

# Ramayana Shiromani Commentary of Valmiki Ramayana by Pt. Shiva Sahāya

स्वस्तिश्रीमन्तं करुणावन्तं श्रीहनुमन्तं नौमि कले ।  
नित्यं विहरन्तं हरिजनवन्तं क्षमावहन्तं कीशबले ॥  
सीतापतिपतिकं पररसरसिकं श्रितजनमतिकं दीनपतिम् ।  
रघुनायकहृदयं हृद्रिपुविजयं शरणदमभयं सर्वनतिम् ॥ १ ॥  
वन्दे श्रीसहितं गुरुमतिमहितं श्रुतिरसदयितं परममहम् ।  
सीतारघुवीरं सुखमतिधीरं सुखदगभीरं विदितमहम् ॥  
विधिहरिहरवन्द्यं श्रितजननन्द्यं प्रीतिमदाद्यं श्रुतिगम्यम् ।  
साकेतपुरेशं द्विभुजपरेशं सर्वसुरेशं द्युतिरम्यम् ॥ २ ॥  
सीताराम समारम्भां शुकाचार्यादि मध्यमाम् ।  
अस्मदाचार्य पर्यन्तां वन्दे श्रीगुरु परम्पराम् ॥  
जयति कवि कुमुद चन्द्रो हुलसी हृद्दर्षवर्धनस्तुलसी ।  
सुजन चकोर कदम्बो यत्कविता कौमुदीं पिबति ॥  
श्री गुरु चरण सरोज रज, निज मनु मुकुरु सुधारि ।  
वरनऊँ रघुवर विमल जसु, जो दायकु फल चारि ॥

In the beginning of this talk, i offer my humble prostrations with deepest reverence unto lotus feet of my pujya sadgurudev Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Sri Swami Ramabhadracharya Ji Maharaj.

I also pay my humble obeissances unto lotus feet of Sri Ranganātha Dāsa Ji Maharaja who have given me this stage to speak in valmiki ramayana conference.

Respected scholars and dear friends, today I am going to speak on the topic "Ramayana Shiromani Vyakhya" ----- a profound commentary by Pandit Vanshidhar Shiva Sahāya, a Ramanandi Scholar of 19th century who used to live near the banks of Triveni Sangam in Prayagraja.

The most interesting fact about this commentary is that it is held in great respect among Sanskrit grammarians due to its esoteric interpretation of Ramayana verses.

The central thought upon which this commentary runs is that Sri Rāmachandra is the Supreme Entity who has been extolled in Vedas, Upanishads and Valmiki Ramayana.

First of all, we should learn about the authority of the Srimad Ramayanam. Maharshi Valmiki states that the Srimad Ramayanam is the upabrimhana, or explanation, of the Vedas.

"वेदोपबृंहणार्थाय तावमाग्राहयत् प्रभुः" Therefore, Maharshi Valmiki intends to speak about that Paramatma who is known through the Vedas, as stated:  
“वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे । वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥”

Therefore, Maharshi Valmiki asks Devarshi Narada about that Veda-vedya Paramatma who descended in the form of a human in order to uphold the Vedic dharma, of which He Himself is the source.

From this, it becomes evident that Maharṣi Vālmīki was not making an ordinary inquiry, but was seeking knowledge of Brahman itself. After all, true inquiry is always directed toward Brahman, as stated in the very first aphorism of the Brahmasūtra: अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा.

The very first question that Maharṣi Vālmīki posed to Devarṣi Nārada was: “गुणवान् कः?” (Who is virtuous?) It is essential to recognize that even the attribute गुणवान् (virtuous) is rooted in the Vedas. The quality of being गुणवान् is fundamentally divine and belongs solely to Bhagavān, as affirmed in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad: “कालकालो गुणी”. This is further confirmed by the Brahmasūtra aphorism: “सर्वोपेता च तद्दर्शनात्” which means Supreme Lord is endowed with all supreme qualities as seen through scriptures.

Further, he asks about the attribute “वीर्यवान्”. This very quality is found in the Ṛgveda as: “को वीर्या परः”. He then asks about the attribute धर्मज्ञ, which means one who knows all aspects of Dharma or one who embodies Dharma in its entirety. The Ṛgveda similarly states: “धर्माणि धारयन्” — He, the Supreme Being, upholds Dharma.

Further, the attribute दृढव्रतः of Śrī Rāma is reflected in the Atharvaveda as: “स एकव्रात्योऽभवत्स” — He is the Supreme Being who is uniquely vow-bound.

When Maharṣi Vālmīki asks, “कः समर्थश्च?” meaning “Who is capable?”, the capability in question is explained by Śrī Hanumān in the Sundarakāṇḍa:

“सर्वान् लोकान् सुसंहृत्य सभूतान् सचराचरान् । पुनरेव तथा स्रष्टुं शक्तो रामो महायशाः ॥”

The highly glorious Lord Rāma possesses the ability to annihilate all worlds, along with all moving and non-moving beings, and then recreate them anew. This aligns with the Brahmasūtra statement: “जन्माद्यस्य यतः”.

