

Samartha Ramādāsa Svāmi's Manuscript of Rāmāyaṇa and its Exegetical Significance for the Critical Study of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: A Phylogenetic Perspective

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Abstract

The seventeenth-century manuscript of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, transcribed by the Maharashtrian saint Samartha Rāmādāsa Svāmi and titled *Rāmeṇa Rāmādāseṇa Likhitaṃ Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam* (RR), represents a crucial artifact for understanding the textual history of the Ādikāvya. This paper conducts a critical exegetical analysis of the RR manuscript, examining its physical structure, orthographic peculiarities, and textual concordance with other known recensions. By employing a phylogenetic perspective, this research argues that the RR manuscript serves as a vital "bridge" or nodal point in the transmission of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, synthesizing features from earlier "Pre-Era" manuscripts (11th-16th century) and transmitting them to the later "Post-Era" North-Western recensions (17th-19th century). The manuscript's unique inclusion of systematic chapter titles (*sarga nāmas*), exclusive passages, and distinctive orthographic markers provides invaluable data for constructing a stemma of the epic's evolution. This analysis challenges established notions of the text's unitary character and offers profound insights into the spiritual, linguistic, and regional milieu of seventeenth-century India, positioning the RR manuscript as a foundational text for understanding the Northern recension's development.

1. Introduction: The Primordial Poem and the Challenge of Transmission

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, revered as the *Ādikāvya*, occupies a foundational position in the cultural and religious landscape of the Indian subcontinent. For over two millennia, its transmission has been a complex interplay of oral tradition and handwritten transcription, leading to a proliferation of recensions and versions, each bearing the imprints of regional linguistic habits, theological inclinations, and aesthetic preferences (Brockington 45). As Sheldon Pollock notes, the written history of the Rāmāyaṇa effectively commences in the eleventh century, but the period between 1020 and 1800 saw a "massive discrepant testimony" in manuscripts, presenting a significant challenge to critical editors (Pollock, "Mīmāṃsā" 609). Within this vast and often disparate manuscript tradition, the work of Śrī Samartha Rāmādāsa Svāmī (1608–1681), known as the *Rāmeṇa Rāmādāseṇa Likhitaṃ Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam* (RR), stands as a document of singular importance. Transcribed during a period of significant socio-political flux in the Deccan, this manuscript is not merely an act of devout reproduction but a

sophisticated scholarly undertaking that provides a critical link in the epic's textual history (Joshi and Kuber 18).

The RR manuscript, preserved at the Shri Samartha Vagdevata Mandir in Dhule, Maharashtra, offers an invaluable dataset for the critical study of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. Its significance is derived from its remarkable completeness, its precise chronological placement in the seventeenth century, and its unique features, including systematic chapter titles and passages absent from many modern critical editions (Joshi and Kuber 18). The critical editions produced by the Oriental Institute in Baroda—including the *Bālakāṇḍa* edited by Bhatt (1960), the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* by Vaidya (1962), the *Aranyakāṇḍa* by Divanaji (1963), the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* by Mankad (1965), the *Sundarakāṇḍa* by Jhala (1966), the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* by Vaidya (1971), and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* by Shah (1975)—represent one major recensional tradition, while the Lahore editions of the North-Western recension edited by Datta (1931), Labhaya (1928), Bhagavad-Datta (1935), Shastri (1940), and Shastri (1936) represent another. The RR manuscript, now published in multiple volumes by the Shri Samartha Vagdevata Mandir (Ramdas 2015, 2017, 2021, 2019), offers a third, distinct textual witness that bridges these traditions (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 194).

This paper will demonstrate, through a manuscriptological, spiritual-hermeneutic, and phylogenetic lens, that the RR manuscript serves as a pivotal bridge between the early medieval "Pre-Era" manuscripts and the more standardized "Post-Era" versions. It represents a moment of synthesis where the linguistic particularities of the Marāṭhā region and the textual traditions of North-East and Western India converged, creating a stable textual root that would come to define the North-Western recensions in subsequent centuries (Joshi and Kuber 23).

