

# Goudiya Recension of Valmiki Ramayana

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This paper is an extract from the 7th volume (Readings of Ramayana) of The Ramayana of Valmiki, authored by Dr. R. Ranganji, Founder President of Web Of Life Makers (Webolim) from the 10 volumes on The Ramayana of Valmiki, a magnum opus, published in 2020. This paper, in the form of a water drop, is a humble summary of the ocean of analysis and insights presented by Dr Ranganji in the book.

## What is Goudiya Recension of Valmiki Ramayana

Gauda recension, as called by European scholars, is prevalent in Gauda desha (Bengal). While the texts like Iramavataram of Kamban or Ramcharita Manas of Tulsidas are retellings, Gauda recension is not one among them. It uses the same text of Valmiki but with numerous alterations. It is not a reading too because alterations are enormous such that it should be billed entirely as a different text. It is Valmiki's Ramayana rewritten. It can be called as Gauda Ramayana (GR). The other recension of Valmiki Ramayana is labelled as Non Gauda reading of Ramayana (NGR) to compare and contrast between the two recensions and also arrive at the more authentic version.

Regarding GR, Gaspare Gorresio says, "The Ramayana tradition was handed down orally from age to age. Later it was gathered and arranged in Gauda and this must have given rise to the Gauda recension. Other raphodists sang and spread the poem all over the northern regions of India, thus giving rise to the northern recension. This must have led to the origin of Gauda recension. And this is how the ancient epics were handed down and diffused by the raphodists. I think that this is the only way the two recensions can be understood and explained (Valmiki Ramayana, Prof. Gaspare Gorresio's prefaces to the Sanskrit text, p.45, (1986), Indian heritage trust, Madras.)"

Though Gorresio's view appears broader or comprehensive, Dr. Ranganji views it differently for two reasons.

1. While Vedas followed predominantly oral traditions, it would not have been possible for a voluminous epic like Ramayana to be handed down across generations orally. Learning Ramayana post completion of Vedic studies would take a minimum of 14 years, which does not look practical. Also, to preserve the svaras of Vedas, oral tradition was maintained. Further, Vedas have multiple seers who were the Mantra drashtas. On the other hand, it is beyond doubt that the major portion of Ramayana has a single author. Why would a single author use the oral method to preserve the scripture when writing technique existed? One can argue the date of the Ramayana of Valmiki predates the oldest available written documents and inscriptions of the world. Writing skill is found in the epic (E.g. 5.36.2.). In the final chapter, the Ramayana itself mentions its writing tradition (6.131.120.).

भक्त्या रामस्य ये चेमां संहितामृषिणा कृताम् । लेखयन्तीह च नरास्तेषां वासस्त्रिविष्टपे । ।

2. GR is only a reconstruction of an already existing Ramayana of Valmiki. GR has a lot of grammatical and metrical errors. It is true the tradition does not take the error in the compositions of Rishis seriously and NGR too has a few errors. But the difference between them in terms of grammatical and metrical errors is highly significant. Errors found in GR are abundant.

## Defects in GR

A few examples of the errors in GR are given below.

हरीन्द्रमिन्द्रोपमतुल्यवीर्यः (6.46.57.) There is no need for the synonymous words 'tulya' and 'Upama' together. The epithet Ramachandra comes in GR which is not of Valmiki's style. हीनं यद्रामचन्द्रेण न विदीर्णं सहस्रधा । (2.62.21.).The word Avatar comes in GR which is not of Valmiki's style. नारायणस्त्वं भगवान् राक्षसार्थेऽवतारितः । (6.26.9.).

A few GR-verses which are inconsistent to the style of Valmiki are given below.

वर्णश्रेष्ठान् पूजयन्तः "Subjects of Ayodhya honored the superior classes (1.6.20.)." - Valmiki never talks of inferiority or superiority of any human class or caste.

सूत्रभाष्यविदश्चैव वेदवेदाङ्गपारगान् ॥ The scholars who were invited for Ashvamedha of Dasharatha include scholars of Sutra and Bhashya (1.11.6.). This is unusual to Valmiki as all Bhashyas were written only after him. Among Purusharthas, Valmiki always mentions three. In GR, the fourth one, Moksha, is mentioned (1.80.15.). This is inconsistent with Valmiki.

ब्रह्म न प्रावदत् कश्चिन्न च धर्मोऽभ्यवर्तत । In Ayodhya devoid of Rama, nobody recited the Vedas and nobody practiced Dharma (2.45.4.). People not following Dharma is certainly not consistent with Valmiki.

In the 61st chapter of Ayodhya Kanda, Kausalya, hurt by Rama's exile, scolds Dasharatha. This occurs in all readings. In GR, Kausalya's harsh words are more detailed which is certainly a later addition. Kausalya asks the King, "If you exiled Rama to keep your word, why did you not keep the word of offering deputy kingship to your son Rama?" Anyone who dives deep into the epic can easily understand the difference between Dasharatha's resolve to crown Rama and Dasharatha's word to Kaikeyi. Former is simply a resolve while the latter is a swear, which is extremely significant compared to resolve. Unfortunately, without any answer, Kausalya's question alone is detailed here. This will confuse the readers and will deviate them from Valmiki's heart – which is to establish the significance of truth and swear in the second book of the epic.

