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The Topos of the Four Ages of Humankind and the Question of Rāma's Divinity¹

SUMMARY: The present paper explores the connection between the topos of the four ages of humankind, and kṛtayuga in particular, and the way in which Rāma's rule is described in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This topos, commonly found in various literatures of the ancient world, is also attested in this epic, featuring in the account of Rāma's rule in books one and six. The characteristic elements of kṛtayuga, such as the earth's spontaneous abundance and the absence of human miseries and suffering, make it clear that the king whose rule is described in such a way should be regarded as a divine human.

The first part of this paper discusses the main problems connected with the Indian idea of king as presented especially by Edward W. Hopkins and Sheldon Pollock (king as a divine human or mortal god).

The second part is devoted to the comparison of the descriptions of the world's four periods in Indian, Greek, and Roman literature, with a focus on the similarities between them.

In the third part of the paper emphasis is laid on the kṛtayuga in particular and the way in which Rāma's rule is described.

KEYWORDS: *Rāmāyaṇa*, four ages of humankind (yugas), Rāma's divinity.

The question of the divinity of rulers has aroused considerable interest among Sanskrit scholars: not only those dealing with the *Rāmāyaṇa*,

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to the journal's anonymous reviewers for their comments.

but also those studying other texts from Indian literature. Before coming to the main subject of this paper, as defined in its title, let us focus our attention especially upon two works discussing the divinity of rulers in India, and in particular the divinity of Rāma.

First, I would like to mention an important paper by Edward Washburn Hopkins, “The Divinity of Kings”, published in the 1931 volume of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.² Hopkins writes that in ancient India it was in the first place priests who were regarded as divine humans (in the epics it was stated quite clearly: each Brahman is a god, and if he is well educated and wise, he is even more than a god³). Furthermore, even in the pre-epic period there were “gods who were humans” and they had their place in the Indian pantheon. Hopkins also notes that all these heroes, as in Greece, were of divine origin (so, for example, Sugrīva is a son of the Sun).⁴

Yet, on the other hand, the question of the divinity of kings is not, according to Hopkins, quite entirely answered. In early Sanskrit literature the divinity of kings was regarded as something useful for a statesman, but in legal texts there was no unanimity as regards the issue (for instance, neither the *Gautama* nor the *Āpastamba* says that the king should be worshipped like a god;⁵ on the other hand, Vasiṣṭha says “that the king occupies Indra’s place”; Kautīlyia uses the same argument, but especially Manu regards him as an incarnation of eight gods, namely the Moon, the Fire, the Sun, the Wind, Indra, Kubera, Varuṇa and Yama⁶). According to the *Ṛgveda*, the king (but only when victorious) is a demigod; elsewhere, it says that he is a god but has some human elements (*RV* 7.64.14 ff.). In the later period the king is seen

² Hopkins 1931: 309–316.

³ *Avidvān brāhmaṇo devaḥ [...] vidvān bhūyastaro devaḥ. Mbh.* 13.136.20.

⁴ Hopkins 1931: 315.

⁵ Hopkins 1931: 310–311.

⁶ Hopkins (1931: 311) quoting *M. Dh. S.* 5. 96; cf. also *M. Dh. S.* 9.303. See also Ghoshal 1923: 138.

as equal to the gods (this is the view of, for example, Manu);⁷ the king receives his divine nature by means of consecration (he is anointed with Fire's glory or haras, with the Sun's splendour or varcas, and with the power of Indra or Brahmā). The king's divine features are indicated in the epics—both in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*—which portray the king as a provider of everything necessary for human life and emphasize that, although his external form is human, he is nonetheless divine.⁸ The king is an embodiment of the law and he should be always worshipped as a god since he is “a great divinity.”⁹ However, this divine element may be granted not only thanks to the assuming of royal power (by means of consecration), but it may also be a result of one's virtuous ascetic life. Such is the case of the old king Pṛthu Vainya, into whose body the god Viṣṇu entered and the entire universe adored the king as a god.¹⁰

E. W. Hopkins is of the opinion that, as a matter of fact, “the position of a king in India was probably like that of the Persian monarchs (but the idea ‘a king as a great divinity’ cannot have been imported from Persia).”¹¹ Importantly, having presented various ways of understanding the divinity of rulers in Sanskrit literature, the scholar arrives at the conclusion that the ruler, although qualified as deva, was not actually regarded as divine and that the title deva itself was rather a mark of politeness towards the king and respect for the royal office.

⁷ Gonda (1993: 164 f.) draws attention to the “striking parallelism between the special emphasis laid already in Vedic texts upon Viṣṇu's protecting activities and his intimate relations with kingship.”

⁸ *Mbh.* 12.68. 40 f.; *Rām.* 2.95.4 ff. 4.18.37–38. See also Pollock 1991: 43–54.

⁹ Hopkins 1931: 312, 315.

¹⁰ *Mbh.* 12.59.118 ff.; see also Gonda (Gonda 1993: 163), who adds that “thus the god entered all kings.”

¹¹ Hopkins 1931: 315. However, Gonda (Gonda 1993: 165) remarks that “Ancient civilizations of the Near East likewise admitted that the king and the ‘high god’, or the fertility deity, or the high god in his fertility aspect, were identical. In the king the high god's power was embodied in a living figure.”

To quote Hopkins, “neither epic nor drama treats a king as a god; he is called deva, but his divinity stops with his title till he appears officially, when it is remembered that ‘there’s such divinity doth hedge a king’, as makes treason impious and disrespect an act of profanity.”¹² He also observes that in the later period, for instance in drama, the title deva is used frequently, but only in the sense of “Sir” or “my Lord.”

Of particular interest to our subject is, however, the long and erudite introduction by Sheldon I. Pollock to his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Book Three. A section of this introduction, entitled “The Divine King of the *Rāmāyaṇa*”, presents his discussion of the question of Rāma’s divinity, Rāvaṇa’s boon in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the ancient Indian king.¹³ In order to define his standpoint clearly, Pollock says that “there was never any doubt that the divinity of the hero formed an integral and authentic feature of the poem and, as such, a fundamental condition of its meaning.”¹⁴ Yet we should bear in mind that there were also scholars for whom passages speaking about Rāma’s divinity were later interpolations only loosely connected with the epic plot (namely Ch. Lassen, H. Jacobi,¹⁵ M. Winternitz¹⁶). Other scholars questioned the authenticity of passages dealing with Rāma as avatāra or tried to prove that the problem of Rāma’s divinity formed no part

¹² Hopkins 1931: 316.

