CHAPTER - I

The Rāmāyaṇa:
Its importance, influence and popularity
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THE RĀMĀYAṆA : ITS IMPORTANCE, INFLUENCE AND POPULARITY

1.1 The greatness of the Ra. and the Mbh.

The Ra. and Mbh. are two great epics of India and their influence on the life of Indian people has been great and immeasurable. While the Vedas and dharmaśāstras can be studied and understood only by the brāhmaṇas and the learned, the Ra. and Mbh. are meant for all. The ideals of these two epics have gone deep into the core of Indian life and they have largely molded its social, political and cultural fabric. Anni Besant has aptly said that they provide us with actual examples of the significance of good conduct and virtues acted out on the life’s stage.¹ Regarding the greatness of these two epics, Tagore says: It is not enough merely to say that the Ra. and the Mbh. are two great epics. They are also a history, though not of a particular time or period. They are the eternal history of India. Other histories have changed on the march of time but this history has not. These two epics embody what India cherishes as its ideals.²

The Ra. along with Mbh. and the purāṇas, constitutes the epic literature of India, comprising the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa, the study of which has been rightly stressed as necessary for the correct interpretation of the Vedas. For over two thousand years, the Ra. like the Mbh., has been influencing deeply the religious and moral thought as well as the

¹ Anni Besant, Ramcandra, Pp-I
² Rāmāyaṇa Pracina sāhitya, 1933. The relevant Bengali text has been quoted by Prabodha chandra Sen.
literary production in India. In fact, the Ra. and the Mbh. are, declared Śvāmi Vivekānanda, the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilisation, which humanity has yet to aspire after. According to Macdowell, "Probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Ra."

The Ra. and the Mbh. began to influence the modern Indian literatures roughly from their early mediaeval period. For centuries before that, people in all parts of India were no doubt acquainted with the stories of the epics, but direct access to the originals was confined to the learned few. So the need for their translation, or adaptation into the spoken languages of the day was badly felt, and the revival of the bhakti cult in different parts of India and, in some cases, the interest taken by local rulers soon supplied it. Once the golden gate to the vast treasure-house of romances and legends was opened widely, modern Indian literature got an opportunity to become nurtured, nourished, and enriched. The Ra. and the Mbh. have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration ever since.

Of these two epics, again the appeal of the Ra. has been deeper and larger than that of the Mbh, the main reason being that the Ra. is a homogeneous text with a simple and straightforward story. The Mbh., on the otherhand is vast and encyclopaedic, depicting complicated pattern of life and society.

I.2 Spontaneity of the creative process

There are many picturesque accounts of spontaneous composition in Sanskrit Literary tradition. Thus, V.R. itself contains the

3. Complete works, IV, 4th Ed. p-97
4. ERE, X. p-574
famous account of the spontaneous genesis of ādikāvyā. The epic records how Vālmikī's heart was filled with pathos at the sight of the wailing krauñca bird whose companion was shot by a hunter. The verse "mā niśāda" etc. is supposed to have been uttered by the poet involuntarily at the spur of the moment.⁵ A.G, in Locana gives a detailed description of this creative moment.⁶ Almost identical in approach with Wordsworth who described poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, A.G portrays the creative moment as the outpouring of the intense emotion with the case and spontaniety of water overflowing a jar. According to A.G. even the proper meterial pattern was spontaneously selected by the intense emotional experience within the poet by assumed poetic form. This is hinted by Kālidāsa and who maintain that the pathos in the poet changed into verse.⁷

Interestingly enough, most poeticians from the time of ĀV onwards regard the rasa experience of the poet as the factor which triggers off the creative process. Bhaṭṭanāyaka, thus, in a passage quoted in Locana asserts that rasa overflows a poet only after it has filled his heart.⁸ Similarly, Mahimabhaṭṭa maintains that intuitive consciousness wells up in a poet who is rapt in contemplation of the sound and sense harmonious to the aesthetic emotion. This intuitive faculty is the very third eye of Lord Śiva by means of which he is able to visualise things past, present and future.⁹ This poetic faculty enables the poets to see "into the life of things" to realise the quintissence of objects apart from their generic nature. Thus, in Sanskrit poetics, if pratibhā stands for the intuitive faculty, rasa is the key term which explains the emotive force

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⁵ B.K.-II sarga
⁶ Locana, Pp. 85-87
⁷ Vyaktiviveka, p-452
⁸ RV, XIV-70 and DL, 1.5
⁹ See Locana, op. cit.
giving rise to inspiration, which in turn is nothing but the unleshing of the intuitive faculty.