2. The Scribe and the Spiritual Context: Samartha Rāmādāsa Svāmī

Understanding the exegetical weight of the RR manuscript requires a deep appreciation of its scribe. Samartha Rāmādāsa Svāmī, born Nārāyaṇa Suryājipanta Thosar in 1608 AD at Jāmba, was a contemporary of the Maratha king Śivājī and a luminary of the Bhakti and Advaita traditions in Maharashtra ("Rāmdās - Brill Reference Works"). His early life was marked by profound introspection; legend holds that at the age of twelve, he renounced a conventional life to embark on an ascetic path, eventually settling at Tākalī near Nāsika (Joshi and Kuber 19).

Between 1620 and 1632 AD, Rāmādāsa engaged in an intense twelve-year period of penance (*anuṣṭhāna*), during which he undertook the monumental task of transcribing the entire Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (Joshi and Kuber 19). This act was far more than a mechanical reproduction; it was an integral component of his spiritual discipline. He encouraged his disciples to write daily, viewing the manuscript as a living embodiment of the divine (Joshi and Kuber 20). His later philosophy, which seamlessly wove together spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) and social responsibility (*rājadharmā*), was deeply rooted in this early immersion in the Rāmāyaṇa narrative. Moreover, his command over multiple languages—including Sanskrit, Marathi, and Kannada—enabled him to produce a transcription of considerable linguistic sophistication (Joshi and Kuber 19). The extensive research compiled by Dev in the *Rāmādāsī Saṃśodhana Khaṇḍa* provides further documentation of Rāmādāsa's literary and spiritual legacy, underscoring the centrality of the RR manuscript within his broader corpus (Dev).

Applying a spiritual hermeneutic theory to religious epics, texts can be seen as operating on both exoteric (literal) and esoteric (symbolic) levels (Patel and Chauhan 2). Rāmādāsa's

transcription practice embodies this duality. While meticulously preserving the literal words of Vālmīki, his choice of chapter titles and the preservation of exclusive passages point to an esoteric engagement with the material, aimed at fostering spiritual awareness and the "upliftment of mankind" (Joshi and Kuber 21). The RR manuscript thus stands as a testament to the scribe's dual role as a faithful custodian of tradition and a creative interpreter of the divine narrative.

3. The Physical and Structural Architecture of the RR Manuscript

The RR manuscript is a masterwork of seventeenth-century calligraphy. It comprises 1,820 pages spanning the seven *kāṇḍas* (books) of the epic and containing nearly 25,000 *ślokas* (verses). A striking feature is the remarkable uniformity of the handwriting from the first page of the *Bālakāṇḍa* to the final page of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, reflecting the intense focus of the scribe over several decades (Joshi and Kuber 20).

The manuscript was written on paper measuring approximately 10.5 by 6 inches, with margins ruled in black ink. Standard pages contain 14 lines with roughly 42 letters per line. Each *kāṇḍa* concludes with the distinctive post-colophon entry: *Rāmeṇa Rāmadāsenā Likhitam Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam*, serving as both a unique signature and a declaration of devotional intent (Joshi and Kuber 21). The inclusion of a colorful illustration at the beginning of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* further emphasizes the personal and artistic devotion invested in this particular copy (Joshi and Kuber 21). The published editions of the RR manuscript—*Bālakāṇḍa* (Ramdas 2015), *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (Ramdas 2017), *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (Ramdas 2021), and *Sundarakāṇḍa* (Ramdas 2019)—now make this textual treasure accessible to a global scholarly audience.

Table 1: Chronological and Quantitative Breakdown of the RR Manuscript (Joshi and Kuber 22).

