



## **CHAPTER 01**

### **Rāmāyaṇas in Sanskrit Literature - A Brief Survey**

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## Chapter 01 Rāmāyaṇas in Sanskrit Literature - A Brief Survey

आदौ राम तपोवनादिगमनं हत्वा मृगं काञ्चनं  
वैदेहीहरणं जटायुमरणं सुग्रीवसम्भाषणम्।  
वालीनिग्रहणं समुद्रतरणं लङ्कापुरीदाहनं  
पश्चाद्रावणकुम्भकर्णहननं एतद्विरामायणम्॥

Formerly Śrī Rāma going to the forest, killing the golden deer, abducting Sītā (by Rāvaṇa), killing Jaṭāyu, friendship with Sugrīva, killing Vālī, crossing the ocean, burning the city of Lāṅkā and then killing Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna. This is the Rāmāyaṇa.

The compounded word “Rāmāyaṇam” is made up of two words “Rāma” and “*Ayanam*”. The word ‘Rāma’ is derived from the root रम् (रमते) 1A<sup>1</sup> to delight, to please. Bhānuji Dīkṣa gives the meaning of ‘Rāma’ he who delights or is delighted, who pleases or is pleased, enjoys carnally and makes other enjoyed, rejoices or makes others happy. Rāmāpūrvatāpinī Upaniṣad defines the word as Rāma is that in whom the Yogis get delighted.<sup>2</sup>

*Amarakoṣa* enumerates 11 synonyms of the word *Ayanam* as follows:

अयनं वर्त्म मार्गाध्वपन्थानः पदवी सृतिः ।  
सरणिः पद्धतिः पद्या वर्तन्येकपदीति च ॥२/१/१५॥

वर्त्म - going,<sup>3</sup> moving, walking; मार्गः - walk, path, way, road; अध्वा-  
passage; पन्थाः - a way of entrance, an entrance, road; पदवी - a place,  
site, track; सृतिः - going, gilding, way, road, path; सरणिः - going,

<sup>1</sup> Cp. अमरकोष १/१/२३

<sup>2</sup> रमन्ते योगिनोऽन्ते नित्यानन्दे चिदात्मनि।

इति रामपदेनासौ परं ब्रह्माभिधीयते ॥ १/६ ॥

<sup>3</sup> Vide. Apte V.S.: The Students’ Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

gilding, way, road, path; पद्धति - a place, site, track; पद्म - a place, site, track; वर्तनी - going, moving, walking; एकपदी - road.

Even the word '*Ayanam*' is etymologically explained by Bhānuji Dīkṣita like 'अयते अनेन' from the root अय् (अयते) 1A to go or to move, on the authority of करणे ल्युट् (पा. ३/३/११७). It means 'that (path) on which the people tread'.

Apte V.S. gives 08 meanings of the word *Ayanam*<sup>4</sup> as follows:

(1) going, moving, walking, (2) walk, path, way, road, (3) place, site, abode, (4) a way of entrance, (5) the Sun's passage, (6) the period of duration of this passage, (7) equinoctial and solstitial points, (8) the final emancipation.

Out of these 5, 6 and 7 are not applicable in deriving the meaning of the word *Rāmāyaṇam*.

Thus the word "*Ayanam*" means going. The word compounded means going of Śrī Rāma (i.e. रामस्य अयनम्). It can also be understood as *Śrī Rāma-Caritam*, Śrī Rāma saga i.e. life history and exploits of Śrī Rāma.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meaning is a path on which if one walks, Śrī Rāma would be accessible or we can say that Śrī Rāma is obtained through that path.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meaning of *Ayanam* also denotes the sense of abode. It (i.e. *Rāmāyaṇam*) is the abode of wisdom of the Supreme Person and that is Śrī Rāma.

The 4<sup>th</sup> meaning is 'entrance' and hence *Rāmāyaṇa* is the prime entrance of the path leading to Śrī Rāma, of course, one of the meanings is final emancipation and what really the text offers.

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<sup>4</sup> The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary, P.48, col.03.

The 5<sup>th</sup> is the path which shows the easiest way to have final emancipation.

This is the entrance of wisdom for all irrespective of caste and creed just next to the Vedas (which are exclusively for the twice-borns), foremost Classical Sanskrit Literature (आदिकाव्यम्) from the pen of the most revered sage Vālmīki, the foremost (आदिकवि) of the poets of the Classical Sanskrit Literature.<sup>5</sup>

According to *Rāmāyaṇa-tilakam* (commentary on Rāmāyaṇa by Nīlkaṇṭha), the chief aim of Śrī Rāma saga is nothing but the attainment of the Self.

The Rāmāyaṇa is not only read not only in the India but also the worldwide, as Śrī Rāma has incarnated here. Śrī Rāma is an ideology which is practised by the people desiring a marvelous life. The Rāmāyaṇa contains the most authentic history of Śrī Rāma. It shows the path of a dignified life-style. It deals with social, political, as well as personal life and again it gives the values and ideals of the each phase of human life.

In the Rāmāyaṇa there is a competition that who abandons more. Thus this is not only the life-story or history but the mirror of life.

Gosvāmin Tulasīdāsa compares Rāmāyaṇa with the wish-fulfilling tree (कल्पवृक्ष).<sup>6</sup>

St. Morārī Bapu explains it as follows:

(1) *Bālakāṇḍa* as the root which creates the story

<sup>5</sup> पठ रामायणं व्यास काव्यबीजं सनातनम् ।

यत्र रामचरित्रं स्यात् तदहं तत्र शक्तिमान् ॥ (बृहद्धर्मपुराण० प्रखण्ड० ३०/४७)

<sup>6</sup> रामायन सुरतरु की छाँया।

दुःख भए दुरि निकट जो आया ॥ रा.च.मा. माहात्म्य ॥

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(2) *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* as the trunk of a tree in which all the characters become strong.

(3) *Aranyakāṇḍa* as the branches as it were containing the *Pañcavaṇī*.

(4) *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* as leaves due to its greenery of Hanūmān's appearance.

(5) *Sundarakāṇḍa* as flowers.

(6) *Laṅkākāṇḍa* as a fruit, as Rāvaṇa gets killed here by Śrī Rāma and gets liberation.

(7) *Uttarakāṇḍa* as *Rasa* full of knowledge, devotion and philosophy.

There are crores of Rāmāyaṇas composed by different sages at the number of times as Sage Budhakaśika says in his *Rāma-rakṣā-stotram*:

चरितं रघुनाथस्य शतकोटिप्रविस्तरम् ।  
एकैकमक्षरं पुंसां महापातकनाशनम् ॥१॥

The life history of Śrī Rāma, the chief of the Raghu dynasty extends to a hundred crores of couplets. Every single letter of this (vast life history) destroys the major sins of the people (going through it).

Among these Rāmāyaṇas some are available, while the rest of them are obsolete.

## Varied extensions of the *Rāmāyaṇas*

Here bellow an attempt is made to present a brief survey of the *Rāmāyaṇas*<sup>7</sup> in chronological order.<sup>8</sup>

(01) *Śravaṇarāmāyaṇam* – It is in the form of a dialogue between god Indra and king Janaka. It is composed in the 40<sup>th</sup> *Kṛta* Era of the *Svāyambhuva Manvantara*. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 1, 25,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Daśarath on hunting, the devotion of Śravaṇa to his parents, Śravaṇa's marriage and his death, his father cursing the king, Mantharā's birth, etc. It deals with the Rāma story in general and administrative strategy in particular.

(02) *Māhārāmāyaṇam* – Lord Śiva has narrated it to mother-goddess Pārvatī in the *Kṛta* Era of *Svāyambhuva Manvantara*. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 2,25,000 verses dealing with the history of Śrī Rāma in general and Vedāntic as well as Yogic description in particular along with 09 sentiments implemented beautifully.

The long description of palaces, inner apartments, mansions, towns, cities, moonrise, seasons etc. are found distinctly.

(03) *Svāyambhuvarāmāyaṇam* – It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord Brahmā and divine sage Nārada. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 18,000 verses. It is perhaps also known as *Nārādīyarāmāyaṇam*. It is composed in 32<sup>nd</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Svāyambhuva Manvantara*.

<sup>7</sup> The information of the *Rāmāyaṇas* has been taken from the book, Chaturvedi Satyadev: Goswāmi Tulasidāsa aur Rāmākathā, Hindi Sāhitya Sṛjana Paṛiṣada; 1957; pp 55-138.

<sup>8</sup> M. Monier Williams: A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Motilal Banarsidass, New delhi, 2002, P 786, Col. 3: The 14 Manvantars in their sequence are : (1) *Svāyambhuva*, (2) *Svārocīṣa*, (3) *Uttam*, (4) *Tāmasa*, (5) *Raivata*, (6) *Cākṣuṣa*, (7) *Vaivasvata* (current), (8) *Sāvarṇi*, (9) *Dakṣasāvarṇi*, (10) *Brahmasāvarṇi*, (11) *Dharmasāvarṇi*, (12) *Rudrasāvarṇi*, (13) *Ruci*, (14) *Bhauma*.

The major episodes are: Sītā worshipping goddess Satī, marriage, exile, Sumantra's lamentation, Sītā's abduction, the reign of Dīrghabāhu, Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, etc.

