

## Different Editions of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*

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### Introduction:

The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (VR), regarded as the *ādikāvya* (the first epic poem), is based on the life of Śrī Rāma. Originally composed and transmitted as a ballad narrative through the oral tradition, it has come down to us in multiple recensions, each derived from different manuscript traditions.

### Recensions, Editions and their classifications:

The text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has come down in three major recensions: the **southern**, the **Eastern**, edited by Gorresio, and the **North Western**, published from Lahore. Kamia Bulke (1950, p.25) and V. Raghavan (2009, p.180) have identified three editions-

- **Southern** includes Bombay editions published by Gujarati printing press, Bombay and Nirnay Sagar Press, Bombay.
- **Eastern** or Gaudiya includes editions by Gorresio published from Paris and the Calcutta series.
- **North-Western** editions include the texts published by Dayananda Mahavidyalaya, Lahore and Sadhu Ashrama, Hoshiarpur.

### Editions:

#### Southern editions:

- **Kumbhakonam edition**

*Srīmadvālmīkirāmāyaṇa* (A Critical Edition) with the commentary of Śrī Govindarāja and Extracts from many other commentaries and Readings, edited and published by T. R. Krishnacharya and T. R. Vyasacharya, Madhva Vilas Depot, **Kumbhakonam**, printed by B. R. Ghanekar for the proprietors Nirnay Sagar Press, Bombay, 1911

- Madras edition-

*Srīmadvālmīkirāmāyaṇa*, published by N. Ramaratnam, Mylapore, Madras, 1933  
Kuppusvami Shastri (Ramaratnam 1933, p. xvi) in the preface clarifies that this edition does not attempt to identify and eliminate interpolations but presents the whole text of *Rāmāyaṇa* recognised by Indian tradition since the time of Kālidāsa and Aśvaghōṣa, in accordance with certain typical manuscripts of South India and the well-known Bombay recension.

It has taken into consideration 3 palm leaf manuscripts in Grantha script, 1 paper manuscript in Devanāgarī and also the Kumbhakonam edition, Gorresio's edition, Bombay edition of Gujarati Printing Press, edition by Vani Vilas Press of Srirangam, the readings adopted in the commentary called *Bhūṣaṇa* by Govindarāja, *Tilaka* by Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa and the commentary *Śiromaṇi*.

- Bombay edition

- *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Nirnaya Sagar Press*, 1888
- *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, edited by Shastri Srinivas Katti Mudholkar with *Tilaka*, *Śiromaṇi* and *Bhūṣaṇa* commentaries, printed by Gujarati Printing Press, 1912-1920. This copy is taken as vulgate by CE, Baroda

As noted by Bhatt (1960, p. xxxii) The Bombay editions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, one of the *Nirnaya Sagar Press* and another by the Gujarati Printing Press based on Devanāgarī MSS., present the text which, unlike the Bombay edition of the *Mahābhārata*, is almost identical with the text of the two southern editions of Kumbhakonam (1905) and Madras (1933) based on MSS. in the southern scripts. The Bombay (Guj. P.) and Kumbhakonam editions have almost the same number of *sargas* (645 and 648 resp.) with an approximate difference of 223 verses (24049 and 2242 resp.). The Bombay text, considered the vulgate, is faithfully preserved in the commentary *Tilaka*, composed by Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa and attributed

to his patron, Rāmavarman, and in the commentary Kataka, which is attributed to two commentators who sometimes differ in individual cases.

However, Bombay editions are also classified as Western recension when an independent Western recension is taken into consideration.

- [Gitapress Edition](#)

Gitapress edition is very popularly referred now a days. Though it's published from the North, it follows the southern recensions. It follows the reading of Ramavarmā or Nageśabhaṭṭa, as noted by Rangan (Rangan 2012, p.4)

- [Webolim Edition](#)

*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, vol.1 to 10, R. Rangan, Webolim, Bangalore, 2012

The first edition of this was mainly based on Govindarāja's reading. The second edition is predominantly the same; in several places, the diction of other readings is preferred. In this sense, it is called a critical edition. Vol. 7, 8,9,10 take into consideration variant readings of the text.

- [North Western/ Lahore edition](#)

*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki (North Western Recension) Critically edited for the First time from original MSS.* by Bhagavad Datta, D.A.V. College, **Lahore**, 1931.

This edition takes into consideration most of the manuscripts received from the Northern region.

It has given details of MSS. used for Bālakāṇḍa indicated by acronyms -kai (Kaithal), rā (Nasik), ba (Bahavalapur), la (Lahore), bha (Bharatpur), Pra (Prayag), pa (Panchavati), ṭa (similar to Bengal and southern recension) and ta (Lahore).

