

# Udali Varadaraja's Commentary on Sri Ramayana

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Many people have written commentaries for the primordial epic, the *Ramayana*. Among the commentaries available to us, scholars believe that the one written by **Udali Varadaraja** is the most ancient. Having remained in palm-leaf manuscripts without being printed until now, this commentary is being published for the first time.

## The Identity of Udali Varadaraja

In the concluding lines (colophon) of this commentary, it is written:

"इति प्रथमात्रेयेण उडालीकुलसंभवेन वरदराजेन चोलपण्डितब्रह्ममहाराज  
अपरनाम्ना विरचित विवेकतिलकनाम्नि श्रीरामायणव्याख्याने "

From this, we learn that the name of this commentary is **Vivekatilaka**. Its author is **Varadaraja**, who belonged to the **Udali clan of the Atreya Gotra** and held the title **Chola-Pandita-Brahma-Maharaja**. Inscriptions from the Chola period indicate that the title *Brahma-Maharaja* was conferred upon ministers and high-ranking officials. For example, inscriptions mention an Aniruddha-Brahma-Maharaja who served as the first minister to Rajaraja Chola. Therefore, Udali Varadaraja might have been a minister or a high official in the Chola court. However, no specific details regarding his exact time period are available.

## Nampillai and Udali

The name of Udali Varadaraja is mentioned in a specific place within the *Eedu Muppathiarayirappadi* (the 36,000-unit commentary) on *Tiruvaymozhi*, authored by the Sri Vaishnava preceptor Nampillai (c. 1147–1252). While commenting on the phrase (*Tiruvaymozhi* 7.5.1) "*Narpal Ayodhi*" (*நற்பால் அயோத்தி*), he observes:

“ஜ்ஞாதிதாஸீ யதோ ஜாதா என்கிறதிறே. இதுக்குக் கருத்தென் என்னில், இத் தேசத்திலே பிறந்தாளாகில் பெருமாளுக்கு விரோதம் செய்யாளாகையாலே எங்கேனும் ஓரிடத்திலே பிறந்தாள் ஒரு விழுந்தான் கிடக்கை என்கிறது. ‘யத:குதச்சித் ஜாதா’ என்று

வ்யாக்யானம் பண்ணினான் உடாலி. இந்நிலத்தில் பிறவாமை இவளுக்குக் கொடுமை விளைந்தது என்கிறானிறே”

Nampillai explains that everyone born in Ayodhya had immense love for Rama. But because Manthara was born elsewhere, she behaved without love. That is why Valmiki, describing her, says "यतो जाता" (born somewhere). Udali interprets this as "यतः कुतश्चित् जाता" (born from somewhere or other) says Nampillai. (In the commentary on *Ayodhya Kanda* 7.1, the line "यतो जाता - यतः कुतश्चित् जाता " from Udali's commentary is cited here.)

Not only did Nampillai cite Udali by name, but in another instance, he provided an explanation without specifically mentioning his name. While commenting on *Tiruvaymozhi* (2.7.4) regarding the phrase "*Thevum Tannaiyum*" (தேவும் தன்னையும) he says:

ஆத்மாநம் நாதிவர்தேதா: என்றானிறே. 'ஆத்மபூதம் பரதம் நாதிவர்தேதா:' என்கிறான் என்று சிலர் சொல்லுவர்கள்.

In the commentary for *Ayodhya Kanda* (111.7), Udali Varadaraja explains the phrase "आत्मानं नातिवर्तते:" as " आत्मभूतं भरतं नातिवर्ते:". Here, Nampillai's reference to "some" (*silar*) can be inferred to mean Udali Varadaraja.

Thus Udali is mentioned in the 12th-century work of Nampillai, and hence it is confirmed that this commentary was written in or before the 12th century.

### **Udali in the Arumpada Urai (அரும்பத உரை)**

In the *Arumpada Urai* (glossary) of the *Eedu* commentary, Udali's name is explicitly mentioned (9.5.2) and his commentary lines are quoted:

“तस्याश्च हृदये रामः द्विगुणं भृशं परिवर्तते। तस्मात्स रामः तस्या अन्तर्जातमपि हृदयं-अभिप्रायं हृदा-मनसा व्यक्तमाख्याति-जानाति। तस्य रामस्य हृदये मैथिली भूयो विशेषेणातिशयेन परिवर्तते। तस्मात्तस्य रामस्य हृदयं भावं मैथिली मनसा जानाति। एतदुक्तं भवति। परस्परहृदयान्तर्वर्तनेन परस्परभावमुभौ जानीत इत्यर्थ इति। इति उडालिः”

This refers to Udali Varadaraja's commentary on the 28th verse of the 77th Sarga in the *Bala Kanda*.