**(04) Lomaśarāmāyaṇam** – Sage Lomaśa composed it in 1062<sup>nd</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Svāyambhuva Manvantara*. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 32,000 verses.

The major episodes are: The cause of Śrī Rāma's incarnation is to kill Jalandhara (*Daśakandhara?*), king Kumuda and his queen Vīramati take birth as Daśaratha and his queen Kauśalyā. As a reward of king Janaka visualising the Yogamāya in the forest, Sītā is born. The marriage of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī is also described.

**(05) Agastyarāmāyaṇam**– It is composed by sage Agastya in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Kṛta* Era of *Svārociṣamanvantara*, It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 16,000 verses. The story refers to the episode of *Rāmacarita mānasa* in which Lord Śiva listens to Śrī Rāma Saga at sage Agastya's hermitage.<sup>9</sup>

The major episodes are: King Kuntala and his queen Sindhumati take birth as king Daśaratha and his queen Kausalyā, Jānakī's manifestation from the altar place of *Vārṣṇeya*, origin of the sea, the cause of giving the ring as well as the installation of *Rāmeśvara-liṅga*, the location of mt. *Rṣyamuka*, birth of demons *Maya* and *Dundubhi*, etc.

**(06) Manjularāmāyaṇam** –Sage Sutikṣṇa has composed it in the 14<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of *Svārociṣa Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 10,3000 verses.

The major episodes are: Accounts of Bhānupratāpa and Arimardana, the dialogue between Jānakī and Hanumān, etc. It deals with ŚrīRāma Saga in general and Śrī Rāma in particular.

<sup>9</sup> 'एक बार त्रेता युग माहीं संभु गए कुंभज रिषि पाहीं ॥ ... रामकथा मुनिबर्ज बखानी । सुनी महेस परम सुख मानी ॥ (मानस. प्र.सोपान - दु (४७)के पश्चात्) '.

(07) *Devarāmāyaṇam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between Indra and his son Jayanta. It is composed in the 6<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of *Tāmasa Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 1, 00,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Jayanta assuming the form of a crow tests Śrī Rāma for His being the Supreme Reality (परं ब्रह्म), Śrī Rāma's wrath, meeting Nārada, Nārada's instruction, the victories of Śrī Rāma, Bharata, Śatrughna and Hanumān, Monkeys' departure, appointment of Vibhīṣaṇa's son as a chief commander at Ayodhyā, Fourfold devotion, Hanumān's coronation, the method of worship, glorifications of sacred places, description of cities, towns etc., rules of linguistic changes (भाषापरिवर्तन) and its description as a supplement to the Vedic literature (शब्दपरिशिष्ट) are peculiarities of this *Rāmāyaṇam*.

(08) *Rāmāyaṇamañiratnam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between sage Vasiṣṭha and his wife Arundhatī. It is composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of *Tāmasa Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 36,000 verses. It presents nicely why Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted mostly in 07 *Kāṇḍas* only.<sup>10</sup>

The major episodes are: The origin of Pañcavaṭī, Śrī Rāma going to sage Vālmīki's hermitage, the description of Citrakūṭa, Anasuyā instructing the duties of women, the description of Ayodhā, reunion of Śrī Rāma and Sītā, various eulogies and Gītas, etc.

(09) *Rāmāyaṇamahāmālā* –It is composed in the *Tretā* Era of *Tāmasa Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 56,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Lord Śiva in the form of a swan stays on Mt. Nilagiri listening to the Rāma story from the crow (काक) Instructing the deluded Garuda, Lord Śiva revealing Himself, removal of delusion at Kākabhūṣuṇḍī's place, etc.

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<sup>10</sup> Such a justification is not found anywhere in the VR as well as Adh.R (the problem of research of the present thesis).



(10) *Sanivṛtarāmāyaṇam* –Divine sage Nārada had narrated ŚrīRāma saga in the 5<sup>th</sup> *Kṛta* Era of the *Raivata Manvantara*. It is perhaps the same *Rāmāyaṇam* known as *Nāradoktarāmāyaṇa*, as it had been narrated by sage Nārada. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 24,000 verses.

The major episodes are: All the beings are created by Manu and Śatarūpā who are in turn during *Raivata Kalpa* are born as Daśaratha and Kausalyā and beget Śrī Rāma as their son.

(11) *Maindarāmāyaṇam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between Mainda, the monkey chief<sup>11</sup> and Kairava. It is composed in 21<sup>st</sup> *Tretā* Era of *Raivata Manvantara*.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma's staying in Ṛsivāta in Mithilā, serving sage Viśvāmitra, upliftment of Rāmeśvara. Hanumān entering into *Aśokavātikā*, etc.

(12) *Sauhārdarāmāyaṇam* – It is ascribed to sage Śara-bhaṅga. It is composed in the 9<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 40,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Origin of Daṇḍaka forest, Nārada's delusion and his wrath, Śūrpaṇakhā's arrival and cutting of her nose and ears, Lakṣmaṇa's drawing the line (लक्ष्मणरेखा),<sup>12</sup> etc.

(13) *Subrahmarāmāyaṇam* – It is composed in the 13<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 32,000 verses.

The major episodes are: The glorification of Prayāga, meeting sage Bharadvāja, the formulas of different gods, Śrī Rāma staying at Chitrakūṭa, the secret of Anasūyā, etc.

<sup>11</sup> His name occurs in AdhR 4/6/21, 4/6/24, 6/4/35, etc.

<sup>12</sup> This episode is not found anywhere in the VR as well as in the AdhR (the problem of research of the present thesis).

(14) *Saupadyarāmāyaṇam* – It is composed by sage Atri in the 16<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Raivata Manvantara*. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 62,000 verses. It is perhaps also known as *Atrirāmāyaṇam*.

The episode of entrusting Sītā to the Fire-god and taking the छायासीता back are depicted in details.

(15) *Suvarcasarāmāyaṇam* – It is in the form of a dialogue between Sugrīva and Tārā. It is composed in the 18<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 15,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Meeting Sugrīva, the dialogue between Vālī and Śrī Rāma, Mandodari persuading Rāvaṇa, Sulocana's lamentation, the ocean creating hindrance, Hanumān bringing the life-restoring herb, the dialogue between Hanumān and Bharata, Sītā cursing Śāntā, Sītā's abandonment, birth of Lava and Kuśa, tying the horse of the Horse-sacrifice, killing of Mahirāvaṇa, division of the kingdom and Śrī Rāma's ascent to the heaven.

(16) *Saurarāmāyaṇam* – It is also known as *Sūrya-rāmāyaṇam*. It is in the form of a dialogue between the Sun god and Hanumān. It is composed in the 20<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of the *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 62,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Hanumān's birth, life-story of Śuka, the dialogue between Añjanī and Hanumān, the account of Jāmbavān, etc.

(17) *Durantarāmāyaṇam* – It is in the form of a dialogue between sage Vasiṣṭha and king Janaka. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 61,000 verses. It is composed in 25<sup>th</sup> *Tretā* Era of *Vaivasvata Manvantara*.

The major episodes are: Greatness of Bharata, Bharata's oath and his lamentation, Kaikeyī's shock, Lakṣmaṇa's wrath, the dialogue between Niṣāda and Bharata, the crest-jewel as the token of

recognition, Sītā's message, the description of Kiṣkindhā, burning of Laṅkā, etc.

The *Rāmāyaṇas* given here below are presented alphabetically, as their date of composition is not available in any book.

(18) *Adbhutarāmāyaṇam* –The story is depicted in the form of a dialogue between sage Vālmīki and Bharadvāja. It contains 27 cantos.

The peculiarities of this *Rāmāyaṇam* are: (1) Lord Viṣṇu takes incarnation due to the curse of Nārada and sage Parvata. Ambarīṣa's daughter has been given the curse to be born as Jānaki & her abduction. (2) Nārada curses goddess Lakṣmi and she incarnates as Sītā from the womb of Mandodarī (3) Sītā kills Rāvaṇa who is having 1000 shoulders (स्कन्ध).

(19) *Ānandarāmāyaṇam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. It consists of 09 Kāṇḍas and 12,252 verses. The 3<sup>rd</sup> canto onward it is the dialogue between Rāmadāsa and Viṣṇudāsa.

The major episodes are: After the marriage of Daśaratha and Kauśalyā, Rāvaṇa abducts Kauśalyā; After Sītā's abduction goddess Umā takes Śrī Rāma's test; Rāvaṇa taking Śiva's *Ātmaliṅga* and Pārvatī, etc.

(20) *Bhuṣuṇḍirāmāyaṇam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between Brahmā and Bhuṣuṇḍi. It comprises of 04 books and 36,000 verses.

It is also known as *ĀdiRāmāyaṇam*. It is called an original (मूल), because sage Bhuṣuṇḍi had witnessed it when he was in the form of a crow (काक) and Śrī Rāma was yet a child.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> *Rāmāyaṇam* in the chronological order should be the *Yogavāsiṣṭha-rāmāyaṇam*, as it is narrated to Śrī Rāma in His student life and that too, before His marriage with Sītā. The 3<sup>rd</sup> naturally is VR, as it is composed and

(21) *Cāndrarāmāyaṇam* –It is in the form of a dialogue between the Moon-god (चन्द्र) and Hūnumān. It comprises of 07 *Kāṇḍas* and 75,000 verses.

