

An insight into

Bhushanam – Sri Govindaraja’s commentary of the Ramayana

Sri Ramayana is a gem amongst spiritual scriptures and is popularly known as “Itihaasa Sreshtha”.

Composed by Sage Valmiki in simple Sanskrit, this text is very compelling to read, understand, enjoy, and follow.

Though the style of the text seems very easy to understand, the Ramayana is actually an ocean of treasures which reveal numerous lessons related to philosophy, spiritualism, and everyday life. To understand these, it is important to look at the commentaries of the Ramayana.

Various commentators have attempted to interpret this gem of a text. We shall be dealing with Sri Govindaraja Swami's commentary to the Ramayana, popularly known as the “Govindarajeeyam” or “Bhushanam” as titled by the author.

Seven Aspects of Bhushanam

In this article, we shall be looking at seven aspects related to the commentary by Sri Govindaraja:

1. History of the origin of Bhushanam
2. Analytical interpretations
3. Revelation of related anecdotes
4. Compliance with popular lore
5. Characters in the Ramayana as highlighted by Sri Govindaraja
6. Citation of special references
7. Timeline in the Ramayana

1. History of the Origin of Bhushanam

Invocations and Obeisances:

Sri Govindaraja commences his commentary with an invocatory verse,

आचार्य शठकोपदेशिकमथ प्रचार्यपारंपरी

श्रीमल्लक्ष्मणयोगिवर्य यमुना वास्तव्यनाथादिकान्।

वाल्मीकिं सह नारदेन मुनिना वाग्देवतावल्लभं

सीतालक्ष्मणवायुसूनुसहितं श्रीरामचन्द्रं भजे ॥

In this verse, he respectfully pays obeisance to his spiritual and divine guides:

- **Spiritual Acharya:** Sri Shatakopa Desika.
- **Lineage of Acharyas:** Sri Nathamuni, Yamunacharya, and Swami Ramanuja.

- **Sources of Ramayana:** Sages Valmiki and Narada, along with Lord Brahma.
- **The Supreme divinity :** Lord Rama, accompanied by Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman.

The Divine Dream and Motivation

Sri Govindaraja then explains what motivated him to compose this voluminous commentary on the Ramayana.

श्रीमत्यञ्जन भूधरस्य शिखरे श्रीमारुतेःसन्निधौ

अग्रे वेङ्कटनायकस्य सदनद्वारे यतिक्षमाभृतः।

नानादेशसमागतैर्बुधगणै रामायणव्याक्रियां

विस्तीर्णा रचयेति सादरमहं स्वप्नेऽमि संचोदितः ॥

He states that he had a dream where he beheld the holy Anjanadri hills. In this vision at Tirumala, he saw the *sannidhis* (shrines) of Sri Hanuman, Lord Venkatesha, and Swami Ramanuja. He also encountered a number of Sri Vaishnavas who sincerely motivated him to compose a commentary on Sri Ramayana. Accepting their suggestion with the utmost respect, Sri Govindaraja undertook the monumental task.

A Humble Undertaking

को भारोत्र मम स्वयं कुलगुरुः कोदण्डपाणिः ।

कृपाकूपारो रचयत्यदः सपदि मज्जिह्वाग्रसिंहासनः ॥

Sri Govindaraja humbly states that the Ramayana is a composition whose gravity is deep like an ocean, and he felt he was no match in intelligence to justifiably comprehend it. Yet, he states that with the grace of Lord Rama, he could accomplish this task. He believed the compassionate Lord would occupy his tongue as His throne and guide him through every word of the commentary.

The scribed version of Srisailapurna's teachings

It is said that Swami Ramanuja went to Tirumala and stayed for the period of a whole year to receive Kalakshepam on the Ramayana from his maternal uncle, Srisaila Purna or Periya Tirumalai Nambi repeatedly for eighteen times. Sri Govindaraja recieved these teachings from his Acharya as they were passed down the lineage of Acharyas. He says he has incorporated the important highlights from the eighteen interpretations recieved by Swami Ramanuja.

सुस्पष्टमष्टादशकृत्व एत्य श्रीशैलपूर्णाद्यतिशेखरोयम्।

शुश्राव रामायणसंप्रदायं वक्ष्ये तमाचार्यपरंपरात्तम् ॥

Ramayana Bhushanam: The Ornament to the Ramayana

Sri Govindaraja has named his commentary as Ramayana Bhushanam, or an ornament to the Ramayana. Very interestingly, he has given a name for the commentary of each of the cantos which is in synchronization with the original theme:

- **Balakanda:** Mani Manjeera (anklets for the divine feet)
- **Ayodhya Kanda:** Peetambara (silk garment)
- **Aranyakanda:** Ratna Mekhala (the waist ornament)
- **Kishkindha Kanda:** Muktahara (the pearl necklace)
- **Sundara Kanda:** Sringara Tilaka (the elegant mark on the forehead)
- **Yuddha Kanda:** Ratna Kireeta (the gem-studded crown)
- **Uttara Kanda:** Mani Mukuta (the jewelled top of the crown)

2. Analytical Interpretations

Sri Govindaraja presents an analysis of many situations in the story of the Ramayana and gives interesting interpretations in his commentary. We shall look at three such examples:

1. The reason behind Rama himself enjoying the Ramayana.
2. The intention behind sparing Maricha's life in Balakanda.
3. The secret behind granting Jatayu moksha.