Nampillai has extensively quoted and commented on many *Ramayana* verses in the *Manipravalam* style in his Tiruvaimozhi commentary. His disciple, Periyavachan Pillai, authored a work called Sri Ramayana Tanishloki for writing detailed commentary on specific verses of Ramayana. Many of the unique meanings in those works are generally not found in Udali's work. In fact, Udali did not even write a commentary for many of the verses explained by those Acharyas. Only in a few places does he show unique insights of Acharyas.

For example, At the beginning of the *Ramayana*, Valmiki lists sixteen qualities and requests Narada to identify who possesses these virtues. First and foremost, he asks, "Who is a Gunavan (virtuous)?" Udali Varadaraja explains the significance of why "Gunavan" was mentioned generally at the start: " अत्र गुणशब्दः सौशील्ये गुणविशेषे वर्तते। न गुणसामान्ये" (The word guna here does not refer to general good quality but His particular quality namely humility.) Many Sri Vaishnava Acharyas have echoed this same view.

In *Ayodhya Kanda* (20.2), regarding Rama leaving for the forest, Valmiki says: " गतिर्यः शरणं चापि स रामोऽद्य प्रवत्स्यति ". Explaining this, Udali says: "गतिः प्राप्यस्य प्राप्तिमार्गः। शरणं प्राप्यम्। उपायश्चोपेयश्चेत्यर्थः। " (Meaning: Sri Rama is both the Means and the Goal). This concept is also mentioned by the Vaishnava Acharyas in their works.

In *Kishkindha Kanda* (42.59), भगवानपि विश्वात्मा शम्भुरेकादशात्मकः। ब्रह्मा वसति देवेशो ब्रह्मर्षिपरिवारितः॥ Explaining this sloka Udali Varadaraja comments as: "भगवान् इति शब्दः भगवति नारायणे निरूढं नाम। तच्च भागवतशब्देन प्रतीयते। तदयमत्र पदाक्रमः—विश्वात्मा भगवान् ब्रह्मर्षिपरिवारितः तत्र वसति। एकादशात्मकः शम्भुः ब्रह्मर्षिपरिवारितः तत्र वसति इति।" Thus Udali says that the word Bhagavan only refers to Lord Narayana.

Except for a few such places, his commentary is generally neutral; therefore, one cannot definitively claim Udali Varadaraja was a Sri Vaishnava.

### **Udali and Govindaraja**

In the *Yuddha Kanda* (Sarga 107), the Aditya Hridaya hymn is situated. At the end of the famous *Bhushana* commentary, Govindaraja notes:

अयं च सर्गः केषुचित्कोशेषु न दृश्यते। उडारिण न व्याख्यातश्च। आरम्भात्प्रभृति प्रबन्धप्रतिपादित- नारायणपरत्वविरुद्धं चात्र प्रतिभाति सूर्यपरत्वम्। अस्मिंश्च काण्डे

त्रिंशदुत्तरशतसर्गा उडारिणा गणिताः। एतदन्तर्भवे एकत्रिंशदुत्तरशतसर्गास्तेन गणिता भवेयुः।

Govindaraja claims this Sarga is missing in some manuscripts and that Udali did not comment on it. However, Udali Varadaraja, in his *Vivekatilaka*, has accepted this Sarga and written:

ततो युद्धपरिश्रान्तं इत्यादौ सर्गे आदित्यस्सविता सूर्यः इत्यारभ्य नमस्तमोभिनिघ्नाय रवये लोकसाक्षिणे(21) इति एवमन्तं आदित्यहृदयम्। अन्यदगस्त्यस्यैव वचनम्। स्तोत्रे प्रथमान्तेषु त्वं शब्दमध्याहृत्यान्वयः। अस्य च स्तोत्रस्यायं प्रसङ्गावसरः। सर्वरात्रं युद्ध्वा पलायिते रावणे नासौ म्रियते कथमयं हन्यत इति चिन्तयित्वा चापमवष्टभ्य विश्रम्यस्थिते रघुनाथे प्रभाते प्रोद्यति भास्करे रामरावणदर्शनसमागतैः देवमुनिभिः समागतोऽगस्त्यः तत्रान्तरे अन्तरिक्षादवतीर्य अवश्यं रावणमद्यैव जेष्यसि। मा चिन्तापरोभूः। स्ववीर्योपबृंहणाय भास्करं समुद्यन्तं अनेन स्तोत्रेण उपतिष्ठस्वेत्युपदिश्य ऊर्ध्वं गतः। तदान् रावणः पुनरागतमित्येवमवसरपरिकल्पनया स्तोत्रमिदं संघत एव। स्वयमेव वक्ष्यति पश्यतां तन्महद्युद्धं सर्वरात्रमवर्तत (109-37) इति।

Even though Udali did not provide meanings for certain words in this Sarga, as he did in other sargas, he explains why presence of this Sarga is appropriate. Thus, Govindaraja's statement that Udali did not comment on it appears contradictory.