¹³ Pollock 1991: 15–54. See also Pollock 1984: 505–514. Also Brockington devotes one of the chapters of his learned book (1998: 467–472) to the question of Rāma’s divinity. Brockington does not agree with Pollock, drawing attention to some doubtful passages. Nevertheless, he admits that ‘the concept of the divinity of kings may well have been a contributory factor in Rāma’s recognition as an avatāra of Viṣṇu’ (Brockington 1998: 468). Pollock’s views are discussed in detail by Stasik (2000: 35–41) and González-Reimann (2006: 203–220).

¹⁴ Pollock 1991: 15. For a contrary opinion cf. González-Reimann 2006: 204–207.

¹⁵ Pollock 1991: 16.

¹⁶ Winternitz 1972: 496, 501.

of the original version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹⁷ The opinion that, apart from a few interpolations, in books two to six Rāma is depicted as thoroughly human was put forward as early as the nineteenth century by J. Muir¹⁸ and Jacobi,¹⁹ and upheld in our times by J. L. Brockington²⁰ and J. D. Smith.²¹ These scholars regard Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu only in books one and seven. R. P. Goldman, on the other hand, emphasizes that “the deification of Rāma appears to belong to the very latest stratum of the conflated epic.”²² Rāma is considered a great but “strictly human warrior-prince” by Goldman and J. L. Masson.²³ In 1969 Oscar Botto wrote that “Rāma, a national hero, whose behaviour in the course of the poem is essentially human, is at a certain moment [in the history of the transmission of the text] divinized.”²⁴

A somewhat different view about Viṣṇu’s human incarnation is held by W. Ruben who believes that the fact that it is mentioned in book one and is not referred to in books 2–6 cannot be taken as proof against the authenticity of this book. Moreover, the identification of Rāma and Viṣṇu need not be late; on the contrary, it may go back to a very early period, even despite the fact that the interpolations in books 2–6 (which are younger than the archetype) do not speak of

¹⁷ For example: A. W. von Schlegel, the first editor of the epic in Europe, Muir quoted by Pollock 1991: 13–16.

¹⁸ Quoted by Pollock 1991: 16.

¹⁹ Brockington 1984: 13 ff., 125, 218. Brockington 1998: 468 ff. This author believes that “Rāma comes to be viewed as divine towards the end of the second stage and the start of the third” (1998: 470).

²⁰ Cf. also González-Reimann 2006: 211–213.

²¹ Cf. Pollock 1991: 17, note 21.

²² Goldman 1984: 43. But in a later paper he says: “Most recently Sheldon Pollock has argued quite persuasively that the avatāra-hood of Rāma in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is a narrative presupposition of the entire text as we have it [...]” (Goldman 1995: 74). See also Goldman 2007: 88–89.

²³ Goldman, Masson 1969: 95.

²⁴ Pollock 1991: 17, note 21, quoting O. Botto 1969: 64 ff. (*Storia delle letterature d’Oriente*. Milan: F. Vallardi. 4 vols. Vol. 3).

the divinity of Rāma.²⁵ Ruben's thesis has been rejected by Goldman but upheld by Pollock.²⁶

Pollock, however, looks upon the presentation of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa* somewhat differently, trying to combine, so to speak, various views of his predecessors, both those who upheld the divinity of Rāma and those who rejected it. He appears to agree, at least partially, with both groups of scholars, but at the same time maintains that the possession of both divine and human elements is characteristic of only one of the poem's figures, who can be regarded neither as entirely divine nor as entirely human, that is to say Rāma. Only Rāma was in a position to defeat Rāvaṇa, whom neither a god nor asura was able to overcome.

Pollock gives a detailed analysis of the passages relating to Rāvaṇa and the privilege bestowed on him for his severe asceticism. As we remember, Brahmā grants Rāvaṇa the benefit of being invincible to gods and asuras, but he warns him at the same time that he may still be threatened by humans.²⁷ Rāvaṇa, however, does not pay heed to this warning and later on is compelled to make the following bitter statement (6.48.4–7): “In vain, all in vain were the intense austerities I practiced. The equal of Indra I may be, and yet a man has defeated me [...]. I had become invulnerable to gods, dānavas, gandharvas, yakṣas, rakṣasas, great serpents; but I had never asked to be invulnerable to men.” (trans. by Goldman, Sutherland Goldman, van Nooten). So Rāvaṇa could be defeated only by Rāma who, however, was no ordinary human—and Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's wife, or the rākṣasa women lamenting his death, gradually become aware of this fact (6.99.8–11; 6.82.24 ff.). Rāma, to quote Pollock, “was in some way more than divine, was the divine human or mortal god. Such an intermediate being—god who walks the earth in the form of

²⁵ Ruben 1936: 63, quoted by Stasik 2000: 34. See also Goldman 1984: 43, note 82.

²⁶ Pollock 1991: 18. Cf. also González-Reimann 2006: 207–208.

²⁷ Cf. also González-Reimann 2006: 211–213.

man—is king.”²⁸ Thus Rāma’s position in the poem is quite exceptional; he is endowed with extraordinary power because he is a king. He appears to belong to a separate category of beings, neither gods nor humans. It is in the light of this idea that Pollock analyses a collection of materials focusing on the image of the ancient Indian ruler. He notes that, as also observed by Hopkins, the notion of the earthly ruler’s divine nature is already present in the Vedic period and it becomes more and more common in later literature. However, there are also texts (some of them also mentioned by Hopkins) containing critical remarks about the divinity of rulers or simply neglecting the issue (for instance the early *Dharmaśāstras*).²⁹ But this lack of information about the divinity of kings needs not, as emphasized by Pollock, be interpreted negatively. For the epic period, an important testimony is a passage from the rājadharmā of the *Mahābhārata*³⁰ in which it is said that the king “is great divinity existing in the form of a man”; a similar statement may be found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where rulers are described as naradeva.³¹ The divinity of the king reveals itself in his power because he saves and protects his subjects, as gods do. The protection of the subjects is, as emphasized by Pollock, almost the heart of the rājadharmā, because the king by ensuring security, preserves world order. Among the gods of the Indian pantheon, it is especially Viṣṇu, whose soteriological function is most evident; his aim is, to quote Pollock, “to aid suffering mankind by reestablishing the righteous brahmanical organization of society.”³²

A strong connection exists between the king and the god Viṣṇu, which is well illustrated by the story of the birth of Pṛthvi, the first righteous ruler.³³ The association between Viṣṇu and earthly sovereigns

²⁸ Pollock 1991: 43.