1.3 The excellence of Vālmīki's composition

The Indian society has derived the highest inspiration from the lofty ideals set forth in the Ra. of Vālmīki. The noble theme of Rāma's life, described by Vālmīki in his inimitable elegant style and language has proved a perennial source of inspiration to many a later poet. There has been no period of Indian literary activity which has not felt the impact of Vālmīki's noble theme. Truly, Indian tradition looks upon Vālmīki as the ādikavi and his Ra. as the ādikāvyā. No work in Sanskrit has enjoyed greater popularity than it. Brahmā foretells the excellence of the poetic composition of Vālmīki as follows:

यावत् स्थायति गिर्यः सरितस्य महीतले ।
रम्या रामायणीकथा लोकेषु प्रचलित्यति ॥

The Mbh. has been hailed as mentioned above as a great epic composition. But it has not moved the Indian mind so deeply character in the Mbh, but it is the rule of Rāma that has been accepted as ideal rule. There was a lot of affection among the Pāṇḍavas brothers, but the brotherly devotion of more of them can be compared with that of either Bharata or Lakṣmaṇa. India has been reflected in the Mbh, but the Ra. is not only an index to Indian culture, but it has also more profoundly molded Indian character than the Mbh and Ra. has inspired the poets and dramatists. It is well known that the poetic compositions based on the Ra. for out number those inspired by the Mbh. The Mbh itself contains the Rāmopākhyaṇa (see Prabodh chandra Sen, Rāmāyaṇa O Bharata-saṁskriti (Bangali), Calcutta, Pp.31)

It is either the extreme joy or extreme sorrow that leads to great
poetic compositions or creative activities. *VR.* owes its origin to his deep sense of sorrow. One day when Vālmīki went to the river Tamasā with his disciple Bharadvāja for a bath, he saw a hunter killing a *krauñca* bird who was mating with his female counterpart. The female bird cried piteously over the death of her male companion. Vālmīki felt a deep sorrow seeing the overwhelming grief of the female bird and spontaneously came out from his mouth a verse in *śloka* meter cursing the hunter for his cruel act. From Vālmīki’s *śoka* was born a *śloka*. Thus, his deep experience of sorrow led to the birth of a new form of poetic experience and technique. When he was pondering over the whole event, still steeped in sorrow, Brahmā appeared and advised him to compose the deeds and glories of Rāma using the meter originating from the deep pathos felt at the sight of the death of the *krauñca* bird. The central theme of the *Rā.* seems to be pathos. This thread of pathos and the denunciation of the unrighteous act runs through the whole epic.

As already noted, the story of Rāma is one of heroism, greatness and unflinching devotion and staunch ascetic ideals. The tale of Rāma is tender and at the same time austere. Life’s hard realities and its tender aspects blend wonderfully in the *Rā.*. There is hardly any literature in the whole world which sets such high examples of pure conjugal love as between Rāma and Sītā, brotherly love and affection, parental love, obedience to the king as well as the king’s love for his subjects. The *Rā.* ideals train the mind and directs it to restraints (see Rabindranath Tagore, Grāmasahītya (1898), Lokasāhitya quoted by Prabodha chandra Sen, op.lit., PP. 81-82).

1.4 The *Rā.* as an ādikāvya

The *Rā.* is regarded as the ādikāvya of classical Sanskrit; and rightly too, as in this particular field, its great writer, Vālmīki, was the
first to have arrived intuitively at the true concept of poetry and to have created in the Ra. a literature with the object of providing aesthetic joy to its listeners and readers. It was he who discovered the great truth that true poetry is a spontaneous outflow of the poet’s heart in response to the pain and anguished cry of the universe.10

The Ra. is not merely a narrative poem of the history of the life of Râma but is also considered to be the first ornate poem of classical Sanskrit. At the end of every canto, it is called an ādikāvyā (இத்த ஆதி-காவ்யே பிராமக்: பர்க்க:) etc. The division of later court epics (mahākāvyā) into cantos (sarga) is based on the model of the Ra. The main object of a poem is to afford aesthetic pleasure which is technically called rasa by the Sanskrit rhetoricians. From the point of view, the Ra. is predominantly a poem of pathos. As a matter of fact, its composition was inspired by the sentiment of pathos which suddenly overwhelmed the mind of the poet Vālmiki, its author, when he saw one of the loving pair of curlews killed by an arrow. The poet at once burst out saying.