When commenting upon the sloka "अत्र पूर्वं महादेवः प्रसादं अकरोत् प्रभुः" (Yuddha kanda 126-18) Govindaraja explains that Mahadeva here refers to the King of the Ocean, not Rudra, and cites Udali:

“अथवा, अस्मिन्सर्गे श्लोकाः प्रायशः व्यत्यस्ता दृश्यन्ते इति उडारिप्रभृतिभिरुक्तम्।”

However, in Udali's own commentary, there is no explanation regarding the word "Mahadeva." He simply identifies the correct sequence of verses: When Lord Rama was returning in the Pushpaka Vimana, after showing the Setu (the bridge) to Sita, he says: "अत्र पूर्वं महादेवः प्रसादं अकरोत् प्रभुः" Udali also says "इत्येष पाठक्रमः। कोशेषु विपर्यासः भ्रंशश्च लेखकदोषकृतः"

Thus, because Udali Varadaraja's commentary was cited as an authority by scholars several centuries ago, it is confirmed that this commentary was highly famous even in ancient times.

### **Nature of the Commentary**

Udali Varadaraja mentions the primary reasons for writing this work in his opening verses:

"नागरादि वर्णेषु नात्यन्तनिपुणैरैः। खण्डने स्खलितः पाठः पारम्पर्येण लिख्यते ॥  
 अतोऽत्र सम्यक्पाठश्च तत्र तत्र प्रदृश्यते। बहुदेशसमानीत बहुकोशपरीक्षात् ॥  
 विरुद्धानीवार्थानां लक्षणोल्लङ्घिनामिव। शब्दानाञ्च यथाशक्ति परिहारोऽत्र कथ्यते ॥

He notes that due to scribes lacking expertise in Nagara and other scripts, many errors crept into manuscripts over generations. This commentary identifies the correct readings (सम्यक् पाठः) by examining manuscripts from various regions. He also identifies the correct sequence of verses.

The commentary is not extensive; it functions like a glossary for difficult words (पद-टिप्पणी). Finding exactly which word of one sarga he is explaining is very difficult as he skips many verses. For some Sargas, there is no commentary at all.

### Numerical Calculations

In the commentary on *Bala Kanda* (4.2):

"चतुर्विंशति-सहस्राणां श्लोकानामुक्तवानृषिः।  
 तथा सर्गशतान् पञ्च षट्काण्डानि तथोत्तरम्"

He clearly specifies the number of Sargas and the number of *Granthas* (verses) in each Kanda:

Kanda	Sargas	Granthas (Verses)
Bala Kanda	77	2,280
Ayodhya Kanda	119	4,415
Aranya Kanda	75	2,732
Kishkindha Kanda	67	2,620
Sundara Kanda	68	3,006
Yuddha Kanda	131	5,990
Uttara Kanda	110	3,234
Total	647	24,277

The total is 647 Sargas and 24,277 Granthas. (A *Grantha* is a unit of 32 syllables). He explains that the extra 227 "verses" come from longer meters like *Trishtup* and *Jagati*. He notes that "500 Sargas" refers to the first six Kandas as a round number. Govindaraja shows nearly identical numbers.

In *Bala Kanda* (4.8), he provides extensive citations from Bharata's Natya Shastra and Sandilya Smriti:

"एतदत्र वयः परमं नटीनामिव दर्शयेत्। ताण्डवं सप्रयोगं च तत्रैवाभ्यन्तरं कृतम्"

He also provides a detailed defence for why the first four Sargas are an integral part of the *Ramayana*:

"नन्वेतत्सर्गचतुष्टयं श्रीरामायणं न भवति। एतेन तस्य पृथक् समुत्पत्तिविनियोग कथनात्। नैष दोषः। प्रस्तावना ग्रन्थोपपादनादेव भवति। तस्यापि तदङ्गत्वात्। ख्यातिलाभपूजार्थं प्राधान्येन त्रिभिरङ्गैः महाकाव्यानि क्रियन्ते। तानि च कवेर्वृत्तकथनं काव्यसमुत्पत्तिविनियोगकथनं नायकवृत्तान्तकथनं च क्रियते। अत एतदपि श्रीरामायणे नैककालकृतं न भवति। तस्य निर्माणसमये अस्यार्थस्य निवृत्तत्वात्। अतः पूर्वनिवृतं नायकचरितं कृत्वा तत् कङ्क्षीलवौ ग्राहयित्वा ताभ्यामुत्पत्तिवियोगाश्च काव्ये प्रयोजिते पश्चादिदं वृत्तं कथितुं युक्तम्। अतोऽर्वाचीने काले सर्गचतुष्टयमेतत् कृत्वा तेन सङ्घटितमिति प्रतीयते। भवतु नामैवम्। नैष दोषः। तथापि महानुभावामुनय एवं न कङ्क्षन्ति। ते प्रथममितिहासादिकरणं सङ्कल्प्य तस्य भाविकथनप्रकारं ज्ञानेन दृष्ट्वा तच्च निवृत्तेन नायकवृत्तान्तेन सह भूतप्रत्ययं न निर्दिशन्ति। तत्र च कारणं ज्ञानस्य विषयीभूतमेवेति बुद्धिश्चावश्यमेवैतत् भविष्यतीति निश्चयच्च। अयं च न्यायो मनुमहाभारतादि महानुभावग्रन्थानां साधारणः।"

