travelling merchants from Yavanadvīpa<sup>44</sup> innocently informed Jīvayaśas that Kṛṣṇa was yet alive and king of Dvārakā. Outraged, she informed Jarāsandha, who ordered his armies to march towards Dvārakā for the extinction of the Yādavas.<sup>45</sup> Many kings joined Jarāsandha in this march (during which several evil omens occurred), including Hiraṇyanābha, Śiśupāla, and the Kauravas led by Duryodhana. Spies informed Kṛṣṇa that Jarāsandha was on his way, and Kṛṣṇa marshalled the Yādavas for battle.

On a day picked by the astrologer Kroṣṭuki, Kṛṣṇa, bearing a Garuḍa banner and surrounded by the Yādavas, set out to meet Jarāsandha's army.<sup>46</sup> Before the battle began, Jarāsandha's minister Haṃsaka tried to counsel Jarāsandha against fighting, and it is here we have our first mention of the fact that the Pāṇḍavas are taking part in the battle, allied with Kṛṣṇa. Another minister, however, named Ḍimbhaka, convinced Jarāsandha that the war must go forward, and King Hiraṇyanābha was made the general of his army. Battle ensued, and Hemacandra gives us vignettes of individual conflicts, including one between Arjuna and Duryodhana, Sahadeva and Śakuni, Bhīma and Duḥśāsana, Nakula and Ulūka, and Yudhiṣṭhira and Śalya.<sup>47</sup> In the end, Yudhiṣṭhira killed Śalya, Bhīma killed Duḥśāsana and Duryodhana, and Arjuna killed Jayadratha and Karṇa. When Hiraṇyanābha was killed in battle, Jarāsandha installed Śiśupāla as his general. After a little verbal sparring, Kṛṣṇa killed Śiśupāla by cutting his head off with a sword.<sup>48</sup> Jarāsandha then attacked Kṛṣṇa, and a rumour spread that Kṛṣṇa had been killed by him. At this, Neminātha, the impending twenty-second *tīrthankara*, entered the battle, and "without anger" (*vinā kopam*)<sup>49</sup> killed a host of enemy kings. Nemi did not, however, kill Jarāsandha himself, realizing that only a *vāsudeva* kills a *prativāsudeva*.<sup>50</sup>

43 TŚPC 8.6.1–56.

44 Or Javanadvīpa.

45 TŚPC 8.7.134–44.

46 TŚPC 8.7.194 ff.

47 TŚPC 8.7.304 ff.

48 *khaḍgam ca mukuṭam cātha mūrdhānam ca hariḥ kramāt | ciccheda cedirājasya vibruvāṇasya durmateḥ* || (TŚPC 8.7.404). The slaying of Śiśupāla by Kṛṣṇa receives very little fanfare in this text. Nevertheless, this event was known to the Jains very early on, and reference to it is found in the Jaina canonical *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* (1.3.1.1). The fact that Kṛṣṇa kills him here via sword (*asi*; TŚPC 8.7.403) rather than *cakra* is contrary to the account in *Mahābhārata* 2.42.21, but seems more in keeping with the prediction of Śiśupāla's death in *Mahābhārata* 2.40.5, where it is said he would be killed by a sword (*śastreṇa*).

49 TŚPC 8.7.425.

50 *pratiṣṅhur viṣṇunaiva vadhya ity anupālayan | svāmī trailokyamallo 'pi jarāsandham jaghāna na* || (TŚPC 8.7.432); this point is reiterated by Jarāsandha's allies after Jarāsandha had been killed (TŚPC 8.8.3). Incidentally, Nemi is the only one of the



At this point, Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha stood face to face in battle, and Jarāsandha barraged Kṛṣṇa with various weapons to no effect. In desperation, he hurled his *cakra*. Though the *cakra* hit Kṛṣṇa on his chest, it landed with the hub and he was unhurt; the *cakra* then hovered at his side while he took it in his hand. Then, the gods proclaimed that the ninth *vāsudeva* had arisen, and they rained a shower of flowers upon Kṛṣṇa.<sup>51</sup> Kṛṣṇa, displaying compassion, offered to let Jarāsandha return home wealthy and unharmed if only he would become Kṛṣṇa's vassal. Jarāsandha simply ordered Kṛṣṇa to hurl the *cakra*; in an instant, Jarāsandha's head was cut off and fell to the ground, while Jarāsandha's soul sank to the fourth hell. Once again the gods rained flowers from the trees of heaven on Kṛṣṇa.<sup>52</sup> This act brought the battle to a conclusion, and while Kṛṣṇa goes on to become the new *ardhacakrin*, he does allow Jarāsandha's son Sahadeva to be a vassal king in Magadha.

While the Pāṇḍavas participate in the war against Jarāsandha, they are relatively minor characters; in this sense, the Jaina account reads like a version of events sung by bards at the court in Mathurā or Dvārakā, glorifying Kṛṣṇa and relegating the Pāṇḍavas to a secondary role. The Hindu *Mahābhārata*, on the other hand, reads very much like a story designed for the court in Hastināpura, focusing primarily upon the Pāṇḍavas and relegating Kṛṣṇa to the role of periodic, albeit divine, ally and aide. In other words, I think there is here evidence of a struggle between the ascendancy of Kṛṣṇa on the one hand, and the Pāṇḍavas on the other, and the Jainas unequivocally adopt the ascendancy of Kṛṣṇa;<sup>53</sup> furthermore, in doing so, they may actually preserve an ancient tradition that, in Hinduism, lost out under the pressure of the increasing popularity of the *Mahābhārata* and its heroes the Pāṇḍavas. In the introduction to his edition of the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*, Alsdorf suggested that the Jaina tradition may, in rare cases, have "preserved an old original trait which is obliterated from the [Hindu] epic-Purāṇic tradition as available to us".<sup>54</sup> The slaying of Jarāsandha by Kṛṣṇa, as the Jainas claim, rather than by Bhīma, as the Hindus would have it, may illustrate an example of this rare trend. Dahlmann, in his *Genesis des Mahābhārata*, suggested this very thing.<sup>55</sup>

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twenty-four *tīrthankaras* who plays any part at all in a battle between *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva*.

51 *navamo vāsudevo 'yam utpanna iti ghoṣiṇaḥ | gandhāmbukusumavṛṣṭim kṛṣṇo vyomno 'mucan surāḥ ||* (TSPC 8.7.452).

52 *taccakraḥṛtam apatan magadheśvarasya pṛthvyām śiraḥ sa tu jagāma caturthapṛthvyām | kṛṣṇasya copari surāḥ suravṛkṣapuṣpavṛṣṭim vyadhur jaya jayeti vadanta uccaiḥ ||* (TSPC 8.7.457)

53 For a discussion of this issue, see Geen (2008).

54 I have borrowed this quotation from Upadhye (1983: 75); I have been unable to acquire Alsdorf's work directly.

55 Again, I have borrowed this from Upadhye (1983: 75); I have been unable to procure a copy of Dahlmann's text. Upadhye, paraphrasing Dahlmann, states: "there must have existed an independent heroic saga dealing with the conflict between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha in which the latter was killed by Kṛṣṇa himself [as in the Jaina account] and only fragments of which are found in the present *Mahābhārata* where the act of killing is attributed to Bhīma".

## II. Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, and Pauṇḍraka in Hindu tradition

### Jarāsandha in the *Mahābhārata*

This now brings us to the account of the slaying of Jarāsandha found in the *Mahābhārata*. Here it was not Kṛṣṇa but rather Bhīma, one of the five heroic Pāṇḍavas, who killed Jarāsandha. The story may be briefly summarized, but we might note two points at the outset. First, contrary to the Jaina account, this confrontation with Jarāsandha happened long before the Bhārata war began, and is largely unconnected with it.<sup>56</sup> Second, much of the enmity and warfare in the *Mahābhārata* is explained theologically by the fact that countless demons had incarnated on earth and were a burden the earth herself could not bear.<sup>57</sup> In response to her plea, the gods likewise agreed to take human birth in order to rid the earth of her demonic burden. Interestingly, in this theological context, Jarāsandha is not only the first demon (Vipracitti) whose incarnation is mentioned, but he is also the first incarnation mentioned period; moreover, Śiśupāla (Hiraṇyakaśipu) is listed second.<sup>58</sup>

While the Pāṇḍavas were dwelling in their palace in Indraprastha, the sage Nārada arrived,<sup>59</sup> and in his conversation with Yudhiṣṭhira he mentioned that Pāṇḍu, the long-deceased father of Yudhiṣṭhira now residing in heaven, desired Yudhiṣṭhira to perform the *rājasūya* sacrifice.<sup>60</sup> Oddly unconfident about this undertaking, Yudhiṣṭhira insisted on consulting Kṛṣṇa, whose advice, he thought, would be most unbiased. Kṛṣṇa suggested that the *rājasūya* should indeed be done, but only after disposing of Jarāsandha,<sup>61</sup> who at that time was considered a universal sovereign. Curiously, there is no indication that Yudhiṣṭhira even knew of the existence of Jarāsandha at this point,<sup>62</sup> but in any case, there was no personal enmity between them.

Let us take a closer look at Kṛṣṇa's involvement in all of this. In *Mahābhārata* 2.13, Kṛṣṇa tells Yudhiṣṭhira the following: (i) Jarāsandha, king of Magadha, attained universal sovereignty from birth,<sup>63</sup> and had a

56 Though the Kauravas would naturally side with anyone opposed to their rival Pāṇḍavas, Jarāsandha is an enemy to Kṛṣṇa rather than the Pāṇḍavas, and thus the Kauravas play no role here.

57 See *Mahābhārata* 1.58.

58 For a list of partial incarnations, see *Mahābhārata* 1.61.

59 See *Mahābhārata* 2.5 ff.

60 The *rājasūya* is a sacrifice done to consecrate a king, and is conducted by the king himself together with all of his vassals and tributaries. Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya* (*Mahābhārata* 2.30 ff.) was preceded by an "expedition of world conquest" or *digvijaya* (*Mahābhārata* 2.23–9), in which his four brothers scoured the earth, making all other kings subject to the rule of Yudhiṣṭhira.

61 There does not seem to be any particular reason why Jarāsandha had to be defeated *before* the *digvijaya* and *rājasūya* could be commenced. As seen below, in certain purāṇic accounts, the defeat of Jarāsandha is incorporated into the *digvijaya*, which makes better sense. The main justification for dispensing with Jarāsandha (via assassination) prior to the *digvijaya* seems to be that he simply could not be defeated in an all-out attack.

62 In *Mahābhārata* 2.16.10, Yudhiṣṭhira innocently asks Kṛṣṇa who this Jarāsandha person was, and how he could possibly withstand Kṛṣṇa's might.

63 *sa sāmṛāyām jarāsandhaḥ prāpto bhavati yonitah* | (*Mahābhārata* 2.13.8cd). It is worth noting that the term used here for universal sovereignty is *sāmṛāya* rather than *cakravartin*.

massive force at his disposal; (ii) the mighty Śiśupāla had become his general;<sup>64</sup> (iii) one of Jarāsandha’s allies among the Cedis had now (falsely and out of folly) claimed for himself Kṛṣṇa’s position as the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*), and was widely known by the title Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva;<sup>65</sup> (iv) Kṛṣṇa had killed the wicked king Kaṁsa, husband of Jarāsandha’s daughters Asti and Prāpti, and now these widowed daughters were inciting Jarāsandha to kill Kṛṣṇa in revenge; (v) out of fear of Jarāsandha, Kṛṣṇa had moved all the people of Mathurā westward to the city of Dvārakā;<sup>66</sup> and (vi) the wicked Jarāsandha had taken many righteous kings captive and meant to sacrifice them to Śiva. Having provided Yudhiṣṭhira with these details, Kṛṣṇa, ironically giving the *least* “unbiased” advice of anyone, said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

Thus, as a result of Jarāsandha’s constant harassment, we who are powerful nevertheless seek refuge with you through our family connection . . . O Best of Bharatas, You are at all times possessed of the virtues of a universal sovereign, and ought to make yourself the universal sovereign among the caste of *kṣatriyas*, but I am of the opinion, O king, that the *rājasūya* cannot be completed by you whilst the mighty Jarāsandha is still alive.<sup>67</sup>

In an effort to avoid the consequences of a large-scale, violent attack, Yudhiṣṭhira agreed to approach Jarāsandha by stealth rather than force.<sup>68</sup> Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, and Bhīma went to Jarāsandha disguised as Brahmins. The confrontation with Jarāsandha, concluding in his death, is found in *Mahābhārata* 2.19–22. As both sides prepared for combat, we are told that Jarāsandha called to mind his two invincible ministers Haṁsa and Dībhaka, both of whom were tricked into committing suicide while Jarāsandha’s army laid siege to the Yādavas,<sup>69</sup> and for whose deaths Jarāsandha surely blamed Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, remembered that Jarāsandha possessed immense strength, but more importantly, that “the slaying [of Jarāsandha] was the appointed lot of

64 *rājan senāpatir jātaḥ śiśupālah pratāpavān* | (*Mahābhārata* 2.13.9cd). No reference is made here to the fact that Śiśupāla was the king of the Cedis.