Maharṣi Vālmīki also asks, “कश्चैकप्रियदर्शिनः?” — “Who is the one worthy of being seen?” The answer to this profound inquiry is that only Śrī Rāma is deserving of such a sight. Devarṣi Nārada confirms this truth, but the essence of this question has deeper roots in the Vedic scriptures, specifically in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which states: “आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः” — “The Supreme Self alone is worthy of being seen.”

Maharṣi Vālmīki then asks Sage Nārada: “Who is Ātmavān?” Sage Nārada answers that He is none other than Śrī Rāma. The term Ātmavān is no ordinary word; it carries layers of meaning as deep as the ocean:

“स्वेमहिम्नि प्रतिष्ठानात् आत्मवान् अभिधीयते”

Śrī Rāma is called Ātmavān because He is established in His own greatness and glory. This meaning has been accepted by Bhagavatpāda Ādi Śaṅkarācārya in his Vishnu Sahasranāma Bhāṣya.

Further, when Maharṣi Vālmīki asks Devarṣi Nārada, “कस्य बिभ्यति देवाः?” — “Who is he whom even the gods fear?”, Nārada answers that He is none other than Lord Rāma, before whom all the gods tremble.

This inquiry, however, has its origins in the Vedāntic scriptures, where we find a similar idea in the Brahmasūtra: “कम्पनात्” — “All tremble due to the fear of the Supreme Being.”

This concept is further confirmed in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, where it is stated:

“भीषाऽस्माद्घातः पवते। भीषोदेति सूर्यः। भीषाऽस्मादग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च। मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमिति।”

“Due to fear of Him, the wind blows, the sun rises, and Agni, Indra, and even Death perform their respective functions.”

Maharṣi Vālmīki records another quality described by Nārada in the Ramayana, where Lord Rāma is referred to as “श्रीमान् धाता”.

श्रीमान् means one who is eternally endowed with Śrī. धाता refers to the Supreme Being who sustains and upholds all creation.

This concept is mirrored in the Ṛgveda, which states:

“सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ धाता यथापूर्वमकल्पयत्”

This means: “The Dhātā, the Supreme Being, created the sun and the moon in the same manner as they existed in the previous cycle of creation.”

Devarṣi Nārada also gives the attribute Vāgmī to Śrī Rāmacandra.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, while commenting on the word “Vāgmī” in the Vishnu Sahasranāma, writes:

“यतो निःसृता ब्रह्ममयी वाक् तस्माद् वाग्मी।”

Because the Veda-filled speech itself has originated from Bhagavān, He is called Vāgmī — the divine source of all sacred words

In this way maharshi valmiki asks about sixteen qualities of that naram. Now the question naturally arises : Why did Valmiki ask about exactly sixteen qualities? Why not fifteen, or seventeen, or even eighteen? What is the reason behind choosing the number sixteen?

We find an answer to this in yajurveda where it is stated --

उपयामगृहीतो सीन्द्राय त्वा षोडशिनोऽएष ते योनिरिन्द्राय त्वा षोडशिनो ॥

This is a praise to the Lord who has Supreme Opulence, who possesses sixteen qualities.

In this way, we can understand that Maharṣi Vālmīki is inquiring about that Parabrahman who has been eulogized indirectly in the Vedas and Upaniṣads.

Taking this understanding as the basis, the Shiromani Vyakhyakāra begins his commentary by describing Sri Ramachandra as the Veda-Vedya Purusha.

He quotes from the Kathopanishad: “पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः” and relates this Śruti statement to the Ramayana, where Śrī Lakṣmaṇa says: “पौरुषे चाप्रतिद्वन्द्वः शरैनं जहि रावणम्”. Thus, Śrī Rāma is presented as the unparalleled Purusha who transcends Manas, Buddhi, Ātman, Mahat, and Avyakta.

He establishes the supremacy of Sri Ramachandra by relating it to His supreme abode, Ayodhya, which has been extolled in the Vedas as “देवानां पूरयोध्या”. Therefore, Sri Rama is the Supreme Parabrahman who resides in Ayodhya Puri, which has been described as Brahmapuri in the Upanishads.