1. The Reason Behind Rama Himself Enjoying the Ramayana

Sage Valmiki presents a scene where Lava and Kusha, who are well-versed in the Ramayana, are propagating the Itihasa by singing the story in their beautiful and mesmerizing voices. Knowing about their proficiency, Lord Rama himself invites them to sing the epic's glory.

इमौ मुनी पार्थिवलक्षणान्वितौ कुशीलवौ चैव महातपस्विनौ।

ममापि तद्विभूतिकरं प्रवेक्ष्यते महानुभावं चरितं निबोधत ॥ (1-4-35)

The verse in the Ramayana uses the words “महानुभावं चरितम्,” indicating the story of a great personality. Since this shloka is being uttered by Lord Rama, Govindaraja poses an interesting question: How is it that Rama called his own story, as the story of excellence? He notes that even ordinary people refrain from proudly claiming such things due to fear of public defamation or shame.- **लोके हि क्षुद्रोऽपि कश्चित् स्वविषयप्रबन्धे श्रवणे लज्जते.**

Govindaraja Swami beautifully clarifies this apparent contradiction. He explains that Rama was interested in listening to this rendition not because his own story was being narrated, but because it

was the story of Sita. - न अयं प्रबन्धः रामचरित्रपरः किंतु सीत चरित्रपरः, “सीतायाः चरितं महत्” – इति पूर्वम् उक्तत्वात्

It was his profound interest in listening to Sita's story that moved him to invite these young children to sing. Furthermore, it is said that as the boys narrated the story, Rama—who was initially seated on the throne—slowly moved down towards them. He joined the audience, becoming a part of the crowd, to enjoy Sita's charitra (character and story) to its fullest.

Thus, Govindaraja presents a beautiful analysis of why Rama listened to his own story with such utmost enjoyment.

2. The Intention Behind Sparing Maricha's Life in Balakanda

Sage Vishwamitra took the young princes, Rama and Lakshmana, into the forest for protecting his *yajnas* (sacrificial rituals). For this purpose, Rama was instructed by the sage to kill Tataka, a command which he followed diligently. Following this, Sage Vishwamitra told the princes to safeguard his *yajnas* until their completion. The young princes stood guard near the sacrificial ground continuously for six days and nights.

As the end of the sacrifice approached, Tataka's sons, Subahu and Maricha, attempted to disrupt the ritual by pouring liters of blood over the sacrificial fire. Rama and Lakshmana valiantly fought these two *rakshasas*. While Subahu was killed in the process, Maricha was struck by the *Sheeteshu* (a celestial weapon presided over by Manu) and thrown about a hundred miles away.

पश्य लक्ष्मण शीतेषु मानवं धर्मसंहितम्।

मोहयित्वा नयत्येनं न च प्राणैर्व्ययुज्यत॥ (1-30-21)

The verse specifically notes that his life was not taken by the arrow. Sri Govindaraja explains the reasoning behind this action, noting that Maricha's life was spared for an important future task. -

भावीकार्यान्तरसाधनाय

The Seed of the Ramayana

Picking up a cue from Sri Govindaraja's commentary, Ashukavi Sarvabhouma Srinidhi Swami composed a beautiful verse in his *Manju Ramayana*. He metaphorically describes Maricha as a seed thrown into the sea, from which the *Kalpaka* tree (the wish-granting tree) known as the Ramayana emerged.

कथां निजां कल्पलतां जनानां विस्तारयन् एष रघुप्रवीरः।

मारीचमेतं किल बीजमस्याः संवापयामास समुद्रमध्ये॥

Just as the *Kalpaka* tree emerged from the churning of the Milky Ocean, the Ramayana—which is like a wish-granting tree capable of fulfilling all desires—emerged from the ocean where Maricha was cast. If Maricha had not been thrown into the sea or had been killed during this process, the later events involving the golden deer, which eventually caused the destruction of Ravana, would not have happened. Thus, the entire story of the Ramayana would not have occurred or been received by future generations. Therefore, Sri Govindaraja concludes it was for this crucial, monumental task that Maricha was spared by Rama.

3. The Secret Behind Granting Jatayu Moksha

When Rama was searching for Sita, he found Jatayu in a pool of blood, holding onto his life just to convey the news of Sita's abduction by Ravana. Before passing away, Jatayu spoke words of encouragement, wisdom, and blessings. Viewing Jatayu as a father-like figure, Rama's heart reached out to him. Rama told Jatayu that he could proceed to the realms of eternity, or moksha.