65 See below for a discussion of Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas*.

66 *vayaṁ caiva mahārāja jarāsandhabhayāt tadā* | *mathurāṁ saṁparityajya gatā dvāravatīm purīm* || (*Mahābhārata* 2.13.65).

67 *evam vayaṁ jarāsandhād āditaḥ kṛtakilbiṣāḥ* | *sāmarthyavantaḥ saṁbandhād bhavantaṁ samupāśritāḥ* || *sa tvam samvāṅguṇair yuktaḥ sadā bharatasattama* | *kṣatre samrājāṁ ātmanāṁ kartum arhasi bhārata* || *na tu śakyaṁ jarāsandhe jīvamāne mahābale* | *rājasūyas tvayā prāptum eṣā rājan matir mama* || (*Mahābhārata* 2.13.53,60–1).

68 Kṛṣṇa says to Yudhiṣṭhira: “The policy (*nīti*) of the wise states that, ‘One ought not approach a stronger [opponent] with battle arrays and rear-guards’, and such is my thinking as well in this case. Entering the abode of the enemy in disguise and attacking him personally, we shall obtain our desire and remain entirely faultless”. (*vyūḍhānikair anubalair nopeyād balavattaram* | *iti buddhimatām nītis tan mamāpīha rocate* || *anavadya hy asambuddhāḥ praviṣṭāḥ śatrusadma tat* | *śatrudeham upākramya taṁ kāmāṁ prāpnuyāmahe* || *Mahābhārata* 2.16.6–7).

69 For the story of Haṁsa and Dībhaka, see *Mahābhārata* 2.13.35–44.

another.<sup>70</sup> Kṛṣṇa, the younger brother of Baladeva and chief of the self-possessed, *respecting the command of Brahmā*, did not desire to kill [Jarāsandha] himself.<sup>71</sup>

In *Mahābhārata* 2.21, Kṛṣṇa asked Jarāsandha which of the three he wished to fight, and Jarāsandha chose Bhīma, saying that it was better to be defeated by a better man (no doubt a slight directed at Kṛṣṇa). In making this choice freely, Jarāsandha is depicted here as the master of his own fate, however fated his decision may have been. But one thing is clear: the animosity at the core of this impending clash was between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha. After a protracted battle lasting a fortnight, Bhīma finally killed Jarāsandha. But even here, Kṛṣṇa played a role. When Jarāsandha broke off from battle due to fatigue one night, Kṛṣṇa, through his usual double-talk, counselled Bhīma to take advantage of Jarāsandha's fatigue. Bhīma understood Kṛṣṇa's intent; he prepared to strike, declaring to Kṛṣṇa that Jarāsandha did not deserve mercy. Then, "thus addressed, Kṛṣṇa, tiger among men, with a desire for the death of Jarāsandha then replied to Bhīma, inciting him: 'Quickly, O Bhīma, demonstrate for us now, upon Jarāsandha, that supreme divine nature and power you received from Vāyu!'"<sup>72</sup> Bhīma killed Jarāsandha with his bare hands, holding him up in the air and then slamming him down on his knee, breaking his back.<sup>73</sup>

Upon the death of Jarāsandha, Kṛṣṇa released the imprisoned kings, who showed their gratitude to Kṛṣṇa and bestowed riches upon him. Before long, the kings once again heaped praise on Kṛṣṇa for accomplishing their rescue: "It is no wonder, O strong-armed son of Devakī, that the protection of *dharma* rests in you, furnished with the might of Bhīma and Arjuna".<sup>74</sup> These kings then supported Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya*, as did Jarāsandha's son Sahadeva, the new king of Magadha anointed as such by Kṛṣṇa. As a summary of the event, the text reads: "Thus did [Kṛṣṇa], a tiger among men and exceedingly wise, cause the enemy Jarāsandha to be killed by the Pāṇḍavas".<sup>75</sup> Bhīma, it would seem, gets little credit for his mighty deed; it is Kṛṣṇa, and none of the Pāṇḍavas, who is described as "one whose enemy was defeated".<sup>76</sup>

70 This is reminiscent of the statement quoted above from the TSPC in which Aṛiṣṭanemi kills many of Jarāsandha's soldiers, but refrains from killing the *prativāsudeva* himself, as such a task is ordained for the *vāsudeva*.

71 *bhāgam anyasya nirḍiṣṭam vadhyam bhūmibhṛt acyutaḥ || nātmanātmavatām mukhya iyeṣa madhusūdanaḥ | brahmaṇo 'jñām puraskṛtya hantuḥ haladharānujaḥ || (Mahābhārata 2.20.33cd–34; emphasis mine). The implication here must be that Brahmā had asked Kṛṣṇa not to kill Jarāsandha, though no such episode is found in the Mahābhārata, nor is there any obvious reason for such a request.*

72 *evam uktas tataḥ kṛṣṇaḥ pratyuvāca vṛkodaram | tvarayan puruṣavyāghro jarāsam dhavadhipsayā || yat te daivam param sattvam yac ca te mātariśvanaḥ | balam bhīma jarāsamdhe darśayāṣu tad adya naḥ || (Mahābhārata 2.22.3–4).*

73 See Preciado-Solis (1984: 83) for a comparison of the killing of Jarāsandha by Bhīma with Heracles' killing of Antaeus.

74 *naitac citram mahābāho tvayi devakinandana | bhīmārjunabalupete dharmasya paripālanam || (Mahābhārata 2.22.31).*

75 *evam puruṣasārdūlo mahābuddhir janārdanaḥ | pāṇḍavair ghātayām āsa jarāsamdham arim tadā || (Mahābhārata 2.22.51).*

76 That is, *jitāri* (*Mahābhārata* 2.22.13).

### Śiśupāla in the *Mahābhārata*

With the disposal of Jarāsandha accomplished, the Pāṇḍavas began their conquest of the world (*digvijaya*), by which Yudhiṣṭhira attained universal sovereignty.<sup>77</sup> Bhīma, who set out to conquer the eastern quarter, approached Śiśupāla, king of the Cedis. One might suppose that Bhīma’s prior killing of Jarāsandha might have made him Śiśupāla’s bitter rival, but we find nothing of the sort:

The king of the Cedis [Śiśupāla], scorcher of enemies, having heard what the Pāṇḍava wished to do and having sauntered out from his city, welcomed him. Coming together, O great king, the bull of the Kurus and the bull of the Cedis then both enquired after the welfare of one another’s family. The king of the Cedis, having offered up his kingdom, O lord of the people, said to Bhīma with a laugh, “What is this you are doing, O faultless one?” Bhīma then explained to him that which [Yudhiṣṭhira] wished to do. Having accepted it, that lord of men [Śiśupāla] acted accordingly. Thereupon, O king, Bhīma resided there for thirty nights, being shown hospitality by Śiśupāla, and then departed with his soldiers and vehicles.<sup>78</sup>

It seems clear from this exchange that either Śiśupāla did not know that Bhīma had killed Jarāsandha, or that he blamed Kṛṣṇa for arranging it and held Bhīma in no way responsible. He even calls Bhīma *anagha*, “faultless”. A third possibility, of course, is that Śiśupāla did not know that Bhīma killed Jarāsandha because, in a more ancient version of the story, Bhīma had not in fact killed him: Kṛṣṇa had killed Jarāsandha himself, without the need for Bhīma as a weapon.

In *Mahābhārata* 2.33–42, we find the story of Kṛṣṇa’s slaying of Śiśupāla, after the latter strenuously objected to Kṛṣṇa being honoured above all else at the conclusion of Yudhiṣṭhira’s *rājasūya* sacrifice. Śiśupāla had two obvious reasons for personal enmity toward Kṛṣṇa; first, Kṛṣṇa’s wife Rukmiṇī was first promised to Śiśupāla, but was stolen away by Kṛṣṇa (as in the Jaina account above); and second, Kṛṣṇa instigated the slaying of Śiśupāla’s friend and ally Jarāsandha. Though these things were mentioned by Śiśupāla during his tirade against Kṛṣṇa, they were not the main objection he raised: he simply stated that, according to Law, Kṛṣṇa could not possibly be considered the most worthy of honour at a gathering of such glorious kings and sages. He repeatedly criticized Kṛṣṇa’s lowly status and lack of respect for the Law, and stated explicitly what Jarāsandha had implied: “That mighty king Jarāsandha, *who did not wish to fight with this man [Kṛṣṇa] in battle, considering him a mere servant*, was highly regarded by me”.<sup>79</sup> After exchanging heated words, Śiśupāla openly

77 *Mahābhārata* 2.23–9.

78 *cedirājo ‘pi tac chrutvā pāṇḍavasya cikīrṣitam | upaniṣkramya nagarāt pratyagrṇhāt paramitapaḥ || tau sametya mahārāja kurucedivṛṣau tadā | ubhayor ātmakulayoḥ kauśalyam paryapṛchatām || tato nivedya tad rāṣṭram cedirājo viśām pate | uvāca bhīmam prahasan kim idam kuruse ‘nagha || tasya bhīmas tad ācakhyau dharmarājacikīrṣitam | sa ca tat pratiḡrḡyaiva tathā cakre narādhipaḥ || tato bhīmas tatra rājann uṣitvā tridaśāḥ kṣapāḥ | satkṛtaḥ śiśupālena yayau sabalavāhanah ||* (*Mahābhārata* 2.26.12–16).

79 *sa me bahumato rājā jarāsandho mahābalaḥ | yo ‘nena yuddham neyeṣa dāso ‘yam iti saṃyuge ||* (*Mahābhārata* 2.39.3; emphasis mine).

challenged Kṛṣṇa to battle and, as if in the blink of an eye, Kṛṣṇa released his *cakra*, decapitating Śiśupāla while the latter was still spouting off:

Though [Śiśupāla] continued speaking in this manner, the angry Lord [Kṛṣṇa], terror of his enemies, cut off his head with a *cakra*; the strong-armed [Śiśupāla] fell like a tree struck by lightning. Then, O great king, the kings saw the most wonderful glow arising from the body of the Cedi king, like the sun rising up in the sky. Thereupon, that glow venerated the lotus-petal-eyed Kṛṣṇa, praised by the world, and then entered into him, O lord of men. Having witnessed this, all the kings considered it a miracle that the glow had entered the strong-armed, supreme person.<sup>80</sup>

This “miraculous” absorption of Śiśupāla will be addressed below.

### **Paunḍraka in the *Mahābhārata***

In the *Mahābhārata*, the identity of Paunḍraka Vāsudeva is rather vague.<sup>81</sup> When Kṛṣṇa described Jarāsandha and his allies to Yudhiṣṭhira in *Mahābhārata* 2.13, he made the following statement (having already mentioned that Śiśupāla was Jarāsandha’s general<sup>82</sup>):

Furthermore, one who was not killed by me in the past has gone over to Jarāsandha, that evil-minded one who is known among the Cedis as the supreme person; he, who constantly, and from delusion, adopts my insignia, and considers himself the supreme person in this world – a mighty king among the Vaṅgas, Puṇḍras, and Kirātas, who is known as Paunḍraka Vāsudeva throughout the worlds.<sup>83</sup>

What we know of this Paunḍraka from the *Mahābhārata* is rather meagre. He is said to have attended Draupadī’s *svayamvara*.<sup>84</sup> In *Mahābhārata* 2.27.16, we are told that Bhīma, having subdued Śiśupāla and continuing his *digvijaya* march eastward, subdued Jarāsandha’s son (in Magadha), and then continued eastward, where we are told he vanquished “the lord of the Puṇḍras, a mighty

80 *tathā bruvata evāsya bhagavān madhusūdanaḥ | vyapāharac chiraḥ krudhaś cakreṇāmitrakaṛṣaṇaḥ | sa papāta mahābāhur vajrāhata ivācalaḥ || tataś cedipater dehāt tejo ‘gryaṁ dadṛṣur nṛpāḥ | utpatantaṁ mahārāja gaganād ive bhāskaram || tataḥ kamalapatrākṣaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ lokanamaskṛtam | vavande tat tadā tejo viveśa ca narādhipa || tad adbhutam amanyanta dṛṣṭvā sarve mahīkṣitaḥ | yad viveśa mahābāhuṁ tat tejaḥ puruṣottamam || (Mahābhārata 2.42.21–4).*

81 In fact, his identity is so vague that he seems at times to have been confused or conflated with Śiśupāla, an issue I address in a forthcoming paper.