The major episodes are: Nārada's penance, Indra sending Kāma-deva, Nārada's delusion, Bharata's journey to Citrakūṭa, meeting sage Bharadvāja and the accounts of Svayamprabhā, Sampāti, etc.

(22) *Mantrarāmāyaṇam* –The story of *Rāmāyaṇam* is popular among the masses of India from the time immemorial. Nīla-kaṇṭha, the great Sanskrit scholar of Vedic literature has selected about 157 *rcās* imbibing the fragments of ŚrīRāma Saga composed by sage Vālmīki.<sup>14</sup>

(23) *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam*<sup>15</sup> – Sage Vālmīki is undoubtedly the father of poetic imagination, as poets can see the past as well as the future through their wisdom and they can imagine the harmonic combination of philosophy as well as worldly parlance.

When sage Vālmīki heard the lamentation of one of the pair of curlews (क्रौञ्च), his grief came out enwrapped in the form of a stanza (शोकः श्लोकत्वमागतः)<sup>16</sup>.

He composed the *Rāmāyaṇam* in 07 *Kāṇḍas* containing 500 cantos and 24,000 verses.<sup>17</sup>

The entire Śrī Rāma Saga<sup>18</sup> is known to every one and hence it can be summarised in the following verse:

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narrated after the exile of Sītā begetting Kuśa and Lava at Vālmīki's hermitage.

<sup>14</sup> *Mantrarāmāyaṇa* Nīlkaṇṭha, Trans. in Gujarati by Shantilala Nagar, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Dlh, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> *Śrīmad Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam*, Tr. Pt. Pandey Rāmanārāyaṇadatta Śāstrī Gitapress, Gorakhpur 1974.

<sup>16</sup> मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।

यत् क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ॥ वा. रा १/२/१५ ॥

<sup>17</sup> cf. चतुर्विंशसहस्राणि श्लोकानामुक्तवानृषिः ।

तथा सर्गशतान्पञ्चषट्काण्डानि तथोत्तरम् ॥ वा. रा १/४/२ ॥

आदौ रामतपोवनादिगमनं हत्वा मृगं काञ्चनं  
वैदेहीहरणं जटायुमरणं सुग्रीवसंभाषणम् ।  
वालीनिग्रहणं समुद्रतरणं लङ्कापुरीदाहनं  
पश्चाद्रावणकुम्भकर्णहननमेतद्धि रामायणम् ॥

The *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam* is as fresh today as it was during the time of Vālmīki, the contemporary of Śrī Rāma.<sup>19</sup> It is one of the world's most remarkable classics and excels all in its appeal.<sup>20</sup> It is full of lessons for all, deserves to be read with interest and is the oldest specimen of epic poetry. (The detailed summary is given below in this chapter.)

(24) *Vedāntarāmāyaṇam*<sup>21</sup> – Sage Vasiṣṭha narrates the life story of Lord Parśurāma to Śrī Rāma.<sup>22</sup>

(25) *Yogavāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇam*<sup>23</sup> – It is in the form of a dialogue between sage Vasiṣṭha and Śrī Rāma. It contains 06 *Kāṇḍas* and 32,000 verses. It is also known as the *Ārṣarāmāyaṇam* and also as *Vāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇma*

The major episodes are: Sage Vasiṣṭha instructs the path of self-realisation (योग) Śrī Rāma. It was narrated earlier by Vālmīki to Ariṣṭnemi and by Agastya to Sutikṣṇa. The last chapter deals with the birth story of Kākabhuṣuṇḍi.

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<sup>18</sup> cf. वाल्मीकिगिरिसंभूता रामाम्भोनिधिसङ्गता ।

श्रीमद्रामायणी गङ्गा पुनाति भुवनत्रयम् ॥ (रामायणतिलकं -मङ्गलश्लोक-३)

<sup>19</sup> प्रचेतसोऽहं दशमः पुत्रो राघवनन्दनः ।

न स्मराम्यनृतं वाक्यमिमौ तु तव पुत्रकौ ॥ वा. रा ७/१६/१९॥

<sup>20</sup> नास्ति गङ्गासमं तीर्थं नास्ति मातृसमो गुरुः ।

नास्तिविष्णुसमो देवो नास्ति रामायणात् परम् ॥स्कन्द० उत्तर० रामायणमाहा० ५/२१॥

<sup>21</sup> *Vedāntarāmāyaṇam*, Lahri press, Banaras 1964.

<sup>22</sup> Only this much information is available.

<sup>23</sup> *Vasiṣṭharāmāyaṇa - A Study*, Meharchanda Lachhmandas.

## Śrī Rāma Saga in the Mahābhārata<sup>24</sup>

The Rāma-story is found in different chapters of the Mahābhārata. The *Rāmopākhyānam* occurs in 739 verses of chs. 273-292 of the *Vanaparva*. The story occurs also in Ch 59 of *Droṇaparva* in total 25 verses.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma's manifestation, Rāvaṇa securing the boons, origin of monkeys, etc., Śrī Rāma's exile, abduction of Śītā, meeting Sugrīva, the dialogue between Rāvaṇa and Śītā, construction of bridge, killing Rāvaṇa, Śītā's purification & Śrī Rāma's coronation.

## Śrī Rāma Saga in the Purāṇas

The dates of the Purāṇas is a hard nut to crack for even the scholars like Upadhyay Baladeva, Hazra R. C., Kane P. V. and others, yet the probable dates accepted by the traditional scholars are adopted.

(01) *Viṣṇupurāṇam* (2<sup>nd</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>25</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 26 verses of Ch 04 of Book IV.

The major episodes are: Manifestation of Śrī Rāma and other brothers from the portion of Lord Viṣṇu, Śrī Rāma's exile, Śrī Rāma's reign, killing of Lavaṇa, enthronement of Lava, Kuśa, etc.

Besides, many *Rāmāyaṇas* in regional languages are available viz. Kamban's *Kambanarāmāyaṇa* (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) in Tamil, Buddhuraja's *Dvipādarāmāyaṇa* (12<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD) known as *Raṅganatharāmāyaṇa* and Molla's *Mollārāmāyaṇa* in Telugu,

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<sup>24</sup> ShriMahābhārata, Sastusāhityavardhaka kāryālaya; 1958.

<sup>25</sup> ŚrīŚrīViṣṇupurāṇa, Śrī Munilal Gupt; Gitapress Gorakhpur, 1934.  
Hazra R. C. dates it in 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

*Irāmacarita*, *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (14<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD),<sup>26</sup> *Kannasarāmāyaṇa* and *Keralavarmā-rāmāyaṇa* in Malayalam, Saint Kṛttivāsa's *Kṛttivsarāmāyaṇa* (15<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD) in Bengali, *Rāmacaritamānasas* of Tulsīdāsa (15<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD) in Avadhi (Hindi), Balarāmadāsa's *Jagannamohanarāmāyaṇa* (15<sup>th</sup> Cent.) in Oriya is also known as *Dāṇḍirāmāyaṇa*; In Marāṭhi saint Ekanātha's '*Bhāvārtharāmāyaṇa*' (16<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>27</sup> and Moropanta's *Rāmavijaya*, Narahari's *Toraverāmāyaṇa* (16<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD) in Kannada, Divakarabhaṭṭa's *Kāśmīrī-rāmāyaṇa* (18<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD), Girdharadāsa's *Gīradhararāmāyaṇa* (19<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD) in Gujarati, Mādhava Kandali's translation of VR in Assami, Durgakavi's *Gītīrāmāyaṇa*, Raghunātha's *Kathārāmāyaṇa* and Ananta Atta's *Ramakirtana* and many more.

It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord Śiva and Mother-goddess Pārvaṭī. Devotion to Śrī Rāma is explained in the light of Advaita Vedānta.

The peculiarities of the story are: (1) Śrī Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are identified with the Supreme Self, Primordial Matter and the individual Self.<sup>28</sup> Sage Viśvāmitra, sage Vasiṣṭha, king Janaka, Kauśalyā, Kumbhakarna and Rāvaṇa etc. are aware of the secret of Śrī Rāma's incarnation. (2) The description of sage Vālmīki's previous life. (3) Lakṣmaṇa observing fast for 12 years. (4) Installation of *Rāmeśvaraliṅga* before the construction of Setu.<sup>29</sup> (5) Aṅgada destroying the sacrifice performed by Rāvaṇa.

**(02) *Matsyapurāṇam*** (2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>30</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga occurs in 02 verses of chs 11 and 12.

<sup>26</sup> The Malayalam Rāmāyaṇa composed by Śrī Eduttchan in 1375 A.D. is mere the translation of *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* written in Sanskrit occurring in the Uttarkhaṇḍa of *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam*.

<sup>27</sup> The influence of AdhR is seen on this Rāmāyaṇa.