मया त्वं समनुज्ञातः गच्छ लोकाननुत्तमान्।

गृधराज महास्त्व संस्कृतश्च मया व्रज॥(3-68-30)

Sri Govindaraja questions how Rama, who wanted to present himself as a human in this incarnation, could perform the divine act of granting moksha. - **ननु मानुषभावं भावयतः श्री रामस्य कथं मुक्तिप्रदत्वं**

The Power of Truth

Sri Govindaraja beautifully answers this by explaining that Rama was one who always spoke only the truth. All the worlds (lokas) are under the disposal of the one who always speaks the truth. “सत्येन लोकाञ्जयति” इत्युक्तीत्या स्वार्जित धर्मविशेषेण स्वाधीनसर्वलोकत्वाविरोधात्

Therefore, because Rama was a speaker of truth, the Supreme Lord rendered ownership of all the lokas to him, giving him the authority to send Jatayu to the realm of eternity.

3. Revelation of Related Anecdotes

Hidden Treasures from the Lineage

Sri Govindaraja provides insights into interesting anecdotes at various places that are not directly mentioned in the text of Valmiki's Ramayana. These events have likely been recorded in his commentary as spiritual treasures handed down through the lineage of *Purvacharyas* (earlier preceptors). One beautiful example is the story of Rama's signet ring.

The Story of the Signet Ring in Ayodhya

When Hanuman handed Sita the signet ring from Rama, she held it with immense affection, shedding tears as if she were seeing her husband in person.

गृहीत्वा प्रेक्षमाणा सा भर्तुः करविभूषणम्।

भर्तारमिव संप्राप्ता जानकी मुदिताऽभवत्॥ (5-36-4)

Sri Govindaraja throws light on an incident from Ayodhya to explain this deep emotional reaction. Once, Rama and Sita had a friendly quarrel and stopped speaking to each other for a couple of days. Wanting to break the ice, Rama deliberately dropped his signet ring. Sita instinctively picked it up, and this simple act broke their silence, reconnecting them. When Sita saw the ring in Lanka, she remembered this intimate moment and felt as though Rama himself was near. The lines from the commentary indicating this story are:

प्रणयकोपे प्रवृत्ते परस्परम् आलोकन भाषणादि विरहदशायां काङ्क्षिते भाषणे मानातिशयेन मौने कृते रामः अङ्गुलीयकं भूमौ च्यावयति सम। तदा व्याजेन च्युतमङ्गुलीयकमिति सीतयाभिहिते प्रणयकोप शैथिल्यात् परस्पर संश्लेषः भूयोप्यभूत्। एवं घटकभूतं करविभूषणं भार्तारमिव संप्राप्तम्

The Significance of 'Karavibhushanam'

Sri Vaishnava Acharyas beautifully interpret this Ayodhya anecdote further. When Sita originally asked how the ring fell from his finger, Rama sweetly replied that he had lost so much weight from not speaking to her for two days that his finger had become lean, causing the ring to slip.

Acharyas note that Sri Valmiki probably had this specific conversation in mind when he used the word *Karavibhushanam* (an ornament of the hand) rather than *Anguliyakam* (an ornament of the finger) in this *shloka*. If Rama had become lean just from a two-day silence, then after ten months of separation from Sita, he must have lost so much weight that a finger ring could now fit around his entire hand. His hands had become as lean as fingers, hence Sri Valmiki's deliberate use of the term *Karavibhushanam*.

The reason behind Rama possessing the ring

Sri Govindaraja also addresses a logical question: how did Rama still have a ring when he had given up all princely ornaments upon his exile to the forest? - ननु त्यक्त सकलधनस्य वन्यवृत्त्या वर्तमानस्य कुतोङ्गुलीयकम्?

He suggests two possibilities in his commentary:

- रामनाङ्कितम् अङ्गुलीयकं सीतायाः कदाचिद्रावणगमनात्पूर्वं प्रणयपरत्वेन रामेण स्वीकृतमिति बोध्यम् - It might have been Sita's ring, bearing Rama's name, which she playfully slipped onto his finger during their time in the forest.
- विवाहकाले जनकेन दत्तमिदम् - Alternatively, it could have been the wedding ring given to Rama by King Janaka. Rama might have kept it safely or given it to Sita, who then handed it back to him while they were sporting in the woods.

Through such details, Sri Govindaraja Swami enriches his commentary with *Rasanubhavam* (the experience of aesthetic bliss), suggesting deeply relevant and touching anecdotes wherever required.

4. Compliance with Popular Lore

The story of Ahalya in the Valmiki Ramayana

While presenting the story of Ahalya, Sage Valmiki states that she was cursed by Sage Gautama to become invisible to everyone. She was to remain in the ashrama for thousands of years, being smeared with dust, consuming nothing but air.

तथा शप्तवा स वै शक्रमहल्यामपि शप्तवान्।

इह वर्षसहस्राणि बहूनि त्वं निवत्स्यसि॥ (1-48-32)

वायुभक्षा निराहारा तप्यन्ति भस्मशायिनी।

अदृश्या सर्वभूतानाम् आश्रमेस्मिन् निवत्स्यसि॥ (1-48-33)

She would finally receive redemption from this curse when Rama visited the ashram. The Valmiki Ramayana describes that the very presence, or *sannidhya*, of Rama at the Ashrama brought Ahalya back to her original form.