"Now, one may object: this group of four cantos does not belong to the *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, since it separately narrates the origin and purpose of the poem. This, however, is not a fault. It arises precisely because of the introductory establishment of the text, and that too forms an integral part of the work. Great epics are chiefly composed with three components, for the sake of fame, recognition, and honor:

- (1) an account of the poet's own life or activity,
- (2) an account of the origin and purpose of the composition of the poem,
- (3) an account of the life and deeds of the hero.

Therefore, even in the *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, this portion is not something composed at a different time. At the time of the poem's creation, this matter was already settled. Hence, having first completed the earlier portion describing the hero's life, and then entrusting that narrative to Kuśa and Lava, and incorporating into the poem the account of its origin and transmission through them, it is appropriate that this narrative was told later.

Thus, it appears that these four cantos were composed in a later period and then integrated into the work. Even if that be so, it is no defect. Nevertheless, great sages of high stature do not compose in this manner. First, having resolved to compose an epic or historical work, and having clearly understood through knowledge the method of narrating future events,

they do not indicate mere conjecture along with a narrative of the hero's past that has already been completed. Rather, they hold the firm conviction that this knowledge itself is the determining cause and that these events will certainly come to pass.

This principle is common to the great and authoritative works such as the *Manu Smṛti*, the *Mahābhārata*, and other revered texts.” - Says Udali Varadaraja.

In *Bala Kanda* (17.35), he resolves a contradiction regarding the parentage of Vanaras like Sushena and Sharabha between the *Bala* and *Yuddha* Kandas:

"नन्वत्र सर्गे वरुणो जनयामास सुषेणं, पर्जन्यश्शरभं, धनदो गन्धमादनं इत्युक्तम्। युद्धकाण्डे तु रावणं प्रति शार्दूलवाक्ये धर्मस्य पुत्रस्सुषेणः वैवस्वतपुत्रौशरभगन्धमादनौ इति वक्ष्यते। किमनयोः प्रमाणं। एतत् प्रथमोक्तमेव। कइतश्शार्दूलस्य वानरपीडाभयस्खलितबुद्धित्वात्तेष्वनभ्यासाच्च एतद्वचनमेव भगवतश्च परस्परविरुद्धाभिधाने प्रयोजनम्।"

“One may object: in this canto it is stated that Varuṇa begot Suṣeṇa, Parjanya begot Śarabha, and Dhanada begot Gandhamādana. But in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, in Śārdūla's speech addressed to Rāvaṇa, it is said: ‘Suṣeṇa is the son of Dharma, and Śarabha and Gandhamādana are the sons of Vaivasvata.’ Which of these statements is authoritative?

The earlier statement alone is authoritative. For Śārdūla, having his intellect shaken by fear due to the torment inflicted by the monkeys, and being unaccustomed to such matters, uttered these words. Moreover, the Lord's purpose in allowing mutually contradictory statements is precisely this.”

In the *Bālakāṇḍa*, canto 75, verse 21, in the commentary, a very detailed explanation is given reconciling the apparent contradiction between two statements: the earlier statement that, at the conclusion of the Daksha yajña, the divine bow was given to the gods, and the statement made here that it was given to Devavrata.

"ननु पूर्वं दक्षयज्ञान्ते महादेवो देवानां धनुर्ददौ इत्युक्तम्। इदानं तु महादेवो देवानां तस्य ददावित्युच्यते। कथमेतत् सङ्गच्छते। नास्ति सङ्गति विरोधः। देवेभ्यो धनुषि दित्सिते तदानीमेव तैर्देवैः सन्निकर्षं गत्वा स्वयं गृहीतुं भीतैरस्मदर्थस्य देवरातस्य हस्ते दत्तवानिति कृत्वा संगतमेतत्। एवं च सति न्यासभूतं तदान्यस्तमिति न्यासार्थं निष्पद्यते। भवतु नाम एवमेतत्सङ्गतम्। यदुक्तं विश्वामित्रयज्ञरक्षणान्ते मिथिलां जिगमिषुभिः विश्वामित्रादिभिर्मुनिभिः यज्ञे जनकस्य देवैर्दत्तं धनुरिति तत्कथम्। एतदपि सङ्गच्छते। देवमाते देवैर्यासतयादापितं ततः प्रभृति न्यासभूतमेव स्ववंश्येषु वर्तमानं