²⁹ Pollock 1991: 45.

³⁰ *Mbh.* 12.68.40; 12.65.29; cf. also Pollock 1991: 44 f.

³¹ *Rām.* 4.18.37 f.

³² Pollock 1991: 48.

³³ *Mbh.* 12.59.129–141.

is also visible in the earliest *Purāṇas*,³⁴ in the play by Viśākhadatta (*Mudrārākṣasa* 7.19), and in Vaiṣṇava's sectarian work, the *Ahīr-budhnyasaṃhitā*.³⁵ Viṣṇu, as is known, reveals himself to the world in his incarnations (avatāra) in various periods (yuga) of the world, when dharma disappears and there follows a gradual decline from the first excellent yuga to the last dark one.³⁶ And undoubtedly, as stressed by Pollock, "the conception of the divine king basic to the story of Rāma was influenced by two factors: by the association between Viṣṇu and the king and by the god's incarnation (avatāra)."³⁷ Thus, from the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s very origins, Rāma had to be a divine hero whose virtues were beyond those of an ordinary human being (which is clearly stated by Bharata in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*³⁸). Pollock's point "that the divinity of Rāma is central to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a whole" is reinforced, in his extensive article, by Jarrod L. Whitaker, who stresses that tejas, "fiery energy", and divine weapons play the central role in the epic.³⁹ The researcher analyses the episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* in which divine weapons appear in great detail and remarks that the use of such weaponry requires almost extraordinary amount of fiery energy, that is tejas, which ordinary humans do not possess. Thus, Rāma, while killing Rāvaṇa with an astra, the unusual divine weapon, had to possess supranormal quantities of tejas himself.⁴⁰ And indeed, the epithets of Rāma as the owner of great tejas (eg. sumahātejas-, amitatejas-, *Rām.* 3.3.2; 3.20.18; 6.59.25), to whom the divine weapon returns after killing Rāvaṇa, appear in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in several places, a fact which confirms the unusual nature of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s hero, who, in fact, is not a mere human (mānuṣa).

³⁴ *VāyuP.* 57.72. Gonda (1993: 165) notices that "Viṣṇu, the supreme ruler and protector of the universe, is also often represented on a royal throne"

³⁵ 16.14–19; cf. *BhāgP.* 1.18.42. Cf. also Gonda 1993: 164–167.

³⁶ Cf. Flood 1996: 116.

³⁷ Pollock 1991: 52.

³⁸ See p. 211, note 8.

³⁹ Whitaker 2002: 418–419.

⁴⁰ Whitaker 2002: 420. See also Whitaker 2000: 87–113.

In this present paper, however, I would like to point to yet another element found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* which also may be taken as indicating that Rāma is no ordinary ruler. The element in question is the topos of the four ages or periods of humankind. This motif, known from Greek (Hesiod) and Roman (Ovid) literature, but found also in the Iranian and Semitic traditions, may be encountered in Sanskrit texts as well.⁴¹ However, the Indian conception of a division of the history of the world into ages, showing the gradual decline of men, was in some aspect different from the Greeks and Romans because of a constantly recurring process of periodic reorganization and dissolution of the universe.⁴²

In various versions of this myth (apart from those found in Sanskrit literature), the symbolism of metals plays an important role. Gold symbolizes the best age whereas silver, bronze and iron represent the subsequent ages, which derive their names from these metals. Each age or each generation of men following the golden age is worse than the preceding one. The metal symbolism, as suggested by Martin West, comes from the Near East.⁴³ The identification of metals with gods is a Babylonian idea: gold was associated with Enlil, silver with Anu, copper with Ea and Tin with Ninazal. To quote West, “in the lost books of *Avesta*, echoed in Pahlavi sources, Zoroaster was described having a vision of the future. He saw a tree with four branches of gold,

⁴¹ Hes. 106–201; In Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, we have in fact five ages of humankind, because between the bronze and iron age the poet inserts the heroic age of Greek epic tradition. *Ov. Met.* 1.107–120. See also West 1999: 312 ff. Allusions to the ages of humankind, especially to the golden age, and the enumeration of features characteristic of this age, may be found in many works of Greek, Roman and later (e.g. Old Polish) literature, see Gatz 1967: 228–232; Winiarczyk 2010: 123, 221–241; Śnieżko 1996: 8–40; Kane 1946: 885–891.

⁴² About the Indian system of cyclical time and the durations of yugas, see Kirfel 1920: 91; Mankad 1942: 271–290; Kane 1946: 885–894; Rocher 1986: 124–125. See also Jahn 1958: 127–134. González-Reimann 2009: 411–428.

⁴³ West 1999: 312. He observes that “in the Near East [...] the technologies of metal-working were most highly developed.”

silver, steel, and iron ore [...], and Ahura Mazda explained to him that they were the ages of the world."⁴⁴ Similarly in the Book of Daniel, the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, dreams of a great statue with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. These various parts represent five successive world kingdoms, the first (of gold) being his.⁴⁵

In Sanskrit literature the story of the four ages (yugas, which are named after the throws of the die: *Kṛta*—the Winning, *Tretā*—the Three, *Dvāpara*—the Two and *Kali*—the Strife) is also found, but the metal symbolism is absent. Instead, we have four colours taken on by *Kṛṣṇa*, namely white, red, yellow and black—which correspond to the four castes.⁴⁶ P. V. Kane remarks that

“up to the latest period of Vedic literature (i.e. *Upaniṣads*) the words *Kṛta*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* were used in the sense of throws of dice in gambling and it is very doubtful whether they were used in the sense of different ages of the world [...]. The theory of yugas had begun shape at least in the 4th or 3rd century B. C. And that in the first centuries of the Christian era it had been fully developed.”⁴⁷

Sometimes the word *kṛta* and the other three were used in a metaphorical sense as representing progressively more desirable states of human activity (one lying down becomes *kali* [...]) and when he moves about he becomes *kṛta*).⁴⁸ Also in the Buddhist Pali Canon the terms *kali*, *dvāpara*, *tretā* and *kṛta* appear many times, but always with

⁴⁴ West 1999: 313.

⁴⁵ West 1999: 313; see also his note 103 with more references.