The Popular Lore of the Stone

While commenting on this segment, Sri Govindaraja draws attention to a popular lore stating that Ahalya actually turned into a stone due to Sage Gautama's curse. According to this version, when Rama's holy foot touched the stone, the curse was reversed, and she regained her form as a beautiful damsel.

एवं व्यक्ततया वल्मीकिवचने स्थिते, शैलीभवेतिशापः रामपादस्पर्शात् शिलात्वमुक्तिरिति पुराणकथा कल्पान्तर वृत्तान्ताम् अनुसृत्य इति बोध्यम्।

Sri Govindaraja explains that the stone version of the story is found in certain Puranas. He suggests that this variation likely occurred during a different span of time, a concept described as *Kalpabheda*.

5. Characters in the Ramayana as Highlighted by Sri Govindaraja Swami

- I. Hanuman – The perfect preceptor
- II. Shatrughna – The Conquerer Beyond Comparison
- III. Lakshmana – The Servant of Virtues
- IV. Bharata – The Proprietor's Possession
- V. Rama – The Ultimate Granter of Asylum
- VI. Seeta – Compassionate to the core
- VII. Vibheeshana – Surrender in personification

i. Hanuman: The Perfect Preceptor (Acharya)

Sri Govindaraja highlights characters by drawing deep philosophical parallels. While describing Hanuman's flight from the ocean shore to Lanka, Sage Valmiki composed a beautiful verse, which is the first shloka of the Sundara Kanda.

ततो रावणनीतायाः सीतायाश्शत्रुकर्शनः।

इयेष पदमन्वेष्टुं चारणाचरिते पथि॥ (5-1-1)

Sri Govindaraja explains that this verse perfectly fits the characteristics of an ideal Acharya, or preceptor, who reaches out to a befitting disciple in order to shed his grace on him. - अनेन शिष्यस्थानान्वेषण परगुरुस्वरूपम् उच्यते

He explains each term in the verse to reveal this deeper meaning:

- **शत्रुकर्शनः - (The Destroyer of Foes):** Hanuman is described as the destroyer of physical obstacles in his path. Similarly, an ideal Acharya destroys the greatest enemy, which is ignorance (*Ajnana, Viparita Jnana, or Anyatha Jnana*)- ततः मुद्राप्रदानपूर्वक भगवदनुजालाभानन्तरं शत्रुकर्शनः The word "Guru" itself reflects this: "Gu" stands for darkness, and "Ru" stands for dispelling it - “गुशब्दत्वन्धकारः स्यात् रुशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः। अन्धकारनिरोधत्वात् गुरुरुत्यभिधीयते॥”- इत्युक्तरीत्या अज्ञाननिवर्तनशीलो गुरुः।
- **रावणनीतायाः सीतायाः - Sita,** described as being abducted by Ravana, represents the *Jivatma*. Naturally a servitor of the Lord, the soul in this metaphor has been abducted by the clutches of worldly ignorance, represented by Ravana. - अविवेकः तेन नीतायाः, स्ववशं प्रापितायाः अनादिभगवदपरतन्त्र चेतनस्य, सीताशब्देन अयोनिजत्वोक्तेः।
- **पदम् अन्वेष्टुम् - (Setting Foot on the Search):** Hanuman set foot to search for Sita. In the same way, an Acharya takes a vow to search for souls lost in the clutches of *Samsara* (ignorance) and bring them onto the right path. - स्थानं संसारमण्डलम् अन्वेष्टुम्
- **चारणा चरिते पथि (The Trod Path):** For Hanuman, this refers to the *Akasha Marga* (sky route) used by the Devas. For an Acharya, it signifies strictly following the established path of Dharma laid down by the *Purvacharyas* (earlier preceptors). - चारयन्ति – आचारयन्ति धर्मान् इति चारणाः पूर्वाचार्याः तैराचरिते पथि

Through this beautiful analysis, Hanuman is portrayed not just as a heroic messenger, but as the perfect preceptor seeking to redeem a lost soul and guide it back to spiritualism.

ii. Shatrughna: The conquerer beyond comparison

Sri Govindaraja also provides a profound analysis of Shatrughna's character based on the first shloka of the Ayodhya Kanda.