82 See *Mahābhārata* 2.13.9.

83 *jarāsandhaṁ gatas tv evaṁ purā yo na mayā hataḥ | puruṣottamavijñāto yo ‘sau cediṣu durmatiḥ || ātmānaṁ pratijñānti loke ‘smin puruṣottamam | ādatte satatam mohād yaḥ sa cihnaṁ ca māmakam || vaṅgapuṇḍrakirāteṣu rājā balasamanvitaḥ | paunḍrako vāsudevito yo ‘sau lokeṣu viśrutaḥ || (Mahābhārata 2.13.17–19).*

84 *Mahābhārata* 1.177.

hero Vāsudeva".<sup>85</sup> The last we hear of this Vāsudeva of Puṇḍra is at Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya*,<sup>86</sup> where he plays no part.

### Jarāsandha in the Hindu *purāṇas*

In the *Mahābhārata*, the story of Jarāsandha is relatively succinct, if somewhat sketchy and confusing. He is said to have been the incarnation of the demon Vipracitti, though this fact does not seem to have any greater significance than locating him among the horde of demons burdening the earth. In the Hindu *purāṇas*, the account of Jarāsandha's hostility towards Kṛṣṇa is greatly expanded, though his connection to Vipracitti is again glossed over and adds little to our understanding of the character.<sup>87</sup> The purāṇic versions of Jarāsandha's story may be divided into two parts: (i) his repeated battles with Kṛṣṇa, and (ii) his death.

As a representative example of the first part, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.22 ff. provides the story of the almost unremitting battles between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha, barely alluded to in the *Mahābhārata*. Hearing that his son-in-law Kaiśa had been killed by Kṛṣṇa, Jarāsandha assembled an enormous army and attacked Kṛṣṇa at Mathurā. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, together with a small Yādava force, quickly routed Jarāsandha's army and put him to flight. All told, Jarāsandha and his armies are said to have attacked Mathurā eighteen times,<sup>88</sup> and were defeated each time, though Jarāsandha was always left alive. In conjunction with these battles, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.23 gives the story of a mighty warrior named Kālayavana.<sup>89</sup> Having been informed by Nārada that the Yādavas were the mightiest heroes on earth, the audacious Kālayavana decided to attack them at Mathurā. When Kṛṣṇa learned of this, he was concerned that Kālayavana's force would weaken the Yādavas enough that Jarāsandha might finally defeat them. So Kṛṣṇa arranged for a place in the ocean (Dvārakā) and took all the citizens of Mathurā there. In other words, it was no longer merely the threat of Jarāsandha, but rather the combined threat of Jarāsandha and Kālayavana, that provoked the escape to Dvārakā. When Kālayavana arrived at Mathurā, Kṛṣṇa ran away, leading him to a cave where the sage Mucukunda slept; Kālayavana, awakening the sage, was reduced to ashes by him.<sup>90</sup> In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the issue of Jarāsandha is not raised again, nor is the story of his

85 *tataḥ puṇḍrādhipaiṃ vīraṃ vāsudevaṃ mahābalaṃ* | (*Mahābhārata* 2.27.20ab).

86 *Mahābhārata* 2.31.10.

87 The *purāṇas* are inconsistent with respect to who killed Vipracitti in the past: for example, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.35.85–6 states that he was killed by Indra; *Brahma Purāṇa* 71.29 implies he was killed by Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha whereas *Brahma Purāṇa* 104 lists Vipracitti as one of the demons defeated by Viṣṇu as Vāmana.

88 This may be inspired by the account in *Mahābhārata* 2.13, where Jarāsandha and his army are said to have attacked the eighteen junior branches (*aṣṭādaśāvarakula*) of *ṣatriyas*, including the Yādavas.

89 In TŚPC 8.5.367 ff., Kāla and Yavana are said to be sons of Jarāsandha; reference to the death of Kāla was cited above.

90 This episode serves as an example of how Kṛṣṇa uses other people as weapons against his enemies.

death found in this text.<sup>91</sup> This basic story is also told, with some variation, in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.50–52, *Brahma Purāṇa* 87–8, *Padma Purāṇa* 6.246, and very briefly in *Agni Purāṇa* 12.27–34.<sup>92</sup>

The most complete, well-crafted and interesting version of Jarāsandha's story is found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Here, during his repeated attacks on Mathurā, we get a novel rationale for why Kṛṣṇa does not just kill Jarāsandha once and for all. In *Bhāgavata* 10.50, we are told that Kṛṣṇa remembered that the purpose of his own incarnation was to remove the burden of the earth; thus, he decided that Jarāsandha should not be killed so that the latter would have the opportunity to amass another army and attack again.<sup>93</sup> With the destruction of Jarāsandha's armies, over and over again, the earth's burden would be continually lightened. In terms of a death toll, this repeated carnage outweighed the Bhārata war many times over.<sup>94</sup> The story of Kālayavana is given in *Bhāgavata* 10.51, though here he is only identified as a *yavana* warrior. On the heels of this episode, and as Kṛṣṇa predicted, Jarāsandha then attacked Mathurā for the eighteenth time. Pretending to be afraid, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma ran away. The two appeared to take refuge on a mountain, and not finding them, Jarāsandha had the entire mountain burned. Thinking them dead, Jarāsandha returned to Magadha.

Unlike the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the *Bhāgavata* includes the episode of Jarāsandha's death and puts events narrated in the *Mahābhārata* into a larger and more logical context. One of the charges that Kṛṣṇa made against Jarāsandha in the *Mahābhārata* was that he held righteous kings hostage, meaning to sacrifice them to Śiva.<sup>95</sup> According to *Bhāgavata* 10.70, Kṛṣṇa, while at Dvārakā, actually received a message from these imprisoned kings, asking to be freed from the clutches of Jarāsandha. Just then, Nārada arrived and Kṛṣṇa, in a seeming *non sequitur*, asked him about the intentions of the Pāṇḍavas. Nārada replied that Yudhiṣṭhira had a desire to perform the *rājasūya* sacrifice in order to honour Kṛṣṇa, and hoped to receive Kṛṣṇa's blessing. Kṛṣṇa then asked his servant Uddhava for advice. In 10.71, Uddhava gives a speech in which much that may have been implied in the *Mahābhārata* is made explicit. By supporting Yudhiṣṭhira's thirst for supremacy, which would involve subduing all rival kings, Kṛṣṇa could kill two birds with one stone: he could both loyally support

91 He is only mentioned again as a guest at Śiśupāla's wedding, where Rukmiṇī is stolen away by Kṛṣṇa.

92 *Agni Purāṇa* 12 is a very brief summary of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* as Kṛṣṇa and, in its brevity, implies a vague connection between Jarāsandha and Pauṇḍraka, either as allies or even as one and the same person: *rāmakṛṣṇau ca mathurām tyaktvā gomantam āgatau | jarāsandham vijityājau pauṇḍrakam vāsudevakam ||* (12.29). There is no mention of repeated attacks by Jarāsandha, and Kālayavana is not mentioned.

93 *haniṣyāmi balam hy etad bhuvī bhāraṁ samāhitam | māgadhenā samānītaṁ vaśyānām sarvabhūbhujām || akṣauhiṇībhiḥ saṁkhyātāṁ bhātāśvarathakuñjaraiḥ | māgadhas tu na hantavyo bhūyaḥ kartā balodyamam ||* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.50.7–8).

94 According to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.50.4, Jarāsandha's army consisted of twenty-three *akṣauhiṇī* battalions. Compared with the total of eighteen *akṣauhiṇīs* that participated in the Bhārata war, and considering Kṛṣṇa smashed Jarāsandha's army at least seventeen times, the vast majority of Kṛṣṇa's task in clearing the earth of her demonic burden occurred quite apart from the Bhārata war.

95 *Mahābhārata* 2.14.18.



his cousin Yudhiṣṭhira and accomplish the release of the kings imprisoned by Jarāsandha. Uddhava also explains why it is that Bhīma should be the one to kill Jarāsandha:

My Lord, the *rājasūya* sacrifice is to be conducted by one who has [first] brought under his sway all the directions on the compass – hence, I see victory over the son of Jarā [i.e. Jarāsandha] as being the goal of you both. Indeed, our own great objective will be well served by this, O Govinda, as will your fame through the liberation of the imprisoned kings. This king [Jarāsandha] is equal in might to myriad elephants, and irresistible even for any other mighty warrior but Bhīma, who is his equal in might. He ought to be defeated in a dual, not surrounded by his hundred *akṣauhiṇīs*! But he is friendly to Brahmins, and when solicited by them, he never refuses. Having donned the garb of a Brahmin, Bhīma (Vṛkodara) should go and beg from him. Without a doubt, he will kill [Jarāsandha] in a dual before your very eyes.<sup>96</sup>

Kṛṣṇa proceeded to Indraprastha, but unlike the version in the *Mahābhārata*, he did not tell Yudhiṣṭhira that the defeat of Jarāsandha must be done in prelude to the *digvijaya*. Rather, the *digvijaya* began at once, and it is only when Jarāsandha remained defiant that Kṛṣṇa related Uddhava's strategy to Yudhiṣṭhira. As in the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa, Bhīma and Arjuna went to Magadha and Bhīma killed Jarāsandha. The version in the *Bhāgavata*, however, has some interesting additions. When Jarāsandha divined that the three "Brahmins" must be *kṣatriyas* in disguise, he did not waver in his duty to offer them service. He thought to himself:

These are certainly princes in the guise of brahmins. [Nevertheless], I shall give to them whatever is asked, even if it be my own self, which is hard to surrender. We have heard of the spotless fame, known the world over, of [the demon] Bali who too was deprived of his sovereignty by Viṣṇu disguised as a brahmin, desirous of taking back the glory of Indra. Though realizing that [Vāmana] was Viṣṇu in the form of a brahmin, the king of the demons [Bali], despite being warned off, yet gave him the earth.<sup>97</sup>

96 *yaṣṭavyam rājasūyena dikcakrajayinā vibho | ato jarāsutajaya ubhayārtho mato mama || asmākam ca mahān artho hy etenaiva bhaviṣyati | yaśaś ca tava govinda rājño baddhān vimuñcataḥ || sa vai durviśaho rājā nāgāyutasamo bale | balinām api cānyeṣām bhīmaṁ samabalam vinā || dvairathe sa tu jetavyo mā śatākṣauhiṇīyutaḥ | brahmaṇyo 'bhyarthito viprair na pratyākhyāti karhicit || brahmaveśadharo gatvā taṁ bhikṣeta vṛkodaraḥ | haniṣyati na samdeho dvairathe tava sannidhau || (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 10.71.3–7).* In the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa echoes this idea that Bhīma is a match for Jarāsandha, and even predicts that when challenged to a fight, Jarāsandha would choose Bhīma over Kṛṣṇa or Arjuna (*Mahābhārata* 2.18.5).