नूनं च तौ न जानीतो मृत्युं ते रामलक्ष्मणौ । यथा हि वनमुत्सृज्य नागताविह दुःखितौ ॥

Bharata further laments, "Rama and Lakshmana do not know you are dead and that is why they did not come here leaving the forest (2.81.16.)."

Again, this is not Valmiki's style. Depth of Bharata's heart is not so easy. Rama has to guard the truth. He cannot return at any cost, even for his father's death. This was the significance given to the truth those days. This is not easily understandable today.

अयुक्तं निधने कामं पुत्रस्य यतितुं मया । न तु मे रामतुष्ट्यर्थमकार्यं भुवि विद्यते ॥

वधोपायो वधश्चैव तुल्यदोषमिदं द्वयम् । तत्पापमुपतिष्ठेयं रामसिद्धिं प्रयोजयन् ॥

घृणामपास्य रामार्थे हनिष्ये भ्रातुरात्मजम् ॥

In GR, Vibhishana says, "It is not fair for me to make efforts in the destruction of my brother's son. But I can do anything, even that which should not be done, to please Rama. Killing and telling the method to kill, both are blemishes. Therefore, I shall get the sin accomplishing Rama's task. Throwing away my shame, I do it for the sake of Rama. While I fight with him, tears come out. But Lakshmana shall remove it."

This is not Valmiki's style and not consistent with Vibhishana's character. Vibhishana never feels anywhere in the epic that he has committed a sin by giving up his relatives and helping their opponents. He is perfectly convinced that he walks the path of Dharma. So these verses of GR are certainly a later addition.

All these suggest NGR is more authentic than GR.

### Divisions of chapters

Wherever the divisions of chapters are different in GR from NGR, NGR gets proven to be more authentic. Let us see a few examples.

स तु मुनिवरलब्धसत्क्रियस्त्रिदशवरस्त्रिदशैरिवार्चितः ।

सुसुखमवसदाश्रमे तदा जनकसुतासहितः स राघवः ॥

Rama with Sita stayed in that Ashrama happily after getting honored by Rishis as Indra got honored by celestials (3.6.23.).

With this verse the chapter ends in GR, which is not found in other readings. A chapter conclusion is significant in Ramayana. It is not accidental. Most chapters in Ramayana take us to a pause, a meditative mood at the end. After experiencing the pause, we should start to read the next chapter. Wherever Valmiki felt this pause he ended the chapter. This meditative pause is not felt in the above shloka. On the other hand, this can be felt with the last verse of this chapter found in other readings.

तथान्ये तापसाः सिद्धा रामं वैश्वानरोपमाः । न्यायवृत्ता यथान्यायं तर्पयामासुरीश्वरम् ॥

With this verse, one can have a pause entering a meditative mood and then after few seconds of meditation can start the next chapter. This meditative mood is hindered by GR's final verse of this chapter. The internal reality of the meditative pause can be experienced by anyone who becomes a true connoisseur of Ramayana by reading Valmiki several times, watchfully, attuned to the moods which the poet wants to establish through his literature.

In NGR, 28th chapter describes Sita's lament and 29th chapter describes her joy. The chapter-division seems natural and normal. In GR, these chapters are jumbled, which seem artificial and not consistent with Valmiki's style. In esoteric sense, a feel of melancholy and a dim ray of hope emerging out of it should come in our meditative pause at the end of 28th chapter. In the pause at the end of 29th chapter we should feel the delight filled with sweetness in our meditation. We cannot get this experience if the chapters are jumbled. So it is not consistent with Valmiki who is quite particular with the pauses between chapters.

One should understand thoroughly the chapter-division of Adi kavi is not accidental. It's significance or purpose can be understood only by a meditative heart.

## Divisions of books

Last four chapters found in Ayodhya kanda in other readings are found in Gauda Ramayana (BCE2, Samskrita) as the first four chapters of Aranyakanda. They describe Rama's arrival to the cottage of Atri and Anasuya honoring Sita. Kamban (12th century, Tamil) follows the former while Tulsī (16th century, Avadhi or Hindi) follows the latter. Former is consistent because it has an auspicious ending of the narration of Sita's wedding and Anasuya's honor to Sita. It is also right if Aranyakanda starts with Rama's entrance to Dandaka. This is a perfect conclusion.

The first chapter in Kishkindha kanda in NGR is found as the last chapter of previous book in GR.

Only with the construction of the bridge on ocean, Sundara kanda ends in GR. This pattern is followed by Tulsidas in Ramcharita manas, which means he took some elements from GR also. Sundara kanda is a separate Kavya though it is an integral part of Ramayana. Any ideal Kavya should resonate with a singular theme. This singular theme should consistently flow throughout the Kavya. Sundara kanda's theme is beauty as its name suggests. This beauty is love; the love of Sita and Rama. Vibhishana-story and construction of the bridge do not belong to this theme.