He states that Sri Ramachandra is the original source of all incarnations, and that all these incarnations serve Sri Ramachandra, who resides along with Janakanandini Sri Janaki in Saket Loka. To validate this, he quotes from the Agastya Samhita: सर्वेषामवताराणामवतारी रघूत्तमः— “Raghuttama Sri Rama is the source of all incarnations.” He further quotes from the Brihad Brahma Samhita: तस्मिन्साकेतलोके विधिहरहरिभिः सन्ततं सेव्यमाने दिव्ये सिंहासने स्वे जनकतनयया राघवः शोभमानः । युक्तो मत्स्यैरनेकैः करिभिरपि तथा नारसिंहैरनन्तैः कूर्मैः श्रीनन्दनन्दैर्हयगलहरिभिर्नित्यमाज्ञोन्मुखैश्च ॥ यज्ञः केशववामनौ नरवरो नारायणो धर्मजः श्रीकृष्णो हलधृक् तथा मधुरिपुः श्रीवासुदेवोऽपरः । एते नैकविधा महेन्द्रविधयो दुर्गादयः कोटिशः श्रीरामस्य पुरो निदेशसुमुखा नित्यास्तदीये पदे ॥ This passage describes Sri Rama seated upon the divine throne in Saket Loka with Sri Janaki, while innumerable incarnations and deities remain ever ready to serve Him and carry out his commands.

According to Pandit Shiva Sahaya , even Srimannārāyaṇa is an expansion of Sri Ramachandra, as stated in the Varāha Samhita: “नारायणोऽपि रामांशः शङ्खचक्रगदाधरः”

He explains this with the help of the Ramayana shloka:

“सूर्यस्यापि भवेत्सूर्यो ह्यग्नेरग्नि प्रभोः प्रभुः”

Here, the Śruti states: “तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वम्,” meaning that the Parabrahman is the illuminator of all. Therefore, the illuminator of the Sun is Sri Ramachandra. In this context, Agni refers to Prakāśa Brahman, as explained by Madhvacharya. The one who illuminates this Prakāśa Brahman is Sri Ramachandra.

The phrase “प्रभोः प्रभुः” signifies that Sri Rama is the supreme controller who governs even the devas, such as Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva.

“तपः स्वाध्याय निरतं तपस्वी वाग्विदां वरम् । नारदं परिपप्रच्छ वाल्मीकिर्मुनिपुङ्गवम् ॥”

Here, the Śruti states: “यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः,” indicating that tapas refers to the expounder of knowledge, and svādhyāya refers to the study of Vedas. This knowledge is centered on the Purusha, as stated in the Śruti: “तं त्वौपनिषदं पुरुषं पृच्छामि.” This Purusha is none other than Aparājiteshvara Sri Ramachandra.

निरतं refers to the dhyana parāyana or we can say it means -- fixed in the knowledge about parbrahma tattva. Therefore this sloka confers the meaning that Maharshi Valmiki asked Devarshi Narada who is fixed in the knowledge about Paramātma Tattva.

The statement “महर्षे त्वं समर्थोऽसि ज्ञातुमेवं विधं नरम्” should not be understood as referring merely to an ordinary human being. The word “नर” carries a profound Vedic significance. In the Rigveda we find the expression:

“नरम् अवार्यक्रतुम्”

Commenting on this, Sāyaṇācārya explains:

“नरं सर्वस्य नेतारम्”

That is, Nara refers to the supreme guide and leader of all beings. Similarly, in the Mahabharata, Vedavyasa states:

“स एव सर्वभूतात्मा नर इत्यभिधीयते । नराज्जातानि तत्त्वानि नाराणीति ततो विदुः ॥”

“The one who is the indwelling Self of all beings is called Nara. From Him all principles of existence arise, and therefore they are known as Nārāḥ.”

Thus, in this verse, the word “नरम्” signifies not an ordinary man, but the Supreme Divine Person concealed in human form.

Similarly, in the expression “इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवो रामो नाम जनैः श्रुतः”, the word “राम” is interpreted by the Śiromanikāra in several profound ways. One such interpretation is:

“रः रेफः नित्यमुच्चार्यमाणत्वेनास्यास्तीति रः शिवः स च अश्च आश्च राः हरिहरब्रह्माणः तैरम्यते काले सेवनार्थं गम्यते इति रामः”

Here, “र” denotes Shiva, “अ” denotes Vishnu, and “आ” denotes Brahma. Thus, the one unto whom all these deities eternally approach for devotional service is called Rāma.