जनकेन स्वयज्ञे स्वत्वेन याचितं देवैस्तस्य यज्ञफलत्वेन दत्तमित्यस्यार्थस्यावबोधनात्। एतदप्येवं संगतमस्तु। यदनसूया समास्या परया सीतया यज्ञे जनकस्य वरुणेन दत्तं धनुरिति वक्ष्यते। कथमत्रापि सङ्गतिः। अस्त्येव। देवैश्चोदितो वरुणः स्वहस्तेन यज्ञे जनकस्य दत्तवानित्यर्थस्य परिग्रहात्। अयमत्र धनुरागतिक्रमः। पूर्वं देवास्त्रिपुरवधाय विश्वकर्मणा निर्मितं धनुर्महादेवाय ददुः। तद्दक्षयज्ञविरोधे विष्णुजृम्भितं देवैः प्रार्थितो देवो देवरातस्य हस्ते न्यस्तवान्। ततः प्रभृति न्यासभावेन मैथिलेषु वर्तमानं तत्सत्वेन देवा वरुणेन यज्ञे जनकादापयन्निति परशुरामकार्मुकस्य वरुणहस्ते निक्षेपणम्। दिव्यं देवेष्ववास्तु किं मनुष्येष्विति विशेषेण अस्य हस्ते निक्षेपणं स देवानामायुधानां निधाय को दायकश्चेति।"

He addresses the discrepancy between earlier mentions of the bow being given by Mahadeva to the Gods and later accounts stating it was given to Janaka's ancestor, Devarata. Udali explains that there is no contradiction. When Mahadeva intended to give the bow to the Devas, they were too afraid to approach and handle it themselves. Therefore, on their behalf, it was placed in the hands of Devarata. Thus, it was held by him as a "trust" (*nyasa*).

Furthermore, he reconciles the statement that the Gods gave the bow to Janaka during a sacrifice with Anasuya's later statement that Varuna gave it. He explains that Varuna acted on the instructions of the Devas to hand it over during the sacrifice.

The established sequence of the bow's journey is:

1. Created by Vishwakarma for the destruction of Tripura and given to Mahadeva.
2. After the conflict at Daksha's sacrifice, it was placed in the care of Devarata.
3. It remained with the kings of Mithila as a sacred trust.
4. Finally, it was formally gifted by the Devas through Varuna as a reward for Janaka's sacrifice.

In *Ayodhya Kanda* (7.2), he addresses a doubt regarding the timing of the coronation:

"एतच्चाभिषेकदिनात् पूर्वेद्युर्वृत्तं वक्ष्यति श्वो पुष्येण इति (11)। ननु पूर्वसर्गे 'गते पुरोहित' इत्यारभ्य रामवृत्तान्तकथने रात्रिः प्रभातेत्युक्तम्। ततः पुनर्वसुदिनं गतः पुष्यदिनं च प्राप्तमिति गम्यते। कथं पूर्वेद्युर्वृत्तं भवति। नैष दोषः। केवलं रामस्यैवं वर्तमानस्य दिवसो गत इत्येतावन्मात्रं तत्र विवक्षितम्। न सर्वेषाम्। अत इदं मन्थरावृत्तं पूर्वेद्युरेव। पुरालङ्कारादिकमपि अभिषेकवार्तासरमात्रादेव प्रवर्तते।"

Udali resolves this by stating there is no error. The mention of the night dawning was intended only to describe the conclusion of Rama's specific observances and routines; it was not meant to indicate that the day

had physically changed for everyone in the narrative. Therefore, the incident involving Manthara indeed took place on the previous day. He further notes that the decorations and festivities in the city began immediately upon the mere spread of the news regarding the coronation.

In *Ayodhya Kanda* (20.45), he establishes that Rama was 28 years old at the time of exile. He elaborates in *Aranya Kanda* (47.10):