Starting Yuddha kanda with Vibhishana's surrender to Rama is verily suitable, because Yuddha kanda is to show the Veerya Rasa (heroism) of Rama. Heroism in early Indian literature not just includes war and might. Blessing the refugees with fearlessness and rescuing them from the mightiest evil forces of the world is the most important part of Veerya Rasa – a theme embodied in Vibhishana Sharanagati. So it is apt if Yuddha kanda starts with it. Vibhishana Sharanagati has to be the grand opening of Yuddha kanda.

All these show NGR is more authentic than GR.

## GR's Innovation

'There is no alteration and detraction in Gauda recension. Innovation in content cannot be discovered,' (Valmiki Ramayana, Prof. Gaspare Gorresio's prefaces to the Sanskrit text, p.17, (1986), Indian heritage trust, Madras.) is the essence of Gorresio's view through which he derives GR cannot be a reconstruction. But there are indeed alterations and detractions. Innovation can be discovered.

Ramayana's greatness is it never stops women from performing the Vedic rituals in NGR. Women's performance of Vedic rituals like Sandhyopasana (2.87.18.), Agnihotra (2.75.13.), Tarpana (2.76.23.) and Shraaddha (6.93.58.) independently is found in Ramayana. Only a few are given here. But, all these are missing in GR. Deliberately, these verses are skipped in GR reflecting the later age of India. There is not even single evidence in GR where women can perform the Vedic rituals independently.

Talking ill of women is also very rare in Ramayana in NGR. On the other hand, in GR, talking ill of women is prevalent throughout. Women-hatred is significantly higher in GR, while talking ill of women is extremely rare in NGR. In several places, GR says due to her womanhood Kaikeyi caused misery for Rama and Dasharatha.

कैकेय्या स्त्रीस्वभावेन पातितो धर्मसंकटे । (2.18.43.). दुष्टां स्त्रीबुद्धिमास्थाय कैकेयी राज्यकामिनी । (2. 110.5.).

तस्यास्तु वचनं श्रुत्वा स्त्रीस्वभावप्रदूषितम् । (3.51.5.).

Ramayana talks of many virtuous and wicked characters in both genders. In GR, wherever the wicked-women like Manthara, Kaikeyi or Shurpanaka appear, they are constantly identified with their womanhood. This is highly unfortunate.

Sati system is found in GR.

GR stops Shudra from learning the Vedas and performing Vedic rituals.

GR stops Shudra receiving Gayatri. नाभिपत्तुं मया शक्या सावित्री वृषलैरिव । (2.88.18.).

रक्षो जग्राह वैदेहीं शूद्रो वेदश्रुतीमिव । (3.55.34.) न शक्तस्त्वं बलाद्धर्तुं वैदेहीं मम पश्यतः । हेतुभिर्न्यायसम्बद्धैः शूद्रो वेदश्रुतीमिव ॥ (3.56.31.).

These are absolutely absent in NGR.

GR stops Shudras from even reciting Ramayana. While talking about the fruit attained by the class of people reading Ramayana, it uses the word 'Patan' for other classes while for Shudra it says he should hear the epic. शृण्वन् हि शूद्रोऽपि महत्त्वमीयात् ॥ (1.1.107). Shudra should only listen to Ramayana according to GR. In NGR, for Shudra also the word 'Patan' is used to denote reading.

The original Ramayana, NGR, is free from talking ill of Shudras. It certainly means it belongs to the time, which was free of prejudice against Shudras. Later the prejudice got developed as we see in further literary works.

Talking ill of Shudras and women is abundant in GR.

This is GR's alteration and detraction. This is GR's innovation.

### **Uttara Ramayana and GR**

Strikingly, the differences between GR and NGR regarding Uttara Ramayana, are lesser than what we find in other books of GR and NGR. It is likely Uttara Ramayana was written by the compilers of GR. When GR was prepared, Uttara Ramayana must have been constructed along with that. Sita's banishment and killing of Shambuka show a fallen state of women and Shudras at the time of Uttara Ramayana, which is consistent with GR. Later, NGR too embraced Uttara Ramayana from GR. This could very well be the origin of Uttara Ramayana.

This is an important finding to vindicate Uttara kanda as a later addition, because those things which are not common in all readings can be doubted in terms of establishing the authenticity of the original author. This is how the compilers of critical edition of Ramayana have done. Even before them, Govindaraja, a traditional commentator of BR rejects few chapters in Kishkindha kanda (59 to 63) showing the same reason.

While Sita comes to see Rama after the death of Ravana, Rama's intense joy is described in other readings in detail. Unfortunately, it is not found in GR. In GR, there are direct statements indicating Rama's doubt about Sita.

राघवश्चापि तां दृष्ट्वा दिव्यरूपवपुर्धराम् । जातशङ्केन मनसा सबाष्पो नाभ्यभाषत ॥ (6.99.47.).