⁴⁶ Cf. also Kirfel 1920: 91. The four yugas are often connected with the four classes of society and especially their respective colours, which are: white (*kṛta*/*brāhmaṇa*), red (*tretā*/*kṣatriya*), yellow (*dvāpara*/*vaiśya*), black (*kali*/*śūdra*). The three qualities (*guṇa*) are connected to the system of yugas: *kṛta*/*sattva*, *tretā*/*rajas*, *dvāpara*/*rajas-tamas*, *kali*/*tamas*, Koskikallio 1994: 261, note 23.

⁴⁷ Kane 1946: 888–890. In the *ṚV* the word *yuga* is referred to a human generation or to an unspecified time period; González-Reimann 2009: 411.

⁴⁸ Kane 1946: 887–888. Cf. also *M. Dh. S.* 9.302 (about a king).

reference to the names of the dice throws or the negative or positive—kali or kṛta—qualities of something.⁴⁹

The fullest description of the four ages of humankind is given in the third book of the *Mahābhārata*, called “The Book of the Forest” (3.148.10–35; 186; 188; 189). A much shorter account of the ages of humankind may be found in the twelfth book of this poem (*Mbh.* 12.70.7–32), in the *Manusmṛti* (*M. Dh. S.* 1.68–74, 79–86), in many *Purāṇas*: *Vāyu* 32, *Viṣṇu* 1.3, 6.3, *Mārkaṇḍeya* 46, *Brahma* 229–230, *Matsya* 142–144, *Garuḍa* 1.223.36); and in some texts (namely in the *Upaniṣads* but not in the *Vedas*) there are allusions to this motif. Also a passage from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, namely “Narada’s lament about the yugas and the status of the varṇas”⁵⁰ (7.65.9–26) makes reference to the myth of four ages. Moreover, in various parts of this poem, the first yuga (kṛta) is mentioned; this age is characterized by the birth of great heroes, mythological figures, perfect government and the well-being of the kingdom and its subjects (1.1.71–76; 1.44.14; 1.5.108; 5.1. 108; 7.2.4; 7.17.31). It was during this age that Vedavātī was born, who later, after burning herself, would be born again in the age of tretā as Janaka’s daughter (7.17.31).

Of particular importance for the question of Rāma’s divinity is, however, a passage from book 6 (*Rām.* 6.116.80–90) which gives a description of the kingdom ruled by Rāma; this passage may be compared to *Rām.* 1.1.71–76. There is a clear reference here to the “golden” age of kṛta (in fact, the term itself is used in book 1).

In the passage from the *Mahābhārata* (3.148.10–35), the most attention is devoted to the first age or kṛtayuga, but in other parts of this epic we come across a kind of prophesy concerning the future in the age of kali:

That Eon is called the Winning Throw, my friend, in which the sempiternal Law holds reign. In that age, that best of Eons, things are done, not left to be done. There the Laws do not lapse nor do creatures die; hence the name

⁴⁹ González-Reimann 2010: 65.

⁵⁰ Brockington 1985: 126.

Kṛtayuga, which in time became equivalent to virtue. In the Kṛtayuga there are no Gods, Dānavas, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, or Snakes, my friend, there is neither buying nor selling. The sounds of the Sāman, Yajus, and Ṛc do not exist, nor is there human labor. Fruit appears when thought of, and the Law is relinquishment. At that junction of the Eons there are no diseases or diminishing of the faculties, no discontent, no tears, no pride, no libel, no strife, no lassitude, no hatred, no hostility, no fear, no suffering, no envy, and no jealousy. Then the supreme Brahman is the highest goal of the yogins, and the white Nārāyaṇa is the soul of beings. Brahmins, barons, commoners, and serfs are well defined in the Kṛtayuga, and the creatures stick to their own tasks. The stages of life, conduct, knowledge, intelligence, and vigor are equally distributed, and the classes obtain their merit of Law by equally distributed activities. Being yoked to a single Veda, carrying out the prescribed rites with one and the same mantra, they are avowed to the same Law in their various Laws and single Veda. With their acts according to age conforming to the four stages of life and receiving the fruit without self-interest, they attain to the highest goal. The Law of the society of the four classes, conjoined with self-discipline, is well defined in the Kṛtayuga, complete in four quarters, an sempiternal.

This is called the Kṛtayuga, which transcends the conditions of the Three Constituents; now about the Trey, in which the Sacrifice appears. The Law now is diminished by one quarter, and Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa] becomes red. Men are bent upon truthfulness and devoted to the Law of rites. In the Tretā, sacrifices become current and all manner of Laws and rituals, now motivated by purposes and giving rise to fruit of acts and gifts. Given to austerities and donations, people do not stray from the Law in the Tretāyuga; they abide by their own Law and perform rituals.

In the Eon of the Deuce the Law survives only half. Viṣṇu becomes yellow, and the Veda fourfold. Some people know four Vedas, others three or two or one, while some have no hymns at all. While the Scriptures are thus broken up, the ritual becomes multitudinous; and bent upon austerities of gifts, the creatures fall under the sway of the Constituent of Passion. Because the single Veda is no longer known, the Vedas multiply; and because there is now a collapse of truthfulness, few abide by truth. Many diseases strike those who have lapsed from truth, and lusts and disasters caused by fate arise, afflicted by which some men perform very severe austerities, while others, motivated by desires or the wish for heaven, hold sacrifices. Thus, having come to the Dvāparayuga, the creatures perish from lawlessness.

In the Eon of Discord, Kaunteya, only one quarter of the Law survives; and, having reached this age that is swayed by Darkness, Keśava becomes black. The Vedic life-rules, Law, sacrifice, and ritual come to an end.