गच्छता मातुलकुलं भरतेन तदाऽनघः।

शत्रुघ्नो नित्यशत्रुघ्नः नीतःप्रीतिपुरस्कृतः॥ (2-1-1)

In this verse, Sage Valmiki describes Shatrughna being taken along by Bharata to visit his maternal uncle. Sri Govindaraja brings out the essence of Sri Vaishnavism by examining two specific words used in this context

- **शत्रुघ्नो नित्यशत्रुघ्नः (Conqueror of Eternal Enemies):** Sri Govindaraja explains that our "eternal enemies" are our sense organs, which constantly distract us with unwanted worldly desires. A true "Nitya Shatrughna" is one who has fully conquered these senses - नित्यशत्रुघ्नः

– नित्यशत्रवो ज्ञानन्द्रियाणि। शरीरे नित्यं सन्निधाय विषयान्तर प्रावण्यरूप विपरीत कार्यकारित्वात्। तान् हन्तीति नित्यशत्रुघ्नः। इन्द्रियनिग्रहवान् इत्यर्थः।

Shatrughna not only mastered worldly pleasures but remained completely unaffected even by the greatness, beauty, and valour of Rama himself. पुंसां दृष्टिचितापहारिण्यपि न मग्नेन्द्र्यः। राम विषयभक्तिः स्वाधिकारविरुद्धेति तन्निवर्तनम् अस्य कार्यमेव। This was because his sole focus was serving Bharata; for him, even serving Rama would be a distraction. Shatrughna exemplifies the highest ideal of being a *Bhagavata Sesa* (servant of the Lord's devotee), which is considered the supreme form of service.

- **नीतः (Taken Away):** Valmiki uses the word *Neetaha*, meaning "a thing which was taken away". Sri Govindaraja points out that Shatrughna is described not as a living person with his own will, but as an inanimate object. नीत इत्युक्तम् न तु ययौ। तेन अचिद्वत् पारतन्त्र्यम् उक्तम्।

This reflects Shatrughna's own mindset: he considered himself merely a belonging of Bharata. Just as Bharata's chariot or clothes accompanied him on his journey, Shatrughna went along simply as an inanimate object belonging to his master.

iii. Lakshmana: The Servant of Virtues

Sri Govindaraja portrays the character of Lakshmana while commenting on the Shloka in which Lakshmana introduces himself to Hanuman. The Shloka from the Kishkindha Kanda is:

अहमस्यवरो भ्राता गुणैर्दास्यमुपागतः।

कृतज्ञस्य बहुज्ञस्य लक्ष्मणो नाम नामतः॥ (4-4-11)

- **A Servant to Virtue:** Lakshmana states that while Rama considers him a younger brother, he views himself as a servant enslaved by Rama's virtuous qualities. अस्य अवरो भ्राता एतदभिप्रायेण भ्रातास्मि। अहं तु गुणैर्दास्यमुपागतः गुणवशीकृतहृदयः सन् तस्य दासोस्मि। Sri Govindaraja points out that Lakshmana had previously described himself as subservient in many instances before. However here, the real intent of the attitude of service is brought forth- यद्यपि परवानस्मि इत्यादौ स्वरूपप्रयुक्तदास्ययुक्तं तथापि योग्यताप्रकर्षणात् गुणोत्तमिभूतम् तद्दास्यमिति तदविरोधोद्भवः

For Lakshmana, service was not merely an inherent duty; rather, Rama's qualities had completely enveloped Lakshmana's mind and emotions, making him naturally and effortlessly a servant to those virtues

- **Rama's Gracious Reception:**

Sage Valmiki describes Rama as कृतज्ञ (grateful) and बहुज्ञ in this context. Sri Govindaraja interprets this to mean that Rama gracefully accepted Lakshmana's service because it brought Lakshmana happiness, thereby earning the title कृतज्ञ. Rama valued Lakshmana so highly that

he viewed even his smallest acts of service as Herculean tasks done for his sake – बहुज्ञ. The lines of the commentary indicating these thoughts are - इदमपि कैङ्कर्यं तन्मुखोल्लासार्थं न तु मदर्थमित्याह – कृतज्ञस्य, बहुज्ञस्य – अल्पमपि कृतं बहुतया जानत इत्यर्थः: It was this incredible reception that deepened Lakshmana's devotion.

- **उपागतः - Universal Service :** Commenting on the word उपागतः Govindaraja explains the sheer scale of Lakshmana's dedication. Rama's qualities were so captivating that Lakshmana desired to perform service in all places, at all times, in all situations, and by all possible means. His only goal was to perform the kind of service that would please Rama. - उपेत्यनेन सर्वदेशसर्वकालसर्वावस्थोचितसर्वविधकैङ्कर्यं प्राप्तइत्युच्यते।
- **The Meaning of His Name:** It is because of this ultimate character of servitude that he earned the name Lakshmana. According to Sri Govindaraja's commentary, this name translates to *Kainkaryā Lakshmi Sampanna*—the one endowed with the wealth of service. स्वनामतः कैङ्कर्यलक्ष्मीसंपन्न इतिप्रसिद्धः।

iv. Bharata: The Proprietor's Possession

In the Ayodhya Kanda, Sage Vashistha advises Bharata to accept the throne and rule over the kingdom, since Dasharatha had passed away and Rama was exiled to the forest. Bharata strongly refused to do this, and utters the following Shloka

कथं दशरथाज्जातो भवेद्राज्यापहारकः।

राज्यं चाहं रामस्य धर्मं वक्तुमिहार्हसि॥ (2-82-12)

Sri Govindaraja beautifully brings out the mindset behind his refusal through his commentary:

The Logic of Possessions: Bharata reasoned that both the kingdom and he himself were mere properties of Rama, who was the sole proprietor. राज्यमपि रामसंबन्धि अहमपि च राम संबन्धि। उभयमपि रामशेषमित्यर्थः. He questioned if it had ever been seen that one possession of a proprietor could rule over another. रामशेषत्वाविशेषे एकं शेषं कथमपरं रक्षेत्

Thus, it was impossible for one possession of Rama (Bharata) to rule over another possession of Rama (the kingdom).