Kāṇḍa (Volume)	Folios	Completion Date (Shaka)	Gregorian Date	Scribe
Bālakāṇḍa	70	Magha, Sh. 13, 1544	Feb 2, 1622	Rāmadāsa
Ayodhyākāṇḍa	141	Phalguna, Va. 7, 1571	Mar 5, 1650	Rāghava
Aranyakāṇḍa	144	Magha, 1544	Jan 1622	Rāmadāsa
Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa	122	Ashvina, Va. 10, 1545	Oct 12, 1622	Rāmadāsa
Sundarakāṇḍa	73	Margashirsha, Sh. 1, 1545	Nov 22, 1622	Rāmadāsa
Yuddhakāṇḍa	244	Vaishakha, Sh. 3, 1546	Apr 23, 1624	Rāmadāsa
Uttarakāṇḍa	132	Kartika, Sh. 10, 1567	Nov 1, 1645	Rāmadāsa

The internal timeline of the manuscript reveals a complex history. While five volumes were completed between 1622 and 1624, the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* and *Uttarakāṇḍa* were finalized decades later, the former by a different scribe named Rāghava. This gap suggests the manuscript was a lifelong project, perhaps carried by Rāmadāsa during his extensive travels across the subcontinent, which exposed him to diverse recensional traditions. The later completion dates for these two *kāṇḍas* might also indicate that they were considered particularly significant or challenging, or that Rāmadāsa sought out specific exemplars for them during his travels (Joshi and Kuber 22).

4. Orthography and Phonetic Analysis: The Scribe's Linguistic Fingerprint

A critical analysis of the RR manuscript reveals specific orthographic features that reflect the scribe's regional background and the broader scribal practices of the seventeenth century. While the grammar is largely consistent with classical Sanskrit, phonetic shifts provide vital clues for locating the manuscript within the textual transmission.

A prominent feature is the interchange of sibilants, specifically स (sa) and श (śa). This phonetic instability is characteristic of many Devanagari manuscripts from Western India. In several instances, one sibilant is replaced by the other, indicating a regional pronunciation that blurred the distinction during transcription (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 197). This is not merely a scribal error but an "exegetical marker" that links the text to the cultural environment of its production, differentiating it from the "polished" versions of other recensions (Joshi and Kuber 20).

Table 2: Phonetic Substitutions of Sibilants in the RR Manuscript (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 197).

Word (RR)	Expected Form	Source Location
śamsinah	śamsinah	2.68.24
praśamśaśi	paśyasi	2.76.18
anṛśamśaśca	anṛśamsaśca	2.78.3
saśāka	śaśāka	2.48.27
suśoca	śuśoca	2.63.44
niśasvāsa	niśaśvāsa	2.100.28

Furthermore, the RR manuscript frequently neglects the rule of *Parasavarna* (nasal assimilation), preferring the use of an *anusvāra* (a nasal dot) in contexts where a class nasal is expected. The final ण (ṇ) is also often replaced by an *anusvāra*, simplifying the written form while reflecting a shift in phonetic emphasis (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 198).

Table 3: Nasalization and Anusvara Usage in the RR Manuscript (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 198).

Word (RR)	Expected Form	Source Location
sampaśyam	sampaśyan	2.39.37
tamapaśyam	tamapaśyan	2.75.48
vidvāmdharma	vidvāndharma	2.108.5

The scribe also employs the character ऌ (L), unique to the Marāṭhā region, as seen in the title बाळकांड (Bālakāṇḍa). These details are not errors but exegetical markers, providing a "linguistic fingerprint" that confidently places the manuscript's production in a Maharashtrian cultural context, even as it transmits a Sanskrit text of pan-Indian importance (Joshi and Kuber 20). A comparative analysis by जोशी (33) of the Bālakāṇḍa in the RR manuscript against the Southern

recension reveals that these orthographic features consistently reflect the Western Indian scribal environment, distinguishing the RR from both the Southern and North-Eastern traditions.

5. Statistical Concordance and the Uniqueness of the RR Version

When compared to standard critical editions like the Baroda (BOR) and Lahore (LR) editions, the RR manuscript reveals a significant degree of textual expansion. It contains several exclusive passages and entire *sargas* not found in other primary recensions, suggesting it preserves a branch of the tradition that was either longer or more inclusive of regional variations (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 195). The RR version includes approximately 22 more chapters than the Baroda edition and 21 more than the common Southern recensions (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 195).