Crop failures, diseases, sloth, vices like anger and so forth, calamities, sickness, and ailments prevail. As the Eons follow one on the other, the Law deteriorates every time. And with the Law the people deteriorate. With the degeneration of people, the forces that prosper the world decline, and the Laws produced by the decline of the world are perverted into prayers. Thus is described the Kaliyuga that will be shortly at hand; those who live long conform to the Eons they live in.⁵¹

As we see, in the *kr̥ta* period there exists law (dharma) and there is no death (Manu, on the other hand, says that although in the *kr̥ta* age people are healthy and live as long as 400 years,⁵² they eventually die; *M. Dh. S.* 1.80–87). According to the *Mahābhārata*, the people of this period have high moral and religious standards. Their life is free from any affliction, either of a physical or a spiritual nature. Their welfare goes hand in hand with the excellent condition of the state: there is no work (the earth bears fruit as a response to the humans' mere wish for it), there is universal happiness and the people are characterized by knowledge, intelligence and energy. Descriptions of the following ages, and especially the kaliyuga, enable us to see, ex contrario, the characteristic features of the *kr̥ta* period: when this age is over the rules of the Vedic life, law, sacrifice and ritual fade away. The first age is free from crop failures, diseases and vices like anger. The humans of this age do not suffer from hunger and are not subject to destructive emotions. There are no misdeeds and people are free from vices. Still later, in the *tretāyuga* and *dvapārayuga*, religion, law and truth become more and more weak and decline; in their place come fraud, theft and diseases. The human life span is now considerably shorter. Other passages from the *Mahābhārata* (3.186 and 3.188) discuss the brahmins'

⁵¹ *Mbh.* 3.148.10–35, translated by J.A.B. van Buitenen. Unfortunately the book of L. González-Reimann (*The Māhābharata and the Yugas: India's Great Epic Poem and the Hindu System of World Ages*: 2002. New York: Peter Lang) was unavailable to me.

⁵² Mesopotamian and biblical traditions agree that human life was originally much longer than it is now and that it has been shortened by stages (West 1999: 314).

neglect of sacrificing, the growing and appalling moral decline and the role reversal between the brahmins and śūdras (serfs). We have here elements known from such texts as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or Hesiod—fathers killing their sons and sons killing their fathers (Ov. *Met.* 1.140–150; *Mbh.* 3.188.25–30), children being born with grey hair (Hes. 180–190; ‘Girls pregnant at the age of seven and eight, and boys of ten and twelve become fathers. Men turn gray in their sixteenth year’ *Mbh.* 3.186.52–55).⁵³ The description in the *Mahābhārata* focuses also on the disruption of social and family ties and the neglect of one's duties; this social decline will be accompanied by unusual and dangerous natural phenomena.

In this description of the ages of humankind (both in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Manusmṛti*), there are some elements which may also be found in Greek and Roman literature.⁵⁴ In Hesiod's *Works and Days* the golden period was free from suffering (also from the afflictions of old age), the earth bore fruit spontaneously, there was no work, and the people were dear to the gods (109–125). However, in contrast to the *Mahābhārata*, the religious aspect is not emphasized. There followed the silver age whose people were worse than their predecessors, both physically and mentally. In their pride, which became their main vice, they refused to make offerings to the gods. The bronze generation was characterized by great physical strength and toughness of soul and heart; the people cared about nothing else except war.

⁵³ West (West 1999: 317) draws attention to the appearance of this motif in both Hesiod and the *Mahābhārata* and says “It is obvious that Hesiod did not think of this motif for himself.” Interestingly, this element is absent from Ovid's account.

West (West 1999: 317) remarks also that “the myth appears entirely alien to the general Greek view of the past as reflected in the whole corpus of epic and genealogical poetry [...]. That it comes from some oriental sources seems certain.” In 19th century some scholars disagreed on the question whether Hesiod's Ages are indebted to oriental prototypes, cf. Roth 1860: 21–32.

⁵⁴ On the myth of the golden age in Hesiod, Ovid, but also other ancient and modern authors see also Levin 1982: 315–343.

According to Hesiod, this generation was followed by that of heroes, brave demigods who were better than the people of the bronze age. But the worst period is the fifth, the age of iron, when all family ties disappeared, parents were no longer held in reverence, shame vanished, and all good features were replaced by envy, perjury and injustice. It may be said that the myth of the ages of the world “gave expression to the conception of step-by-step deterioration of ethics and justice”.⁵⁵

It is also worth looking at some characteristics of the golden age in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1.90–150). The earth bore fruit spontaneously (as in the *Mahābhārata* and in Hesiod) and there was no need for work. Warm winds blew and there was eternal spring. All the worst features (betrayal, fraud, the rejection of truth and family ties, as well as war) appeared in the iron age.

The golden age, according to these descriptions, is the period of welfare, affluence, and of the ideal state whose inhabitants have no need for work, enjoy happiness devoid of any of the afflictions of the everyday life. In the *Mahābhārata*, however, it is the religious and ethical aspect that is emphasized most markedly. What is common to all these descriptions is also a mythical element in the motif of the earth bearing fruit of its own accord (Ovid. *nullo cogente*), without any human work. Still another motif deserves to be pointed out: both in the *Ramāyāna* and in post-Hesiod Greek and Roman accounts of the golden age (e.g. in Ovid), the season characteristic of this age is perpetual springtime.⁵⁶ It is not mentioned in Hesiod; also in the *Mahābhārata* we are told only that “fruit appears when thought of” (3.148) or that “all the seasons are delightful and free from evil” (*Mbh.* 12.70.10).

⁵⁵ Fränkel 1975: 121. In a poem by a 3rd century BC follower of Hesiod, Aratus, there is a story about the goddess of justice Dike, who, appalled by the bloodshed of the third generation, escapes to heaven, cf. Levin 1982: 328. Also in Ovid, Astraea (or Iustitia, the goddess of justice) leaves in the iron age, earth dripping with blood (Ovid. *Met.* 1.145–150).

⁵⁶ In reference to Greek and Roman literature, West notes here parallels to Near Eastern texts (West 1999: 314).

Let us look more closely at the above-mentioned passage from book 7 of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, giving the account of all the ages of humankind. This passage, which may reflect the “increasing adaptation to brāhman values,”⁵⁷ does not, however, contain a detailed enumeration of the features characterizing individual ages, which we know e.g. from the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* description, the focus is on the status of the varṇas and on their representatives practice of asceticism. However, as in other accounts, we also have here the gradual deterioration of humans, the appearance of adharma, the shortening of life; in each succeeding age, dharma, which is understood as a cow, loses (as in the *Manusmṛiti*) one of its “legs”. Evil-doers go to hell (naraka), and the king’s special duty is to repress vices every time he notices a misdeed. Thus, justice and righteous conduct are features present in various depictions of the ages of humankind.