<sup>28</sup> अग्रे यास्याम्यहं पश्चात्त्वमन्वेहि धनुर्धर ।

आवयोर्मध्यगा सीता मायेवात्मपरात्मनोः ॥३/१/१३॥

<sup>29</sup> सेतुमारभमाणस्तु तत्र रामेश्वरं शिवम् ।

संस्थाप्य पूजयित्वाह रामो लोकहिताय च ॥६/४/१॥

<sup>30</sup> *Matsyapurāṇamahāpurāṇam*, Trans. Tripathi Ramapratap; Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag, 1947.

Hazra R. C. dates it in 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

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(03) *Vāyupurāṇam* (3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. AD) - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 214 verses of Ch 26.<sup>31</sup>

(04) *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam* (3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>32</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in the Uttarakhaṇḍa as *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇam*. It contains 07 *Kāṇḍas*, 64 cantos and 4,200 verses.<sup>33</sup>

(05) *Padmapurāṇam* (5<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>34</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 733 verses of chs 8, 33, 35, 198 of the *Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa*, in 4,297 verses of chs 1-68 of the *Patālakhaṇḍa* and in 5,600 verses of chs 73, 242, 254 of the *Krīyāyoga sārakhaṇḍa*.

The major episodes are: Daśaratha's four queens are Kausalyā, Sumitrā, Surūpā and Suveṣā,<sup>35</sup> The Rāmarakṣāstotra is a part and parcel of this Purāṇa (*Uttarakhaṇḍ* 73/1-12), Śrī Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, goddess Lakṣmī, Serpent Śeṣa, Discus Sudarśana and Conch Pāñcājanya respectively.

(06) *Śrīmad Bhāgvatapurāṇam* (6<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>36</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in Ch 19 of the 5<sup>th</sup> Book in 04 verses and in chs 10-12 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Book in 107 verses.

<sup>31</sup> The Vāyumahāpurāṇam, Ed. Nag Sharan Sinh, Pub. Nag Publisher, Delhi, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam*, Ed. Sharma K. V. Krishnadas academy, Varanasi, 2000.

Upadhyay Baladeva dates it in 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

<sup>33</sup> पार्वत्यै परमेश्वरेण गदिते ह्यध्यात्मरामायणे

काण्डैः सप्तभिरन्वितेऽतिशुभदे सर्गाश्चतुःषष्टिकाः ।

श्लोकानां तु शतद्वयेन सहितान्युक्तानि चत्वारि वै

सहस्राणि समाप्तितः श्रुतिशतान्युक्तानि तत्त्वार्थतः ॥पृ. ३९९,

अध्यात्मरामायण (हिन्दी), गीताप्रेस, गोरखपुर, सं. २०३१॥

<sup>34</sup> The Padmapurāṇa, Ancient Indian Tradition & Mythology (part I-X); Dr. N. A. Deshpade, Dr. G. P. Bhatt; Motilal Banarsidass; Delhi, 1989.

Hazra R. C. dates it in 9<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

<sup>35</sup> This Purāṇa mentions 04 queens of king Daśaratha and they are Kausalyā, Sumitrā, Surūpā and Suveṣā (here Kaikayī is missing).

<sup>36</sup> Ancient Indian Tradition & Mythology, the Bhāgvatapurāṇa; A board of scholars; Motilal Banarsidass; Delhi, 1981.



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The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma and Sītā are presented as the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and goddess Lakṣmī, the *Śītāsvayamvara*, Śrī Rāma abandoning Sītā, etc.

(07) *Kūrmapurāṇam* (6<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>37</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 61 verses of Ch 21 of the पूर्वभाग.

The major episodes are: The description of demon's race, Solar race, Śrī Rāma installing *Śivaliṅga* after the war, abduction of Māyāsītā under *pativratopākhyāna*, etc.

(08) *Bhaviṣyapurāṇam* (6<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>38</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in only 11 verses (06 verses of *Pratisargaparva* & 05 verses of *Uttara Parva*.)

(09) *Līṅgapurāṇam* (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>39</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga occurs in 02 verses of Ch 66 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Book.

(10) *Skandapurāṇam* (6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>40</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 128 verses of Ch 8 of *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa*, in 53 verses of chs 2 & 7 of *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa*, in 2,194 verses of chs 11, 13, 15, 18, 19 & 43-52 in *Avanti* Section as well as 30-38 in *Dharmāranya* Section of *Brāhma-khaṇḍa*, in 144 verses of chs 20, 96-104 of *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* and in 80 verses of chs 111-113, 123 & 171 in *Prabhāsakṣetramāhātmya* of *Prabhāsakhaṇḍa*.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma's manifestation, Rāvaṇa's killing, reason of Śrī Rāma's incarnation, king Dharmadatta and Kahalā take birth as king Daśaratha and Kausalyā, construction of the bridge, Śrī Rāma's ascent to heaven, Śrī Rāma installing *Śivaliṅga*, Sītā's fire-ordeal, Fire-god eulogizing Sītā, etc.

<sup>37</sup> Kalyāṇa-Purāṇāṅka-Kūrmapurāṇa; Gītā Press, Gorakhpur; 1971.

<sup>38</sup> Upadhyay Baladeva dates it in 10<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

<sup>39</sup> Līṅgapurāṇam, Jain Shantilal, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1980.

Upadhyay Baladeva dates it in 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

<sup>40</sup> Ancient Indian Tradition & Mythology, the Skandapurāṇa; A board of scholars; G.P. Bhatt; Motilal Banarsidass; Delhi, 1992.

Śrī Rāma Saga depicted here is important to prove the historicity of Śrī Rāma's life and exploits as it gives the data of the events.

(11) *Varāhapurāṇam* (8<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>41</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga occurs in 09 verses of Ch 45. The *Rāghavadvādāśī* vow is described.

(12) *Agnipurāṇam* (8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>42</sup> - The story is depicted briefly in chs. 05-11 in 179 verses. It is the summary of VR.

(13) *Nārādapurāṇam* (8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>43</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga occurs in 895 verses of chs 3/73-75, 78, 79. The story of VR is briefly depicted here.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma making Vibhīṣaṇa free in Dravidian country, Śrī Rāma as well as other brothers are incarnation of Nārāyaṇa, Saṁkarsaṇa etc..

(14) *Brahmavaivartapurāṇam* (8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>44</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in Ch 14 of *Prakṛtikhaṇḍa* in 65 verses as well as in Ch 62 of *Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa* in 99 verses.

The major episodes are: Vedavatī takes birth as Sītā, Sītā's abduction, the Fire-god creating *MāyāSītā* etc.

(15) *Brahmapurāṇam* (9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)<sup>45</sup> - The story is depicted in chs 53-84 & 87 in 282 verses as well as in Ch 1.67 in 25 verses.

<sup>41</sup> The *Varāhapurāṇa*; Śrī Ahibhushan Bhattacharya; Śrī Ānand Swaroop Gupta; All India Kashiraj Trust; Varanasi, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> *Agnipurāṇa* – Garga Saṁhitā aṅka, Kalyāṇa; Hanumānprasada poddar & Chimanlal Goswami; Motilāl Gītā press Gorakhpura.

<sup>43</sup> *Nārādamahāpurāṇam*; ŚrīVāsudeva M Joshi; Sastu sāhitya vardhak karyalay, Ahmedabad.

<sup>44</sup> *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, Vinayak-Ganesh Apte; Ānandāśram. Upadhyay Baladeva dates it in 15<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

<sup>45</sup> The *Brahmapurāṇam*; Ed. Nagasharan sing; Nagpublisher, Delhi; 1985. Upadhyay Baladeva dates it in 13<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD.

The major episodes are: The glorification of *Rāmatīrtha*, Rāvaṇa's life story, Rāvaṇa's penance, Rāvaṇa stealing Vāsudeva's image from Amarāvātī etc.

(16) *Garuḍamahāpurāṇam* (9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Cent, AD)<sup>46</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in chs 142 and 143 in 72 verses. It depicts few events of Śrī Rāma's life like Śrī Rāma cutting Śūrpaṇakhā's nose and ears, Śrī Rāma going to Gayā for performing the ancestral rites.

The Śrī Rāma saga is depicted also in many other minor texts and they are as under.

(01) *Ādipurāṇam*<sup>47</sup> - The Rām Saga is depicted in Ch 12.<sup>48</sup>

(02) *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇam* - The Rāma Saga is depicted in chapters 18-22, 25-30 (i.e. 11 chapters in total) of the पूर्वखण्ड. The story depicted is similar to the story of *Mahābhāgvata (Devī)-purāṇam* and *Nṛsimhapurāṇam*

The major episodes are: Hanumān entering into Lalīkā in the form of a he-cat, the origin of *Rāmāyaṇa*, etc.

(03) *Bṛhannāradyapurāṇam*<sup>49</sup> - The story occurs in chs. 75 and 79 of the पूर्वभाग.<sup>50</sup>

(04) *Śrīmad Devībhāgavatapurāṇam* ()<sup>51</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in chapters 28-30 under *Navarātra Māhātmya* of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Garuḍamahāpurāṇa; Sastu Sāhitya Mudraṇālay Trust, Ahmedabad; 1977.

<sup>47</sup> The information regarding the Purāṇas Nos. 2, 3 & 19 is taken from the book - Chaturvedi Satyadev: Goswāmi Tulasidāsa aur Rāmakathā, Hindi Sahitya Srjana Parisada; 1957; pp 55-138. Hence no further information is available.