Table 4: Comparative Statistical Concordance of Sarga Counts (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 195).

Kāṇḍa	RR (Samartha)	LR (Lahore)	DR (Southern)	BR (Baroda)
Bālakāṇḍa	81	77 (Datta)	72	76 (Bhatt)
Ayodhyākāṇḍa	122	128 (Labhaya)	119	111 (Vaidya 1962)
Aranyakāṇḍa	88	82 (Bhagavad-Datta)	75	71 (Divanaji)
Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa	64	62 (Shastri 1936)	67	66 (Mankad)
Sundarakāṇḍa	67	100 (Shastri 1940)	68	66 (Jhala)
Total (First 5 Kāṇḍas)	422	449	401	390

Graphical Analysis of Table 4:

A bar chart visualizing this data would immediately highlight the distinct textual profile of the RR manuscript when compared against the published critical editions.

- **Aranyakāṇḍa:** The RR's 88 *sargas* are significantly higher than the Lahore edition's 82 (Bhagavad-Datta 1935), the Southern recension's 75, and the Baroda edition's 71 (Divanaji 1963), suggesting it preserves a more expansive version of the forest exile narrative, possibly including additional dialogues or descriptive passages that were later streamlined in other recensions.
- **Ayodhyākāṇḍa:** The RR count of 122 falls neatly between the Lahore edition's high count of 128 (Labhaya 1928) and the Baroda edition's low count of 111 (Vaidya 1962). This middle position could indicate that the RR represents a "missing link" – a version that retains much of the Northern expansion seen in the Lahore recension but has not yet undergone the final stage of amplification that characterizes that tradition (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 198).

- **Sundarakāṇḍa:** The RR's 67 *sargas* align closely with the Baroda edition's 66 (Jhala 1966) and the Southern recension's 68, while the Lahore version has a dramatically higher count of 100 (Shastri 1940). This suggests that the RR follows a different textual stream for this particular *kāṇḍa*, one that did not incorporate the extensive additions found in the North-Western tradition. This variance across *kāṇḍas* reinforces the idea of the RR as a composite manuscript, drawing from multiple exemplars for different sections (Joshi and Kuber 23).

Notable exclusive passages, such as those in *Bālakāṇḍa sargas* 1.3, 1.18, and 1.79-1.81, and extensive additions in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (e.g., 2.1.9 to 2.1.39 and 2.14.16 to 2.14.112), are critical for exegetical study. They often provide deeper psychological or philosophical insights into characters' motivations, likely reflecting Rāmadāsa's own spiritual emphasis on moral righteousness and the "Supreme divine" (Patel and Chauhan 5). The published RR editions (Ramdas 2015, 2017, 2021, 2019) make these variant readings available for systematic comparison with the Baroda and Lahore recensions, as well as with the commentarial traditions preserved in the Parimal publications (Katti 1983; Mudholakar 1983; Mudholkar 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1983d, 1983e; Mudholkar 1983f).

6. Sarga Nāma: The Diagnostic Key to Textual Transmission

The most distinctive feature of the RR manuscript—and the primary evidence for its role as a "bridge"—is the systematic inclusion of *Sarga Nāmas* (chapter titles) in the colophons. Most major editions, particularly the Southern and the Baroda Critical Edition, lack these titles. In contrast, the RR MS provides a name for every canto, enabling a detailed comparison with manuscripts from across India (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 194). The lexical analysis provided by Rai in the *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇakośaḥ* (1965) offers a valuable resource for understanding the semantic range and textual history of these chapter titles.

A concordance study of the *Bālakāṇḍa sarga* names reveals that Rāmadāsa's titles correlate highly with both North-Eastern (NE) and North-Western (NW) recensions, while bearing little resemblance to the Southern (S) tradition. Titles like *Nāradavākyam nāma saṃgraha sargaḥ* (1.1) and *Brahmāgamanam* (1.2) match the Lahore edition (Datta 1931) and several North-Western manuscripts (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 199).