In the passage from book 7 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (65.9–26), the age of kṛta is not as fully described as in the *Mahābhārata*, where Mārkaṇḍeya gives even the exact duration of each yuga. It may be said that in book 7 of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, kṛtayuga is the age of the brahmins, because only the brahmins practiced asceticism then, they constituted the highest varna and, what is more, were above death and stronger than kṣatriyas (they possessed vīrya). The kṣatriyas were born in the following age of tretā, and they possessed strength (vīrya) acquired through asceticism. In the tretāyuga the brahmins and kṣatriyas were of equal strength (in the preceding age the former were stronger). In the age of tretā, one portion of sin appeared on earth and the “doubly born” (dvijās) became, on account of adharma, weaker. The brahmins and kṣatriyās “are engaged in austere penances and the Vaiśyas and Śūdras engaged in serving them.”⁵⁸ In the following age, dvāpara, impiety and untruth increased but, on the other hand, the “Vaiśyas engaged in devout penances” while the śūdras would practice asceticism in the age of kali.

⁵⁷ Brockington 1985: 15.

⁵⁸ Translated by Dutt 1998: 195.

Even in the age of dvāpara, devout penances for śūdras were considered impiety and a śūdra practising them was punished with death.

As a matter of fact, the poet pays the least attention to the age of kali. The proportions between the description of kṛtayuga and kaliyuga are rather similar to those in other accounts of the ages of humankind, where a long narrative of the golden age may be viewed as a depiction of things which are absent from the last age.

*purā kṛtayuge rāma brāhmaṇa vai tapasvinaḥ
 abrāhmaṇas tadā rājan na tapasvī kathaṃ cana
 tasmīn yuge prajvalīte brahmabhūte anāvṛte
 amṛtyavas tadā sarve jajñire dīrghadarśinaḥ
 tatas tretāyugaṃ nāma mānavānāṃ vapuṣmatām
 kṣatriyā yatra jāyante pūrveṇa tapasānvitāḥ
 vīryeṇa tapasā caiva te 'dhikāḥ pūrvajanmani
 mānavā ye mahātmānas tasmīns tretāyuge yuge
 brahmakṣatraṃ tu tat sarvaṃ yat pūrvam aparaṃ ca yat
 yugayor ubhayor āsīt samavīryasamanvitam
 apaśyantas tu te sarve viśeṣam adhikaṃ tataḥ
 sthāpanaṃ cakrire tatra cāturvarṇyasya sarvataḥ
 adharmāḥ pādān ekam tu pātayat pṛthivītale
 adharmeṇa hi saṃyuktās tena mandābhavan dvijāḥ
 tataḥ prāduṣkṛtaṃ pūrvam āyusaḥ pariniṣṭhitam
 śubhāny evācaraml lokāḥ satyadharmaparāyaṇāḥ
 tretāyuge tv avartanta brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyās ca ye
 tapo 'tapyanta te sarve śuśrūṣām apare janāḥ
 sa dharmāḥ paramas teṣāṃ vaiśyaśūdrām athāgamat
 pūjāṃ ca sarvavarṇānāṃ śūdrās cakrur viśeṣataḥ
 tataḥ pādān adharmasya dviṭīyam avatārayat
 tato dvāparasamkhyā sā yugasya samajāyata
 tasmīn dvāparasamkhye tu vartamāne yugakṣaye
 adharmāś cāṅṛtaṃ caiva vavṛdhe puruṣarṣabha
 tasmīn dvāparasamkhyāte tapo vaiśyān samāviśat
 na śūdro labhate dharmam ugraṃ taptaṃ nararṣabha
 hīnavarṇo naraśreṣṭha tapyate sumahat tapaḥ
 bhaviṣyā śūdrayonyāṃ hi tapaścaryā kalau yuge
 adharmāḥ paramo rāma dvāpare śūdradhāritāḥ
 sa vai viśayaparyante tava rājan mahātapaḥ
 śūdras tapyati durbuddhis tena bālavadhō hy ayam
 yo hy adharmam akāryaṃ vā viśaye pārthivasya hi*

*karoti rājaśārdūla pure vā durmatir naraḥ
kṣipram hi narakaṃ yāti sa ca rājā na saṃśayaḥ
sa tvaṃ puruṣaśārdūla mārgasva viṣayaṃ svakam
duṣkṛtaṃ yatra paśyethās tatra yatnaṃ samācara
evam te dharmavyddhiś ca nṛṇāṃ cāyurvivaradhanam
bhaviṣyati naraśreṣṭha bālasyaśya ca jīvitam (Rām. 7.65.9–26)*

Particular attention should be paid, however, to two passages, from books one and six, in which references to the age of kṛta may be found. These passages, which give an account of the kingdom of Rāma, form, so to speak, a structural frame of the first six books of the epic. In book one the term kṛtayuga is even used in reference to the rule of Rāma. The term reappears also in book seven (7 App. I 12), where Agastya reminds Rāma how in the kṛtayuga people begged Brahmā, the creator, to give them a king and he endowed him the attributes of the lokapālas.⁵⁹

The kingdom of Rāma as depicted in the first book of the poem (I 1.71–76) is full of happiness, offerings are duly made to the gods, people are glad, joyful, contented, well-fed and righteous (prahṛṣṭamudito lokas tuṣṭaḥ puṣṭaḥ, 1.1.71), upright and free from sufferings and the distress caused by hunger. Fathers never witness the death of their sons (putramaraṇaṃ), and women, always faithful to their husbands (pativratās), never become widows (nāryaś cāvidhavā nityam bhaviṣyanti). This kingdom is not threatened by floods and “just as in the Golden Age, there is no danger whatever of fire and wind” (na vātajaṃ bhayaṃ, na cāgrijaṃ bhayaṃ, 1.1.73).⁶⁰ It is worth

⁵⁹ Brockington 1985: 126.

⁶⁰ *prahṛṣṭamudito lokas tuṣṭaḥ puṣṭaḥ sudhārmikāḥ
nirāyamo arogaś ca durbhikṣabhayavarjitaḥ
na putramaraṇaṃ ke cid draḥsyanti puruṣāḥ kva cit
nāryaś cāvidhavā nityaṃ bhaviṣyanti pativratāḥ
na vātajaṃ bhayaṃ kiṃ cin nāpsu majjanti jantavaḥ
na cāgrijaṃ bhayaṃ kiṃ cid yathā kṛtayuge tathā
aśvamedhaśatair iṣṭvā tathā bahusuvārnakāiḥ
gavaṃ koṭyayutaṃ dattvā vidvadbhyo vidhipūrvakam
rājavaṃśān śatagaṇān sthāpayiṣyati rāghavaḥ*

noting, too, that while in book 1 the poet uses the future tense to describe Rāma's kingdom, in book 6 it is replaced by the past. Thus, in book 1 we have an announcement of what was fulfilled in book 6.