तां तु देवीं तथा दृष्ट्वा रामः शङ्कासमन्वितः । हृदयान्तर्गतं भावं व्याहर्तुमुपचक्रमे ॥ (6.100.1.).

In other readings, however harsh Rama may be, there is no evidence for Rama's doubt about Sita. He behaves harshly only to reveal her glory to the world. Unfortunately, GR narrates Rama doubts Sita.

This is certainly an insertion because doubting is illogical. How can he cry for Sita going mad after her, if he doubts her?

In essence, in the context of Sita's Agni-pravesha, GR shows Rama to be harder than NGR. The one who is ready to narrate Agni pravesha like this in GR is fit to write Rama's banishment of the pregnant Sita to the forest also. GR's negative prejudice against women is already elucidated.

### **Identical things in GR and Mahabharata**

A few examples of the similarities between GR and Mahabharata are given here. The 33rd chapter of Ayodhya kanda details how subjects respond to the news of Rama's exile. Same chapter appears in Mahabharata in the context of the subjects' response to Yudhishtira's exile. The 100th chapter of Ayodhya kanda is the explanation of royal Dharma by Rama to Bharata. Same chapter occurs in Mahabharata as Narada's advise on royal Dharma to Yudhishtira. These two are identical in all readings of Ramayana and Mahabharata. But, GR has few more identical elements with Mahabharata.

In GR alone, the first book is named as Adi kanda instead of Bala kanda. Mahabharata's first book is Adi parva. Dhyana shloka of this reading has naray[< nmSk&Ty which is in Dhyanasloka of Mahabharata also.

GR has a wonderful Anukramani or index unlike other readings and similar to Mahabharata. This index is given in its fourth Sarga.

पतेद्दयौः पृथिवी शीर्येच्छोषं जलनिधिर्व्रजेत् । स्वैरेष्वपि न तु ब्रूयामनृतं क्वजिदप्यहम् ॥

Sky may fall. Ocean may get dried. But I shall not give up truth (2.15.30.). This, which comes in GR as Rama's words, comes in Mahabharata as the words of Krishna in the beginning of Aranya parva.

धर्मो स्थितिः परो लाभो धर्मो धारयते धृतः Rama says, "Being in Dharma is the supreme benefit. Dharma sustained sustains (2.18.47.)." The same is told by Yudhishtira to Yaksha in Mahabharata.

In the same way as Lakshmana rejects the hospitality given by Sugriva, Krishna rejects Duryodhana's hospitality in Mahabharata.

### **Why GR?**

GR authors must have thought of making the epic clearer and more beautiful than before.

GR explains the words which are ambiguous or generic in NGR. A few examples are given below.

धैर्येण हिमवानिव "Rama is equal to Himalaya in Dhairya." – NGR. SwEyeR c ihmvainv "Rama is equal to Himalaya in sthairya." (1.1.20.) – GR.

Dhairya has several meanings like courage, stability and knowledge. But sthairya has only one meaning 'stability.' In this context, stability is relevant. Here, the word sthairya of GR is as if an interpretation of 'Dhairya' of other readings.

आयकर्मण्युपायज्ञः Rama is expert in earning wealth. This is NGR. GR explains why Rama should earn at all? सुखाय सर्वसुहृदामर्थग्राही प्रियंवदः Rama earns wealth for the welfare of all good-hearted ones (2.1.13.).

After losing Sita, Rama is enraged with gods and cries he would destroy the realms of gods. This is found in all readings. One may wonder here how a pious Rama talks like this? Explanation is given in GR alone.

यदा धर्मप्रधानस्य धर्मसेतुर्विभिद्यते । तदा खिन्नस्य सौमित्रे नास्तिक्यमुपजायते ॥

Rama says, "O Lakshmana! When a dam of Dharma of the one, who lives the life prioritizing Dharma, is broken, Nastikya raises in his heart when he becomes pessimistic (3.69.5.)." Here, dam of Dharma means the eternal law of nature featured with joy as the fruit of virtue and misery as the fruit of vice. Nastikya is the loss of faith in eternal Dharma.

At first, Rama asks Hanuman to find whether Bharata is desirous of ruling the kingdom. Rama also insists Hanuman to inform this to himself so he can decide his future according to that. This is common in NGR. But in GR, the below verses appear after that.

न तस्यैवंविधं चित्तं भूतपूर्वं कदाचन । प्रकृतिर्नीतिशास्त्राणां येनैवं क्रियते मया ॥

Bharata did not have such a thought (being desirous of kingdom) before. Yet, I make enquiry based on the nature of political science.

कामं न स नरव्याघ्रः कृतां संस्थामतिक्रमेत् । न स मार्गात्तु विचलेद्धर्मो मानुषविग्रहः ॥

He shall not transgress the discipline designed. He shall not get shaken from the right course as he is Dharma in human form.