मा निषाद प्रतिष्क्री त्वमगमः शाख्यति: समा:।
यतृ त्रूणिनिशुनाबेकमद्वभी: काममहितम्। B.K 2/15

“Let not glory attend thee, O fowler! for eternal years to come, for thou has killed one of the pair of curlews infatuated with love”.

This very stamp of pathetic sorrow that became imprinted on the mind of the poet is visible throughout the incidents of the Ra. Although there are glimpses of other sentiments like the वीर, शृवार, रैत्र, भवानक, अन्द्रूत etc., yet the dominant sentiment that pervades the poem is unquestionably that of pathos (karuṇa). The verse quoted above contains the suggestion called अलक्ष-कर्म-व्यक्त्य or व्यक्त्वच्चनि. Besides this, the other

10. sokaḥ, slokatvamīgataḥ VR- 1/2/40
varieties of dhvani are also found in the Ra. e.g.

\[ \text{रिजंकालंतिभाष्यस्तुप्रारुणमाङ्गः।} \]
\[ \text{निश्वासान्य इवादार्शिष्ठरम न प्रकाशते।} \] Ar.K, 16/13

The eminent rhetorician AV has quoted this verse as an example of अत्यत्ते-तिस्तृते-वाज्ये-ध्वनि. Not only this, the Ra. bristles with figures such as उपमा, रुपक, अनुप्रास etc. All such figures have an exquisite charm of their own which makes the poem a pleasurable reading. They afford a brilliant testimony to the keen observation and the great flights of imagination of Valmiki. This fact is recognized even by western critics who say, “Valmiki is rich in the cumulating of similes”. A verse in जानकी हरण of Kūmaradāsa who has tried to imitate Valmiki in describing the rebuke of Lakṣmana to Sugrīva who was making delay in the quest of Sītā-

\[ \text{मदं नवेर्ति-लत्वेन लम्बितं विससुन्य पूर्णं। समयो विमुख्यताम्।} \]
\[ \text{जगज्ञिथत्साहुर-कण्ठ-पदर्ति: न वालिनेवाहित-दृषि: अन्तरः।} \]

“Give up thy conceit of newly acquired prosperity, and pay head to thy former promise. The voracious appetite of the devouring God of death will not be satisfied by the consumption of Vāli alone”. How can this elaborate rebuke compare with the simple but suggestive reproof of Lakṣmana in the Ra. He says-

\[ \text{न स श्रृंचितः पन्था वें वाली हलो गत:।} \]
\[ \text{समये तिथि सुग्रीव मा वालिपथमन्वागः।} \] Kś.K. 34/18.

“The path which Vāli followed in his death is not closed. Mind thy promise, Sugrīva don’t try to tread in the footsteps of Vāli”. The contrast between the two verses is too apparent to require comment. The crisp suggestion in मा वालिपथम् अन्वणम्: can hardly be matched by the laboure
expression न वालिनेवाहिष्ठितसि, अन्तकः. It is only Kālidāsa who has been able to achieve that facility of expression which is the characteristic of the style of the Rā. His RV is based on the unique epic poem, and, for the Meghadūta also. He found inspiration from the message of Rāma carried by Hanumāna to Sītā. Dhanañjaya has advised the dramatists to study the Rā. before attempting to write a drama. He says:

इत्याशोभ्यं इह वस्तु-विभेद-जातं रामायणाति विभाव्य बृहत्कथां च ।
आसूशोथेऽ तदुत्तेऽसामनुष्ठापि विभाव्य कथाम् उपित-चाह-कवः प्रयश्चित: || Dasarupaka, I.68.

"After examining the entire body of division of the subject-matter here presented in these and the following sections, as well as after studying the Rā. and the like, and the Bṛhatkathā, one should thereupon compose a story diversified by the appropriate selection of the hero and sentiments, together with the application of appropriate and pleasing words".