Table 5: Sample Sarga Nama Concordance for Balakanda (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 200-203).

Sarga No	RR Sarga Name	LR Match (Datta)	Pre-Era Match (1020-1594 AD)	Post-Era Match (1675-1869 AD)
1	Nāradavākyam nāma saṃgraha sargaḥ	Yes	None	NW2, NW5, NW10
2	Brahmāgamanam	Yes	NE1, NE2	NE5-9, NW1-15
5	Ayodhyāvarṇanam	Yes	NE1-3, W2	NE4-11, NW1-16
15	Vānarotpattiḥ	Yes	NE1-3, W1	NE4, NE8, NW1-16
20	Vidyāpradānam	Yes	NE1-3	NE4-11, NW3-15

63	Dhanurbhaṅgo	Yes	NE1-3	NE4-11, NW1-15
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Graphical Analysis of Table 5:
This data can be understood through the lens of phylogenetic stemmatics, which seeks to map the relationships and descent of manuscripts.

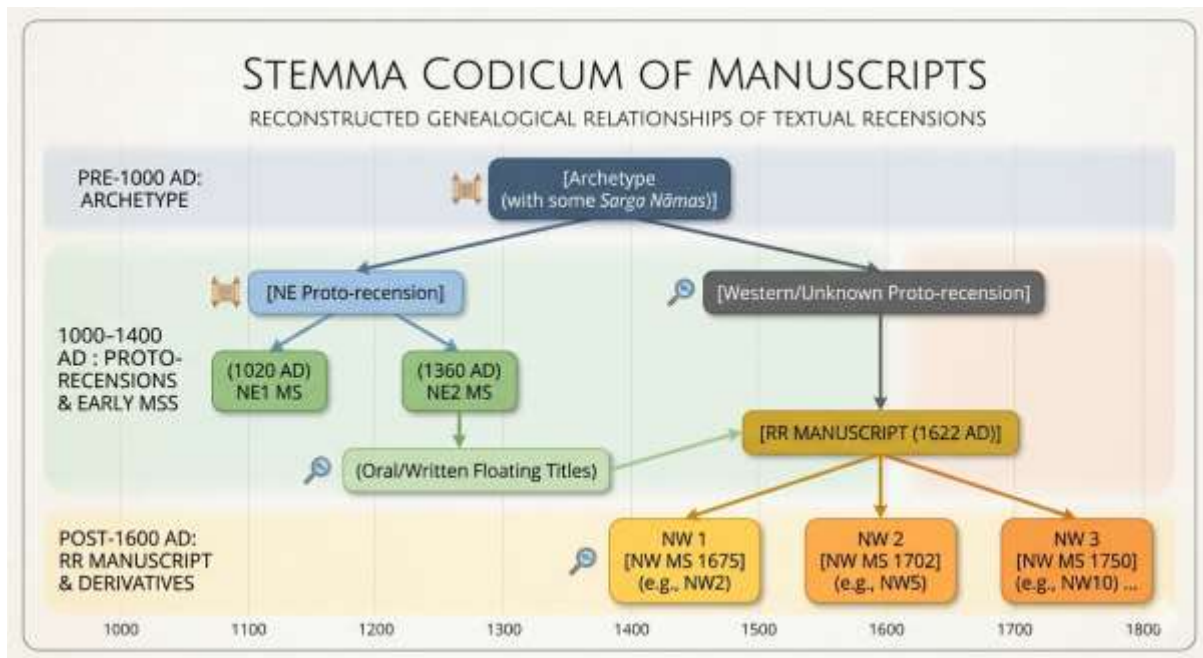
- **Archaic Retention (NE1, NE2):** The presence of names like *Brahmāgamanam* and *Vānarotpattiḥ* in both the RR and the earliest "Pre-Era" North-Eastern manuscripts (NE1: Nepali MS 1020 AD; NE2: Maithili MS 1360 AD) suggests that these titles are not a seventeenth-century innovation. They represent an archaic layer of the tradition, preserved in the remote Himalayan region and independently in the RR manuscript. This points to a common ancestral source for the Northern recension that contained these titles (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 202).
- **Innovation and Codification (RR):** The crucial data point is for *Sarga 1, Nāradavākyam...*. This title has no surviving match in the Pre-Era manuscripts. It appears in a stable written form for the first time in the RR manuscript (1622 AD). This is a moment of **textual codification**. Rāmadāsa either inherited this title from a now-lost exemplar or, acting as an editor, formally adopted a floating title into his master copy (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 204).
- **Phylogenetic Descent (Post-Era NW):** The subsequent appearance of this same title in multiple "Post-Era" North-Western manuscripts (NW2, NW5, NW10) dated 1675–1869 AD strongly suggests that these later scribes used the RR manuscript, or a direct copy of it, as their exemplar. The RR manuscript thus functions as the **node** or **common ancestor** for this specific textual feature in the NW recension (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 205).