- [Gauda/Eastern/North-Eastern/Paris Edition](#)

*Rāmāyaṇa Poema Indiano Di Valmici*, Gaspare Gorresio, Dalla Stamperia Reale, Parigi, 1843

Prof. Gaspare Gorresio's edition of *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki is as fascinating in its beautiful typography as it is scholarly in its introductions and Notes. This is the first complete edition of the 'Poem of India', which was published in Paris during 1843-67. He calls the first kāṇḍa ādikāṇḍa instead of Bālakāṇḍa.

#### CE, Baroda:

Jacobi pointed out, based on a comparison of the first thirty cantos of Kiṣikindhākāṇḍa, that 'one third of the verses of one recension have no corresponding verses in others.' (Sharma 1998, p. 239) As considerable variations were found in different editions of VR, there was a need to have a uniform edition of VR. This task was taken by the Oriental Institute, Baroda, under the leadership of G. H. Bhatt. Though there were editions calling them critical editions, this is the first comprehensive critical edition which has taken comprehensive Mss. data and followed the scientific methodology of lower criticism. CE marks interpolations but researchers get the entire text in one place.

#### Different recensions:

Textual problem by the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been summarised by Weber in the slogan 'as many *Rāmāyaṇas* as there are manuscripts' (Yardi 1994, p. i). The text has been transmitted in two major recensions, the northern (N) and southern (S), each with different versions, generally defined by the scripts used. Yardi (1994, p. iii) presents this classification clearly. N recension has three further important divisions –

- a) Śāradā or the NW group
- b) Nepālī or the NE group
- c) Devanāgarī version

The Nepālī or NE group has two further subdivisions- i) the Maithilī version and ii) the Bengali version.

The southern recension has three main divisions-

- a) Telugu version
- b) Grantha version
- c) Malayalam version

Manuscripts of the Northern recensions come from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Nepal, Bihar and Bengal; Those of the southern recension from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, with the Devanāgarī Manuscript, variously affiliated to the northern /and Southern tradition. (Goldman 1984, p. 84).

Bhatt has taken into consideration 37 Mss. for Bālakāṇḍa. He mentions 3 versions of N recension, namely- North-eastern, North-Western and Western. The southern recension has also got three versions- Telugu, Grantha and Malayālam, which are preserved in almost uniform text.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* text of **Southern** commentators, Rāmānuja, Maheśvaratīrtha, Govindarāja and Katakayogīndra is generally identical with occasional variations in individual readings. Some scholars have come to the conclusion that there are two different versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* according to the two commentators, Govindarāja and Katakayogīndra. (Bhatt, p.xxx). In the NR also, there is a division of NW (Kashmir and West) from NE (Nepal and East). Ruben, additionally, wished to divide the southern recension into two, one represented by commentators Vamśīdhara Śivasahāya (*Rāmāyaṇaśriromaṇi*), Maheśvaratīrtha (*Tattvadīpikā*), and Govindarāja (*Bhūṣaṇa*) and the other by Kataka Mādhava Yogīndra (Kataka) and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (Tilaka). (Goldman 2007, p. 84, f.n. 4).

Bhatt has explained that **Northern** has two versions NW and NE. NW includes Śāradā (Ś) and some Devanāgarī mss (D<sub>5.7.11-13</sub>). NE includes the Nepali (Ñ<sub>1.2</sub>), Maithilī (V<sub>1-4</sub>), Bengali (B<sub>1-4</sub>) and D<sub>10</sub> mss, which are uniform in character. (Bhatt, vol.1, p.xxx). Vaidya (vol. II, p. xx), while discussing the critical apparatus of Ayodhyākāṇḍa, says that NR can be subdivided into NE, NW and W recensions. NE is represented by Ñ (Nevari-2 mss), V (Maithilī- 1 ms), B (Bengali, 4 mss)

and D (Devanāgarī, 1 mss). NW by ś (Śārada), 1 Ms.) and D (Devanāgarī, 2 mss) and W by D (Devanāgarī, 4 Mss).

Additionally, there is **Western** sub-recension as well. There are debates about whether such independent recension should be identified or not. Bhatt identifies this recension based on his observations of four Devanāgarī manuscripts of Bālakāṇḍa. (Bhatt 1960, pp. xii-xiv, xxxii). It is generally believed that there is no independent version of Western India on account of the identical text in the Bombay and Kumbhakonam editions. D Mss. belonging to and written in Western India show the features of both the NW and S versions and some peculiar traits which induces to assume the separate versions of the Western parts of India. (Bhatt, vol.1. p.xxxii).