Sage Vyāsa, too, himself describes his work as a kāvya and Brahmā, the creator, has testified to it by saying: जन्म-प्रभृति सत्यं ते विषा गां ब्रह्म-वादिनाम्। त्या च काव्यं इत्युतं तत्मात्त काव्यं भविष्यति । सर्वं काव्यं-मुद्रायां उपजीव्यं भविष्यति ।

"From your very birth we know that your speech truly is the expounder of the Vedas and the sacred texts. You have, indeed, composed a poem. This poem will be a source of inspiration for all the best poems (of the future)".

काव्यं रामायणं कृतसं सीतायाणं चरितं महत् ।
पार्थे गेषे च मधुरं प्रमाणेऽसु त्रिभिः अन्वितम् ॥
जातिभिः समताभिः युक्तं तन्नी-लयं-समवितम् ।
रसे: शुभार-क्रण-हास्य-रीढ-भयानकेऽ ||
वीराधिभि रसेऽ युक्तं काव्यम् एतं अगायताम् ॥
"The entire poem of the Rā. depicting the lofty character of Sītā, is supported by the three means of acquiring knowledge (viz., perception, inference and scripture). It is melodious in both reciting and singing and can be set to the tune of the lute. It can be sung in seven manners of singing. It pervades with the sentiments of गुरु, करुण, हास्य, भयानक, धैर्य, and वीर”.

1.5 Rā. as a source-book for ancient Indian culture and civilization

The Rā. has always been considered as the first and the foremost mahākāvya in Sanskrit literature. Perhaps the very definition of a mahākāvya has been evolved from this very superb type of it. Rā. is a unique representative poem of Indian culture. In it we see the presence of both national and universal elements. Winternitz remarks: “The Rā. has become the property of the whole Indian people, and scarcely any other poem in the entire literature of the world has influenced the thought and poetry of a great nation for centuries”. The poet Vālmiki presents in this poem the entire gamut of the Indian life. It shows a perfect harmony of social life and spiritual attainment. The combination of ahīṁsā and vīrārasa and of both with Yoga and bhakti as well as with Jñāna is well depicted in this unique work.

Another reason for calling it a representative poem is the poet’s keen vision of the unity of India. Though the Rā. was composed in Northern India, Vālmiki had a clear vision of the geographical unity of India. He describes southern India and other parts of the country vividly, including its forests, rivers, mountains, etc. He had also the clear vision of India’s cultural and political unity. The representative character of the poem is also seen in the way in which the deep-rooted Hindu ideas and sentiments and emotional attitudes are reflected in it. There is an
ample record of individual, social and religious customs that have been characteristic of the Hindu society all along up to the present day.

The *tyāga* of Rāma could set a model for Indian living. But there are numerous other examples of *tyāga* practiced by India’s great men. The Buddha’s renunciation, for instance, was supreme and finds hardly an equal. The reason perhaps for the peerless fascination for Rāma was that in him people saw the combination of the grace of God and the ethical height of a great man. Moreover, Rāma had exhibited righteousness and renunciation not only in his own person, but had kindled them in others as well by precept and example.

I.6 A living human society

No doubt, we have the earliest picture of Indian culture and civilization in Vedic literature. But since that literature is primarily religious and metaphysical and the information supplied by it on secular subjects meagre and casual, the cultural picture that emerges from it is rather dim and hazy. The credit of presenting the first clear picture of Aryan-culture, complete almost in every detail, belongs to the *Ra*. which gives us a vivid portrait of a living human society and furnishes ample details with regard to its food and drink habits, dress and ornaments, sports and amusements, superstitions and customs as also its religion and philosophy. The epic also supplies valuable information relating to its various social, economical and political institutions. In fact, for a student of the history of post-*Vedic* Aryan institutions the *Ra*. is simply indispensable.

Among its characters there are, in deed, some who, on account of their prodigious physical strength and uncouth behaviour, have been represented as demons, and others who seem to correspond to gods on
account of their benign disposition and illustrious conduct. “But the fact remains that all the characters of the epic are essentially human. They cherish in their hearts aspirations and ambitions like ordinary men and women, their life passes through vicissitudes of hope and despair, pleasure and pain, success and failure, they endure disease, old age and death, and they are also subject to human weaknesses like greed, jealousy and the like”.