A somewhat longer description of the state under the rule of Rāma is given in book six, which, to quote Brockington, “reaches its conclusion and climax in the description of Rāma's righteous rule.” This passage is, according to Brockington, “relatively late, but the basic attitude is found at all stages”:⁶¹

*rāghavaś cāpi dharmātmā prāpya rājyam anuttamam
 ije babhuvidhair yajñaih sasuhṛdbhrāṭṛybandhavaḥ
 paunḍarikāśvamedhābhyāṃ vājapeyena cāsaḥkṛt
 anyaiś ca vividhair yajñair ayajat pārthivarśabhaḥ
 rājyaṃ daśasahasrāṇi prāpya varṣāni rāghavaḥ
 śatāśvamedhān ājahre sadaśvān bhūridakṣiṇān
 ājānūlambibāhuś ca mahāskandhaḥ pratāpavān
 lakṣmaṇānucaro rāmaḥ pṛthivīm anvapālayat
 na paryadevan vidhāvā na ca vyālakṛtaṃ bhayam
 na vyādhijaṃ bhayaṃ vāpi rāme rājyaṃ praśāsati
 nirdasyur abhaval loko nānarthaḥ kaṃ cid aspāt
 na ca sma vṛddhā bālānāṃ pretakāryāni kurvate
 sarvaṃ muditam evāsīt sarvo dharmaparo 'bhavat
 rāmam evānupaśyanto nābhyahiṃsan parasparam
 āsan varṣasahasrāṇi tathā putrasahasraṇaḥ
 nīrāmayā viśokāś ca rāme rājyaṃ praśāsati
 nityapuṣpā nityaphalās taravaḥ skandhavistṛtāḥ*

*cāturvarṇyaṃ ca loke 'smin sve sve dharme niyokṣyati
 daśavarṣasahasrāṇi daśavarṣaśatāni ca
 rāmo rājyam upāsītivā brahmalokaṃ gamiṣyati (Rām. 1.1.71–76).*

⁶¹ Brockington 1985: 124. A little earlier there is a passage in which Brahmā reveals to Rāma his divine nature and praises him at the Supreme lord (6.105). This passage has good manuscript support. However, Goldman says that “it is almost certainly a relatively late addition” (Goldman 1984: 43, note 82). Brockington, on the other hand, observes that “at the end of the second stage, at the close of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, Rāma is recognised as divine [...], but this recognition is expressed in terms of identity and not yet as incarnation” (Brockington 1998: 470).

*kālavarṣī ca parjanyaḥ sukhasparśaś ca mārutāḥ
svakarmasu pravartante tuṣṭhāḥ svair eva karmabhiḥ
āsan prajā dharmaparā rāme śāsati nāṅṣṭāḥ
sarve lakṣaṇasaṃpannāḥ sarve dharmaparāyaṇāḥ
daśavarṣasahasrāṇi rāmo rājyam akārayat (Rām. 6.116. 80–90).*

Once righteous Rāghava had obtained that unsurpassed kingdom. He performed many different kinds of sacrifices, together with his friends, his brothers, and his kinsmen. 80

That bull among kings performed the Paundarīka, Aśvamedha and Vājapeya sacrifices many times, as well as various other sacrifices. 81

Rāghava ruled his kingdom for ten thousand years and performed one hundred Aśvamedha sacrifices with splendid sacrificial horses and generous sacrificial fees. 82

With broad shoulders and his arms extending to his knees, valorous Rāma ruled the land with Lakṣmana at his side. 83

While Rāma ruled the kingdom, no widows mourned, nor was there any fear of snakes or threat of disease. 84

The world was free from thieves and misfortune afflicted no one. The elders never had to perform the funeral rites for their children. 85

Everyone was content. Everyone was devoted to righteousness. Looking constantly to Rāma alone, people did not harm one another. 86

While Rāma ruled the kingdom, people lived for thousands of years and had thousands of sons. They suffered no illness and were free from all sorrow. 87

The trees with their spreading boughs were always in flower and filled with fruit. Parjanya brought the rains at the proper time, and the breeze was pleasant to the touch. 88

While Rāma ruled, his subjects adhered to their own proper occupations and were satisfied with their own duties. Devoted to righteousness, they adhered always to the truth. 89

Everyone was endowed with auspicious marks. Everyone was devoted to righteousness. And so, for ten thousand years, Rāma ruled his kingdom. 90⁶²

Rāma's kingdom in book six is qualified as *uttamam* and Rāma himself (referred to as *dharmātmā*) is shown to have made many offerings to the gods together with his relatives. Both in the *Rāmāyana* and in the *Mahābhārata*, it is stressed that sacrifice is one of the king's

⁶² Translated by R. P. Goldman, S. J. Sutherland Goldman, B. A. van Nooten 2009: 493–494.

duties, but—as is pointed out by J. Gonda—“this feature is by no means contradictory to his quality of deva (‘god’), since the gods are likewise represented as offering sacrifices, the sacrifice being indispensable means of [...] maintaining the right order in the universe.”⁶³ It may be debatable whether sacrifices are performed in the kṛtayuga because in the passage cited above from the *Mahābhārata* 3.148, it is said that “the sacrifice appears in Tretāyuga.” But it should be remarked that in the *Mahābhārata* 3.148.10.17 ff., we are told about four varṇas, which “kṛte yuge svakarmaniratāḥ prajāḥ”, and that they are yoked to a single *Veda*, and carry out the prescribed rites. Similarly in the *Matsyapurāṇa* 165.3, it is stated that there were four varṇas in the kṛtayuga.⁶⁴ Moreover, in one of the *Purāṇas* it is expressly said that “in kṛta age people have to perform sacrifices.”⁶⁵ It may be also pointed out that Rāma in a metaphorical sense represents more desirable states of activity.⁶⁶

During the reign of Rāma, wives were not distressed and people were not afraid of wild beasts and diseases. They were free from anxiety, they were not oppressed by thieves and old men (vṛddha) did not need to perform burial rites for their children. All were happy, devoted to pious observances and free from envy. Their life span was extremely long (they lived 1000 years)⁶⁷ and they had as many as a thousand sons.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as in many other accounts of the golden age, there were no diseases or distress in Rāma’s kingdom, people engaged in their respective works (svakarmasu pravartante tuṣṭāḥ) and were

⁶³ Gonda 1956: 50. Cf. also Kantawala 1964: 104 f.