Vashistha's Counter-Argument: Sage Vashistha presented a counter-argument to this logic, stating that a box safeguards any jewellery that is kept inside it. This implies that it is indeed possible for one possession (the box) to take charge of and guard another (the jewels). - ननु रत्नपेटिकयोः द्वयोः शेषत्वाविशेषेपि एकं रक्ष्यं परं रक्षकं च दृष्टम्

The Analogy of the Box and the Jewels: Bharata gave a befitting reply, explaining that a box cannot perform the activity of guarding the jewels all by itself. It has to be kept locked by the owner of the

box, and the key must be kept safe by him to ensure the jewels remain secure. तत्र हि पेटिका कुञ्चिकादि व्यापारेण स्वामिना रक्षकत्वेन विनियुक्ता नाहं एवं रामेण विनियुक्तः Therefore, Bharata concluded that, much like the box and the jewels, he and the kingdom were but mere possessions of the ultimate proprietor, Rama.

v. Rama: The Ultimate Granter of Asylum

When Vibhishana came to surrender to Rama, all the Vanaras were against accepting him; however, after giving them a patient hearing, Rama presented his final verdict.

मित्रभावेन संप्राप्तं न त्यजेयं कथंचन।

दोषोयद्यपि तस्य स्यात्सतामेतदगर्हितम्॥ (6-18-3)

Sri Govindaraja beautifully comments on this segment to highlight Rama as the ultimate granter of asylum:

- **मित्रभावेन (The Guise of Friendship):** While the term usually refers to someone approaching with friendly intentions, Sri Govindaraja interprets that even if someone comes without true friendship or merely in the disguise of a friend, Rama would still never give up on them. - वास्तव मित्रत्व अभावेपि, मित्रत्व अभिनयमात्रेणापि इत्यर्थः
- **न त्यजेयम् (The Inability to Abandon):** This word reflects Rama's "inability" to abandon or give up on protecting someone who has sought his refuge. As an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Rama is *Sarvashakta* (all-capable) and can achieve anything; however, his one true "incapability" is renouncing those who surrender to him. - न त्यक्तुम् शक्नोमि। सर्वशक्तेरपि मम शरणागतशब्द श्रावणः परित्यागे शक्ति संभवानामपि न पश्यामि इत्यर्थः
- **कथंचन (At Any Cost):** Sri Govindaraja comments that Rama is ready to protect a devotee who comes seeking surrender, even if it comes at the cost of his own life. - मत्प्राणपरित्यागे प्रस्तुतोपि इत्यर्थः
- **दोषो यद्यपि (Despite All Flaws):** Rama declares that even if Vibhishana possesses all the flaws pointed out by the Vanaras, or many more, he would still accept him. यद्यपि सुग्रीवादिभिर्रुक्ता दोषा न अस्मिन् सन्ति, सन्तु वा ततोपि भूयांसः

A single act of surrender is enough for Rama to grant asylum to all beings, regardless of the person's past or creed, as he quotes in His Charama Shloka

“सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।

अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्व्रतं मम॥ (6-18-33)

- **The Command to Sugriva:**

Having uttered the Charama Shloka, Rama asks Sugreeva to fetch Vibheeshana

आनयेनं हरिश्रेष्ठ दत्तमस्याभयं मया।

विभीषणोवा सुग्रीव यदि वा रवण स्वयम्॥ (6-18-34)

Sri Govindaraja analyzes Rama's instruction to Sugriva to fetch Vibhishana. - यद्वा स्वयम् अयम् यदि विभीषणो न भवति किंतु कामरूपि रावण एव विभीषणभूमिकां परिगृह्य यद्यागतः तथापि अस्य अभयं मया दत्तम्। त्वमपि रावणोयं न तु विभीषण इति विज्ञापनाय अपि पुनः न आगच्छे:

Rama states that Sugriva must bring him in, even if it is actually Ravana in the disguise of Vibhishana. Adding a touch of subtle humor, Rama essentially tells Sugriva not to come back to check with him if he realizes it is Ravana; whoever has uttered the word of surrender must be granted asylum, as it is Rama's ultimate dharma.

- vi. **Sita: Compassionate to the Core**

When Hanuman arrived to deliver the joyful news of Rama's victory over Ravana, Sita rejoiced in this bounty. She asked Hanuman what she could do in return, and Hanuman requested a boon: he asked for permission to torment and devour the Rakshasis who had tortured her for ten long months.