The Rā. appeals to the human mind on account of its lofty idealism. It represents a struggle between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between selfishness and self-sacrifice, between the highest ideals that an ārya entertained and their reverse cherished by the rākṣasas. In this struggle and in the robust idealism of the poet, which makes good in the end triumph over evil, lies the universal appeal of the Rā.

Works which have affected so large a population over so long a period of time and moulded the character and civilization of so vast a region, often transcending geographical limits, can ill afford to be termed mere ‘epic’. Indeed, the Rā. and the Mbh should better be regarded as the true history of India, history not for events, but of the urges and aspirations, strivings and purposes of the nation. Encyclopedic in nature, together they form ‘the content of our collective unconscious’ where in breathe ‘the united soul of India and the individual souls of her people’. The two epics represent the two ‘moods of our Aryan civilisation, viz moral and intellectual, and it is, indeed, impossible to grasp the true spirit and, meaning behind the ‘moving drama of Indian life’ without a through and intelligent understanding of the epics. “And to trace the influence of the Indian epics on the life and civilization of the nation, and on the

11. Ramashraya Sharma- A socio political study of the V.R., p.2
development of the modern languages, literatures, and religious reforms, in the words of R.C. Dutta, 'is comprehend the real history of the people during the three thousand years'. The epics have thus been the 'deep well of strength' to our forefathers, from which they derived and which inspires us to derive the 'enduring vitality' of our cultural and spiritual basis as well as of our social and political life.

"Glory to the twin poets where names are lost in the morass of time, but whose message brings strength and peace in a thousand streams to the doors of millions of men and women even to this day, and incessantly carries silt from long past centuries and keeps fresh and fertile the soul of India."  

I.7  **Rā. as a literary master-piece**

As has been stated earlier Sanskrit literature, nay the entire literature, is highly indebted to Vālmīki, for in the Rā., he created a kāvya which, besides providing perennial joy to all lovers of poetry has served as an immortal and inexhaustible source of inspiration to poets through the ages. It has, as rightly remarked by Winternitz, "become the property of the whole Indian people, and scarcely any other poem in the entire literature of the world, has influenced the thought and poetry of a great nation for centuries".  

*Rā.* has its importance from the literary point of view also. The literary qualities have endowed the poem with such perfection as make the modern writers marvel at it. Vālmīki's work is universally referred to as the *adi-kavi*, viz, the first poet of Indian literature. As a piece of poetic art the *Rā.* stands unrivalled. There is no ideal, no reality, no fancy, and no sentiment which Vālmīki has not depicted with a masterly touch,

12. (from the original Bengali) The cultural heritage of India, Vol-II, P-118.
and which has not evoked many admiring tributes from great scholars even in the West. Schlegel calls the Ra. as "the noblest of the epics". Sir Monier Williams says: "There are in the whole range of the world's literature few more charming poems than the Ra. The classical purity, clearness and simplicity of its style, the exquisite touches of true poetic feeling with which it abounds, its graphic description of heroic incidents and of nature's grandest scenes, the deep acquaintance displayed with conflicting working and most refined emotions of the human heart all entitle it to rank among the most beautiful compositions that have appeared at any period and in any country".

1.8 Social and family life in Ra.

Coming to the social and family life, we find that the Ra. represents the picture of an unparalleled brotherly affections even between children of co-wives.

Epic family was patriarchal in which father was the head of the family and his command was supreme. The wife was the mistress of the household but subject to the will of her husband. During the Ra. age, a young wife could snub her old husband and exercise complete mastery over him.

In the Ra. the father exercised complete control over his children who were obedient to the parents. Sons had a privileged position in the household as being the promoters of the family, but daughters, too, were not unwelcome, although the question of their marriage did cause worry to their parents. Otherwise, the presence of daughters in the house was considered auspicious. Both boys and girls were properly educated in the sacred lore, smṛtis, purāṇas and political science. Women also received some sort of military training. We find that Kaikeyī
accompanied her husband, Daśaratha, to the battlefield and rendered help to him.