"तदयमत्र तयोर्वयोगणनक्रमः। देवस्य पाणिग्रहणान्ताः षोडश। ततोऽयोध्यायां द्वादश। ततो मुनीनामश्रमेषु दश। ततः पञ्चवत्यां त्रय इत्येकचत्वारिंशत्। देव्यास्तु मिथिलायां षट्। अयोध्यायां द्वादश। मुनीनामाश्रमेषु दश। पञ्चवत्या त्रय। इत्येकत्रिंशत्। ननु देव्याषष्ठे पाणिग्रहणमिति कथमुच्यते। नह्यत्यन्तबाले पाणिग्रहणं युज्यते। सत्यमेतत्। मिथिलावर्तनसंवत्सरेषु षष्ठे पाणिग्रहणमित्युच्यते। नहि दिव्यदेहपरिग्रहसंवत्सरेष्विति। एषा हि देवी द्रौपदीव परिपक्वा भुवं भित्वा दशवर्षदेशीया निर्गता। अत्र च प्रमाणं 'वीर्यशुल्केति मे कन्या स्थापितेयमयोनिजा' इत्यादि परिणतिसूचकं जनकस्य वाक्यं स्वयंवरे किल प्राप्ता। 'त्वमनेन यशस्विना' इत्यादि यौवनसूचनं अनसूयावचनम्। 'पतिसंयोगसुलभं वयो दृष्ट्वा मे पिता' इति देव्या वचनं च। नहि पञ्चवर्षे शुल्कस्थापनं स्वयंवरघोषणं पतिसंयोगयोग्यत्वं च विद्यते। ततः पूर्वमपि किञ्चित् परिपक्वेव निर्गतित्यध्यवसीयते। अतो भूगर्भे दश पश्चात् षडित्यस्याश्चार्थत षोडश एव पाणिग्रहणम्।"

Udali's Timeline:

1. Rama with Vishvamitra: Age 16
2. Exile: Age 28
3. Separation from Sita: Age 41
4. Coronation: Age 42

He argues that Sita being 6 year age at marriage is inappropriate; instead, she was got from the earth as a 10-year-old and stayed in Mithila for 6 years, making her 16 at marriage.

In the *Sri Ramayana Tanishloki*, a *Manipravala* style commentary on the *Ramayana* authored by the Vaishnava Acharya Periyavachan Pillai (who is considered to have lived after Udali Varadaraja), several verses from the *Ramayana* are cited as evidence to state that Lord Rama was twelve years old and Sita was six years old at the time of their marriage. He further states that when they departed for their exile in the forest, Rama was twenty-four years old and Sita was eighteen years old. Govindaraja has also followed this same path exactly:

"तदयमत्र वयोयोगगणनक्रमः। देवस्य पाणिग्रहणान्ताः द्वादश। तदन्तरं दश वर्षाणि सप्त च। ततः परं त्रयोदशे वर्षे यौवराज्याभिषेकारम्भः। ततश्च वनप्रवेशसमये रामः पञ्चविंशतिवर्धार्हः। ततः मुनीनामाश्रमेषु दश वत्सराः। पञ्चवत्यां त्रयः। वनवासस्य चतुर्दशे वर्षे सीतापहरणम्। सीतायाश्च भूगर्भादाविर्भावानन्तरं मिथिलायां षट् संवत्सराः। ततः विवाहानन्तरमयोध्यायां द्वादश इत्येवमष्टादश वर्षाः गताः वनवासारम्भ इत्युक्तम्। ----- इदानीं तु रामः अष्टत्रिंशद्वर्षः मम त्वेकत्रिंशद्वर्षा गताः। इदानीं तु द्वात्रिंशो वर्षो वर्तते। (इति सीता उवाच)"

It is truly surprising that Udali Varadaraja argues that it would have been impossible for Sita to have been married at the age of six, during the days of Rama i.e. thousands of years ago, especially considering the fact that the custom of child marriage for girls was prevalent even until a century ago. Furthermore, his conclusion that Rama and Sita must be considered to be of the same age (16 years old) at the time of their marriage also appears to be inconsistent or illogical.

### Resolution of Contradictions

Regarding Rama killing Vali from a hidden position (*Kishkindha* 18):

"अत्र वालिवधे रघुवीरस्य प्रच्छन्नवधे किं कारणमुच्यते। अद्यैव तं हनिष्यामि तव भार्यापहारिणं इति, सुखं हि कारणं श्रुत्वा वैरस्य तव वानर। आनन्तर्यं विधास्यामि इति च रघुवीरेण सन्वस्तः सुखोपायवधः प्रतिज्ञातः। एवं स्थिते वालिनं यदि प्रकाशमाह्वयेत् स भीतस्ववेगेन पलायेत वा, किष्किन्धां दुर्गां समाश्रित्य बलैस्सह दीर्घं युद्धयेद्वा। सन्धाय ्यरणं गच्छेद्वा। तथा सति सद्यस्सुखोपायवधप्रतिज्ञा हीयेत। तत इदानीमिदमेव युक्तमिति प्रतिच्छन्नवेधनं कृतम्।"

Udali argues that if Rama had challenged Vali openly:

1. Vali might have fled in fear due to his great speed.
2. He might have retreated into the fortified stronghold of Kishkindha and engaged in a long, drawn-out war with his entire army.
3. He might have sought a treaty or taken refuge (*sharanam*).

In any of these scenarios, Rama's vow to provide a swift and easy end to Sugriva's misery would have been thwarted. Therefore, Rama concluded that attacking from a concealed position was the only appropriate way to fulfill his promise promptly.