In response, Sita uttered a beautiful verse,

पापानां वा शुभानां वा वधार्हानां प्लवङ्गम।

कार्यं करुणमार्येण न कश्चिन्नापराध्यति॥ (6-116-45)

Sri Govindaraja analyzes this to highlight her boundless compassion:

- **Duty Over Sin:** Sri Govindaraja notes that while Hanuman viewed the Rakshasis as sinners, Sita considered them virtuous because they were merely performing their duty by following their master's orders. - त्वदभिप्रायेण पापानां वा अस्मदभिप्रायेण शुभानां वा। तदेव मम उद्देश्यं “दोषो यद्यपि तस्य स्यात्
- **Pity for the Fearful:** Sita argued that regardless of whether the Rakshasis were virtuous or vicious, they were now in a pitiable state of fear and fright, seeing what Hanuman was capable of doing to them. She felt this vulnerable state needed to be noted with pity. - पुण्यं पापं च इदानीम् एतत् दयनीयदशां पश्य
- **Consideration of Past Merit:** Sita reasoned that if a normally virtuous person commits a sin deserving of capital punishment, their past merits are still taken into consideration. She suggested that a similar consideration should be applied to these Rakshasis as well. - शुभेषु वधार्हेषु यथा करुणं कार्यं तथा पापेषु वधार्हेष्वपि कार्यमित्यर्थः
- **To Err is Human:** Finally, setting aside concepts of sin and merit, Sita asked a profound question: "Who has never committed a sin?". Acknowledging that committing sins is a natural occurrence and that to err is human, she urged Hanuman to learn to forgive, let go, and show compassion. - न कश्चिन्नापराध्यति - सर्वोऽपि अपराध्यति इत्यर्थः

Through this analysis, Sri Govindaraja brings about the character of Sita as someone who is compassionate to the absolute core.

vii. Vibhishana's Surrender in Personification

The Scripture of Surrender (Sharanagati Shastra) The Ramayana is known as the *Sharanagati Shastra*, or the scripture of surrender. There are many events of surrender occurring in the Ramayana, with the crowning one being the surrender of Vibhishana, known as *Vibhishana Sharanagati*. It is said that this surrender of Vibhishana is a complete one because it fulfills all the components of surrender, also known as the *Angas of Sharanagati*. Sri Govindaraja beautifully brings about how all the aspects of surrender are completely observable in the *Vibhishana Sharanagati*.

The Six Components (Angas) of Surrender

- **1. आनुकूल्यस्य सङ्कल्पः** - This means one must vouch to do things which are conducive to the master to whom he surrenders. This can be seen in *Vibhishana Sharanagati*, where he repeatedly tried to impress upon Ravana to return Sita back to Rama before he left Lanka. साधु निर्यात्यतां सीता रामायेति पुनः पुनः॥ (6-17-14) Thus, Vibhishana did something that was conducive to Rama, fulfilling the aspect of *Anukulya Sankalpa*. “चराचराणि भूतानि सर्वाणि भगवद्वपुः। ततस्तदानुकूल्यं मे कर्तव्यमिति निश्चयः” इत्युक्तम् आनुकूल्य सङ्कल्परूपम् अङ्गम् प्रदर्शितम्
- **2. प्रातिकूल्य वर्जनम्** - This means the one who is surrendering must refrain from doing anything which is against the interest of the master. Vibhishana gave up everything he had relating to Ravana and Lanka. This is reflected in the phrase stating he gave up his sons and wife, and reached out to surrender to Lord Rama. - त्यक्त्वा पुत्रांश्च दारांश्च इति अनेन प्रातिकूल्यवर्जनमङ्गं प्रदर्शितम्
- **3. कार्पण्यम्** - This refers to a state of helplessness. Vibhishana had been reduced to a state of helplessness, having been cast away by Ravana and labeled a traitor to his clan (*Kuladrohi*). दासवच्चावमानितः - कार्पण्यम्
- **4. गोप्तृत्व वरणम्** - This means an open acceptance of the master. It requires verbally declaring that one surrenders to the master and seeks their protection. Vibhishana did this vocally when he said the words “निवेदयत मां क्षिप्रं” (6-17-17) - “अप्रार्थितो न गोपायेदिति तत्प्रार्थनामतिः।” - इत्युक्तं गोप्तृत्ववरणमङ्गम् प्रदर्शितम्।
- **5. महाविश्वासः** - This denotes supreme faith. Vibhishana came and stood in the sky (उपस्थितम्) with the firmness of resolve that even if Rama would not accept him, he would not go back to Lanka. He maintained the belief that Rama would accept him and that he alone would be his refuge. - उपस्थितम् - समीपं प्राप्य स्थितम्, ” रक्षिष्यतीति अनुकूलान् इत्येवं सुदृढमतिः” इत्युक्तं विश्वासरूपमङ्गम् प्रदर्शितम्

- **6. आत्मनिक्षेपः** - This refers to the actual act of doing the surrender. This was performed by Vibhishana when he uttered the words “I surrender to Raghava” - राघवं शरणं गतः इति अनेन आत्मनिक्षेपमङ्गम् प्रदर्शितम्

Thus, having fulfilled these six *Angas*—Anukulya Sankalpa, Pratikulya Varjanam, Karpanyam, Goptrutva Varanam, Maha Vishvasa, and Atma Nikshepa—the six-limbed (*Shadanga*) surrender was successfully performed by Vibhishana, as shown by Sri Govindaraja.