<sup>48</sup> Only this much information is available.

<sup>49</sup> Nārada-purāṇa, Ancient Indian Tradition & Mythology, Vol.15, Tr. A Board of Scholars and Prof. J. L. Shastri, Pub. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989.

<sup>50</sup> No further information is available.

<sup>51</sup> The *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*; Ed. Nagasharan sinh; Nagpublisher, Delhi, 1986.

## Chapter 01

Book in 187 verses, 01 verse in 4<sup>th</sup> Book and in 63 verses of the Ch 16 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Book.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma making Śūrpaṇakhā deformed, Śrī Rāma observing fast in *Navarātra* to defeat Rāvaṇa, the goddess appeasing Śrī Rāma for defeating Rāvaṇa.

(05) *Mahābhāgavata(Devī)purāṇam*<sup>52</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in chapters 37-64.

The major episodes are: Gods approaching Lord Viṣṇu and requesting to kill Rāvaṇa, the gods approaching Lord Śiva and Pārvatī, Lord Śiva assumes Hanumān's form, Lord Brahmā worships the goddess for Śrī Rāma's victory, Sītā's birth from Mandodarī etc.

(06) *Harivamśpurāṇam*<sup>53</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is briefly depicted in 35 verses of Ch 41.

(07) *Kalkipurāṇam*<sup>54</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 58 verses of Ch 03 of Book III.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma's manifestation, Rāvaṇa's killing, Rāma abandoning Sītā, Sītā entering into the Earth, Śrī Rāma's ascent to the heaven, etc.

(08) *Kālikāpurāṇam*<sup>55</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in total 10 verses of chs 38 & 62.

The major episodes are: God Brahmā worships goddess Kālī for Śrī Rāma's victory, Janaka gets 02 more sons while ploughing the land, etc.

<sup>52</sup> The Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, Ed. Nag Sharan Sinh, Pub. Naga Publisher, Delhi, 1986.

<sup>53</sup> Mahābhārata-Khilabhaga Hari Vamsa, trans. Pt. Rama Narayana Datta Shastri Pandey 'Rama', Gita Press Gorakhpura, 1860.

<sup>54</sup> Shri Kalkipurāṇam; Pt. Baldevprasad Mishra; Nag Publisher; Delhi, 1986.

<sup>55</sup> Kālikāpurāṇa, Edi. Śrī Biśwanārāyaṇa Śāstrī; Chawkamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varansi; 1972.



(09) *Nṛsimhapurāṇam* - The story of VR is briefly presented in 741 verses of chs 47-52.

The major episodes are: Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are the incarnation of Lord Nārāyaṇa and serpent Śeṣa, account of Ahalyā and her transformation to stone due to the curse, etc.

(10) *Śivapurāṇam*<sup>56</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 141 verses of chs 20, 24 & 25 of *Satīsamhitā*.

The major episodes are: Nārada's delusion, Sati testing Śrī Rāma's divinity, origin of Hanumān as Lord Śiva's portion, etc.

(11) *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇam*<sup>57</sup> - Śrī Rāma Saga is depicted in 2,289 verses of chs 200-269. Śrī Rāma and other brothers are identified with Nārāyaṇa, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Paṇḍya and Aniruddha respectively.

### Exhaustive summary of *Śrīmad Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam*<sup>58</sup>

Any student working on Śrī Rāma Saga is not supposed to constrain himself from presenting the contents (in brief) of the original rather the foremost Śrī Rāma Saga narrated by sage Vālmīki in 645 Cantos and 23,733 verses [FN Many of the modern scholars both Indian and Western, believe that Vālmīki did not compose the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. In that case the total number comes to 346 Cantos and 17,905 verses.] Here below the content or summary is given of the *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam*.

### *Bālakāṇḍa* (Cantos 77, Verses 2369)

जातः श्रीरघुनायको दशरथान्मुन्याश्रयात्ताटकां

<sup>56</sup> Ancient Indian Tradition & Mythology The Shivapurāṇa (I-IV); by a board of Scholars; Dr. Arnold Kunst Prof. J.L. Shastri, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi,

<sup>57</sup> Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇam, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1933.

<sup>58</sup> The numbers of the cantos and of the verses of each of the kāṇḍa are taken from the Jāṅkīnātha Sharma's Vālmīkiya Rāmāyaṇa (Hindi translation), Gita Press, Gorakhpura.

## Chapter 01

हत्वा रक्षितकौशिकक्रतुवरः कृत्वाऽप्यहल्यां शुभाम् ।  
भङ्क्त्वा रुद्रशराशनं जनकजां पाणौ गृहीत्वा ततो  
जित्वार्धाध्वनि भार्गवं पुनरगात् सीतासमेतः पुरीम् ॥१॥<sup>59</sup>  
(बालकाण्डम् - कश्यपः)

It begins with celestial sage Nārada narrating Śrī Rāma Saga to sage Vālmīki, when a hunter kills one of the pair of curlew (क्रौञ्च).<sup>60</sup> Lord Brahmā visits and asks sage Vālmīki to compose Śrī Rāma Sage. The poet gives an outline of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (01-03).<sup>61</sup>

Śrī Rāma ascends to the throne. Kuśa and Lava sing Śrī Rāma Saga. Ayodhyā, its inhabitants and prosperity during the reign of king Daśaratha are described (04-07).

King Daśaratha performs the Horse-sacrifice (08-09). Episode of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, the son-in-law of the king is narrated (10-11). King Daśaratha performs the sacrifice for four blessed sons under the supervision of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga (12-14).

The gods approach lord Brahmā for the destruction of Rāvaṇa. Lord Brahmā implores lord Viṣṇu to descend in the house of king Daśaratha for the said purpose (15). Lord Viṣṇu accepts the proposal and appears from the alter with a basin sacrificial milk-rice (पायसम्) (16). Other gods take birth as monkey chiefs (17) Birth of Śrī Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna follow by the description of festivity. After their religious ceremonies, sage Viśwāmitra arrives and asks Daśaratha to send Śrī Rāma for the protection of the sacrifice (18-19).

Daśaratha denies. Sage Viśwāmitra gets enraged. Sage Vasiṣṭha persuades the king to send Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Sage Viśwāmitra instructs 02 mystic spells *Balā* and *Atibalā* (20-22).

<sup>59</sup> The verses given in the beginning of the summary of contents of 07 Books are taken from the *Ślokaḥaddhasaptarṣirāmāyaṇam*, Introduction pp.33-34, *Saṅkṣiptarāmāyaṇam*

<sup>60</sup> Vide. P 12, FN 19.

<sup>61</sup> Here onwards the numerals in the brackets indicate the canto number.

They stay night long in a holy hermitage at the confluence of Gaṅgā and Saryū. The sage narrates the life account of ogress Tātakā whom Śrī Rāma kills (23-26). The sage being pleased imparts the knowledge of various missiles as well as the method of calling them back and narrates the story of the *Siddhāśrama* (27-29).

Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa protect the sacrifice by defeating the demons (30). Sage Viśwāmitra along with Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa proceeds to Mithilā to witness the bow-sacrifice of king Janaka (31). An account of Kuśanābha is narrated (32-34). Sage Viśwāmitra and the party reach the bank of Gaṅgā where the sage narrates the story of Gaṅgā's descent on the earth (35-44). The milky-ocean is churned by gods and demons from which come out one by one the deadly poison, god Dhanvantarī, a bevy of *Apsarās*, the beverage known as *Vāruṇī*, the horse Uccaiṣravā, the Kaustubha gem and nectar. A son of Ikṣvāku, built the city of Viśālā where Diti the wife of Kaśyapa practised austerities. Sumatī, the ruler of Viśālā receives sage Viśwāmitra and his party (45-47).

On the way from Viśālā to Mithilā, they come across a deserted hermitage of sage Gautama. The sage narrates the account of Ahalyā (sage Gautama's wife). Ahalyā gets released from the curse of sage Gautama by the very sight of Śrī Rāma (48-49).<sup>62</sup>

Śrī Rāma and others reach Mithilā, king Janaka headed by his family priest Sadānanda welcomes them and the sage introduces two princes as well as tells the episode of Ahalyā's release. Śatānanda narrates the life history of sage Viśwāmitra (50-51). The war for cow Śabalā and sage Vasiṣṭha along with his Brahminical staff renders ineffectual all the mystic missiles discharged by sage Viśwāmitra.

Sage Viśwāmitra practises severe austerities to attain Brahmanhood (52-56). The episode of Triśaṅku is described. Sage

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<sup>62</sup> Some of the versions of the Rāmāyaṇam mention Ahalyā's release after the touch of Śrī Rāma's holy feet.

Viśwāmitra proceeds to create a new heaven for Triśaṅku (57-60). Sage Viśwāmitra rescues Śunaḥśepa from Ambarīṣa's bondage and the king gets the reward of the sacrifice without sacrificing him (61-62). Lord Brahmā rewards him at Puṣkara with the status of a seer. The sage enjoys life with celestial nymph Menakā for ten years and hence retires to Mt. Himālayas, when he is rewarded with the status of *Maharṣi* (63). Sage Viśwāmitra resolves upon a further course of austerities (64). Ultimately he is conferred the title of a *Brahmarṣi* by lord Brahmā (65). They come to the court and Janaka reveals his pledge regarding the bow. Śrī Rāma breaks the bow and the king sends his counselors to Ayodhyā to invite Daśaratha for wedding (66-67).