हृदयेनाभिजानामि भरतस्य तु हृद्गतम् । मन्निमित्तमपि प्राणांस्त्यजेन्नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

I know what is in Bharata's heart through my heart. He can give up even his life for my sake.

न चास्ति स्वकृते दोषो दोषो दोषगवेषणे ॥

Wishing the wealth, which is ordained to him is not a fault. Wishing the faulty wealth is a fault. (Therefore Bharata is faultless even if he wishes the wealth) (6.109.37-40.).

In this way, GR has to be taken as NGR's oldest commentary. GR helps a lot to understand the deep words of NGR.

The second reason for the birth of GR is: NGR was rewritten as GR also to beautify it more. Let us see some examples.

सर्वदाऽभिगतः सद्भिः (Rama is approached by the noble ones.) This is found in NGR. In GR this occurs as

सर्वदाऽभिप्लुतः सद्भिः (1.1.18.) Here approach is emphasized. The word अभिप्लुत is not mere approached. It is 'approached with passion.' Therefore, it can be translated as Rama is adored by noble ones.

तवापि मे प्रियं कार्यं त्वत्प्रभावाच्च मे जितम् । Rama says to Vibhishana, "I also should do that is lovable to you. I got victory with your might." This found in NGR is further elaborated in GR.

तवापि मे प्रियं कार्यं त्वत्प्रसादाद्धि मे जयः । हेतुमात्रं तु रामो वै जयमूलं विभीषणः ॥

Rama says to Vibhishana while instructing him to perform Ravana's funeral, "I also should do that is lovable to you. I got victory with your blessing. Rama is mere an instrument. Vibhishana is the base for Rama's victory (6.95.55)."

In this way, there are many examples for GR's beautification by changing the dictions of NGR.

### Merits of GR

GR cannot be fully ignored. There are few places where GR's style is more consistent with the original author. A few examples are given below.

हृष्टाः खलु भविष्यन्ति रामस्य परमाः स्त्रियः । अप्रहृष्टा भविष्यन्ति स्त्रुषास्ते भरतक्षये ॥

Women of Rama will be happy if Rama will become the king and your daughters-in-law will be in misery in the fall of Bharata.

This verse is found in NGR. How does Manthara talk of many women of Rama while he got married only to Sita? Commentators say, "Manthara talks about the possibility of future wives." But in GR, the verse in the same context is highly convincing.

ऋद्धियुक्ता श्रिया जुष्टा रामपत्नी भविष्यति । अश्रीमती चासमृद्धा स्त्रुषा ते तु भविष्यति ॥

Rama's wife will become wealthy and fortunate. Your daughter-in-law will become poor and unfortunate (7.6.).

In NGR, there is a verse in the context of Hanuman's travel to bring herbs. It states Hanuman flies to Meru which contradicts Hanuman's journey to Himalayas in the same NGR. That verse is not found in GR.

These are the few places where GR seems more authentic than NGR. What does it suggest? It clearly suggests GR is not a recent recension. It must be very old. GR must have been prepared from NGR long before the addition of some later elements in NGR.

NGR is free of Shudra-hatred and hence older than GR. But there is only one exception. The words Vrishalas and Shudras are identical in NGR. This is not found in GR. Thus, GR retains originality here. By this we conclude some changes happened in NGR even after compilation of GR. Similarly, talking ill of women is minimal in NGR while it is abundant in GR and so GR was compiled later.

In NGR, Sita, after her wedding, stayed at Ayodhya for 12 years (3.47.4.) and in GR, she stayed for a year (3.53.3,4.).

संवत्सरं चाध्युषिता राघवस्य निवेशने । ततः संवत्सरादूर्ध्वसममन्यत मे पतिम् ।

अभिषेचयितुं राजा संमन्त्र्य सचिवैः सह ॥

Krittivasa of Bengal echoes GR here in his literature called, 'Rama Panchali' while Narahari in Thorave Ramayana of Karnataka echoes NGR. Rama started his journey to the woods at the age of 25. At this time Sita's age is 18. Before this, she according to NGR stayed at Ayodhya for 12 years which means she got married at the age of six. Here NGR may be consistent with some Smritis which advocate pre-puberty-marriage. But it contradicts several statements in Ramayana of very NGR.

Some chapters, which seem later additions in NGR, are not found in GR. In this way, GR happens to be highly beneficial for identifying the interpolations in NGR.

The 31st chapter of the third book, Aranya kanda, is missing in GR. In this chapter, Akampana informs Ravana about the death of Khara. This chapter is likely an insertion because of several reasons. While Shurpanakha informs the news of the death of Khara, Ravana listens as if he is listening to it newly and enquires about Rama. The 32nd chapter is the description of Ravana in detail. This is the introduction of villain. I think it should come when villain comes in the epic for the first time. Kamban, who meticulously follows NGR, does not narrate the incident in which Akampana informs Ravana about Khara's death.