97 *rājanyabandhavo hy ete brahmalingāni bibhrati | dadāmi bhikṣitam tebhya ātmānam api dustyajam || baler nu śrūyate kūrṭir vitatā dikṣv akalmaṣā | aiśvaryād bhramśitasyāpi vipravayājena viṣṇunā || śrīyam jihūrṣatendrasya viṣṇave dvijarūpiṇe | jānann api mahim prādād vāryamāno 'pi daityarāt || (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 10.72.23–5).*

In other words, Jarāsandha likened this situation to that of another struggle between an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (Vāmana) and a demon (Bali). By likening himself to Bali, Jarāsandha seems to view himself as a likely target for an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. But given the choice of who to fight, Jarāsandha again chose Bhīma, stating that Kṛṣṇa was a coward who abandoned his own city (Mathurā) for the safety of the ocean (Dvārakā). The fight between Bhīma and Jarāsandha lasted two fortnights, and Bhīma became discouraged. But then, Kṛṣṇa “re-invigorated Bhīma (Pārtha) with his own energy”,<sup>98</sup> and Bhīma killed Jarāsandha with his bare hands.<sup>99</sup> Once again, Kṛṣṇa does not kill Jarāsandha personally, but by invigorating Bhīma with his *tejas*, we might consider Kṛṣṇa as the efficient force. Kṛṣṇa freed the imprisoned kings, who once again showed all gratitude to him. As a summary of the events, the text states: “Having used Bhīmasena to kill Jarāsandha, Kṛṣṇa (Keśava) was honoured by [Jarāsandha’s son] Sahadeva, and then departed, together with the two Pāṇḍavas”.<sup>100</sup>

The account of Jarāsandha in the *Padma Purāṇa* is similar to the basic story told in the *Bhāgavata*, though it too has a few interesting features. For example, Kālayavana is not sent to fight the Yādavas by Nārada, but rather is engaged as an ally by Jarāsandha himself.<sup>101</sup> Also, here Kṛṣṇa explained to Bhīma and Arjuna that Jarāsandha had to be killed by hand owing to a boon from Śiva that made him invincible to all weapons.<sup>102</sup> As in the other versions, the *Padma Purāṇa* also states that Kṛṣṇa killed Jarāsandha using Bhīma.<sup>103</sup> Thus, in every purāṇic version examined, it is clear that the real fight was between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha, and for reasons sometimes explained and sometimes not, Bhīma was employed merely as Kṛṣṇa’s weapon.<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, the *Mahābhārata*’s vague suggestion that Kṛṣṇa refrained from killing Jarāsandha himself due to his “respecting the command of Brahmā” is never followed up in the *purāṇas*.

### Śiśupāla in the Hindu *purāṇas*

The *Mahābhārata* informs us that Śiśupāla, son of Kṛṣṇa’s aunt Yādavī and the Cedi king Damaghoṣa, was the incarnation of the demon Hiranyakaśipu. We are also told that, upon his death by decapitation, Śiśupāla “entered” Kṛṣṇa. In the

98 *pārtham āpyāyayan svena tejasā (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 10.72.42)*. Kṛṣṇa’s use of other people, by imbuing them with his *tejas*, to kill his enemies is openly acknowledged in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa 3.3.10: kalamāgadhaśālvādīn anikai rundhataḥ puram | ajīghanat svayaṁ divyaṁ svapuṁsām teja ādiśat ||*.

99 Here, he is said to have split him in half, returning him to the form he had before the *rākṣasī* Jarā and joined him together. For the story of the *rākṣasī* Jarā, see *Mahābhārata 2.16–17*.

100 *jarāsandham ghātayitvā bhīmasenena keśavaḥ | pārthābhyām saṁyutaḥ prāyāt sahadvena pūjitaḥ || (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 10.73.31)*.

101 *Padma Purāṇa 6.246*. This version lies between the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (where Kālayavana is entirely independent from Jarāsandha), and the TSPC, (where Kāla and Yavana are said to be sons of Jarāsandha).

102 *anena rudraḥ pūjitas atapasādāc chastrair avadyaḥ (Padma Purāṇa 6.252.1)*.

103 *jarāsandham pāṇḍuputreṇa hatvā (Padma Purāṇa 6.252.1)*.

104 *Brahma Purāṇa 10* provides a novel justification for Bhīma’s killing of Jarāsandha, which involves taking back a divine chariot that once belonged to the Kuru kings and that had been acquired by Jarāsandha.

Hindu *purāṇas*, the relationship between Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla is placed into a much larger context. The *purāṇas* tell us that Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva had five sisters, and that Śiśupāla was the son of his sister Śrutaśravā.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, we are told that Dantavakra<sup>106</sup> was the son of the Karuṣa king Vṛddhaśarman and Vasudeva's sister Śrutadevā,<sup>107</sup> though the *Brahma Purāṇa* claims Ekalavya as the son of Śrutadevā, and has Dantavakra as the son of another sister named Pṛthukīrti.<sup>108</sup> As Vasudeva's sister Pṛthā/Kuntī was the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, this now makes first cousins of Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas, Śiśupāla, Dantavakra and Ekalavya.

The *purāṇas* also inform us that Śiśupāla was not merely Hiranyakaśipu in a former life, killed by Viṣṇu as Narasimha, but also the *rākṣasa* Rāvaṇa, killed by Viṣṇu as Rāma, son of Daśaratha.<sup>109</sup> In *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.15, we are told that as a result of his keeping Viṣṇu in his thoughts always, Śiśupāla was united with Viṣṇu upon his death. As this was the third time that Viṣṇu had killed this "same" demon, the question arises as to why the miraculous absorption happened on the death of Śiśupāla and not on either of the previous occasions: the reason given is that Hiranyakaśipu did not recognize Viṣṇu in the Narasimha form, and Rāvaṇa was so engrossed in his love for Sītā that he mistook Rāmacandra for a mortal. Only as Śiśupāla did the demon consciously realize that his death came at the hands of Viṣṇu.<sup>110</sup>

A more comprehensive reason for Śiśupāla's absorption the third time around is provided in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and clearly alluded to in the *Padma Purāṇa*. The account of the slaying of Śiśupāla in *Bhāgavata* 10.74 is brief. In *Bhāgavata* 10.74.43, Kṛṣṇa decapitates Śiśupāla with his discus, and two verses later it is said that a light which arose from Śiśupāla then entered into Kṛṣṇa like a meteor. The text goes on to comment: "Meditating [on Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa] with his thoughts consumed by an innate hostility for a triad of births, [Śiśupāla] went to a state of absorption – one's state of mind indeed determines one's [future] state of being".<sup>111</sup>

The triad of births is explained earlier in the *Bhāgavata*, first in 3.15–19 and again in 7.1. Briefly, there were two doorkeepers named Jaya and Vijaya stationed outside Viṣṇu's great hall in Vaikuṅṭha. One day they made the grave mistake of barring entrance to a group of divine sages led by Sanaka. As a result of the sages' indignation, Jaya and Vijaya were both cursed to spend three lives

105 E.g. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.14; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.139.55; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.34; *Brahma Purāṇa* 12, *Skanda Purāṇa* 7.1.20; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.24.39–40.

106 Dantavakra is twice mentioned in *Mahābhārata* 2: once in 2.13, where Kṛṣṇa lists him among Jarāsandha's allies, and once in 2.28, where he is one of the kings subdued by Sahadeva during the *digvijaya*.

107 E.g. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.14; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.139.54; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.34; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.24.37.

108 *Brahma Purāṇa* 12.

109 E.g. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.14; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.34; *Skanda Purāṇa* 7.1.20.

110 The idea that Śiśupāla achieved absorption into Viṣṇu despite his enmity is often remarked upon in the *purāṇas*, e.g. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.15, *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.12.118, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.2.19; 7.1.12 ff.

111 *janmatrayānuguṇitavairasamrabdhayā dhiyā | dhyāyāṃs tanmayatām yāto bhāvo hi bhavakāraṇam ||* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.74.46).

outside of Vaikuṅṭha before they could return. In this context, they first became Hiraṇyakaśipu and his brother Hiraṇyākṣa, then Rāvaṇa and his brother Kumbhakarṇa, and finally Śiśupāla and Dantavakra.<sup>112</sup> While the absorption of Śiśupāla by Kṛṣṇa is often remarked upon in the *purāṇas*,<sup>113</sup> that of Dantavakra is largely glossed over. The *Padma Purāṇa*, however, ties up all the loose ends by immediately following the account of the absorption of the decapitated Śiśupāla with the death-by-mace and absorption<sup>114</sup> of Dantavakra, who had come to Mathurā to kill Kṛṣṇa after hearing of Śiśupāla's murder.<sup>115</sup> The text sums up by stating that, "Thus, through the presence of Sanaka's curse but actually for the Lord's amusement, Jaya and Vijaya, having descended to earth, were killed by the Lord alone in a triad of births, and then reached enlightenment; at the end of their triad of births, they attained release".<sup>116</sup>

### Paunḍraka in the Hindu *purāṇas*

The shadowy character of Paunḍraka Vāsudeva in the *Mahābhārata* begins to crystallize in the *purāṇas*, though in a multitude of conflicting forms. The epithet Vāsudeva is occasionally justified patronymically by trying to make him out to be a son of Vasudeva,<sup>117</sup> but most often Paunḍraka simply arrogantly adopts the epithet "Vāsudeva" as an indication that he is Viṣṇu incarnate. His association with the land of Puṇḍra<sup>118</sup> is almost never explored, and he is most often associated with Vārāṇasī/Kāśī, either as its king or a friend and ally of its king.<sup>119</sup>

The *Mahābhārata* itself contains no account whatsoever of any battle between Kṛṣṇa and Paunḍraka. Probably the earliest version of Kṛṣṇa's slaying of Paunḍraka is in the *Harivaṃśa*, *Bhaviṣya Parvan*, chapters 90–101, wherein Paunḍraka convinced his allies to assail Dvārakā and kill Kṛṣṇa. In the end, Kṛṣṇa used his *cakra* to cut Paunḍraka to pieces.<sup>120</sup> It is interesting that

112 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.1.45 may be taken to suggest that Śiśupāla and Dantavakra were brothers, but they are generally considered first cousins.

113 For example, during a discussion of *tīrthas*, *Padma Purāṇa* 6.222 suggests that Kṛṣṇa decided to kill Śiśupāla specifically at Indraprastha because he knew that, in this very holy place, Śiśupāla would achieve final release.

114 *kṛṣṇas tu gadayā taṃ jaghāna ... so 'pi hareḥ sāyujyam yogigamyam nityānandasukham śāsvatam paramam padam avāpa* (*Padma Purāṇa* 6.252.3).

115 This briefly-described episode of Dantavakra appears to mirror the episode of Śālva in *Mahābhārata* 3.15. There, it is Śālva who was outraged at the death of Śiśupāla, though there is no mention of Śālva's absorption by Kṛṣṇa.

116 *iṭham jayavijayau sanakādiśāpavyājena kevalam bhagavato līlārtham saṃsṛtāv avatīrya janmatraye 'pi tenaiva nihatau janmatrayāvasāne muktim avāptau* (*Padma Purāṇa* 6.252.3).

117 The *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.34.183–4) suggests that Vasudeva had a son named Puṇḍra with his wife (the former maidservant) Sugandhi, and that Puṇḍra became a king. There is, however, no further attempt to connect this king to our Paunḍraka.

118 In the *purāṇas*, there is virtually no association at all between Paunḍraka and the land of Puṇḍra; perhaps a more appropriate explanation of his name might be "one who adopts the sectarian marks (*puṇḍra*) of Vāsudeva".

119 The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (10.66.1) claims he was the lord of the Karūṣas (*karūṣādhipatīr*), which may imply a veiled connection with Dantavakra.

120 *Harivaṃśa*, *Bhaviṣya Parvan*, 101.

throughout much of this account, Pauṇḍraka is referred to simply as “Vāsudeva”, and even in his fight with Kṛṣṇa, the isolated name “Vāsudeva” not infrequently refers to Pauṇḍraka rather than Kṛṣṇa. In the *purāṇas* I have examined, the only other time Pauṇḍraka actually comes to Dvārakā is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*; otherwise, their battle always takes place at Kāśī.

Later versions of Pauṇḍraka’s story seem to become embroiled in the *vaiṣṇava* sectarian story of the burning of Kāśī. In *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.34, King Pauṇḍraka sent a messenger to Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā and demanded that Kṛṣṇa relinquish the *cakra* Sudarśana.<sup>121</sup> Kṛṣṇa then came to Kāśī, whose king was an ally to Pauṇḍraka, and released the *cakra*, which cut Pauṇḍraka to pieces. Kṛṣṇa then killed the king of Kāśī with arrows and returned to Dvārakā. A female deity (*kṛtyā*) with the (supposed) power to kill Kṛṣṇa, created by Śiva at the behest of the indignant people of Kāśī, came to Dvārakā to destroy Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa’s *cakra* then chased the *kṛtyā* all the way back to Kāśī and razed the city to the ground. At this point, the central aspect of the story seems to have shifted from Kṛṣṇa’s victory over Pauṇḍraka to Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa’s superiority over Śiva. Interesting variants of this story are found in *Brahma Purāṇa* 98, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.66, *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.12; 7.1.99, and *Padma Purāṇa* 6.251.<sup>122</sup>

Although certainly not comprehensive, this brief review of the depictions of Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas* should suffice to demonstrate that the mythology surrounding these three characters was far from static in the Hindu tradition, and that there is ample room to explore not only how this evolving Hindu mythology may have influenced the Jaina tradition (Section III), but also how Jaina versions may have, in turn, influenced the Hindus (Section IV).