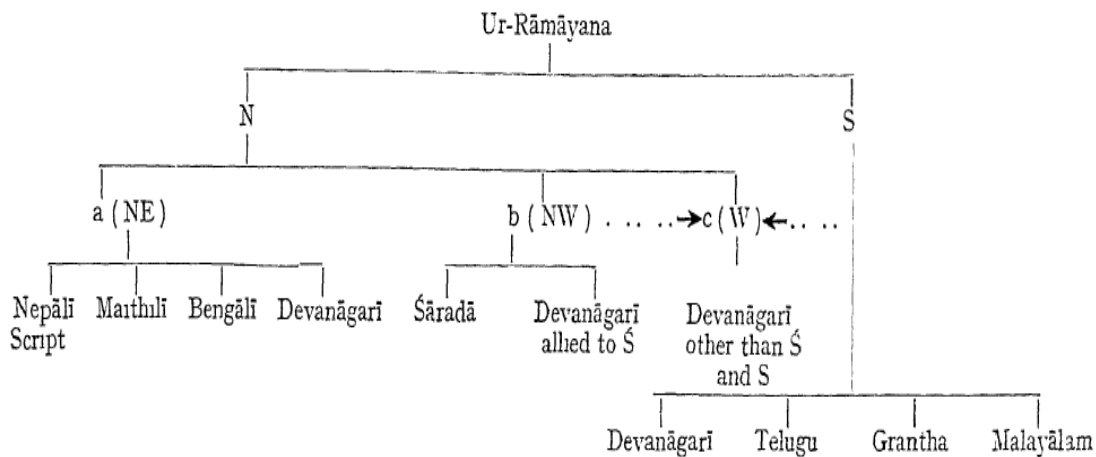


Figure 1: Classification of Manuscripts of Balakanda, CE, Baroda

Bhatt, in his introduction to the Bālakāṇḍa, adopted a separate western recension, but P. C. Diwanji (editor of CE of Araṇyakāṇḍa), in the introduction to the Araṇyakāṇḍa, felt that there was not enough manuscript evidence to support an independent western version (Diwanji 1963, pp. xxiii-xxv).

Other editors of the critical edition have disagreed with him. Vaidya (1971, p.xv) apparently accepts a separate Western recension despite Bhatt's argument. Mankad Feld that evidence tended to support a separate recession for the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam. G. C. Jhala (1966, pp. xxvii-xxx), like Mankad, felt that an

independent western recension “would be justified”. Shah (1975, p.23) briefly summarises the different positions of these editors and feels that Various manuscript evidence of the Uttarakāṇḍa supports the existence of an independent Western recension. [Goldman 2007, p.5, f.n. 7].

However, Goldman opines that the numerous interesting and important textual differences that characterize the various recensions, subrecensions, and versions of the epic- differences are not, in fact, reflected in any significant variations in the major outlines of the story, its contents, tone, moral or characterisation. (Goldman, 1984, p.6) This is a very important observation noted by Goldman regarding different variations found in recensions and editions. Jacobi says that among the three recensions (Northern, Eastern and North Western), ‘undoubtedly Northern Recensions have, in most cases, preserved the original reading’. In support of his contention he observed that in those regions which were the centres of classical Sanskrit literature, specially in the east and the west, which were places of origin of the Gauḍa and Vaidarbha styles, the irregularities of the epic language met with abhorrence from the people and as a consequence deliberate attempts were made to remove them in the Bengali and the West Indian recensions.’ (Sharma 1998, p. 240)

In general, editors of CE of VR have considered the Southern recension as authentic, which is clear from the critical apparatus. Bhatt opines that N has polished the text both from the viewpoint of form and matter. (Bhatt, vol.1, p.xxxii). South India, due to its unflinching devotion towards the regional language, has preserved the epic in its original form, whereas Northern India has simplified the readings of the S recensions.

However, this can’t be considered as a general rule. It is observed by editors of CE that SR have preserved the archaic text, whereas the tendency of NR is towards refining the text. Wherever there is a situation of conflict, a preference is

given to the southern text. It is generally said that NR were bringing the poem into accordance with the rules of classical grammar or rhetoric.

Goldman argues that the northern version of the text often uses different wording from the southern version, but these changes don't really improve the grammar or make the poetry better. In many cases, the northern version actually simplifies or explains the southern one. (Goldman 2007, p.85)<sup>1</sup>

Lower criticism can just give the comparison and common text of all recensions or editions. To come up with a concrete understanding of what exactly NR is adding, we need to apply the principles of Higher Criticism to recensions of VR. Various parameters like the storyline, structure of the story, poetry, language, grammar, vocabulary, narrative features, etc. should be taken into consideration while understanding the significance.

### **Variant Readings and their significance:**

Some examples can be taken here to understand different readings reflected in different recensions of editions and their significance:

#### **1. First verse of VR:**

The first verse of the VR is significant as it sets the prelude to the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. It starts with the dialogue between Nārada and Vālmīki. The verse captures both personalities. Editions differ in giving privilege to Nārada and Vālmīki. Some editions, considering Nārada as a supreme personality, have applied epithets to him. Whereas other editions, Vālmīki being the composer of *ādikāvya*, have applied epithets to him.