कपोतो वानरश्रेष्ठ किं पुनर्मद्विधो जनः ॥ If even a dove gave refuge to the hunter who hunted its wife, why can't the one like me (6.18.25.)? कपोतो वानरश्रेष्ठ किमुताहं विभीषणम् ॥ If the dove gave refuge even to the hunter who hunted the dove's Love, then why cannot I give refuge to Vibhishana who surrendered in true sense (5.91.5.)?

Here GR is better. NGR shows here the notion of superiority of human race. Nowhere in Ramayana, we see the notion of superiority of human race.

Thus, some chapters, which seem later additions, which are viewed by great scholars as insertions, in very NGR, are not found in GR. This indicates the oldness of GR. As the remake in the form of GR is very old, it is highly helpful indicating original chapters and verses of the original literature. i.e. we understand that what chapters were there in NGR, while GR got separated from NGR.

But it does not mean all chapters skipped in GR but found in NGR must be later additions.

E.g. 40th chapter of Yuddha kanda which contains the fight of Sugriva and Ravana is missing in GR. This is not consistent with Valmiki's style.

Chapters 62 and 63 of Aranya kanda of NGR are missing in GR. They describe Rama's search for Sita and his suffering. This is significant. It is certainly consistent with Valmiki's style. There are chapters in GR itself after this, where Rama expresses his love for Sita and longs for Sita. So though GR has missed these two chapters, they are not insertions.

The 24th chapter of Kishkindha kanda is missing in GR. This chapter talks about Tara's wisdom, her deep understanding of Rama and Rama's speech of wisdom, which she grasps rightly. Later, Tara's counseling to angry Lakshmana is also missing. If these are skipped, on what basis Tara can be called as a great woman in tradition and especially within the GR itself?

To put it in nutshell, NGR is more authentic than GR in many contexts while GR is more authentic than NGR in fewer contexts. So, regarding authenticity, first preference should be given to NGR and a secondary preference to GR.

### **Unique contents of Gauda Ramayana**

A few instances of unique contents of GR are given below.

रमयत्येव स गुणैरुदारैस्तैरिमाः प्रजाः । यस्मादतो राम इति नामैतत् तस्य विश्रुतम् ॥

He gladdens these subjects of him through his magnanimous virtues. Therefore, he is well-known as Rama (1.1.22.).

पठेदिमां पर्वणि यः समाहितः कथां शुचिर्दाशरथेर्महात्मनः ।

विमुच्यतेऽसौ कलुषेण मानवः सुखेन गच्छेच्च मृतोऽपि सद्गतिम् ॥

The chapter ends with a beautiful shloka which promises purification of heart to those who read the epic (1.4.149.).

King Dasharatha's detailed speech in front of his subjects revealing his thought of coronating Rama is missing in GR. The text only says the king asked his subjects for their opinion.

अमोघास्त्रो दूरपाती चित्रयोधी दृढायुधः । His missile never fails. He can even make those who stay at a long distance to fall through his shaft. He is creative in warfare. He has strong and stable weapons (2.1.34).

Some verses of NGR describing Rama's arrival in the chariot through the royal streets are not found in GR. One verse found in GR is not found in NGR.

प्रहर्षवद्भिः पुरवासिभिर्जनैः सभाज्यमानः प्रियशब्दवादिभिः । कराग्रदृष्टिस्मितभाषितेङ्गितैर्ययौ जनौघं प्रतिपूजयन् शनैः ॥

Honored by the cheerful citizens' talk, lovely Rama slowly goes honoring them by stretching the hand, seeing, smiling, talking and revealing manners (2.13.29.).

The verse यश्च रामं न पश्येत्तु found in NGR (2.17.14.) is not found in GR.

नियमाश्चोपवासाश्च ये मया त्वत्कृते कृताः । ते मेऽद्य विफलीभूता वनं सम्प्रस्थिते त्वयि ॥

Kausalya says to Rama, "Fasting and disciplines practised by me for your welfare have become futile, while you start to forest (GR, 2.17.37.)." (NGR, 2.20.). "for your welfare" is a beautiful expression.

त्वं मे नाथो गुरुश्चैव गतिर्देवतमेव च । गमिष्यामि त्वया साधर्म्ये मे निश्चयः परः ॥

Sita says to Rama, "You are my lord, Guru, refuge and God. I shall come with you to the woods. This is my ultimate decision (GR, 2.27.6.)."

In GR, Dasharatha expresses his concern towards Lakshmana too while in other readings he expresses his concern only towards Sita. In GR, Vasishtha's talk in support of Sita is not found.

In NGR, Kausalya advises Sita to serve Rama in the woods without insulting him. While Sita responds positively to Kausalya's advise, Kausalya only sheds tears with joy. But in GR, Kausalya praises Sita.

While introducing Guha, GR describes his truth and Dharma. xaimRk> sTyvadI c guhae nam mhabl>, Rama smells Guha's head with love. õehada²ay mUxRin,

ध्यानैकतानस्तिमिता न विचेरुर्मृगद्विजाः ।

In a deep meditation, birds and animals of Ayodhya become one with Rama (2.59.9.).