Daśaratha along with sage Vasiṣṭha and his retinue reach Mithilā. Janaka offers the hand of the two daughters Sītā and Urmilā to Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as well as Kuśadhvaja offers the hand of his two daughters to Bharata and Śatrughna. The wedding ceremony is described (68-73).

On the way of their returning to Ayodhyā, Paraśurāma appears before them. He challenges Śrī Rāma to string the bow of lord Viṣṇu, Śrī Rāma does so and puts an end to the worlds earned by Paraśurāma through austerity. Recognizing Śrī Rāma as the Lord he departs for Mt. Mahendra (74-76).

They return to Ayodhyā, Yuddhājita (Bharata's maternal uncle) takes away Bharata and Śatrughna to his father's capital (77).

### ***Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (Cantos 119, Verses 4317)**

दास्या मन्थरया दयारहितया दुर्भेदिता केकयी  
श्रीरामप्रथमाभिषेकसमये माताऽप्ययाचद्वरौ ।  
भर्तारं भरतः प्रशास्तु धरणीं रामो वनं गच्छता-  
दित्याकर्ण्य स चोत्तरं नहि ददौ दुःखेन मूर्च्छां गतः ॥२॥  
(अयोध्याकाण्डम् - अत्रिः)



It begins with<sup>63</sup> the aging king of Ayodhyā, Daśaratha, his wives Kausalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā, and the four princes: Rāma, son of Kausalyā, Bharata, son of Kaikeyī, and Lakṣmaṇa as well as Śatrughna, sons of Sumitrā. Daśaratha determines, amid general approval, install Rāma as *Yuvarāja*, the crown prince or heir-apparent (1-6), but Kaikeyī urged on by her servant Mantharā (7-9), contrives to have him supplemented by Bharata and banished to the forest for 14 years (10-12). Daśaratha feels forced to give in to her petulance in fulfillment of 02 boons he has previously granted her, but his agony of mind doing so is touchingly portrayed; so profound is his grief that he dies shortly after Rāma's departure from Ayodhyā, attributing his death, separated from his son, to retribution for having accidentally killed an ascetic (13-15).

His distress is shared by almost all the inhabitants of the town, but not by Rāma himself, who accepts the decree with absolute submission and with the calm self-control that regularly characterizes him (16). The more completely to fulfill his father's commands, he suggests sending messengers to recall Bharata, who, with Śatrughna, is away from Ayodhyā on a visit, and so innocent and ignorant of his mother's machinations; Rāma then makes preparations for his departure with no protest whatsoever, accompanied at their insistence by his wife Sītā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa (17-35). Daśaratha feels intense pain of separation, scolds Kaikeyī. Kauśalyā persuades him and begins to lament, Sumitrā consoling her. Śrī Rāma and party take halt on the river Tamasā (36-39). The trio sons evade the huge crowd of mourning citizens who flock after them (40-41), the citizens helplessly return to Ayodhyā. In the mean time Śrī Rāma having crossed the rivers Vedaśruti, Gomatī and Syandikā, reacher the bank of river Gaṅgā (42-43) and make their way, first by chariot, then on foot, to Mt. Citrakūṭa, visiting *en route* the Niṣāda chief Guha (44-45) and the ascetic Bharadvāja (46-48). On Citrakūṭa they erect a hermitage where they live happily for a while, enjoying the beauties of nature (50, 58-60), Minister Sumantra returns to Ayodhyā. Kauśalyā and

<sup>63</sup> Taken *verbatim* from Brockington J. L.: *Righteous Rāma The Evolution of an Epic*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984.

Daśaratha lament for Śrī Rāma, Daśaratha narrates the episode of Śravaṇa and the curse given by his parents. The king dies (51-57).

Meanwhile, to avert the graphically predicted evils of a kinless state, Bharata has been recalled to Ayodhyā (61-65), where he confounds his mother's schemes by angrily rejecting the proffered kingdom (66-73) and setting off (74-75), accompanied by the 03 queens and huge retinue, to fetch Rāma back (76). They too meet Guha (77-81), start for Prayāga (82-83) and are entertained to a miraculous banquet by Bharadvāja (84-85). Crossing the river Yamunā Bharata and party reach Rāmāśrama (86-89). Rāma greets Bharata with none of the rancour displayed by the excitable Lakṣmaṇa (90-93), Rāma along with His brothers performs but enquires calmly about his conduct of public affairs (94); but he insists on carrying out to the letter of his father's express wish, undeterred alike by Bharata's impassioned pleas and offers to change places with him (97-99), by the cynical materialism expressed by the courtier Jābāli (100), and by the defence of orthodox traditional values put forward by the court chaplain, Vasiṣṭha (101-102), followed by the glory of Solar dynasty (103). Eventually Bharata and his train return to Ayodhyā (106), taking with them Rāma's sandals as a symbol of his authority (104-105); Bharata retires to nearby *Nandigrāma*, from where he administers the country as Rāma's regent (107). Meanwhile Rāma and his companions decide to leave Citrakūṭa for a remote part of the forest, by way of the hermitage of Atri and Anasūyā (108), who listen to their story and present them with handsome gifts of clothing and ornaments (109-111).

### ***Aranyakāṇḍa* (Cantos 75, Verses 2446)**

श्रीरामः पितृशासनाद्वनमागतः सौमित्रिसीतान्वितो  
गङ्गां प्राप्य जटां निबध्य सगुहः सच्चित्रकूटे वसन् ।  
कृत्वा तत्र पितृक्रियां सभरतो दत्त्वाऽभयं दण्डके  
प्राप्याऽगस्त्यमुनीश्वरं तदुदितं धृत्वा धनुश्चाक्षयम् ॥३॥

(अरण्यकाण्डम् - भरद्वाजः)

Book three, *Aranyakāṇḍa*, narrates the exiles life amongst the hospitable, respectful sages (1) and the hostile Rākṣasas of the Daṇḍaka forest. Despite Rāma's resolve to live like an ascetic, it is his role as the perfect *Kṣatriya*, or warrior, which now comes to the fore. The brothers have to rescue Sītā from the clutches of a Rākṣasa, Virādha (2-3), meet sage Śarabhaṅga who then ascends to heaven (4) and the sages extract a pledge from Rāma to protect them against the depredation of the Rākṣasas (5). Sītā (or, more realistically, a relatively late redactor of poem) feels that such conduct may lead to a charge of aggression, but Rāma counters this argument with an appeal to his duty to protect the ascetics (8-9). For ten years Rāma and his party wander among the sages; we have specific accounts of their visits to Śarabhaṅga (4), Sutikṣṇa (6-7), and Agastya, who gives him divine weapons and advises him to build a hermitage in nearby Pañcavaṭī (10-12); on the way there, they meet the vulture Jaṭāyus, who narrates his lineage and offers them his protection (13).

While they are living in the hut they have built in Pañcavaṭī (14) where they enjoy the autumn season (15), the hideous but none the less amorous Rākṣasī Śūrpaṅkhā makes advances to the brothers; infuriated by their disdain, she attacks Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa mutilates her as a punishment (16-17). Her brother Khara attempts to avenge her, first by sending a posse of fourteen Rākṣasas to kill the brothers (18-19), and then, after they have all been killed (21-22), by leading an army of fourteen thousand to attack them (20); Rāma alone defeats them all (23-24), killing the generals Dūṣaṇa (25) and Triśirā (26), and finally Khara himself (27-28), to the delight of the Daṇḍaka sages (29). Śūrpaṅkhā then seeks a different kind of vengeance from another brother, Rāvaṇa, king of Laṅkā, whom she incites to abduct Sītā (30-32). He compels the aid of the unwilling and timorous Mārīca (33-39), whose disguise as a golden deer and feigned call for help induce Sītā to send both brothers after it (40-43); Rāvaṇa, disguised as a mendicant, thus has not difficulty in seizing her (44-47). Jaṭāyus is fatally wounded when he attempts to intervene (48-49), and Sītā is taken to Laṅkā (50), where, having vehemently rejected all Rāvaṇa's blandishments, she is confined in a grove of *Aśoka* trees (51-54).

Sugrīva (29-30, 32) remind him (33) of his promise to help (34-35). A vast army of Vānaras is mustered (36-38), divided into four, and sent off with instructions to search for Sītā in every direction (39-42). Rāma places most faith in the party led by Hanumān and Aṅgada, and entrusts his ring to Hanumān as a token for Sītā (43). The monkey chiefs set forth towards the quarters assigned to them by Sugrīva (44-45). The other three parties return without success (46), it sure now that Hanumān alone will be able to discover Sītā (47), but after much searching and several bouts of suicidal despair (48-54), Aṅgada and Hanumān's troop meet Sampāti, Jaṭāyus' brother (55); Aṅgada narrates him the whole story from the entry of Śrī Rāma into the Daṇḍaka forest to his own fasting and from him they learn that Sītā is on the island Laṅkā (56-57), Sampāti narrates his past life and the incident how he lost his wings (58-64) and Hanumān resolves to leap over the sea to find her (65-66).