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<sup>1</sup> First, the wording of the northern recension frequently differs from that of the southern without appreciably altering the text's grammatical regularity or poetic acceptability. The northern recension, moreover, often tends toward a popularisation or glossing of the southern text. The critical apparatus on virtually every page of the Ramayana indicates how the northern recension rephrases the southern recension almost gratuitously, without eliminating solecisms or enriching the poetic quality of the text. The only answer problems inherent in transcribing an oral poem would affect the southern recension no less than the Northern. (Goldman 2007, p.90, f.n.23)

Critical Edition, Baroda, Kumbhakonam and Gitapress edition:	Lahore edition	Paris edition
तपःस्वाध्यायनिरतं तपस्वी वाग्विदां वरम्। नारदं परिपप्रच्छ वाल्मीकिर्मुनिपुंगवम् ॥	तपःस्वाध्यायनिरतः तेजस्वी वाग्विदां वरः। नारदं परिपप्रच्छ वाल्मीकिर्मुनिसत्तमः॥	तपःस्वाध्यायनिरस्तपस्वी वाग्विदां वरः। नारदं परिपप्रच्छ वाल्मीकिर्मुनिसत्तमः॥

Before this, there are 3 verses added in Paris edition.

ॐ रामाय नमः।

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य नरं चैव नरोत्तमं।

देवीं सरस्वतीं चैव ततो जयमुदीरयेत्॥१॥

जयति रघुवंशतिलकः कौशल्यानन्दिवर्धनो रामः।

दशवदननिधनकारी दाशरथिः पुण्डरीकाक्षः॥२॥

नमस्तस्मै मुनीशाय श्रीयुताय तपस्विने।

सर्वज्ञानाधिवासाय तस्मै वाल्मीकये नमः॥३॥

Most of the Mss. starts with the praise of Rāma.

e.g. Ś<sub>1</sub> (śāradā)- ॐ नमः कमलदलविपुलनयनाभिरामाय श्रीरामचन्द्राय ॐ नमः शिवाय॥ ॐ नमः शिवाय॥ ॐ नमः सरस्वत्यै ॥ and then starts the Stotra of 6 verses praising Rāma, Vālmīki and Rāmāyaṇa.

जयति रघुवंशतिलकः कौसल्याहृदयनन्दनो रामः।

दशवदननिधनकारी दशरथिः पुण्डरीकाक्षः॥१॥

नमस्तस्मै मुनीशाय श्रीयुताय तपस्विने।

सर्वज्ञाननिवासाय वाल्मीकिमुनये नमः॥२॥

कूजन्तं रामरामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम्।

आरुह्य कविताशाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकिकोकिलम्॥३॥

वाल्मीकिर्मुनिभृङ्गस्य कवितावनचारिणः।  
श्रुत्वा रामकथानादं को नु याति परां गतिम् ॥४॥  
यः पिबन्सततं लोके रामायणकथामृतम्।  
अतृप्तस्तं मुनिं वन्दे प्रचेतःसमविक्रमम् ॥५॥  
गोष्पदीकृतवारिशं मशकीकृतरावणम्।  
रामायणमहामालारत्नं वन्देऽनिलात्मजम्॥६॥

These 6 stanzas are given with variations in most of the manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>

V1 (Maithilī)- ॐ गणेशाय नमः। and then some variants are there in stanzas.

V3 (Maithilī)-ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय।

श्रीगणेशाय नमः। श्रीसरस्वत्यै नमः। श्रीरामाय नमः। then follow three verses dedicated to Ganeśa, Sarasvatī, Śvara who is called as *jagannidhi*.

Thus, there are verses dedicated to Rāma, Ganeśa, Sarasvatī and Vālmīki which are omitted from CE as they do not form the main text.

The NR has all epithets in the Nom. Sing. qualifying Vālmīki and nothing for Nārada. Bhatt notes that this is strange. One would naturally expect some complimentary term or terms for Nārada, who, as an ācarya of Vālmīki, is superior to Vālmīki, who appears here as a mere disciple. SR has a text which seems to be more natural and original. Vālmīki belongs to the North and enjoys an enviable position even today. According to Bhatt, probably the older text preserved in the SR has been modified in favour of Vālmīki (Bhatt 1960, 424).