Though *svayamvara* was prevalent in the *Rā* age, consent of the father was necessary for marriage. Rāma, even after having come out successful in his trial, had to seek the consent of his father before marrying Sītā. Women of aristocracy and royal families lived in the inner apartments, and young girls, too, were kept in seclusion in the *Rā* age. They were not free to make love nor could young couples meet before marriage. Polygamy was prevalent among the high classes, but wives were required to be chaste and true to one husband only. On the slow, chastity of women was highly commended and prized. Widow remarriage among the Aryans was not known, though among the *rākṣasas* it was prevalent. Men of a higher caste could marry women of a lower caste, but not vice versa. Śāntā, a *kṣatriya* girl, was married to the *brāhmaṇa* Rṣyaśṛṅga. The father of Sravaṇakumāra, who was killed by Daśaratha by mistake, was a *vaiśya*, and his mother a *sūdra* lady. Non-vegetarian diet was not a taboo. People ate the flesh of animals.

The *Rā* portray pictures of ideal men and women, and preach through a popular medium the gospel of *bhṛtṛ dharma*. The *Rā* does this by glorifying domestic relations and family life “sustaining the entire social structure”. Rāma represents an ideal son and a perfect king, Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata ideal brothers, Sītā an ideal wife, a perfect woman, Hanumāna an ideal devotee. Parents and elders have for generations used the themes and stories of the epic for imparting wisdom and instruction to the younger generation. The themes are at once appealing and entertaining, and they create an indelible impression on the young mind, every incident and story (and the moral going with it) become deeply engraved thereon. The educative influence of the epics
on an Indian further is sustained through all the stages of life by such means as mass recitations of the epics in the temple, or in public on festive and other occasions (the earliest reference to which is found in Kumāralāta’s Kalpanā-maṇḍitikā, a work of second century A.D), and by such open-air popular performances as the Rāmalālā and Bharatalālā, yātras and, pālāgānas and regular dramatic performances- these are entertainments which always attract vast and varied crowds, irrespective of creed or faith, and they are an evidence of the perennial and dynamic appeal of the epic to all. To belief of Hindus it has been a religious duty to recite at least a few verses from the epic before taking their meals.

I.9 Political condition in Rā.

As regards the political conditions during the age of Rā. we find that there was no paramount power in the country. The country was divided into small kingdoms ruled by petty kings. The king had a council of ministers which included the priest who had an influential voice in all political affairs. The king always consulted him in difficult matters and followed his advice. During the reign of Daśaratha, there was peace in the country, and people were happy and prosperous. Even when Rāma returned to Ayodhya after his victory and exile, he ruled the kingdom so well that his reign has become proverbial for good government. Mahātmā Gāndhi always wished to establish Rāmarājya in India. During Rāma’s reign there were no thefts, no diseases, no premature deaths, no widows, and no fear from drought and other calamities as well as from beasts and venomous reptiles.

In the Rā. there is no mention of foreign kings taking part in the war. The weapons of war were also more primitive in the Rā. war. The monkeys and bears fought with the aid of hewn rocks, uprooted trees and their teeth and nails. The rākṣasas, too, used similar weapons.
I.10 Basic values of the Ra.

'Value' is a prime necessity of a corporate living. It is the values and norms that define and regulate the conduct of an individual in a collective life. A healthy society presupposes cohesion in social life. This again calls for the patterning of human conduct in different spheres of life in accordance with certain norms of values. In philosophical literature of the west one comes across prolific writings on the normative and the metanormative theories of morality. The normative theories provide different standards of "good" and "right" where as the metanormative theories dwell upon the nature of the "good and "moral valuation". Except the theologians like saint Augustine and Aquinas who define good in terms of the will of God and the idealists like Bradley who define the highest good in terms of self realization, the tendency, by and large, in the west is to define values in terms of relative interests and purposes of the individuals in particular and the society in general. But when we turn to the oriental tradition there appears to be a significant departure from the western way of thinking, (which for all intents and purposes is based on materiality or pragmatic consideration) in so far as, the former construes values to be absolute and eternal (śāśvata).

In this perspective, the Ra. can be taken as a specimen representing the pristine values enshrined in the tradition and cultural milieu of the country. It is obviously not a theoretic exercise on the concept of morals nor does it contain the abstract moral principles to be unconditionally and mechanically adhered to by the individuals. But it can quite befittingly be taken us a source book of values as it seeks to propagate values by concretizing them through characters in actual human situations.

"It is not a mere narration of conflicts and battles, but contains
the highest ideals of political and social life as well as religious ordinances and practices prevailing in that remote age. In this epic poems the gods have not come down as men, but men by dint of their virtues, have become Gods”.