***Sundarakāṇḍa* (Cantos 68, Verses 2865)**

दूतो दाशरथेः सलीलमुदधिं तीर्त्वा हनूमान् महान्  
 दृष्ट्वाऽशोकवने स्थितां जनकजां दत्त्वाङ्गुलेर्मुद्रिकाम् ।  
 अक्षादीनसुरान्निहत्य महतीं लङ्कां च दध्वा पुनः  
 श्रीरामं च समेत्य देव ! जननी दृष्ट्वा मयेत्यब्रवीत् ॥५॥

(सुन्दरकाण्डम् - गौतमः)

Book five, called the *Sundarakāṇḍa* after its account of the beauties of Laṅkā, opens with a long account of Hanumān's fantastic leap (1), after which he alights unnoticed in Laṅkā and wanders about the city, dazzled by its splendours (2-5). Entering Rāvaṇa's magnificent palace, he searches in vain for Sītā (6-9), having fail to find Sītā even on searching for her all round Hanumān enters to the grove (10-12) and eventually discovers her in the *Aśoka* grove (13), his eyes filled with joy on beholding Sītā. On seeing Rāvaṇa surrounded by hundreds of young women approaches Sītā, he hides himself under the boughs in order to avoid observation (14-17) and overhears her rebuff Rāvaṇa's entreaties and threats (18-20). Her guards also try to persuade her to accept Rāvaṇa, though one, Trijaṭā,

cheers her by recounting an auspicious dream (21-25). Sītā experiences good omens (26-27). Hanumān gently reveals himself to the incredulous Sītā (28-33) and proves his identity by producing Rāma's ring (34). Sītā refuses to escape with Hanumān, preferring to be liberated by Rāma in person, but gives the Vānara a jewel as a token for Rāma (35-36). Hanumān consoles Sītā and hands over Śrī Rāma's ring (37-38). Instead of hurrying back in secret, Hanumān then embarks upon a course of ostentatious and wanton destruction (39-41), kills a number of Rākṣasa champions (42-45) and finally, curious to see Rāvaṇa, allows himself to be captured by Indrajit, Rāvaṇa's son (46). Commended by Rāvaṇa Prahasta inquires of Hanumān why he has ruined the grove and killed the demons he warns Rāvaṇa if he longed to survive, he should restore Sītā to Śrī Rāma (47-49). The angry Rāvaṇa is dissuaded from killing Hanumān outright by his virtuous brother Vibhīṣaṇa's reminder of the inviolability of envoys (50), so he merely sets fire to the Vānara's tail (51). This does not have the desired effect; Hanumān uses it as a brand to complete the destruction of Laṅkā (52). Reassuring himself of Sītā's safety (53-54), he re-crosses the sea (55) and reports to his eager companions (56-58). They are overjoyed, the rampage through Sugrīva's private orchard, the Madhuvana, to the discomfiture of its guards (59-61) before returning to Kiṣkindhā with the news of the success of their mission (62-66).

### ***Yuddhakāṇḍa* (Cantos 128, Verses 5783)**

रामो बद्धपयोनिधिः कपिवरैर्वीरैर्नलाद्यैर्वृतो  
लङ्कां प्राप्य सकुम्भकर्णतनुजं हत्वा रणे रावणम् ।  
तस्यां न्यस्य विभीषणं पुनरसौ सीतापतिः पुष्पकाऽऽ-  
रूढः सन् पुरमागतः सभरतः सिंहासनस्थो बभौ ॥६॥

(लङ्काकाण्डम् - जमदग्निः)

Book six, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, concerns with the final battle between the armies of Rāma and Rāvaṇa, hearing the report from Hanumān as well as the description of Laṅkā, Rāma and the Vānaras march southwards (1-4), Śrī Rāma reminds Sītā and laments (5). The

Rākṣasas prepare for war (6-8), Vibhīṣaṇa defeats when his conciliatory advice is refused (9-10). After some debate, he is welcomed into Rāma's camp, and consecrated as king of Laṅkā (11-13). When the sea did not allow a passage Śrī Rāma looses fierce arrows (14). The problem of how to cross the sea is solved by Nala's construction of a causeway (15). Rāvaṇa receives information from his spies about the size of the besieging army (16-21) and after trying in vain to frighten Sītā into submission by showing her the illusion of Rāma's severed head (22-24) Mālyavān persuades Rāvaṇa. On reaching Laṅkā Vibhīṣaṇa apprises them of arrangement made by Rāvaṇa at 04 gates for the defence of Laṅkā (25-30) and Rāvaṇa rejecting Rāma's ultimatum delivered by Aṅgada (31), joins the battle (32-34).

Disaster soon strikes, Indrajit and puts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa out of action (35), to the despair of Vānaras (36) and the watching Sītā (37-38), but eventually the brothers are resorted by the divine intervention of the bird Garuḍa (39-40). There follows a long series of duels, resulting in the eventual deaths of all the most fearsome Rākṣasa champions at the hands of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkey-chiefs (41-46). During this time, Rāma overcomes Rāvaṇa but spares his life (47). One of the most terrible of the Rākṣasas is another brother Kumbhakarna who is under a curse of deed sleep (49); the elaborate efforts of his desperate comrades to wake him provide some much needed comic relief from the tension of the battle scenes, (48) Kumbhakarna twists Rāvaṇa for all his misdeeds and rushes to battlefield (50-54), but after causing initial havoc among the Vānaras even he is slain by Rāma (55). Hanumān slays Devāntaka and Trīśirā. Aṅgada, Nīla, Rṣbha and Lakṣmaṇa kill Narāntaka, Mahodara, Mahāpārśwa and Atikāya respectively. Indrajit presides over Brahma missile make Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa as well as the monkey army unconscious. Hanumān fetchs the herbs, Aṅgada, Dwivida, Mainda, Sugrīva, Hanumān kill Śoṇitākṣa, Yupākṣa, Kumbha and Nikumbha respectively (56-67). Indrajit repeatedly resorts to magic to strike terror into the Vānaras: one of his stratagems is to show Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa the illusion of Sītā being executed (68), he also embarks upon a sacrifice to ensure

victory (69), Vibhīṣaṇa asks Rāma to send Lakṣmaṇa with army to march against Indrajit who is prevented from completing it by Lakṣmaṇa (70-73), who eventually kills him (74-78). Rāvaṇa being enraged due to his son's death proceeds to kill Sītā but is stopped Supārśwa (79-82). Only Rāvaṇa is left, and at least he takes the field again amid bad omens (83). Rāvaṇa along with the demon army marches to the field. Sugrīva destroys the army and ogress chief Virupākṣa. Aṅgada kills Mahāpārśwa. The war is between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa (84-96). His duel with Rāma is protracted, but finally, after Rāma receives divines help in the form of Indra's chariot and driver, Rāvaṇa too is killed (97), Vibhīṣaṇa performs funeral rites (98-99) and then he installed as the king (100).<sup>64</sup>

However, later qualms about Sītā's virtue cause Rāma to be made coldly to spurn her, saying (for the first time) that he undertook the quest and combat simply to vindicate his own and his family's honour, and not for her sake and asks her to seek shelter elsewhere (101-103). In desperation, Sītā undergoes a fire ordeal (104). The gods appear to Rāma and reveal that he is in fact an incarnation of Viṣṇu (105) and Agni hands Sītā back to her delighted husband, unhurt and exonerated (106). Daśaratha now appears, blesses his sons, and tells Rāma to return to Ayodhyā and resume his reign (the fourteen years of exile have, it seems, just expired) (107). At Rāma's request, the dead Vānaras are restored to life by Indra (108); then Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, and all the Vānaras, and Vibhīṣaṇa and his counselors, all climb into Rāvaṇa's chariot *Puṣpaka*, and – surveying as they go the scenes of their earlier advantages – they fly back to Ayodhyā (109-111).

After greeting Bharadvāja (112), Rāma sends Hanumān to find Bharata, who is living the life of an ascetic (113). Bharata is delighted by the news of Rāma's triumph and return (114), and

<sup>64</sup> Brockington J. L. in his *Righteous Rāma The Evolution of an Epic*, comments here, "Little trace remains of what was no doubt the original simple happy ending of the story: there is no reason to suppose that Rāma and Sītā were not joyfully reunited and lived happily ever after in the version, now extant."

restores to him the kingdom (115). This is followed by an elaborate ceremony of installation, and the epic is rounded off with a eulogy of Rāma and his righteous ten-thousand-year reign (116).<sup>65</sup>

***Uttarakāṇḍa* (Cantos 111, Verses 3459)**

श्रीरामो हयमेधमुख्यमखकृत् सम्यक् प्रजाः पालयन्  
कृत्वा राज्यमथानुजैश्च सुचिरं भूरि स्वधर्मान्वितौ ।  
पुत्रौ भ्रातृसुतान्वितौ कुशलवौ संस्थाप्य भूमण्डले  
सोऽयोध्यापुरवासिभिश्च सरयूस्नातः प्रपेदे दिवम् ॥७॥  
(उत्तरकाण्डम् - वसिष्ठः)

Book seven, the the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, begins with the arrival of the great seers arriving to meet Śrī Rāma and Agastya discloses the origin of Viśravā, the race of demons and the origin of Rāvaṇa etc. (1-9).