The data confirms that the RR manuscript is a "composite copy." It carries forward approximately 25.7% of the *sarga* names found in the oldest "Pre-Era" manuscripts. Crucially, a significant portion (36 *sargas* in the *Bālakāṇḍa*) find no match in the Pre-Era, appearing for the first time in a stable, written form in Rāmadāsa's manuscript. These names then become standard in the "Post-Era" North-Western manuscripts (1675–1869 AD), establishing the RR manuscript as the vital link that codified these titles and transmitted them from scattered regional traditions into the dominant North-Western recension (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 206). The Parimal editions of the Rāmāyaṇa with commentaries (Katti 1983; Mudholkar 1983; Mudholkar 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1983d, 1983e; Mudholkar 1983f) preserve the commentarial traditions that engaged with these *sarga* titles, further attesting to their importance in the exegetical tradition.

7. A Phylogenetic Perspective: The RR Manuscript as a Nodal Point

The evidence from orthography, statistical concordance, and *sarga nāma* transmission allows us to construct a phylogenetic model for a branch of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa's Northern recension. In this model, the RR manuscript is not a terminus but a crucial nodal point.

Figure 1: Proposed Phylogenetic Stemma for the Northern Recension (Bālakāṇḍa Sarga Nāmas)



Explanation of the Stemma:

1. **Archetype:** A hypothetical early manuscript or stable oral tradition that contained a core set of *sarga nāmas* (Joshi and Kuber 18).
2. **Regional Divergence:** The tradition splits. The North-Eastern branch (NE1, NE2) preserves many of the archaic titles. Another branch, perhaps in Western or Central India, preserves a different set, with some titles possibly remaining in a fluid, oral state (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 202).
3. **Convergence in the RR Manuscript:** In the early 17th century, Rāmadāsa, through his travels and scholarship, gains access to manuscripts or oral informants from both branches. He creates a new, comprehensive manuscript (RR) that synthesizes these traditions. For some chapters (e.g., *Sarga* 1), he codifies a title that had previously been fluid, creating a new stable reading (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 204).
4. **Descent and Proliferation:** The RR manuscript, or a close copy, becomes a prized exemplar. Scribes in the North-Western region in the late 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries use it as the basis for their own copies, inheriting its structure, including its now-codified *sarga nāmas*. This explains the high degree of concordance between RR and the later NW manuscripts, which include the Lahore editions (Datta 1931; Labhaya 1928; Bhagavad-Datta 1935; Shastri 1940; Shastri 1936) (Joshi and Kuber 24).

This phylogenetic model confirms the "Genesis Theory" proposed in the scholarship: while only a quarter of its data existed in rare Pre-Era manuscripts, over 56% of its unique features were carried forward into the manuscripts that define the North-Western tradition (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 206). The RR manuscript is therefore not just a bridge but a **generative source** for a significant portion of the later textual tradition.