### III. Origin and development of Jaina Kṛṣṇa mythology

On the basis of archaeological evidence, it is clear that the Jainas had established themselves in the city of Mathurā prior to the Common Era, and it seems likely that they first began adopting and adapting Kṛṣṇa mythology within a few centuries of their arrival.<sup>123</sup> Assuming this to be the case, it is our task to explain how the Jainas (over the course of many centuries) transformed Hindu Kṛṣṇa mythology into the formulaic and recurring *vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* rivalry

121 That is, Pauṇḍraka thought the *cakra* should rightfully be in his own possession.

122 *Skanda Purāṇa* 6.58 has another story about a *sūdra* boy named Pauṇḍraka, but there is no obvious connection with our character.

123 When and where the Jainas first encountered the Kṛṣṇa cult, and when they first began incorporating epic characters into their mythology, is an open question. Jaini proposes that it occurred after the Jainas had migrated to Mathurā, where inscriptions definitively place a Jaina community prior to the Common Era (Jaini 1993: 210–11). For an accessible overview of the history of Jainas in Mathurā, see Sharma (2001). On the basis of the *Kalpa Sūtra*’s mention of *baladevas* and *vāsudevas*, however, Cort (1993: 199) suggests that these categories might predate the migration to Mathurā. What, exactly, the Kṛṣṇa cult of Mathurā looked like when the Jainas first encountered it must also remain an open question, but given the obvious evolution of Kṛṣṇa mythology throughout the Hindu *purāṇas*, we must be careful not to assume uncritically that mythological features (especially relating to Kṛṣṇa’s rivals) found in the *Bhāgavata* or even the earlier *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, were necessarily prominent features of this cult.

found in medieval Jaina texts such as Hemacandra's TŚPC. The stories of Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka in the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu *purāṇas* no doubt played a role in this process, though as I will discuss in Section IV, some of the character developments in the Hindu *purāṇas* may have been influenced by the Jainas. In this section, I offer some suggestions as to how and why Jaina Kṛṣṇa mythology developed in the manner that it did.

### Mathurā and Dvārakā

Our first question is: why did the Jainas settle on Jarāsandha as Kṛṣṇa's chief rival? As I will discuss in greater detail below, when the rivals of the *vāsudevas* first appear in Jaina texts, they are simply a list of names, but there is no list that fails to declare Jarāsandha as Kṛṣṇa's rival. As mentioned above, it is possible that the Jainas' choice of Jarāsandha may reflect an earlier tradition no longer found in Hindu texts, in which Kṛṣṇa killed Jarāsandha himself, but in the complete absence of supporting evidence, this hypothesis carries little weight. It is equally possible that the Jainas chose Jarāsandha precisely *because* Kṛṣṇa did not kill him in the Hindu versions, thereby providing a clear point of distinction. Nevertheless, it is worth considering why Jarāsandha was chosen.

One obvious choice of a single nemesis for Kṛṣṇa would have been Kaṁsa. Although the *Mahābhārata* suggests that Viṣṇu incarnated on earth as Kṛṣṇa in order to relieve the earth of her demonic burden in general, certain purāṇic passages specifically suggest that the purpose of this incarnation was to rid the earth of Kaṁsa and his demonic cronies.<sup>124</sup> But there are good reasons why Kaṁsa would not be chosen by Jainas as Kṛṣṇa's chief rival. As noted by Edwin Bryant,<sup>125</sup> Kṛṣṇa mythology in the Hindu tradition may be neatly divided into Vraj and post-Vraj periods, roughly delineated by childhood (Mathurā/Vraj) and adulthood (Dvārakā), respectively. In terms of iconographical images of Kṛṣṇa, the vast majority is representative of the Vraj period,<sup>126</sup> and it is also this period of Kṛṣṇa's life that became, historically, the primary focus of the Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* cult. Here, Kṛṣṇa is depicted as an adorable and mischievous child, a playful divinity who slays demons with his bare hands as if merely playing around (*līlayā*), and when a little older, as a youth who has innumerable trysts with the cowherdresses of Vṛndāvana. In the Vraj period, Kṛṣṇa's chief rival is Kaṁsa, said to be the incarnation of the demon Kālanemi.<sup>127</sup> The effective end of the Vraj period is marked by two events: the slaying of Kaṁsa, and the education of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in the use of weapons by Sāndīpani. Soon

124 See, e.g., *Harivaṁśa* 47–48, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.34, *Brahma Purāṇa* 82.

125 Bryant (2003: xxii).

126 Bryant (2003: x).

127 The identification of Kaṁsa with the demon Kālanemi is found, for example, in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.1 and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.1. Surprisingly, neither Kaṁsa nor Kālanemi are mentioned in the Book of Partial Incarnations (*Mahābhārata* 1.61), and references to Kaṁsa in *Mahābhārata* 2 make no mention of Kālanemi. This perhaps highlights the stark contrast between Vraj and post-Vraj Kṛṣṇa mythology, and the fact that the *Mahābhārata* is primarily concerned with the post-Vraj Kṛṣṇa. Nevertheless, it is interesting that in the closing book of the *Mahābhārata*, when Yūधिṣṭhira reaches heaven, among those he sees is Kaṁsa (18.5.14), while Jarāsandha goes unmentioned.

after the latter occurs, Kṛṣṣṣa and Balarāma, now armed warriors, retreat under military pressure to Dvārakā. It is from Dvārakā that the adult Kṛṣṣṣa is involved in the slayings of Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, Pauṇḍraka.<sup>128</sup>

I propose that the miraculous stories relating to Kṛṣṣṣa as an infant and young adolescent in Vraja, culminating in the slaying of Kāmsa, were not calculated to attract Jains or any other Indian religious tradition outside of the Kṛṣṣṣa cult. As Goldman has noted,<sup>129</sup> infancy-childhood (including memories of this period) is a time of life almost universally ignored in Sanskrit literature. The circumstances surrounding the conception and birth of important characters (including the Jaina *tīrthankaras*) often draw significant fanfare, but the period of life between birth and mid- to late-teens is quickly glossed over. We see this, for example, in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, where the period between the *bodhisattva*'s birth and marriage is covered in just five verses (2.19–24). Likewise, the time between the birth of Rāma in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.17.6) and the completion of his education (1.17.21) is brief and unremarkable, and the childhood period of the five Pāṇḍavas is not treated in much greater detail in the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>130</sup>

In the biographies of the sixty-three *śalākāpuruṣas* in Hemacandra's TŚPC, only two include childhood events in any way comparable to those of the young Hindu Kṛṣṣṣa: (i) the *vāsudeva* Kṛṣṣṣa himself; and (ii) the final *tīrthankara* Mahāvīra.<sup>131</sup> The Jains do not dwell upon the infant-childhood "miracles" of Kṛṣṣṣa, but they do include a few,<sup>132</sup> with the caveat that it was not actually Kṛṣṣṣa, but rather his attending guardian deities, who performed the deeds.<sup>133</sup> Obviously, these miraculous childhood activities in Kṛṣṣṣa's biography did not become a paradigmatic feature of the other *vāsudevas*, perhaps indicating that the Jaina authors were not attracted to them. The degree to which Kṛṣṣṣa, as a youth, is described in later Hindu texts as indulging in sexual trysts with any number of women (including married women, not his wives) is no more suited to Jaina morality than that of the Buddhists or Hindus, with the obvious exception of Kṛṣṣṣa-cult devotees, who incorporate such divine behaviour into their theology and identify with the women rather than Kṛṣṣṣa. It was perhaps the reluctance fully to embrace this Vraja-based Kṛṣṣṣa that essentially removed the

128 In Kṛṣṣṣa's adult life, the only lingering relevance of his killing of Kāmsa is that he simultaneously widowed Jarāsandha's daughters, which was the initial cause for Jarāsandha's animosity towards Kṛṣṣṣa.

129 Goldman (1985: 416 ff.).

130 See *Mahābhārata* 1.113 ff. In *Mahābhārata* 1.119, the "boyhood" struggles between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas occur at an uncertain age (probably adolescence or later), though the physical invincibility of Bhīma does seem miraculous.

131 According to Hemacandra's *Mahāvīracaritra* (Johnson 1962b: 31 ff.), when not yet eight years old, Mahāvīra subdued a god who confronted the boy first as a serpent and then as a goblin. These events seemed designed to bolster the epithet "Mahāvīra" and to serve as a prelude to future attacks that occur after Mahāvīra became an ascetic, though one cannot help but wonder whether or not the childhood deeds of Kṛṣṣṣa were an influence here. These events are not, for example, found in the *Mahāvīracarita* in the *Kalpa Sūtra*.

132 E.g. the killing of demons by overturning the cart (TŚPC 8.5.123–6); the dragging of the mortar between two *arjuna* trees (TŚPC 8.5.138–40).

133 Those who witnessed these deeds were unaware of this fact, however, thereby explaining how such fantastic and erroneous stories first began to circulate.

possibility of Kamsa becoming Kṛṣṇa's chief rival in the Jaina tradition. Kṛṣṇa's slaying of Kamsa in the Jaina tradition is certainly fated, and serves as a prelude to the slaying of Jarāsandha, but the role played by Kamsa in Kṛṣṇa's biography does not become a paradigmatic feature in the biographies of *vāsudevas* in general.

In the post-Vraj period, however, the Hindu Kṛṣṇa is depicted more as an epic hero than a divine miracle worker.<sup>134</sup> He engages in political intrigue and occasionally open battle,<sup>135</sup> where he uses weapons (or other people) to slay his foes. The Jainas were already comfortable with kings and heroes in the worldly realm, including their own *cakravartins* and their alleged close association with King Śreṇika of Magadha, and it would not be difficult to incorporate Hindu epic heroes into their mythology by making them semi-*cakravartins* or *ardhacakrins*, as both the *vāsudevas* and *prativāsudevas* are said to be. There may even have been a special affinity for the heroic Kṛṣṇa of Dvārakā, who, like the Jainas themselves, migrated from Mathurā to the Saurāṣṭra region, possibly under political pressure.<sup>136</sup> That Dvārakā held special importance in the Jaina Universal History is indicated by the fact that five of the nine *vāsudevas* of the current *avasarpinī* used it as their capital, including the first *vāsudeva* Tripṛṣṭha, a past life of Mahāvīra himself.

In Kṛṣṇa's post-Vraj adult life, there was no rival more powerful or daunting than Jarāsandha, especially as described in the Hindu *purāṇas*. Moreover, unlike Kamsa, Jarāsandha is specifically identified in the *Mahābhārata* as a universal sovereign, and Kṛṣṇa himself admits to Yudhiṣṭhira that the flight from Mathurā to Dvārakā was out of fear of Jarāsandha. For these reasons, I suggest that Jarāsandha became the obvious choice for the Jainas when deciding upon Kṛṣṇa's chief rival.

### The conflation of Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, and Pauṇḍraka

The second question is: how did the Hindu Jarāsandha become a Jaina *prativāsudeva*? To put it succinctly, I propose that the Jainas conflated the Hindu characters Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, and Pauṇḍraka into a single nemesis. Standing at Dvārakā and facing eastward, the Caidya (Śiśupāla), Māgadhan (Jarāsandha), and Pauṇḍra (Pauṇḍraka) regions are almost in a perfect line, and in the *Mahābhārata*, these three regions, in this order, were conquered by Bhīma during the *digvijaya*. If these three regions, with their respective rulers, were to be conflated, then a single, powerful, hostile foe from the east emerges.<sup>137</sup> The result was a *new* Jarāsandha, still the powerful king of

134 For a discussion of the Jaina Kṛṣṇa as a *karmavīr*, or hero of deeds, see Bauer (2005).

135 The notion that Kṛṣṇa's role is primarily one of policy/polity is often found in the *Mahābhārata*, including this story. For citations relevant to our story, see, e.g., *Mahābhārata* 1.1.85 ff.; 1.2.98; 2.16.8; 2.17.27; 2.18.3; 2.18.20.

136 As Paul Dundas (1992: 98–9) points out, the migration of the Jainas from Mathurā westward to Saurāṣṭra occurred at a time (circa fourth–fifth centuries CE) when the Guptas of North India were supporting a sort of Hindu revivalism, though there is no direct evidence to suggest that it was persecution of Jainas that specifically prompted the westward migration.