Rāvaṇa and younger brothers perform penance and obtain boons. The demons occupy Laṅkā and Rāvaṇa is installed as the ruler (10-11). The marriages of Śūrpaṇakhā, Rāvaṇa and his brothers as well as the birth of Meghanāda take place (12-13). Rāvaṇa's exploits are described. Rāvaṇa attacks on the Yakṣas, defeating Manibhadra and Kubera holds *Puṣpaka* (14-15). Lord Śiva curses Rāvaṇa and curbs his pride (16). Vedavatī being insulted by Rāvaṇa, curses him and enters into fire. Rāvaṇa kills Anaraṇya and receives curse from him (17-19). Rāvaṇa invades the domain of Yama, destroys the forces, fights with Yama and being triumphant leaves the place (20-22). He forcibly carries off the celestial damsels and other ladies who curse him. He accompanied by Madhu invades the realm of gods (23-25).

Rāvaṇa violates celestial nymph Rambhā and receives a curse from Nalakūbara. He invades the realm of Indra, the fight takes place between demons and gods. Vasu kills Sumālī. A combat takes place

<sup>65</sup> Brockington J. L. ends his summary here, because he believes that the First and the Seventh Books are not the parts of the original epic.



between Meghanāda and Indra's son Jayanta as well as god Indra and Rāvaṇa (26-28). Meghanāda captures Indra and returns to Laṅkā. Brahmā grants him boons against the release of Indra from captivity (29-30). There is the encounter of Rāvaṇa and other demons with Sahasrārjuna who captures Rāvaṇa and bears him away to his city Māhiṣmatī. Pulastya secures the deliverance of Rāvaṇa from the bondage. After Rāvaṇa's humiliation at the hands of Vālī he makes friendship with him (31-34). There is a description of Hanumān's descent, past life and his heroic super human deeds. Due to a curse of some sages, he remains unconscious of his might. Śrī Rāma requests Agastya and other sages, he remains present in the sacrifice performed by Śrī Rāma and they depart. King Janaka, Yudhājita, Prataḍana and others proceed to their respective dominions (35-38).

Śrī Rāma accepts the presents, distributes them to His friends, the monkeys, the bears as well as the demons and sends them back to their respective abodes (39-40). Bharata describes the glory of Śrī Rāma's reign Sītā wishes to visit penance groves and Śrī Rāma accords His consent. Bhadra reports ugly remarks made by citizens about Sītā, Śrī Rāma orders Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā away in the forest and to leave her in the vicinity of sage Vālmīki's hermitage (41-45). Lakṣmaṇa does so. He laments and talks with a heavy heart. Sītā utters plaintive words and her message to Śrī Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa departs. On hearing Sītā's wailing, sage Vālmīki approaches her and takes her to his hermitage. There is a dialogue between Lakṣmaṇa and Sumantra (46-50). Sumantra consoles Lakṣmaṇa by narrating the account of Bhṛgu. Lakṣmaṇa meets and comforts Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma persuades Lakṣmaṇa with the narrative of king Nṛga and instructs him to perform the duty towards the subjects (51-54).

There is the story of king Nimi as well as sage Vasiṣṭha's re-incarnation. King Nimi resides in the eyelids of living beings (55-57). Śukrācārya curses king Yayāti who has borrowed youth from his son Purū in exchange for his own old age. Yayati consecrates Purū and curses Yadu (58-59). The sages terrorised by demon Lavaṇa approach Śrī Rāma and appeal to dispel the fear by destroying the demon. Śrī Rāma coronates Śatrughna and dispatches

him with a view to killing Lavaṇa (60-63). Śatrughna dispatches his army in advance.

Sage Vālmīki narrates to Śatrughna the story of Kalamāspāda, the son of Sudās. Sage Cyavana appraises him with the power of Lavaṇa's lance. Śatrughna kills Lavaṇa. He establishes the city Madhupurī, proceeds to Ayodhyā in the twelfth year to meet Śrī Rāma. On the way he listens to Śrī Rāma's golry being sung and gets surprised, meets sage Vālmīki as well as Śrī Rāma, stays there for a week and returns to Madhupurī (64-72). A Brahmin with his son's dead body comes to Śrī Rāma and laments blaming Him for the death. Nārada shows the reason as an unauthorized practice of penance of a Śūdra called Śambūka. Śrī Rāma goes there in the plane *Puspaka* and kills him for which gods applaud Him. Sage Agastya welcomes Him, presents celestial ornaments and narrates the story of king Śveta (73-78). There is an episode of king Daṇḍa. Śrī Rāma leaves the hermitage and returns to Ayodhyā. Śrī Rāma denies performing the Rājasūya sacrifice and performs the Horse-sacrifice as per Lakṣmaṇa's advice. Śrī Rāma narrates to Lakṣmaṇa the story of king Ilā (79-90).

Then come the descriptions of the preparation of the sacrifice, arrival of sage Vālmīki with Lava, Kuśa and he orders and asking them to sing the Rāmāyaṇam. Śrī Rāma hears the sweet song. He dispatches an envoy to sage Vālmīki. Sītā takes an oath for purification to which the sage supports. Sītā enters into the hole of the ground offered by Earth and Śrī Rāma laments (91-99). Bharata proceeds towards the territory of the Gandharvas and defeats them. He installs his son Takṣa on Takṣaśilā and Puṣkara on Puṣkarāvati. Aṅgada and Candraketu are coronated by Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa in the territory of kārupataha (100-102).

Durvāsa in the form of an ascetic approaches Śrī Rāma to convey Lord Brahmā's message and wishes to meet Śrī Rāma and warns him not to enter the chamber. Lakṣmaṇa on breaking the condition is abandoned by Śrī Rāma. He departs to heaven along with his body. Śrī Rāma ascends to heaven with the citizens (103-110).

## Relevance

As the literature is the mirror of the society, the mind of a poet is equally reflected in the poetry. Sage Vālmīki has illustrated the nature of a poet along with the form of the best poetry. Even the importance of an epic, its nature, form and the quality came to be known in their fullness. In spite of numerous poetic compositions existing in the world literature, the qualities of lucidity, beauty and sweetness found in *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam* are rare elsewhere.

The *Rāmāyaṇam* is an excellent source-text as well as a fantastic work of inspiration and hence it has become a model for the poetic genius like Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and many others of the regional languages. It is such a powerful composition that it grows true love in the human heart through the charming literary art. Its incessant chanting and repetition create the human excellence in the society adorned with the humanity and chastity. For this reason Śrī Rāma saga based on *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇam* (1/2/37-38)<sup>66</sup> is read, recited and listened to by the masses in all over India.

The *Rāmāyaṇam* is a perfect text of ethical and moral values in all aspects like household duty, family concord, social life, political segment, righteous progress and spiritual development. It is a historical saga dealing with numerous ideals and it puts an example before the society how one can live a gorgeous life. As e.g. When Kaikeyī decides for Śrī Rāma's exile, she calls and asks Him to follow father's command. At that time Śrī Rāma enumerates 03 categories of a son. (1) The best (उत्तमः) who follows father's command without telling any thing. (2) The middle one (मध्यमः) follows the command after telling. (3) The inferior one (मलः) disregards father's command.

In this way, the *Rāmāyaṇam*, a marvelous piece of the poetic excellence occupies a unique place in the human heart since ages.

<sup>66</sup> यावत् स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले । तावद् रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति ॥

यावद् रामस्य च कथा त्वत्कृता प्रचरिष्यति । तावद्ध्वमधश्च त्वं मल्लोकेषु निवत्स्यसि ॥

Moreover it is portrayed in the light of spiritualism and hence it shines more with the title *Adhyātmārāmāyaṇam*(=AdhR) which dealing with the spiritualism imbibed in Śrī Rāma Saga is an important treatise for the devotees of Śrī Rāma as well as the students of Vedānta esp. the followers of *Kevalādvaita*. It has its great influence on the later *Rāmāyaṇas* like *Āṇandarāmāyaṇam*, *Kambarāmāyaṇa*, *Kṛttivasarāmāyaṇa*, *Ramacaritamānasa* and so on.

## Conclusion

Thus the study of the *Rāmāyaṇam* gives rise to the divine thoughts leading one to the supreme human goal of Absolution.<sup>67</sup>

The calculation of the couplets of all the available texts on the *Rāmāyaṇam*, life history of Lord Śrī Rāma, it undoubtedly extends to a hundred crore couplets in total. The reading, reciting and listening to of these numerous *Rāmāyaṇa* texts eulogizing Śrī Rāma destroy the major sins of the people, naturally by pointing out to them the righteous path.

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<sup>67</sup> वरं वरेण्यं वरदं तु काव्यं संतारयत्याशु च सर्वलोकम् ।  
सङ्कल्पितार्थप्रदमादिकाव्यं श्रुत्वा च रामस्य पदं प्रयाति ॥  
श्रीमद्वाल्मीकीरामायणमहा० १/२८॥