While the messengers journey to Kekaya kingdom, Kurukshetra is mentioned in the path (2.70.12.). (NGR, 2.68.).

Apart from the men of occupations listed among the followers of Bharata to the forest in other readings, GR has a huge list (2.90.). (NGR, 2.83.).

यस्य त्वं वृत्तशौटीरो गुणज्ञो बन्धुरीदृशः । धन्यश्चासौ मम सखा राघवः प्रियबान्धवः ॥

Guha says to Bharata, “my friend Rama is blessed as he has you, the virtuous and the man of character as his brother (2.93.3.)” (NGR, 2.85.).

In the hospitality given to the people of Ayodhya by Bharadvaja, surprisingly the description of Bharata’s deed of honoring the royal seat meditating Rama on that and fanning it is missing. I am unable to even imagine this chapter without that description. If you remove that event, the whole chapter is futile in my eye.

98th chapter which describes Bharata’s longing to see Rama in detail is missing in GR.

Bharata says to Rama: तवास्मि शिष्यो दासश्च प्रैष्यः प्रैष्यानुगः परः, I am your disciple, servant, servant of the servant, even follower of the servant of the servant (2.117.6.). (NGR, 2.109.). This reminds of the Adiyaarku-adiyaan of Srivaishnavam.

इदं गोदावरीतीरमृषयः पावकोपमाः । त्वद्वाहुबलमाश्रित्य तिष्ठन्तीति मतिर्मम ॥

Shurpanakha says to Rama, “I feel Rishis stay safely in the bank of Godavari having refuge in your arms (3.23.29.)” (NGR, 3.17.).

From the verse 3.45.32 Lakshmana talks to Sita harshly. There is a turning point, from the verse 33 from which he starts to talk to her softly. To explain that turning point there is a verse in GR.

उत्तेति परुषं वाक्यं पश्चात्तापसमन्वितः । सामपूर्वं पुनः सीतां वक्तुमारब्धवानिदम् ॥

After talking harshly, Lakshmana felt sorry and then starts to talk with Sita in a pacified way (3.51.36.). (NGR, 3.45.).

त्वं हि तातो नरेन्द्रस्य राघवस्य महात्मनः । निधनं तव पक्षीन्द्र मत्कृते जातमीदृशम् ॥

Sita laments on seeing the fallen Jatayu, you are the father of Rama the great soul. Your death has happened in this way for my sake.

त्वं हि राजा दशरथो मिथिलाधिपतिः पिता । त्वं हि नाथो नरेन्द्रस्य राघवस्य महात्मनः ॥

You are Dasharatha and Janaka. You are the lord of Rama.

कच्चित्ते गुरुशुश्रूषा सफला चारुभाषिणि ॥ - NGR

कच्चित्ते गुरुशुश्रूषा सफला गुरुवत्सले ॥ - GR

Here Shabari is addressed by Rama as the care taker of Guru (3.77.10).

(NGR, 3.12.).

तत्प्रचिन्तय काकुत्स्थ हन्यैतैकेषुणा यथा, “Plan in such a way through which you can kill Vali just by one arrow (4.8.9).” (NGR, 4.11.). It is Sugriva who gives hint for Rama to hit Vali by hiding. The above sentence of Sugriva is a euphemistic expression of hiding and attacking. Many arrows represent war and one arrow represents hiding and killing.

कामतन्त्रप्रधानश्च न स्थितो राजवर्त्मनि, Rama says to Vali, “you prioritize lust. You are not in the royal path (4.18.12.).” - NGR. कामतन्त्रप्रधानश्च प्राकृतो वानरो यथा, “You prioritize lust like an ordinary ape (4.17.15.).” – GR. This is important. Here Rama shows difference between Ramayanic Vanara and an ordinary ape. Though Vanara also means an ape, Vanara of Ramayana should not be seen as an ordinary ape. Vanara is parallel to what they call as homo erectus in biology.

Coming to the point Vali’s consideration of himself to be an ordinary ape for the sake of convenience says that adultery committed by him is faultless among monkeys. Taking the same point, Rama explains Vali was hunted as he was a wild beast disturbing social order. Here, if the differentiation also is given in reply as GR does, it becomes easier to answer Vali in either way. If Vali has to be treated as a Vanara of Ramayana kind, he should be punished for transgressing the ethics. If he has to be considered as an ape, he should be hunted as any beast disturbing the society has to be hunted.

यथा रामस्तव भ्राता तथायं ते गुरुः प्रियः । पूजनीयश्च मान्यश्च रामस्यार्थे परन्तप ॥

Tara says to Lakshmana, Sugriva too is honorable to you like your Guru and brother Rama for the sake of Rama (4.35.14.).

GR mentions Kashmir (4.43.22.).

Before going to Ashoka grove, Hanuman salutes Sita, Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, gods and goddesses. This is missing in GR.

नीलजीमूतसङ्काशः स भूत्वा कपिकुञ्जरः, Here Hanuman is described like a blue cloud (5.35.34.). This is a rare expression as he is gold in color unlike Rama.