This interpretation is further supported by Śruti:

“यथैव वटबीजस्थः प्राकृतश्च महाद्रुमः । तथैव रामबीजस्थं जगदेतच्चराचरम् ॥ रेफारूढा मूर्तयः स्युः शक्तयस्तिष्ठ एव च ॥”

Just as a mighty banyan tree exists in subtle form within a tiny seed, in the same way the entire moving and unmoving universe exists within the seed-syllable “Rāma.” Upon the syllable “र” abide the three deities—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa—together with their respective śaktis. Thus, the name Rāma is not merely a personal name; it is the seed of the entire cosmos and the abode of all divinity.

according to the shiromani vyakhya sri rama's actual form is dvibhuja narākṛiti form who resides eternally in Sri Sāketa Dhāma which is situated in the middle of saptāvarana consisting of all other lokās and he only expand into other forms like Chaturbhuja, Ashtabhuja, Dashabhuja etc. he validates this concept from rama tapani shruti --

उपासकानां कार्यार्थं ब्रह्मणो रूप कल्पना ।

Therefore only dvibhuja narākṛiti parabrahma sri rama appears in the front of mother kausalya.

in the shloka एतस्मिन्नन्तरे विष्णुः रूपयातो महाद्युतिः । शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिः पीतवासा जगत्पतिः ।

shiromanikara uses akaar lopa in this shloka to say एतस्मिन्नन्तरे अविष्णुः -- अस्य वासुदेवस्य विष्णुर्व्यापकः विष्णोर्विष्णुरित्यर्थः । Sri Rama is Vishnu of Vishnu. He translates शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिः as शङ्खचक्रादयो रेखा रूपेण पाणावस्य सः श्रीसाकेताधीशः । He who have auspicious symbols of shankh chakra gada in his hands.

for the adjective मानुषः he interprets the meaning as "मनुकुलोद्भूत द्विभुजनराकृति परब्रह्म" . similarly for the word "विष्णुरात्मवान्" he says आत्मवान् विष्णोः सः विष्णुर्व्यापकः श्रीरामः । the one who even pervades vishnu is Sri Ramachandra.

for the shloka विष्णोरर्थं महाभागं पुत्रमैक्ष्वाकनन्दनम् he says ---

अत्र विष्णु शब्देन प्रणव उच्यते तस्यार्ध अर्धमात्रा तदात्मकं राममित्यर्थः ---- here vishnu word refers to pranava and the ardha matra in pranavakshara is the parbrahma sri ramachandra.

as atharvana shruti says ---

"अर्धमात्रात्मको रामो सच्चिदानन्द विग्रहः"

Another point explained in his commentary is that when the qualities of Śrī Rāma are compared through expressions such as “विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्ये” and “सोमवत् प्रियदर्शनः,” they should be understood in the light of the upamāna–upameya relation. Here, Śrī Rāma is the upameya, the principal subject being described, while others such as Viṣṇu and Soma serve merely as the upamāna, the standards of comparison. Otherwise, Śruti statements such as “न तत्समश्चाभ्यधिकश्च दृश्यते” would become meaningless, for they declare that none is seen to be equal to or greater than Him.

In this shloka of the 76th sarga in Bālakāṇḍa —

जडीकृते तदालोके रामे वरधनुर्धरि । निर्वीर्यो जामदग्न्योऽसौ रामो राममुदैक्षत ।

The commentator explains that the vaiṣṇava-teja of Bhārgava Rāma enters into the divine form of Śrī Rāmacandra. He relates this to the vyāpya-vyāpaka sambandha, which establishes Śrī Rāma’s vaiṣiṣṭyam (supremacy) over Viṣṇu. Although they are inseparable in the sense of aṁśi-aṁśa sambandha, Śrī Rāma is the root source and therefore the supreme entity, as this prasanga demonstrates.

Let us move to the Ayodhyākāṇḍam where after getting exiled Sri Rama along with Sri Janaki and Lakshmana went to the forest and reaching the

सुराघट सहस्रेण मांसभूतौदनेन च । यक्ष्ये त्वां प्रीयतां देवि पुरीं पुनरुपागता ॥

While commenting upon this shloka shiromani vyakhyakara says that सुराघट here means सुरेषु देवेषु न घटन्ते न सन्तीत्यर्थः which means with those dravyas which are rare to obtain even for the suras - and मांसभूतौदनेन च which means मा नास्ति अंसो राजभागो यस्यां सा एव भूः पृथ्वी च उत वस्त्रं च ओदनं च एतेषां समाहारः तेन च त्वां यक्ष्ये अतः प्रीयतां meaning with the land having no royal share and royal garments and cooked rice I will worship you while coming back to puri.

Further, in the shloka तौ तत्र हत्वा चतुरो महामृगान्, the commentator interprets it as तत्र वराहादीन् चतुरो महामृगान्हत्वा खेलनार्थं सन्ताड्य, which means chasing those mahāmṛgas in a playful manner—gently striking them in a sportive way. He validates this meaning by relating it to Sayana’s commentary on अघा सु हन्यन्ते गावः, which states हन्यन्ते दण्डैस्ताडयन्ते प्रेरणार्थम्, meaning that just as oxen are whipped at the start of farming in the Magha nakṣatra, similarly, Śrī Rāma gently strikes these mahāmṛgas in a sportive manner.

In this way we can see that many vishesharthas Shiromani vyakhyakāra gives in this commentary in order to sing the ultimate supremacy of Sri Ramachandra.