If we understand the narrative structure of VR, the dialogue between Nārada and Vālmīki itself is considered a frame narrative of the epic as it sets the context of VR. As per the narratology, every story follows this structure. The entire Bālakāṇḍa can be called the frame narrative of the epic. Jacobi thinks that original text of VR begins with the *sarga* 5 (Altekar 1987, p.192). It gives answers to the

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<sup>2</sup> For details- G. H. Bhatt, 1960 p. 3

questions of why Vālmīki composed this poetry, how he got the divine vision and divine order from Lord Brahmā. This definitely cannot be a part of the poetry which is composed by Vālmīki himself. This prelude can be well described as ‘poetry about poetry’ or ‘a story about the story’. Interestingly, later manuscript scribes have added benedictory stanzas to this prelude also, which praise different gods, goddesses, Vālmīki or Rāma. This is a kind of frame narrative for the frame narrative.

## 2. Pādukā episode

The Pādukā episode is a very significant narrative in the VR. Bharata, when he returns to Ayodhyā, is shocked to know the events happened, including the exile of Rāma for 14 years. Bharata refused to accept the throne as it rightfully belonged to Rāma. He went to the forest along with the royal family and citizens of Ayodhyā. Despite Bharata’s request, Rāma denies the kingdom. On request of Bharata, Rāma keeps his feet on sandals and returns to Bharata. Bharata carries them with great reverence. Here, *pādukā* becomes a symbol of Rāma’s symbolic rule over the kingdom, though he is not physically present there. Here, variations are found in different versions as to the detailing of the episode. Where *pādukā*’s come from? Whether Rāma was wearing those or Bharata brought them. If Rāma was wearing them, then how could they be golden because he was in forest exile? These questions arise.

**CE of Baroda** (Ayodhyākāṇḍa 105.21,22), Madras edition, Kumbhakonam edition, Gitapress edition, mentions golden *pādukās*. Bharata asks Rāma to place his feet on golden sandals so that they can do the task of protecting the world. Then Rāma touched them with his feet and returned to Bharata.

### Paris Edition

There is an additional *sarga* for *Pādukā* incident and detailed elaboration is done. Disciple Śarabhaṅga brings sandals of Kuśa grass. Vasiṣṭha asks Rāma to touch

those *pādukās*. These *pādukās* will take care of the entire world. Rāma touching those with his feet, returned to Bharata. Bharata taking those *pādukās*, circumambulated Rāma. (Ayodhyākāṇḍa 123. 16-22)

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे शिष्याः शरभङ्गस्य धीमतः।  
उपायनमनुप्राप्ता गृहीत्वा कुशपादुके ॥१७॥  
मुनेस्तु कुशलं स्पृष्ट्वा निवेद्य सुमहात्मनः।  
राघवः प्रतिजग्राह ते उभे कुशपादुके ॥१८॥  
अब्रवीच्च तदा वाक्यं जनौघैः परिवारितः।  
वशिष्ठो वाक्यकुशलो दैन्यं हर्षं च वर्धयन् ॥१९॥  
अधिरोप्यार्य पादाभ्यामिमि गृह्णीष्व पादुके।  
एते हि सर्वलोकस्य योगक्षेमं करिष्यतः॥२०॥  
सोऽधिरोप्य महातेजाः पादुके व्यपरोप्य च।  
प्रायच्छत तदा धीमान् भरताय महात्मने॥२१॥  
स पादुके ते भरतः प्रतापवान्  
स्वयं गृहीत्वा तु मुदा धृतव्रतः।  
प्रदक्षिणं चैव चकार राघवं  
चकार चैवोत्तमनागमूर्धनि॥ २२॥

**Lahore edition** (Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 125, 19-22)

Vasiṣṭha instructs Rāma to give his *Pādukā* to Bharata. Rāma then gives his *Pādukā* to Bharata. Bharata taking those circumambulated Rāma.

एवं ब्रुवाणं रामं तु वसिष्ठो वाक्यमब्रवीत्।  
तेजसाऽऽदित्यसङ्काशं प्रतिमानं धनुष्मताम्॥१९॥  
प्रयच्छ पादुके पुत्र भरताय महात्मने।  
एते हि सर्वलोकस्य योगक्षेमं करिष्यतः॥२०॥  
इत्युक्तः स वसिष्ठेन रामोऽप्यानाय्य पादुके।

प्रयच्छत् प्रीतिमान् भ्रात्रे भरताय महात्मने ॥२१॥

स पादुके ते भरतः प्रतापवांस्तदाऽनुरूपे प्रतिगृह्य धर्मवित्

प्रदक्षिणं चैव चकार राघवं चकार चैवोत्तमनागमूर्धनि॥२२॥

Here, the *pādukās* of Rāma, which Bharata took for being installed as Rāma's substitute, offer a textual problem. Though a very minor thing, that *pādukās* are brought by Śarabhaṅga seems to be an important detailing on the part of the eastern version, more specifically the Paris edition of VR. Bharata may not come with that idea, and Rāma definitely can't have golden *pādukās*. Here North-Eastern edition suggests the *pādukās* brought by another sage, and that too *pādukās* of grass, which is more natural with their *vanavāsa* context. V. Raghavan (2009, p. 182) also says that *tr̥ṇapādukā* is a more natural version of the text.