8. Exegetical Significance for the Critical Study of Vālmīki

The exegetical significance of the RR manuscript, viewed through this phylogenetic lens, extends beyond manuscriptology. It challenges the notion of a "unitary character" for the

Rāmāyaṇa, which some early critics proposed by viewing Northern versions as mere "purifications" of an archaic Southern text (Pollock, "Mīmāṃsā" 605). Instead, the RR MS suggests that the Northern traditions represent a robust, independent evolution of the epic, with its own internal history of branching and synthesis, meticulously preserved and even shaped by scholars like Rāmadāsa (Joshi and Kuber 23). The availability of multiple recensions—the Baroda Critical Edition (Bhatt 1960; Vaidya 1962; Divanaji 1963; Mankad 1965; Jhala 1966; Vaidya 1971; Shah 1975), the Lahore North-Western Recension (Datta 1931; Labhaya 1928; Bhagavad-Datta 1935; Shastri 1940; Shastri 1936), the Paramil commentarial editions (Katti 1983; Mudholakar 1983; Mudholkar 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1983d, 1983e; Mudholkar 1983f), and the published RR text (Ramdas 2015, 2017, 2021, 2019)—now enables scholars to undertake the kind of comprehensive comparative analysis that Joshi's work has pioneered.

The manuscript functions as a "maulik" (original) resource for scholars of linguistics, social science, and spiritual history (Joshi and Kuber 24). Its unique readings and passages provide a window into the interpretive community of 17th-century Maharashtra. The emphasis on moral clarity and righteous action in its exclusive passages resonates with Rāmadāsa's own teachings to his disciple Shivaji, suggesting that the manuscript was not a passive copy but an active tool for shaping ethical and political consciousness (Patel and Chauhan 6). The lexicographical resources compiled by Rai (1965) provide essential tools for analyzing the semantic nuances of these unique readings.

Finally, the RR manuscript's high degree of accuracy and consistent structure provided a stable "root" that helped standardize the North-Western tradition. In the chaotic landscape of discrepant manuscript testimony that Pollock describes, the RR manuscript emerges as a force for textual coherence, its influence palpable in the versions eventually published in Lahore in the 19th century (Joshi and Kuber 24). The work of scholars like जेष्ठी (32-37) in conducting detailed comparative analyses between the RR manuscript and the Southern recension has begun to map the precise contours of this influence.

9. Conclusion: The RR Manuscript as the Textual Bridge and Generative Node

This research concludes that the *Rāmeṇa Rāmadāsenā Likhita Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam* is not merely one manuscript among many, but the essential bridge and a generative node in the textual transmission of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. By situating the manuscript within its chronological, linguistic, and phylogenetic context, we see a document that successfully synthesized diverse traditions—including *sarga* naming conventions, orthographic habits, and textual expansions—from the North-Eastern and Western recensions of the "Pre-Era" (1020–1594 AD) and transmitted them into the "Post-Era" (1675–1869 AD) recensions (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 206).

As the oldest dated complete Devanagari manuscript of the Rāmāyaṇa known to current research, the RR manuscript predates most copies used for the Baroda Critical Edition (Joshi and Kuber 24). Its role as a "composite copy" of North-Eastern, Western, and North-Western influences identifies it as a pivotal point of convergence. The phylogenetic analysis of its *sarga nāmas* confirms that while it preserved a quarter of its textual features from ancient sources, it also served as the point of codification for a majority of the features that would define the later North-Western tradition (Joshi, "Comparative Study" 206).

As a masterpiece of seventeenth-century calligraphy, a repository of rare linguistic markers, a vehicle for spiritual hermeneutics, and a crucial node in the epic's family tree, the RR manuscript remains an unmatched resource. It proves that Samartha Rāmadāsa Svāmī was not only a saint and political mentor but a sophisticated editor and textual curator who captured the living, evolving spirit of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa at a critical moment of transition, ensuring that the ancient *Ādikāvya* remained a coherent and complete guide for future generations. The ongoing publication of the RR manuscript in critical editions (Ramdas 2015, 2017, 2021, 2019) and the continued comparative work by scholars such as Joshi, Kuber will continue to open new avenues for research, providing a deeper understanding of the Rāmāyaṇa's journey through the heart of Indian civilization.

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