5. Citation of special references

Sri Govindaraja gives the source of certain original references for specific applications quoted in the shlokas of Sage Valmiki. A beautiful example of this is seen when Hanuman enters Lanka.

प्रविश्य नगरीं लङ्कां कपिराजहितंकरः।

चक्रेऽथ पादं सव्यं च शत्रूणां स तु मूर्धनि॥ (5-4-3)

In the text, it is mentioned that Hanuman set his left foot first into the enemy's territory, as if he were placing it on the head of the enemy himself.

While commenting on this shloka, Sri Govindaraja brings about a sentence from the *Brihaspati Smriti*. This scripture states that when one is embarking on a *yatra* (journey), attending a housewarming, or during the time of a wedding, he must always place his right foot first. तदाह बृहस्पतिः “प्रयाणकाले च गृहप्रवेशे विवाहकालेपि च दक्षिणाङ्घ्रिम्।

However, the scripture explicitly notes that while entering the territory of an enemy, the left foot should be placed first. - कृत्वाग्रतः शत्रुपुरप्रवेशे वामं निदध्यात् चरणं नृपालः

It is on the basis of this specific rule from the *Brihaspati Smriti* that Sage Valmiki has composed this shloka, as pointed out by Sri Govindaraja in his commentary.

7. Timeline in the Ramayana

Tracing Rama's Journey: While commenting upon the shloka which speaks about the arrival of Lord Rama at the ashrama of Sage Bharadwaja on his return from exile, Sri Govindaraja beautifully gives a compilation of the timeline followed by Rama.

पूर्णे चतुर्दशे वर्षे पञ्चम्यां लक्ष्मणाग्रजः।

भरद्वाजाश्रमं प्राप्य ववन्दे नियतो मुनिम्॥ (6-127-1)

This timeline covers the entire period from the time he left Ayodhya for the forest until he came back to the Bharadwaja ashrama. Let us have a look at the list.

- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Panchami – Starting day of exile. That night at the banks of Tamasa river
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Shashti – Rama at Shringiberapuram

- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Saptami – Rama in Vatsadesha
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Ashtami – Rama at Prayaga – Bharadwajashrama
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Navami – Rama at the banks of Yamuna
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Dashami – Rama at Chitrakoota
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Ekadashi – Sumantra returns to Ayodhya, Dasharatha's demise
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Shukla Dwadashee – Vasishtha sends messengers to fetch Bharata
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Amavasya – Messengers reach Kekaya
- ▶ 1st year Chaitra Krishna Navami – Bharata reached Ayodhya and did Samskara for Dasharatha, from this day 13 days of Kriyas for Dasharatha
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Shukla Shashti to Dashami – 4 days - route to Chitrakoota cleared for people and army to travel
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Shukla Ekadashi – Bharata reached the banks of Ganga
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Shukla Dwadashi – Bharata reached Bharadwaja ashrama
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Shukla Trayodashi – Bharata reached Chitrakoota and stayed for 3 days
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Krishna Chaturthi – Bharata left from Chitrakoota
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Krishna Chaturthi – Bharata returned to Ayodhya – Nandigram – PADUKA PATTABHISHEKAM
- ▶ 1st year Vaishakha Krishna Panchami – Rama started from Chitrakoota and reached Atri ashrama
- ▶ Next ten years in Dandakaranya staying at various Rishi Ashrams (years 1 to 10)
- ▶ Next three years stay at Panchavati (years 11 to 13)
- ▶ 14th year Chaitra – Seeta's abduction
- ▶ 14th year Vaishakha – Meeting Sugreeva
- ▶ 14th year Aashaadha – Death of Vaali
- ▶ 14th year Aashwayuja – Readyng troops for searching Seeta
- ▶ 14th year Phalguna – vanaras who went south decide to fast to death
- ▶ 14th year Phalguna Shukla Chaturdashi – Lanka set to flames
- ▶ 14th year Phalguna Amavasya – Death of Ravana
- ▶ 14th year Chaitra Shukla Prathama – Ravana's last rites
- ▶ 14th year Chaitra Shukla Dwiteeya – Coronation of Vibheeshana
- ▶ 14th year Chaitra Shukla Triteeya – Rama started back for Ayodhya from Lanka
- ▶ 14th year Chaitra Shukla Chaturtee – Halt at Kishkindha

► 14th year Chaitra Shukla Panchami – Reached Bharadwaja Ashrama

Conclusion: The Treasure of Ramayana Bhushanam

Thus, Sri Govindaraja's Bhushanam on the Ramayana is indeed like an ornament, exactly as the name suggests. It is a treasure house of learning and wisdom. It is extremely valuable from the linguistic, philosophical, and spiritual angles, and must be cherished as a subject of study for all seekers of the eternal treasure, the Ramayana.

Jai Sitaram