Another problem faced in this whole narrative is how Bharata came up with the idea of *pādukās*. Therefore, the Paris and Lahore editions solve this problem by bringing Vasiṣṭha into the picture. Vasiṣṭha suggests to Rāma that he should give his *pādukās* to Bharata and attain the golden mean in the conflict. Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracaritam* (IV act) also adopts the version that Śarabhaṅga brings *pādukās* on the request of Yudhājit.<sup>3</sup> Here, southern text seems more unnatural as they include the text as golden *pādukās* rather than grass *pādukās*.

### 3. Amorous episode from Ayodhyākāṇḍa:

Ayodhyākāṇḍa has the description of the beauty of Citrakūṭa and Mandākinī shown to Sītā by Rāma. Followed by this, there is a description of amorous sports between Rāma and Sītā.

CE, Baroda has a description of the beauty of Citrakūṭa and Mandākinī in *sarga* 88 and 89 of Ayodhyākāṇḍa. CE of Baroda has pointed out the amorous episode

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<sup>3</sup> युधाजित्- वत्स, एवं तावत् रामभद्र एवमयं विज्ञापयति- यदेतद्भगवता शरभङ्गेण प्रेषितं तपनीयोपानद्युगं तदार्यः प्रसीदीकरोतु। (*Mahāvīracaritam of Bhavabhūti*, T. R. Ratnam Iyer (Tr and Ed.), Nirnay Sagar Press, Bombay, 1892, p. 172)

in Ayodhyākāṇḍa, passage no. 26 in App. I as an interpolation. It is found in all the MSS. of the N recension (Ñ<sub>1</sub> -missing major portion of it) and in Dt<sub>1</sub> and M<sub>4</sub> of the SR. There is, however, no trace of it in any of the commentaries on the S recension from Uḍāri down to Maheśvaratīrtha and also in the bare text of 9 MSS. (T G M<sub>1-3</sub>).

The Gitapress edition has no inclusion of this amorous episode in Ayodhyākāṇḍa. There is a description of Rāma showing the beauty of Citrakūṭa to Sītā (*sarga* 94,95), but amorous sports between them are absent.

The Paris edition has elaborated this in detail after Rāma shows the beauty of Citrakūṭa to Sītā in Ayodhyākāṇḍa, *sarga* 105, in which the crow episode is also included. Maithilī sits on the lap of Rāma. Rāma's heart is pleased by that. He put the tilak of red chalk (śilāgirī) on her forehead very lovingly. (Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 105.17) He put the flowers of Keśara in her hair. (105.18). When both of them were walking, Sītā saw the flock of monkeys and got afraid. Rāma, warding them off, embraces and calms Sītā, which makes the red mark transfer to his chest. (Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 105.17105.22,23). Then they came across a grove of Aśoka trees, and they proceeded towards that and adorned each other with flowers. (105.29) Upon their return to the hermitage, Lakṣmaṇa shows them ten deers he killed. (105.32.33) Sītā then cooked a meal for them, and followed the crow episode.

The Madras edition has no mention of this episode after the *Citrakutavarṇanam* and *Mandakinīvarṇanam*. The Kumbakonam edition includes this episode (*sarga* 95), but it is marked as an interpolation. The Lahore edition has this episode (*sarga* 109) followed by the crow episode.

The following stanza from this amorous sport has been very popular and this is immortalised by Bhavabhūti in *Uttararāmacaritam* (VI.36). There are slight variations in the text.

त्वदर्थमिव विन्यस्तः शिलापट्टोजयमग्रतः।

अस्य पार्श्वे तरुः प्रवृष्ट एव केसरैः॥ or यस्यायमग्रतः पुष्पैः प्रवृष्ट एव केसरः ॥ (App. 1, No.26, lines 11-12)

त्वदर्थमिव विन्यस्तः शिलापट्टोजयमग्रतः।

अस्य पार्श्वे तरुः पुष्पैः प्रवृष्ट एव केशरः॥ Paris edition, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, १०५.६

त्वदर्थमिव विन्यस्तः शिलायां सुखसंस्तरः।

यस्याः पार्श्वे तरुः पुष्पैर्विनष्टः एव केसरैः॥ Lahore edition १०९.६

It seems that there are many variations pertaining to this episode. Some editions just maintain the description of Citrakūṭa and Mandākinī but some added the amorous episode and subsequent crow episode as well. Surprisingly, some southern recensions have also maintained this text.