In *Yuddha Kanda* (94.65), he recounts the war timeline:

"पौर्णमास्यां सुवेल प्रवेशः। ततः कृष्णपक्षप्रथमायां युद्धस्य प्रारम्भः। तस्यामेव रात्रौ नागपाशबंधयुद्धम्। द्वितीयायां धूम्राक्षस्य युद्धम्। तृतीयायां वज्रदंष्ट्रस्य। चतुर्थ्यां कम्पनस्य, पञ्चम्यां प्रहस्तस्य, षष्ठ्यां स्वयं रावणस्य, सप्तम्यां कङ्कणस्य,

अष्टम्यामतिकायादीनां, नवम्यामिन्द्रजितः, तस्यामेव रात्रौ कङ्कभनिकङ्कभादीनां, दशम्यां मकाराक्षस्य, एकादश्यां द्वादश्यां त्रयोदश्यां इन्द्रजित इति।"

In *Yuddha Kanda* (50.33), he discusses the Avatars and its classifications

"अत्रेदमवसरप्राप्तमुच्यते। अस्यावसरस्य प्रयोजनं रावणादि वधः सतामनुष्ठेय धर्मनिश्चय प्रतिपत्तिश्च। तत्र राज्यपरित्यागेन वनवासेन च यथा सर्वं सुखं परित्यज्य सर्वदुःखमनुभूय चाप्यवश्यं गुरुवचनमनुष्ठेयमिति सतामनुष्ठेयधर्मनिश्चय प्रतिपत्तिर्भवति। तथातेनेन्द्रजित् समर पराजयेनापि शुचीनां शुद्धभावानां ऋजूनां धर्मिष्ठानां प्राणसन्देहदायिन्योऽपि विपदोऽवश्यमन्ते विनश्यन्ति। विपरीतानां पापिष्ठानां करतलगतापि कार्यसिद्धिर्विगलति। अतश्शौचार्जवादिगुणयुक्तैः पुंभिर्भवितव्यमिति सतां धर्मनिश्चय प्रतिपत्तिर्ज्ञायते। तेन कङ्कस्थकङ्कलनाथस्य पराजयवृत्तमपीदं नव्यर्थं भवति। यदयमवतारो लोकस्य वीर्यिपकार्याचारोपकारीत्युभयोपकारी वेदितव्यः। तथाहि भगवतोऽपकारः प्रायेण वीर्यिपकारी विद्योपकारीः ज्ञानोपकारी आचारोपकारी, उभयोपकारी, सर्विपकारीति। तत्र मत्स्यकूर्मवराहनरसिंहादयः प्रायेण वीर्यिपकारिणः। हंसहयग्रीव कृष्णद्वैपायनादयः प्रायेण विद्योपकारिणः। कपिलादयो ज्ञानोपकारिणः। नरनारायणादयः आचारोपकारिणः। उभयोपकारी-रामादयः। सर्वोपकारी-कृष्णावतारः।"

### Textual corrections

Udali points out many textual corrections throughout his commentary. For example, he says "एदममिच्छामि" is the correct reading over "एतदिच्छामि". He comments on verses like the "Indrohyasrunipatam" verse (*Ayodhya* 74.27) which is missing in many editions.

In addition to textual corrections, Udali Varadaraja points out the correct sequence of verses in many places. He asserts that versions differing from this sequence were written incorrectly due to the negligence of the scribes who copied the palm-leaf manuscripts. For example, in his commentary on *Ayodhya Kanda* (75.57), he states the following:

"अत्र प्रकरणे श्लोकविपर्यासस्थानविपर्यासाश्च विरोधाभावान्मूलत एव मुनिभ्यो दीयमानेषु कोयेद्दु मुनिनैव कृत इति वेदितव्यः। एवमन्यत्राणि अविरुद्धाः श्लोकविपर्यासा अर्धविपर्यासाः पादविपर्यासा स्थानविपर्यासाश्च मन्तव्याः। एवमेव मम सत्यं शपमानः बभूव लुलितं मन (63) इत्यस्मादेवानन्तरम् लालप्यमानस्य (64) इत्यादि श्लोको द्रष्टव्यः। उपरितु लेखकैः प्रमादाल्लिखितः। अतः उपरितनस्सर्गस्याऽऽरंभः तमेवं शोकसन्तप्त इत्यादिक एव।"

He explains that while some transpositions in the sequence of verses or parts of verses (*shloka-viparyasa*) might have existed in original manuscripts given by sages, many are clearly the result of errors by copyists (*lekhaka-pramada*). Specifically for the passage in question, he notes that verse 64 (लालप्यमानस्य...) should immediately follow verse 63 (मम सत्यं शपमानः...), and that the next Sarga should correctly begin with the verse तमेवं शोकसतप्त... (Distressed by grief in this manner...).