137 Jarāsandha, of course, was not the only character transformed; Rāvaṇa too undergoes, in the hands of the Jainas, a significant transformation in order to harmonize him with the



Magadha and universal sovereign (or *ardhacakrin*),<sup>138</sup> but now also a sort of false or anti-*vāsudeva* (like Pauṇḍraka), and now killed by Kṛṣṇa himself via *cakra*-decapitation (like Śiśupāla).<sup>139</sup>

Using the war between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha as a template, which pitted *vāsudeva* against *prativāsudeva*, the Jains then read it back into their history claiming that, like the periodic appearance of *tīrthankaras* or *cakravartins*, this cosmic battle has been, and will be, repeated an infinite number of times in Bharatavarṣa. In an effort to demonstrate this more concretely, they produced lists of names of the nine *vāsudevas* and nine *prativāsudevas* of the current *avasarpinī*, and later composed new versions of the formulaic battle using these new characters. The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was already well suited to this pattern, with its two heroic brothers<sup>140</sup> and their powerful adversary Rāvaṇa. As it was well known that the events described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* were said to have taken place before those of the *Mahābhārata*, the *vāsudeva* Lakṣmaṇa and *prativāsudeva* Rāvaṇa were placed anterior to Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha. The remaining seven *vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* pairs were located anterior to Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa.

### The *prativāsudevas* as *śalākāpuruṣas*

Our third question is: when did these *prativāsudevas* become *śalākāpuruṣas*? It is clear from a brief survey of the literature, beginning with the Śvetāmbara canon, that it took quite some time. There is no information on *baladevas*, *vāsudevas*, or *prativāsudevas* in either the *Ācārāṅga* or *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtras*, the first books of which are generally considered the oldest of the extant

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*prativāsudeva* template based upon the Jaina Jarāsandha. It is also worth noting that in Jaina texts from the canonical *Nāyādhammakahāo* onwards, Kṛṣṇa does participate in the rescue of a woman (Draupadī) abducted and taken away to a far off island, similar to the rescue of Sītā from Laṅka, but this episode is not related to Jarāsandha at all, and does not become a paradigmatic feature in the biographies of *vāsudevas* in general.

138 The Jaina Jarāsandha is not a *samrāj*, however, but an *ardhacakrin*, lord of half (three parts, or *trikhaṇḍa*) of Bharatakṣetra. A full *cakravartin* is a *ṣaṭkhaṇḍin*.

139 As noted above, the TSPC tells us that Śiśupāla was killed by Kṛṣṇa with a sword rather than his *cakra*. In the TSPC, all of the *prativāsudevas* are killed by the *cakra*, and with the exception of Rāvaṇa, all are decapitated. Decapitation-by-*cakra* is an interesting phenomenon in the Hindu tradition as well. In fact, according to one purāṇic story (e.g. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.35.139 ff.), Viṣṇu was cursed by Bhṛgu to incarnate among men seven times (including his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa) as a result of using his *cakra* to decapitate Bhṛgu's wife. Even in the pre-weapon (i.e. Vraja) phase of his life, Kṛṣṇa decapitated Kaṁsa's washerman with his bare hands (see, e.g., *Brahma Purāṇa* 84; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.41). As Śiśupāla is Kṛṣṇa's most famous victim of decapitation-by-*cakra* in the Hindu tradition (*Mahābhārata* 2.42), the fact that the Jaina Kṛṣṇa does not kill Śiśupāla with his *cakra* may provide evidence that his death by *cakra*-decapitation had been transferred to Jarāsandha.

140 Furthermore, Rāma (of the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and Kṛṣṇa were probably already connected in the Hindu tradition through being two of the recurring incarnations of Viṣṇu; nevertheless, even if this is so, the Jains broke from this pattern by making Lakṣmaṇa, rather than Rāma, the *vāsudeva*.

Śvetāmbara canon.<sup>141</sup> *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* 3.1.117–20 cites three recurring lineages (*vaṁśas*) of *śalākāpuruṣas*<sup>142</sup> that appear in Bharatavarṣa in each *utsarpiṇī* and *avasarpiṇī*: that of the *tīrthaṅkaras* (*arahaṁtā*), the *cakravartins* (*cakkavaṭṭī*) and the *baladeva-vāsudevas*, also referred to collectively as the “pairs of *daśārhas*” (*daśāramaṇḍala*)<sup>143</sup> *Sthānāṅga* 8.77–80, laying out the geographic distribution of *śalākāpuruṣas* on Jambūdvīpa, refers only to *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas*. The *catuḥpañcāsatsthānaka* of the *Samavāyāṅga Sūtra* informs us that in each *utsarpiṇī* and *avasarpiṇī* in Bharatavarṣa, fifty-four *śalākāpuruṣas*<sup>144</sup> always have and always will arise: twenty-four *tīrthaṅkaras*, twelve *cakravartins*, nine *baladevas* and nine *vāsudevas*.<sup>145</sup> The *Nāyādhammakahāo* gives a biography of Draupadī in which Kṛṣṇa appears, though there is no mention of Jarāsandha;<sup>146</sup> there are, however, some interesting general statements made about *śalākāpuruṣas*, but only *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas*.<sup>147</sup> The *Antakṛddasāḥ* and *Uttarādhyayana* likewise contain some stories that include Kṛṣṇa as a character,<sup>148</sup> but there is no mention of his war with Jarāsandha or of the latter’s status.<sup>149</sup>

*Jambūdvīpa Prajñāpti Sūtra* 7.208 refers to the maximum and minimum numbers of each class of *śalākāpuruṣas* at any one time on Jambūdvīpa, but again includes only *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas*. In the biography of Mahāvīra found in the *Kalpa Sūtra*, two general statements

141 *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* 1.3.1.1 makes a veiled reference to Kṛṣṇa as the great warrior who removed Śiśupāla’s pride, and, as Jacobi notes, Kṛṣṇa may be intended in the reference to the great warrior Viśvakṣeṇa in 1.6.22.

142 Lit., *uttamapuruṣas*.

143 *Jambūdvīpa Prajñāpti Sūtra* 2.44 refers to the same three lineages, describing them as arising in the *duṣama-suṣamā* period. Because the first *tīrthaṅkara* Ṛṣabha and the first *cakravartin* Bharata appeared already in *suṣama-duṣamā*, we are explicitly told that the *duṣama-suṣamā* period contains twenty-three *tīrthaṅkaras* (*tevīsaṁ titthayarā*), eleven *cakravartins* (*ikkārasa cakkavaṭṭī*), nine *baladevas* (*ṇava baladevā*) and nine *vāsudevas* (*ṇava vāsudevā*). The use of the term *daśārha/dāśārha* as a synonym of *vāsudeva* continues in the Jaina tradition as far as Hemacandra’s TSPC; for example, when the first *tīrthaṅkara* Ṛṣabha predicts that the soul of his grandson Marīci is destined to become the first *vāsudeva* (Triṣṭha) of the current *avasarpiṇī*, he uses the term *dāśārha: triṣṭho nāma dāśārhaḥ prathamō ‘sau bhaviṣyati* (TSPC 1.6.377).

144 Lit., *uttamapuruṣas*.

145 *bharaheravaesu ṇaṁ vāsesu egamegāe ussappiṇṇe osappiṇṇe caūvantam caūvantam uttamapurisā uppajjamti vā uppajjisamti vā | tam jahā – caūvisam titthakarā bārasa cakkavaṭṭī nava baladevā nava vāsudevā | Samavāyāṅga* 291.

146 In *Nāyādhammakahāo* 1.16.122–6, we hear of Draupadī’s father sending out messengers to invite kings to attend Draupadī’s *svayamvara*, including Sahadeva, son of Jarāsandha, in Magadha. This implies that Jarāsandha had already been killed by Kṛṣṇa before the time of Draupadī’s *svayamvara*, which is not the usual chronology in later Jaina versions of the Pāṇḍava story (where Kṛṣṇa’s war with Jarāsandha takes place long after Draupadī’s *svayamvara*). In any case, there is no reference in the *Nāyādhammakahāo* to Kṛṣṇa’s slaying of Jarāsandha, or of the latter’s status as a *prativāsudeva*.

147 See *Nāyādhammakahāo* 16.130.

148 E.g. *Antakṛddasāḥ* 1.1; 3.7; 5.1; *Uttarādhyayana* 22.

149 The *Vanḥidasāo* (see Schubring 2000: 107) contains stories related to Kṛṣṇa’s people, i.e. the descendants of Andhakavṣṇi, but nothing of relevance to our present topic.

regarding *śalākāpuruṣas* are found: first, in the context of the embryo transfer of Mahāvīra from a *brāhmaṇa* to a *kṣatriya* womb, it is said that *arhats* (i.e. *tīrthaṅkaras*), *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas* are always born into noble *kṣatriya* families;<sup>150</sup> second, regarding the number of auspicious dreams heralding the birth of an illustrious person, it is said that fourteen dreams herald the birth of an *arhat* or *cakravartin*, seven herald a *vāsudeva*, four a *baladeva*, and a single dream heralds a *māṇḍalika*.<sup>151</sup> The term *māṇḍalika* generally refers to a minor ruler or provincial governor, and is not an ideal synonym of *prativāsudeva*, though it is conceivable that the term *māṇḍalika* is meant to refer to the enemies of the *vāsudevas*. As there is no explicit mention of *prativāsudevas* in any of these references, it is safe to conclude that they were not originally numbered among the *śalākāpuruṣas*, and the *Samavāyāṅga* even explicitly sets the number at fifty-four.

In the third appendix to the *Samavāyāṅga*, however, in a series of passages providing names, descriptions, and demographic details of *śalākāpuruṣas* of the past, present, and future time-cycles in Bharatavarṣa, we are provided with the names of the so-called *pratiśatrus* (Pkt. *paḍisattus*) of the *vāsudevas* of the current *avasarpinī*, including Rāvaṇa and Jarāsandha. It is said that the *pratiśatrus* possess the *cakra*-weapon, and that they are killed by the *vāsudeva* with their own *cakra*.<sup>152</sup> They are not, however, explicitly named as *śalākāpuruṣas*. *Sthānāṅga* 9.19–20 provides the same information almost word for word and *Bhagavatī Vyākhyāprajñapti* 5.5.89 refers us to the *Samavāyāṅga* for details on the *baladevas*, *vāsudevas*, and *pratiśatrus*. The *Āvaśyaka-niryukti* mentions the names of the nine *pratiśatrus* (*paḍisattū*) in the *bhāṣya* verses,<sup>153</sup> where Jarāsandha is referred to as “Jarāśimdhū”. In the discussion surrounding these verses, the focus is upon the *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas* – there is no hint that the *pratiśatrus* are considered *śalākāpuruṣas*.<sup>154</sup> Elsewhere, the *Āvaśyaka-niryukti* discusses *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and *vāsudevas* without regard to *prativāsudevas*.<sup>155</sup>

150 *Kalpa Sūtra* 17–19; 22–3. In these references, there is no mention of *prativāsudevas*.

151 *Kalpa Sūtra* 74–8. I should note here that the biography of Neminātha in the *Kalpa Sūtra* makes no mention of his relationship to Kṛṣṇa.

152 *ee khalu paḍisattū [kittīpurisāṇa vāsudevāṇam | savve vi cakkajohī savve vi hayā] sacakkehiṃ || Samavāyāṅga* 663 [gāthā 64].

153 Bhāṣya 42. Bhāṣya 43 reiterates the notion that the *pratiśatrus* are *cakra*-holders and are killed by the famous *vāsudevas* with their own *cakra* (*ee khalu paḍisattū kittīpurisāṇa vāsudevāṇam | savve a cakkajohī savve a hayā sacakkehiṃ ||*). Haribhadra, in his *Āvaśyaka-ṭīka*, expands upon this by pointing out that the *pratiśatrus* first fling their *cakras* in order to kill the *vāsudevas*, but that due to the arising of the *vāsudevas*' merit, the *cakras* merely bow to the *vāsudevas*, and thence kill the *pratiśatrus*. (*tānyeva taccakrāṇi vāsudevavyūpattaye kṣiptāni taiḥ puṇyodayād vāsudevam praṇamya tāneva vyūpādayanti* – commentary on Bhāṣya 43).