In the opinion of P. L. Vaidya (1962, p. XXIII) the passage was first introduced in the NR, and was blindly copied by Dt<sub>1</sub><sup>4</sup> and M<sub>4</sub><sup>5</sup>. The lines 31-52 describe a highly poetic and romantic situation, the elimination of which from the constituted text might displease lovers of a fine poetic composition. The passage is, no doubt, charming and old enough as it is referred to by Bhavabhūti (8<sup>th</sup> Century) and Kṣmendra (11<sup>th</sup> Century); but no trace of it can be found in the purest form of the S recension represented in the Critical apparatus of as many as 9 Mss. (T G M<sub>1-3</sub>) which, in *sargas* 88 and 89, represent the contents of this part. The editor considers this passage for the hero and heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as out of taste in the present context, for they could not indulge in such amorous sport when their departure from Ayodhyā, Bharata's visit, etc., were still fresh in mind, and the suggestion of Śṛṅgāra at this juncture is hardly justifiable.

This is a very logical stand. It seems that the serene beauty of Citrakūṭa and Mandākinī must have inspired northern poets to narrate about the erotic pleasure taken by Rāma and Sītā. Being in the forest has been considered the ideal place of natural beauty and serenity to enjoy each other's company. It may be possible

<sup>4</sup> Jodhpur Palace Library, unnumbered, unnamed mss. (North-Western Recension)

<sup>5</sup> Malabar, in Private possession of (Sri Nilakanthan Nambudripad), unnumbered, undated (Southern Recension)

that, as proposed by Bhatt, it is the NR which is trying to refine the poetic and grammatical features. Description of Citrakūṭa, Mandākinī and erotic description on that background is in tune with Classical Sanskrit literature. This feature later became an inevitable part of the *Mahākāvya lakṣaṇas*. It doesn't go with the main purpose of the epic, which is mainly based on war and its context. Bhavabhūti has followed the Northern *pāṭha* (more specifically, his rendition of the verse matches that of the Paris edition, i.e. North Eastern recension) and recounted the above verse, which also suggests that this *pāṭha* was definitely old and popular.

Some excerpts are also recounted in the episode of Sundarakāṇḍa as a part of *abhijñāna* presented by Sītā to Hanuman. These memories, which are private and erotic, are definitely necessary as *abhijñāna*. Therefore, this episode also adds to the fine-tuning of the epic poem from the perspective of structure.

#### 4. Crow episode:

Connected with the amorous episode of Rāma and Sītā is the crow episode in *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* of the NR. This episode is otherwise placed in the Sundarakāṇḍa when Hanumān asks for *abhijñāna* as Sītā is not ready to ride on his back. Sītā tells a memory of when they stayed on the foothills of Citrakūṭa. One crow was continuously troubling Sītā. Getting tired of warding him off, she sat on the lap of Rāma. At that time, the crow assaulted Sītā by attacking her breast with the desire for meat. Rāma, seeing the dripping blood, shoots Brahmāstra with mantras at him. Crow, who was Indra's son, surrendered to Rāma. To save his life, an arrow is shot on crows' eye as it can't go to waste. Here, Sītā comments that if Rāma can shoot Brahmāstra on insignificant crow, then how can he forgive the one who has abducted me? <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> मत्कृते काकमात्रेऽपि ब्रह्मास्त्रं समुदीरितम्।

कस्माद् यो माहरत् त्वत्तः क्षमसे तं महीपते॥ Gitapress, Sundarakāṇḍa , 38.37

Gitapress edition mentions this in Sundarakāṇḍa (*sarga* 38), but it's absent in Ayodhyākāṇḍa. The Madras edition has no inclusion of this episode in Ayodhyākāṇḍa, but it includes it later in Sundarakāṇḍa (*Sarga* 38). Lahore edition mentions this in Ayodhyākāṇḍa (*sarga* 109) and Sundarakāṇḍa (*sarga* 35). Paris edition mentions this in Ayodhyākāṇḍa (*Sarga* 105) and Sundarakāṇḍa (*Sarga* 36). Paris edition again recounts their amorous sport, also as a part of *abhijñāna*, presented by Sītā to Hanuman. She recalls that Rāma had put the red mark on her forehead (105.34), and then the crow episode follows.

In the Kumbakonam edition (*Ayodhyākāṇḍa sarga* 95) this episode is shown as *prakṣipta*. CE, Baroda, includes the crow episode in the appendix. P. L. Vaidya (1962, p. XXIII) opines that this episode was first introduced by a *kīrtanakāra* bent on amusing his audience, and offering, at the same time, an explanation why a crow sees with one eye only. The description of the harassment of Sītā by the crow is highly inappropriate in the *ādikāvya*, and does no credit to Sītā or to Rāma, who was, for a while, silently looking at the harassment. The use of a reed sanctified by *mantras*, as described in (App. I. no.26, lines 89-90) against a small bird for such a trifling purpose surely looks strange.