⁶⁴ But, on the other hand, in the *MatsyaP.* 144.78, it is only one varṇa in the kṛtayuga and in the tretāyuga each varṇa has to discharge its own duties and functions, e.g. Brahmins perform the jāpayajña [...] (142.50).

⁶⁵ *GaruḍaP.* 1.223.36. Cf. also *Mbh.* 3.189.9-11. On the other hand, however, in many pūraṇas and epic passages the idea of tretāyuga is given as the principal era of sacrifices, Koskikallio 1994: 256.

⁶⁶ See p. 218.

⁶⁷ The ideal human life span was 100 years in the *ṚV* and *Brāhmaṇas*; González-Reimann 2009: 213.

pious and truthful (dharmaparāḥ, nāṅṛtāḥ). Interestingly, trees were always in blossom and full of fruit, it rained only when people wished it (kāmaravāṣī parjanyaḥ), winds blew pleasantly (trees in permanent blossom and always bearing fruit as well as mild winds are mentioned also in the account of Rāma's rule in Tulsīdās, VII 20.3–23).⁶⁸ Thus, in the passage from book 6, we have more details characteristic of the golden age than in book 7. In books 1 and 6, on the other hand, some features of the kṛtayuga are repeated (women are not widows, there is neither fear of sickness nor the death of sons and people are happy). The kingdom of Rāma, its state and the well-being of its subjects is also a praise of the divine ruler himself. It may be said in reference to the *Mahābhārata* passage that Rāma is only the creator of the kṛta age.⁶⁹

As we see, both descriptions of the kingdom ruled by Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, although not particularly long, especially when compared to what the *Mahābhārata* says about the kṛtayuga, reveal many features which are typical for other descriptions of the first age. Thus Rāma, the hero active in the tretāyuga (as is stated also by Tulsīdās)⁷⁰ brings back kṛtayuga.⁷¹

It should also be pointed out that some elements typical for descriptions of the first age are used in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in reference to the rules of other kings, for example Anarāya, the father of Pṛthu, or Daśaratha.

⁶⁸ On the account of the supreme god Rāma's rule in the *Śrīrāmcarit-mānas* (7.20-23) by Tulsīdās there are also numerous elements characteristic of the golden age; thus everyone acts according to one's dharma, people are free from vices and endowed with virtues, diseases do not exist, nobody dies young, there are no miseries, misfortunes and suffering, a pleasant wind blows and even elephants and lions live in harmony. See also Stasik 2000: 276 ff.; 290.

Similar examples from Roman literature include Calpurnius Siculus' bucolic 1 and Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* ch. 4 where the golden age description serves to extol the new emperor Nero.

⁶⁹ *Mbh.* 12.70.25. Cf. also 12.70.26.

⁷⁰ Goldman, Sutherland Goldman 2007: 76; Brockington 1998: 473; also *M.Dh.S.* in 9.303 ascribes his activity to the Tretā age.

⁷¹ Similarly Tulsīdās 7.22–23.

In the first case, that of king Anaraṇya,⁷² there are only a few such elements: in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa we are told that during his reign nobody suffered from hunger or drought, and there were no thieves.⁷³ Thus, no extraordinary, mythical features are found, such as trees in permanent blossom and always bearing fruit or rains occurring in response to one's wish, the elements which are present in the description of Rāma's kingdom. These two mythical elements are not used in reference to the reign of Daśaratha or the account of Ayodhyā under his rule either, although the very description of Ayodhyā and the subjects of Daśaratha is quite detailed⁷⁴ and it may be thought that the inhabitants of this state, thanks to the purity of their character and behaviour, belong to the kṛta age (but it should be remembered that according to the *Mahābhārata* no particular decline in human morality took place in the tretāyuga). So all Daśaratha's subjects were pious, righteous and deeply learned. However, what is stressed in the account of his kingdom is the right social structure and the fulfillment of the duties appropriate for the members of the four castes. Thus the proper social order here goes hand in hand with the welfare of the people, their deep knowledge of dharma and happiness. All the inhabitants of Ayodhyā, both men and women, were devoted to the king.

The moral standards of all the subjects of king Daśaratha are as unusual as in the case of people living in the kṛtayuga in the *Mahābhārata* or under the rule of Rāma. But the fact that those mythical elements referred to earlier are absent from the account of Daśaratha's kingdom means that the presentation of Ayodhyā as ruled by Daśaratha is somewhat different from what is told about its situation under Rāma.⁷⁵ And it is precisely these extraordinary elements in nature (trees in perpetual blossom and always bearing fruit, rains occurring on demand,

⁷² His name is also meaningful '[under whose rule there is] no wilderness'.

⁷³ *Rām.* II 102.9.

⁷⁴ *Rām.* I 6.1–24.

⁷⁵ A very short description of Daśaratha's rule appears also in Kālidāsa's *Ragh.* 9.4 (there are no diseases and earth always bears fruit).

only pleasant winds) together with the mention of people enjoying longevity, free from diseases, anxieties, fear of losing their possessions, people always happy, pious and truthful—it is precisely these factors which incline us to think that in the case of Rāma we are dealing with the description of the ideal state which cannot be found on earth.

All the inhabitants of Rāma's kingdom are quite extraordinary in their high standards of morality and fulfillment of dharma, whose root, as the *Rāmāyaṇa* emphasizes, is the king himself.⁷⁶ And because it is the king who, in keeping with the principle that “as is the king so are his people”, sets an example of righteous behaviour for his subjects,⁷⁷ it seems reasonable to conclude that this ideal state is not ruled by an ordinary king but by a divine human. Rāma who establishes *kṛtayuga*,⁷⁸ the characteristic feature of which is *sattva*,⁷⁹ is, like a sage, the only man worthy of respect, directed by dharma and *satya*⁸⁰ and not paying heed to the code of the *kṣatriyas*.⁸¹ He is, in fact, a divine human who at the end of the ten-thousand-year period will go to the world of *Brahmā*. However, unlike the case of *Anarāya*, *Daśaratha* or *Duṣanta* from the *Mahābhārata*,⁸² the term *kṛta* may be used only in reference to the period in which Rāma ruled.

⁷⁶ *Rām.* III 48. 8 f.

⁷⁷ *Rām.* II 101.9.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Mbh.* 12.70.25.

⁷⁹ See p. 218, note 46.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Rām.* 2.10.30–31; 2.16.46; 2.1659.

⁸¹ *Rām.* 2.101.20.

⁸² *Mbh.* 1.62.1–10.

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