154 I have not examined in great detail either Jinadāsa's *cūrṇi* or Haribhadra's *ṭīka* on the *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*; thus, there may be some relevant passages related to the development of the status of the *pratiśatrus* that I have overlooked. Nalini Balbir has translated some stories from the *cūrṇi*, two of which include Kṛṣṇa as a character (but without reference to Jarāsandha), and one of which deals with two courtesans of Jarāsandha (but without any information about Jarāsandha himself). See Balbir (1990: 19–20, 30–31, 63–4).

155 E.g., *Āvaśyaka-niryukti* 70–75.

Turning to non-canonical texts of the Śvetāmbaras and Dīgambaras, the first extensive treatment of a *vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* rivalry is found in the Śvetāmbara poet Vimalasūri's third-century<sup>156</sup> *Paūmacariya*. Here, the *vāsudeva* is Lakṣmaṇa and his rival *prativāsudeva* is Rāvaṇa. Vimalasūri devotes Canto 20 to some general statements about *śalākāpuruṣas*, though he stops short of explicitly naming the *prativāsudevas* as *śalākāpuruṣas*. Rather, he lists *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas* and “those beginning with *vāsudevas*”, which may be intended to imply the *prativāsudevas* without explicitly naming them.<sup>157</sup> He does, however, provide the standard list of *prativāsudevas*, calling them first *pratiśatrus* (*paḍisattu*)<sup>158</sup> and then *prativāsudevas* (*paḍivāsudeva*).<sup>159</sup> The Dīgambara poet Raviṣeṇa's seventh-century *Padma-Purāṇa* (or *-Carita*),<sup>160</sup> which represents the first work of Jaina story literature in Sanskrit, closely follows Vimalasūri's *Paūmacariya* as its model,<sup>161</sup> and Raviṣeṇa likewise devotes his own Chapter 20 to a description of the *śalākāpuruṣas*. Of the 250 verses in the chapter, only four (242–5) are devoted to the *prativāsudevas*, where they are referred to as *praticakrins*.<sup>162</sup> Here, Raviṣeṇa does not explicitly refer to them as *śalākāpuruṣas*, but neither does he explicitly use this term (or its variants) for the *tīrthaṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *vāsudevas* or *baladevas*.

The Dīgambara poet Punnāṭa Jinasena's eighth-century Sanskrit *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* represents the earliest extant Jaina story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha that could rival in length and detail Vimalasūri's treatment of the Rāma story. *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* 3.171–3 refers to the *śalākāpuruṣas*<sup>163</sup> that arise in Bharatavarṣa, and the *vāsudevas* and *prativāsudevas* are explicitly grouped into one compound (*keśavapraṭiśatravaḥ*). It appears from the context that both are considered *śalākāpuruṣas*. *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* 3.193–5 refers to the biographies of people born into the *harivaṃśa* that will be covered in the text, including those of the Bhāratas, the *tīrthaṅkaras* (*jinas*), the *cakravartins*, the *baladevas* (*halin*), *vāsudevas* and the *prativāsudevas* (*pratiḍviṣ*). Thus, of the texts I have examined, Punnāṭa Jinasena's *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* appears to be the first explicitly to include the *prativāsudevas* as *śalākāpuruṣas*.

Two ninth-century texts provide an interesting contrast on the issue at hand, as made apparent by their titles: (i) the Svetāmbara poet Śīlaṅka's Prākṛit *Caūppaṇṇamahāpurisa-cariya* (Biographies of the Fifty-Four Great Beings);<sup>164</sup> and (ii) the combined work (in Sanskrit) in the Dīgambara poets Jinasena (*Ādipurāṇa*) and Guṇabhadra (*Uttarapurāṇa*) entitled the

156 This seems to be the consensus dating, first proposed by Jacobi and accepted by Kulkarni (1990: 51–9).

157 *tīthayara cakkavaṭṭi baladevā vāsudevamāyā | jaṃ honti mahāpurisā taṃ dhammadu-massa hoī phalaṃ ||* (*Paūmacariya* 20.167).

158 *Paūmacariya* 20.200.

159 *Paūmacariya* 20.202.

160 I have not examined the Śvetāmbara poet Saṅghadāsa's *Vasudevahīṇḍi*, which probably dates from somewhere between the *Paūmacariya* and Raviṣeṇa's *Padma-Purāṇa*.

161 See Kulkarni (1990: 91 ff.).

162 In 20.2, he refers to Rāvaṇa as a *pratiśatru*.

163 Lit. *puruṣottamas*.

164 The story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha is found in *Caūppaṇṇamahāpurisacariya* 37.

*Triṣaṣṭīlakṣaṇamahāpurāṇasaṅgraha* (The Great Compendium of the Sixty-Three Illustrious<sup>165</sup> Beings).<sup>166</sup> Whereas the former has consciously excluded the *prativāsudevas* from the category of *śalākāpuruṣas*, the latter fully accepts them. The tenth-century Digambara poet Puṣpadanta followed the lead of Jinasena/Guṇabhadra in his Apabhraṁśa *Mahāpurāṇa* entitled *Tisaṣṭhi-mahāpurisaguṇālamkāra* (Ornament of the Virtues of the Sixty-Three Great Beings).<sup>167</sup> This now brings us back to Hemacandra's twelfth-century TŚPC, by which time the official number of *śalākāpuruṣas* appears to be set at sixty-three once and for all.<sup>168</sup> Thus, it appears that the rivals (*pratiśatrus*) of the *vāsudevas* officially became *prativāsudeva-śalākāpuruṣas* by the eighth century in the Digambara tradition, and by the twelfth century (or earlier) in Śvetāmbara texts.

### Death by *Cakra*-decapitation

Finally, if, as I suggest, the Hindu character Pauṇḍraka was influential in the development of the Jaina conception of these rivals as “prati-vāsudevas”, the Hindu character Śiśupāla was likewise influential in the manner in which these *prativāsudevas* were killed: decapitation by *cakra*. But this too was something that took centuries to become a paradigmatic feature of the *vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* battles. The earliest Jaina references to the slaying of the *pratiśatrus* state merely that the *pratiśatrus* possess a *cakra*-weapon and are killed with their own *cakra*.

In Vimalasūri's *Paūmacariya*, Lakṣmaṇa does kill Rāvaṇa with the latter's own *cakra*, but he does not decapitate him. Instead, the *cakra* splits open Rāvaṇa's chest.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, the *cakra*, when first hurled by Rāvaṇa, does not strike and temporarily render unconscious Lakṣmaṇa, but merely circumambulates him and hovers by his side. The reason why death by decapitation was impossible in this instance, as Vimalasūri informs us, is that Rāvaṇa had acquired the *bahurūpā vidyā*, whereby he would grow two heads for every one cut off; Lakṣmaṇa did, in fact, cut off Rāvaṇa's head, but to no avail.<sup>170</sup> In the *Harivamśapurāṇa*, Punnāta Jinasena followed Vimalasūri's pattern: the *cakra*, hurled by Jarāsandha, merely circumambulates Kṛṣṇa, and then Kṛṣṇa splits open Jarāsandha's chest with the *cakra* rather than decapitating him.<sup>171</sup>

The first Jaina work explicitly to cover the biographies of all sixty-three *śalākāpuruṣas* is the combined *Ādipurāṇa-Uttarapurāṇa* of Jinasena-Guṇabhadra. With the death of his mentor Jinasena, who had completed only the stories of the first *tīrthaṅkara* Ṛṣabha and first *cakravartin* Bharata, Guṇabhadra was left with the monumental task of completing the biographies of the remaining sixty-one *śalākāpuruṣas*, including all nine *baladeva-*

165 *Lakṣaṇa*, lit. “marked”.

166 The story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha is found in *Uttarapurāṇa* 70–72.

167 The story of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha is found in *Tisaṣṭhimahāpurisaguṇālamkāra* 81–92.

168 Biographies of the *śalākāpuruṣas* are certainly found in texts post-dating Hemacandra, though we will not examine them here.

169 *Paūmacariya* 73; see Kulkarni (1990: 40).

170 *Paūmacariya* 72; see Kulkarni (1990: 39).

171 *Harivamśapurāṇa* 52.65–83.

*vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* triads. In no case does Guṇabhadra describe the *vāsudeva* being knocked unconscious by the *cakra*. In five cases,<sup>172</sup> he mentions that the *cakra* circumambulated the *vāsudeva* (including Lakṣmaṇa and Kṛṣṇa), and in the remaining cases<sup>173</sup> he ignores the issue altogether. As for the exact method of death-by-*cakra*, Guṇabhadra leaves the matter unstated for the first six *prativāsudevas*, but for the last three, including both Rāvaṇa and Jarāsandha, Guṇabhadra explicitly cites decapitation.

By the time of Hemacandra's TŚPC, the confrontation between *vāsudeva* and *prativāsudeva* has become highly standardized: (i) while engaged in battle, the *prativāsudeva* flings his *cakra* at the *vāsudeva*, but the *cakra* hits the *vāsudeva* with its flat side and merely knocks him unconscious; (ii) instead of returning to the *prativāsudeva*, the *cakra* hovers near to the *vāsudeva*; (iii) when the *vāsudeva* quickly recovers, he grasps the *cakra*, flings it back at the *prativāsudeva*, and decapitates him. This order of events is repeated in the first seven of the nine *vāsudeva-prativāsudeva* battles. In the case of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha, the only element not made explicit is Kṛṣṇa being temporarily knocked unconscious by the *cakra*, though it might be implied. The only significant deviation from this pattern in Hemacandra's text is his account of the battle between Lakṣmaṇa and Rāvaṇa, where he, unlike Guṇabhadra, follows Vimalasūri in having Rāvaṇa's chest split open by the *cakra*.<sup>174</sup>

It is curious that Hemacandra explicitly describes each of the first seven *vāsudevas* as being temporarily knocked unconscious by the *cakra*, rather than merely being circumambulated by it.<sup>175</sup> This represents a departure from both Vimalasūri and Punnāṭa Jināsena, and I might suggest an origin for this feature, relating originally to Lakṣmaṇa's fight with Rāvaṇa. Of all the *vāsudevas*, Lakṣmaṇa is the only one to have had two important face-to-face encounters with his *prativāsudeva* rival: in their first encounter, Rāvaṇa hit Lakṣmaṇa with a magic spear that knocked him unconscious until he was healed by a virtuous woman named Viśalyā;<sup>176</sup> in the second encounter, Lakṣmaṇa killed Rāvaṇa with the *cakra*. The story of the *cakra* momentarily knocking the *vāsudeva* unconscious, a paradigmatic event for *vāsudevas* in the TŚPC, appears to represent a compression of these two encounters into one.

## IV. Influence of Jaina Kṛṣṇa mythology

### Mutual influence

The assertion that the Hindu characters Jarāsandhā, Śiśupāla and Pauṇḍraka were instrumental in the formation of a paradigmatic rival for the Jaina

172 *Uttarapurāṇa* 58.114–5 (Dvipṛṣṭha); 59.96–7 (Svayambhū); 66.120 (Datta); 68.628–9 (Lakṣmaṇa); and 71.113–5 (Kṛṣṇa).

173 *Uttarapurāṇa* 57.90 (Triṇṛṣṭha); 60.78 (Puruṣottama); 62.511 (Anantavīrya); 65.184 (Puṇḍarīka).

174 Curiously, Hemacandra mentions the acquisition of the *bahurūpā vidyā* by Rāvaṇa, but omits to mention explicitly the reason why decapitation would be futile, which would have justified his breaking from his usual pattern.

175 Technically, he does not include this in his version of the seventh *vāsudeva*, but his story is so brief I think it is safe to imply it here.

176 See, e.g., *Paūmacariya* 61–4; TŚPC 7.7.

*vāsudevas*, while plausible, is merely a suggestion, but one that has little competition: the circumstances in which the Jainas created their categories of *baladevas*, *vāsudevas*, and *prativāsudevas* are something of a mystery. Furthermore, this explanation in no way precludes the possibility that earlier elements of Hindu Kṛṣṇa mythology may survive now only in Jaina texts, such as the death of Jarāsandha coming at the hands of Kṛṣṇa himself.<sup>177</sup> The Jainas, established in the city of Mathurā prior to the Common Era, may have had access to stories in the Kṛṣṇa cycle that fell out of use or were subsequently modified in the Hindu tradition.