Vaidya points out that there is no trace of this episode in the SR of Ayodhyākāṇḍa, but still this story is referred to in the vulgate, 5.67, in the Lahore edition in 5.66 and Gorresio's edition in 5.68, and is used as *abhijñāna* by Sītā in her message to Rāma. Thus, all printed editions agree in retaining the incident in the Sundarakāṇḍa (Vaidya 1962, p. 701). This episode is kept in Sundarakāṇḍa, *sarga* 36 of CE, Baroda. On manuscript evidence, this *sarga* is an interpolation as far as Ayodhyākāṇḍa is concerned. *Padma Purāṇa* (6.269.194), Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa* (12.21-23) and *Agni Purāṇa* (9.14) mention this episode. This proves that the passage is old and was in wide circulation.

Commentators also regard it as exclusion in Ayodhyākāṇḍa, but transmit the same. This observation is important because it proves that this episode was

considered significant from the viewpoint of the storyline that it was retold by later texts and commentators.

Attention might be called to its Etiological feature of the story; it explains why the crow possesses, so it is believed, only one eye, which rolls back and forth as they quickly move their heads. This episode, though, serves the purpose of *abhijñāna* as it happened between Rāma and Sītā, and nobody was aware of it. It also generates a kind of trust that if Rāma can punish a trivial crow with Brahmāstra then definitely he will call a war with Rāvaṇa for abducting Sītā.

Apart from this, the Crow narrative has a Purāṇic bent. It has the etiological purpose as suggested by Sheldon Pollock (2007, p. 489). It comes as a justificatory narrative why the crow sees with one eye. Such narratives are profuse in the Purāṇas. *Rāmāyaṇa* doesn't have such etiological tales except Uttarakāṇḍa, which is considered to be of a later period.

### 5. Indra-Pāyasa episode:

Sītā is taken to Aśokavāṭikā after abduction. She is encircled by various ogresses. The *sarga* narrates how Brahmā asks Indra to provide sacrificial food to Sītā in Laṅkā so that she can sustain her life during her period of captivity in Laṅkā. She is in despair, encircled by all demoness. She may not take the food as she will be in separation. She may die without food. Indra carries Nidrā with him. Nidrā deludes all demons. Indra accordingly goes to Sītā, tells her that Rāma will come with the army and kill Rāvaṇa. Sītā asks for his identification as a god. Indra reveals his divine characteristics. Sītā accepts the sacrificial milk given by Indra to her. Sītā dedicates that offering to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. She was freed from hunger and thirst and also learned about the well-being of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

CE of Baroda mentions this episode as an interpolation. Araṇyakāṇḍam, Passage no. 12 (67 11) found in some N MSS and one S MSS (Dt<sub>1</sub>) corresponds to *sarga* 63 in Gorresio's edition and also in the Lahore edition. It is considered *prakṣipta*

in the SR. The Gitapress edition (Sarga 57) presents this episode as *prakṣipta*, but includes both text and translation. Kumbhakonam edition includes (Sarga 57) this *sarga*, but it is shown as *prakṣipta*. The Madras edition completely omitted this episode.

It seems that NR has added this *sarga* to make the following points. It emphasises the position of Sītā as *virahiṇī* and also *pativratā*. She can't eat without seeing Rāma. Pāyasa seems to be a miraculous element for being hunger and thirst-free. This is again very much in tune with the Purāṇic material of the later period, where *abhūtātmakata* is very common. Epics where the stories are more about the human element, it seems very unlikely that this episode was part of the original epic poem. The role of Indra is that Sītā got to know about the well-being of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from him and got assurance from Indra about his help. Rāma will come to kill Rāvaṇa, etc. This is again fine-tuning of the structure of the epic and adding the dramatic element.

### **Conclusion:**

It is observed that almost all editors of CE agree in accepting the Western recension of the VR. CE needs more diligent study of each and every variation based on Higher criticism to come to any solid conclusions. As far as we observe, selected examples, NR has added more dramatic elements to the storyline without changing the basic structure of the story. Nowhere, main frame of the story get deviated, distorted or changed. Detailing or focus may change due to these variations. Except for the Pādukā episode, in all other episodes, NR have made dramatic changes. In the Pādukā episode, NR is very natural, but SR has made an addition which seems quite unnatural.

NR has played a role most of the time in making the plot interesting and in tune with later classical literature or the Purāṇas. It also necessitates the independent

and in-depth study of various interpolations observed in different recensions of VR.

All these additions and interpolations made by different recensions have given rise to further regional *Rāmāyaṇas*, their development and have played an important role in enriching our literary tradition. This is the reason that variations in the versions of VR are an important area of research.

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