Regarding Kishkindha Kanda (Sarga 1, Verse 71), he remarks:

अत्र प्रदेशे अन्येऽपिकेचन श्लोकाः केषुचित् कोशेषु सन्ति। ते हेहया इति न प्रदृश्यन्ते। कतिपयपदग्रथनकोविदकवितालवलाभलुष्टितविवेकैः अविद्वत्कुलकुमारैः ऽस्ववाक्यसादृश्य शोधनेन वा सहपाठतस्ववाक्प्रथनसंभावनाभ्रमणे वा कौतूहलबहुलेन बाल्येन वा तादृशाः श्लोकाः कोशेषु लिखिताः इति वेदनीयाः। 82.अत्र कोशेषु श्लोकपौर्वापर्यविपर्ययो मुनिभ्यो दीयमानेषु कोशेषु मूलत एव मुनिनानुमतः।

In this section, there are some other verses found in certain manuscripts. These are not seen in the authoritative (Hehaya) versions. It should be understood that such verses were written into the manuscripts by people who, though skilled in stringing a few words together, had their discernment ruined by a mere pittance of poetic talent; by ignorant fools who mistook their own lines for the original due to a similarity in phrasing; or by those acting out of sheer childish curiosity. 82. As for the reversal of the sequence of verses found in these manuscripts, it should be understood that such variations existed in the original manuscripts given by the Sage (Valmiki) himself and were authorized by him.

In a few places, it is pointed out that even the Sargas (chapters) themselves differ. (At the beginning of each Sarga, the numbers are indicated as *Prathame* (first), *Dvitiye* (second), *Tritiye* (third), and so on.) In the 20th Sarga of the *Kishkindha Kanda*, the commentary indicates that what is currently the 21st Sarga in modern editions should be included within it. Consequently, the 22nd Sarga of modern printed books appears as the 21st Sarga in this commentary, and this one-chapter-less count continues thereafter. In our current edition, the Sarga numbering follows the sequence found in this commentary.

In the *Ayodhya Kanda*, what is taken as the 101st Sarga in Udali Varadaraja's commentary is shown as the 104th Sarga in some other editions. (Govindaraja treats it as the 104th Sarga and provides the reasons for it in his commentary.) Although Udali Varadaraja does not explicitly state here that the Sarga order has changed, he offers a resolution by stating that Rama

considered Dasaratha to have reached a state equivalent to death due to the grief of being separated from his son:

ननु आर्यं तात (5) इत्यादिना राजा स्वर्गतः मातरश्च विधवा इति भरतेनोक्ता। रघुनाथोऽशोचत्। किमित्यभिषेकप्रत्याख्यानं कङ्क्षते। पितृमरणानन्तरं श्रवणमेव शोचितव्यं हि। नास्ति व्यतिक्रमः। तस्मिन् भरतवाक्यप्रबन्धे पितृमरणमानुषङ्गिकेनोक्ताऽन्येन राज्यस्वीकारमेवोच्यते। अतो रघुनाथः तदानीमेवममन्यत। पिता पुत्रशोकेन मृतकल्पः। न पुनर्जीविष्यतीति मृत इत्युच्यते। मातरश्च विधवाकल्पमिति विधवा उच्यन्ते। अनेन ममाभिषेचनमेव प्राधान्येनोच्यत इति अशोक अभिषेकप्रत्याख्यानं कङ्क्षते। स्ववाक्ये पितृमरणानुवादस्य चायमेव परिहारः।

Regarding the doubt raised: In the verse beginning with "*Aryam Tatam*" (Verse 5), Bharata stated that the King had passed away to heaven and the mothers had become widows. Upon hearing this, Raghunatha (Rama) grieved. However, why does he then proceed to reject the coronation? Usually, one must observe mourning immediately upon hearing of a father's death.

There is no inconsistency here. In that flow of Bharata's speech, the mention of the father's death was made incidentally, while the primary focus was on urging Rama to accept the kingdom. Therefore, Raghunatha thought at that moment: "My father is dead-like (*mrita-kalpah*) due to the grief of losing his son. Similarly, the mothers are called widows because they are in a widow-like state (*vidhava-kalpam*)."

Believing that the main point being urged was his coronation, Rama remained (relatively) without grief and rejected the coronation. This same explanation serves as the resolution for when Rama himself later refers to his father's death in his own words.

In this manner, numerous rare and valuable insights are contained within the commentary titled '**Vivekatilaka**' written by Udali Varadaraja. (Only a select few examples have been highlighted here.)

Though the palm-leaf manuscripts of this commentary are available in several manuscript libraries like, Madras Government Oriental Library, Chennai Adyar Library, Tanjavur Saraswathi Mahal Library, Mysore oriental Library, Tiruvanandapuram Manuscript library and other places, this commentary has not been published so far. Now, by Lord Rama's grace, I have been fortunate enough to be chosen for printing this commentary from the palm-leaf manuscripts for the first time. This book is yet to be released and will be released shortly in a couple of months.