In any case, the evolution of Kṛṣṇa mythology in the Hindu and Jaina traditions developed, from a relatively early period, in parallel, no doubt with periodic cross-fertilization. That Hindu versions of the epic stories and their characters continued to play a formative role in Jaina versions, even after Jaina versions were well established, is made clear from an examination of Jaina *Rāmāyaṇa* stories. Raviṣeṇa, for example, clearly took Vimalasūri's distinctively Jaina *Paūmacaiya* as his model, while Saṅghadāsa was heavily influenced by Hindu versions.<sup>178</sup> But did the evolving Jaina tradition influence the Hindus? Almost half a century ago, Klaus Bruhn remarked:

A reexamination of the current thesis that the Jains normally borrowed from the Hindus and not vice versa may be useful . . . Quite recently, Kirfel<sup>179</sup> has made a similar observation with reference to the avatāra-concept. According to him, the avatāra-doctrine of the Hindus was evolved in analogy to the universal histories of the Jains and Buddhists.<sup>180</sup>

Such suggestions notwithstanding, the prevailing scholarly attitude continues to be that, in the realm of mythology, Jainas were the perennial borrowers.<sup>181</sup> As one among any number of examples, consider Sumitra Bai:

the fact that the Jainas had their own versions of the Mahābhārata since very early times cannot be denied. But we should not forget the typical attitude that Jaina authors have shown time and again: they brought into

177 The only reason given in the epic for Kṛṣṇa not killing Jarāsandha himself is the brief and vague reference to “respecting the command of Brahmā”, a point never taken up or expanded upon in the Hindu purāṇic texts.

178 Kulkarni (1990: 113), after comparing Vimalasūri's *Paūmacariya*, Raviṣeṇa's *Padmapurāṇa*, and Saṅghadāsa's version in the *Vasuevahiṇḍī*, stated: “Saṅghadāsa is, for his version, heavily indebted to the Hindu version represented by the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki/the *Rāmopākhyāna* of Vyāsa”.

179 Bruhn refers to a statement made by W. Kirfel (1959: 40): “Mit diesen Avatāras, die in Analogie zu den Gestalten der buddhistischen und jainistischen Welthistorie aufgestellt worden sind . . .”. The initial impetus for Bruhn's cautious statement was another suggestion made by Kirfel that the Hindu story of embryo-transfer found in Kṛṣṇa mythology may not have been the source of a similar story in the biography of Mahāvīra, but rather derived from the Jaina story.

180 Bruhn (1961: 8).

181 This is certainly the attitude adopted by Jha (1978).

their own religion whatever they found attractive in other religious systems.<sup>182</sup>

There is truth in this assertion, but the description, “they brought into their own religion whatever they found attractive in other religious systems” is as much or more applicable to Hindus as it is to Jainas.

Another reason scholars have tended to dismiss Jaina influence in the development of Hindu mythology is the belief that Hindus paid no attention to Jaina texts. For example, P.S. Jaini stated:

there is very little indication that [the Jaina] works were studied by the authors of the Brahminic Purāṇas, for had the Brahmins indeed seen what the author of the *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* or the *Pāṇḍava Purāṇa* had said about them, they would certainly have made some angry rejoinders. Unfortunately, no record of such literary retaliation has become available to us. In view of the kind of religious and sectarian segregation that exists between various communities of India, it is more than likely that non-Jainas ceased to have any contact with the Jaina material; and hence Jaina works enjoyed a very limited readership, probably confined only to a few Jaina monks and still fewer members of the learned laity.<sup>183</sup>

Examining the Hindu *purāṇas* merely for evidence of “angry rejoinders” to Jaina slander is perhaps too limited. It is certainly true that Jainas have slandered the Hindus and vice-versa. The original Hindu purāṇic story of Viṣṇu’s false *avatāra* as the Buddha/Jina is as slanderous a rejoinder as we might hope to find, as is Haribhadra’s ridicule of Hindu purāṇic mythology in his *Dhūrtākhyāna*.<sup>184</sup> But this is not the only form of interaction for which we should search. Jaini himself provided an excellent example of what might be dubbed a “refinement” or “nuancing” of Hindu mythology through the quiet absorption of the Jaina *tīrthaṅkara* Ṛṣabha as a minor *avatāra* of Viṣṇu<sup>185</sup> in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and he does admit that:

such a lack of cross-references does not tell us the whole story of the mutual impact between these two [Hindu and Jaina purāṇic] literary traditions, which were probably competing for the patronage of a common

182 Sumitra Bai and Zydenbos (1991: 260).

183 Jaini (1993: 246).

184 Texts such as Haribhadra’s *Dhūrtākhyāna* and the *Dharmaparīkṣās* of Hariṣeṇa, Amitagati and Vṛttavilāsa display the Jaina talent for using imaginative tales to expose many aspects of Hindu mythology to ridicule (see Upadhye 1983: 31). For example, Amitagati had great fun at the Hindus’ expense by piecing together various fragments from Hindu tales, supposedly culled from the Hindu *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, in such a manner as to make them seem as absurd as possible. For a humorous, if slanderous, tale by Amitagati regarding Vyāsa, author of the Hindu *Mahābhārata*, see Winternitz (1983: 543).

185 See Jaini (1977). Jaini even suggests that this was in response to the depiction of Ṛṣabha in Jinasena’s *Ādipurāṇa*.



audience, namely, the mostly urban and affluent sections of the Indian community.<sup>186</sup>

Part of the reason why Jaini proposes that Jaina texts were little noticed by the Hindu purāṇic authors is that only two characters which might otherwise be deemed the exclusive property of the Jainas, i.e. the *tīrthāṅkara* Ṛṣabha and his *cakravartin* son Bharata, have appeared in Hindu *purāṇas*. But it is also in the realm of shared characters such as Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha that we ought to look for evidence of mutual influence.<sup>187</sup> In what follows, I will propose a couple of instances where the Jainas may have influenced, or provoked refinements in, Hindu mythology.

### Jaina influence on Hindu Kṛṣṇa mythology

Descriptions of the five recurring character types that make up the Jaina Universal History (*tīrthāṅkaras*, *cakravartins*, *baladevas*, *vāsudevas*, and *prativāsudevas*), while at times lacking in narrative creativity, are certainly paradigmatically crisp and well defined. Even a cursory examination of the Hindu *purāṇas* is sufficient to demonstrate that the manifestations or *avatāras* of Viṣṇu are anything but well defined. While any rudimentary textbook on Hinduism is sure to mention the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, most of the *purāṇas* simply refuse to abide by so confining a number, and even when they pretend to, they do not agree upon exactly which ten are to be counted.<sup>188</sup> Purāṇic *avatāras* of Viṣṇu abound, as do theories of his incarnation. As Kirfel suggested, it may be worth considering the notion that the Jaina Universal History played a role in the development of the ten *avatāras* doctrine.<sup>189</sup>

According to this doctrine, Viṣṇu has incarnated in the world nine times already, and will in the future incarnate a tenth time as Kalkin. Perhaps the earliest crystallization of the ten *avatāras* doctrine is found at the so-called Gupta Daśāvatāra Temple in Deogarh (circa sixth–seventh century CE),<sup>190</sup> though it was sporadically adopted in the *purāṇas* as well. The ten *avatāras* were also popularized by Kṣemendra in his eleventh-century *Daśāvatāracarita* and in

186 Jaini (1993: 242).

187 For a likely example of this type of phenomenon, see Geen (2006).

188 The so-called standard list of Viṣṇu's ten *avatāras* are: fish (*matsya*), boar (*varāha*), tortoise (*kūrma*), dwarf (*vāmana*), man-lion (*narasiṃha*), Paraśurāma, Rāmacandra, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and Kalkin. To give only one of any number of examples in which this standard list of ten is not abided by, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.36 provides a synopsis of Viṣṇu's ten incarnations, the first three of which are said to be divine, and the last seven human: Nārāyaṇa, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Dattātreyā, Māndhātṛ, Paraśurāma, Rāmacandra, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa, and Kalkin. This list provides some evidence that the number of *avatāras* (i.e. ten) was considered important enough to maintain, even if the constituents of the list varied. It is also interesting that, here, the list of demons said to have been killed by the Kṛṣṇa *avatāra* includes Kaṃsa, but does not include either Jarāsandha or Śiśupāla.

189 It would be stretching things too far to suggest that the general notion of a god incarnating on earth as a human being, so common in Hindu mythology, required any input from the Buddhists or Jainas. Rather, it is the notion of narrowly defining such phenomena into a list of ten *avatāras* that may have been influenced by the Jainas.

190 For a discussion of Jaina monuments in Deogarh, see Bruhn (1969).

Jayadeva's twelfth-century *Gītagovinda*.<sup>191</sup> The fact that the Jaina Universal History claims nine appearances of a *vāsudeva* in Bharatavarṣa in each *ut-* and *ava-sarpiṇī* may have been a determining factor in the selection of nine *avatāras* of Viṣṇu in the ten *avatāras* doctrine (the tenth being reserved for the future). Apart from the possibility of Jaina influence, there does not seem to be the slightest trend towards a doctrine of (only) ten *avatāras* in the Hindu *purāṇas*, and it may be significant that Viṣṇu's false *avatāra* as a heretical śramaṇic teacher (Buddha/Jina) was probably the last of the ten *avatāras* to gain prominence.<sup>192</sup>

It is also worth noting the extent to which the importance of the Hindu character Jarāsandha steadily increased in the *purāṇas*, to the point at which, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of Kṛṣṇa's efforts to rid the earth of her demonic burden comes in the form of recurring battles with Jarāsandha's massive armies. By comparison, the deaths of Kaṁsa and his demonic cronies, as well as all the warriors in the Bhārata war, were collectively a drop in the ocean. It would not stretch credulity too far to suggest that the importance of Kṛṣṇa's rivalry with Jarāsandha in the Jaina tradition made some contribution to this impressive development.

Another place where the crisply defined and recurring Jaina *vāsudeva-privivāsudeva* paradigm may have had an impact upon the Hindu tradition is in the mythological development of Śiśupāla. As noted above, Śiśupāla, proclaimed in the *Mahābhārata* to be the incarnation of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, is in the *purāṇas* likewise identified with the demon Rāvaṇa. There is no hint of such a thing in either of the Hindu epics. Beyond this, we also see, for example in the relatively late *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the notion that Hiraṇyakaśipu-Hiraṇyākṣa, Rāvaṇa-Kumbhakarṇa, and Śiśupāla-Dantavakra were all earthly incarnations of Viṣṇu's dimwitted doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya. In this scenario, we have essentially the same Viṣṇu (as Narasiṁha/Varāha, as Rāma,<sup>193</sup> and as Kṛṣṇa), slaying essentially the same two "demons" over and over. It seems plausible that the development of such a narrowly-defined recurring struggle was inspired by the recurring battles between the Jaina *vāsudevas* and *privivāsudevas*. A similar sort of consolidation is also witnessed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where Vasudeva and Devakī, the parents of Kṛṣṇa, are likewise said to have been the parents of two previous incarnations as well: Pṛṣṇigarbha and Vāmana (the dwarf who thwarted Bali).<sup>194</sup>

Such developments in the mythology of the Hindu *purāṇas* may be evidence of a sort of ongoing conversation between the Hindu and Jaina traditions, and there is no reason automatically and uncritically to default to the assumption that any shared mythology must necessarily have been developed first by the

191 In these latter two examples, the so-called Buddha *avatāra*, evidence for which is not found prior to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (O'Flaherty 1976: 188), and which was initially derogatory towards the *śramaṇas*, is depicted as a heroic pillar of compassion.

192 See O'Flaherty (1976: 198 ff.).

193 In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, both Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa are killed by Rāma. The *Mahābhārata*'s *Rāmopākhyāna*, however, has Rāma kill Rāvaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa kill Kumbhakarṇa. In Jaina versions, Rāvaṇa is killed by Lakṣmaṇa, and Kumbhakarṇa remains alive, taking on Jaina mendicancy at the conclusion of the battle.

194 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.3.32–44.

Hindus and later stolen by the Jains. In order to strengthen this argument, however, a great deal of further investigation will be required, a task necessarily hampered by the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of accurately dating narrative material (even when individual texts may be assigned a single author and a certain date, as is often the case in post-canonical Jaina literature). In any case, it is ironic that Jaina versions of the Indian epics and their related mythologies have often been excluded from serious scholarly consideration on the basis that the Jains were guilty merely of doing what everyone else did, i.e. tailoring popular tales to specific doctrinal ends. It may be hoped that placing Jaina sources next to their Hindu counterparts will lead us to ask new questions of both, and we may find that the two traditions have interacted much more than is currently believed.

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