श्रुतवानात्मनि स्थितम् Rama spoke what is there in his Self (6.18.1.). – NGR.

श्रुतवानात्मनि स्थितः Rama, being in his Self, spoke these words(5.90.35.).- GR

Sugriva is convinced just by hearing Rama’s initial words: I cannot give up the one who approaches me with love. Sugriva immediately says he would bring Vibhishana. He appreciates Rama too for his words. With this the chapter ends. In the next chapter again Rama starts to talk on blessing the one who takes refuge.

It should be noted that this structure is followed by Tulsidas in Ramcharita manas. NGR has a different structure here. Both sound good. Both are consistent with Valmiki’s style. In NGR, few more verses are found here regarding protecting the one who takes refuge.

Entire 96th chapter in GR is dedicated to explain Ravana’s cremation. More details are given regarding Ravana’s cremation in GR (6.96.). It is interesting to note that Vanaras also served in the funeral as per the instruction of Sugriva (6.96.2.).

ततः सुग्रीवसन्दिष्टा वानरा भीमविक्रमाः । चन्दनागरुकाष्ठानि समाजहुरितस्ततः ॥

As per the instruction of Sugriva, Vanaras of terrific might collected the woods and sandals for the funeral of Ravana.

पुत्रपक्षे प्रजा राज्ञस्तवापि विदितं ध्रुवम् । पश्यन्तु मातरं तस्मादिमे कौतूहलान्विताः ॥

While Vibhishana brings Sita in a covered palanquin, Vanaras get excited to see Sita. Then, Rama asks Vibhishana to make Sita to come out of palanquin. In that context, Rama says in GR, “you too know that the subjects are children of the king. Therefore, may they, who are excited, see their mother Sita (6.99.32).” (NGR, 6.117.).

स तथोक्त्वा महाबाहुर्लक्ष्मणं प्राञ्जलिं स्थितम् । उवाच राजा धर्मात्मा वैदेहीं वचनं शुभम् ॥ - NGR

The same verse comes in GR as इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणं राजा स्तुषां बद्धाञ्जलिस्थिताम्, पुत्रीत्याभाष्य मधुरं शनैरेनामुवाच ह ॥ After telling this to Lakshmana, the king sees his daughter-in-law who stands with folded hands and slowly talks to her sweetly addressing her as ‘daughter!’ (6.104.41.).

Bharata hugs Sugriva in NGR (6.130.) while Bharata bows down to Sugriva in GR (6.112.1.).

वशिष्ठो वामदेवश्च जाबालिर्विजयस्तथा । काश्यपो गोतमश्चापि तथा कात्यायनो द्विजः ॥

विश्वामित्रश्च तेजस्वी तथान्ये द्विजपुङ्गवाः । अभ्यषिञ्चन्नरवरं प्रसन्नेन सुगन्धिना ।

सलिलेन सहस्राक्षं वसवो वासवं यथा ॥

Vasishta, Vamadeva, Jabali, Vijaya, Kashyapa, Gotama, Katyayana, the luminous Vishvamitra and others anointed Rama, the best among humans with fragrant and graceful water as Vasus anointed Indra (6.112.70-73.).

### **Followers of GR and NGR**

Mahabharata, Bhagavata, Anandavardhana, a scholar from Kashmir (820-890 CE), King Bhoja, Vishnu Sahasranama Bhashya, attributed to Shankara, Ramanuja and his followers, Madhva’s Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya, while he narrates Ramayana, Appayya Dikshita (1520-1593 CE) generally follow NGR only.

Many well known commentators of Ramayana like Rama varma, Trayambakaraja Makhi, Govindaraja, Krishna suri and Shiromani follow only NGR. Gorresio says GR also has several commentaries. But they are not well-known. Among them, unfortunately, only one is available now and that too in manuscript. The one commentary which is available in manuscript to Gorresio refers GR’s other commentaries. So, GR does not seem to be a living culture.

Kamban (12th century CE) mostly followed NGR as it was prevalent in Tamilnadu. Bhatti (7th century CE) follows predominantly GR. Buddha Gona reddy, author of Ranganatha Ramayana, chiefly follows NGR while sometimes follows GR. Eastern writers like Madhava kandali, Krittivasa and Vishvanath Kuntiya follow mainly GR. Though Tulsidas (16th century) follows NGR mainly, in few contexts he considered GR.

In essence, GR (Gauda Ramayana) is prevalent horizontally in India in the states Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bengal and Assam. We see two kinds of GR. GR of west (Maharashtra and Gujarat) is a blend of NGR and GR, in which GR is predominant. GR of east (Bengal) is pure GR. The saints of Maharashtra like Eknath and Samartha Ramdas are the followers of western GR while Krittivas and Madhvakandali are the followers of eastern GR. NGR in general is prevalent vertically from south to north. Madhyapradesh and Orissa are the regions of GR partially and NGR partially. In overall estimation the scholars predominantly followed NGR in India while a secondary importance was given to GR.