The extraordinary finesse of sage Vālmīki in character portrayal reveals his primary concern in bringing home the eternal values through the use of parables and narrations. One finds in Rāma a happy amalgamation of all the cherished ideals राजभर्म, पुज्यभर्म, स्वामीभर्म, भ्रातृभर्म and can discover in Sītā, Kausalyā, Tārā and Mandorari the ideals खोभर्म. Sumatra, Guhaka, Bharadvāja, Jatāyu, Sampāti, Sabari, Hanumāna, typify the ideals प्रजाभर्म or सेवकभर्म. There is also the delineation of the ideal मित्रभर्म among Rāma and Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa. The uniqueness of the poet consists in portraying the characters not as Gods or supra-human species but as beings with flesh and blood embodying the highest ideals that the mankind is heightened by the fact that the poet does not forget to invest the characters with the human frailties. Rāma the most calm and circumspect breaks down in grief with the separation of Sītā as is evident from the following expressions-

या विना नोस्तते वीर सुदृढजिविनुभु ।
क्व सा प्राणसहाया मे सीता सुरुस्तोपपा ॥ Ar.K., 58/4

And Sītā the soft, well meaning and tolerant character also does not mince words to castigate and throw as persious on so devoted and ideal brother like Lakṣaṇa when the latter shows his reluctance to leave Sītā alone.

लोभातु मत्तते नूतन नानुस्चछसि राजभर्म ।
व्यसनं ते प्रियं मने स्मेहो भातरी नास्ति ते ॥ Ar.K., 45/7

14. Essays on Sanskrit Literature-Sadhu Ram
In Rāma, Lākṣmaṇa and Bharata, as the concrete matchless examples of brotherly love, Hanumāna as a devoted servant, and Sītā a true wife, in the ideals kingship and friendship we have the basic requirements of moral life provided to every Hindu who cares for the social and moral virtues.

I.11 Great ethical value of the Rā

“In spite of all the virtues and vices, hatreds and jealousies, and ups and downs of fortunes, the epics have a great ethical value. The leading idea of our social thinkers, legislators and sages was the government of human interest and desire by the social and ethical law, the dharma, so that it might be made a preparation for the spiritual existence”.¹⁵

The Rā. and Mbh. are epical in their motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the world. They are entirely of their own kind, and subtly different from others in their principle. Although Rā. contains early heroic stories, its form belongs to a period of a highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture enriched with a body of mature thought, and uplifted by a ripe mobility and refined gravity of ethical tone. The popular bending of the natural breath of an early heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual and even the philosophical mind is indeed a remarkable feature of the poems. The poet intends with a sense of his function as architects and sculptors of life, and creative exponents and fashioners of significant form of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. The work of the epic was to popularise high philosophical and ethical ideas and cultural practice. Poet’s aim was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect all

¹⁵. Essays on Sanskrit literature-Sadhuram, p.149
that was best in the soul and thought, or true to the life, or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind.

The Gītā saw light of the day because of Arjuna’s dejection and the sorrow of Vālmīki produced the Rā. Do we not have dejection, disappointment, sorrow and the like all around us! Then why is not on epic born? Rāvana represented all the desired achievements accomplished at their zenith but that cannot be on ideal for any society. This leads to “haves and have-nots” at the individual, national or international level. Only the ideal of sacrifice for the universal brotherhood and fighting for it like Rāma would lead to a real solution! There is not a single event or situation in this real life that cannot draw an illustration from the Rā. Rā is and is going to remain current in it’s attitudes and solutions in future too.

1.12 Dharma as taught by Rā.

A) Rājadharma

The Rā of Vālmīki is a unique work belonging to the Vedic aryān tradition. Like the sister epic the Mbh, and the dharmaśāstras of Manu and others, the Rā lays great emphasis on dharma or righteousness, the principle that upholds society. Vālmīki was never over-shadowed by religious superstitions, orthodoxy or metaphysics. He has presented to us concrete facts from which we can arrive at a very distinct and clear motion of a realistic pragmatic view of dharma always relative to time and place. Dharma is a comprehensive term and includes all the duties of man, which ensure his safety in this world and in the next world. Adharma signifies all acts which are contrary to the established order. Dharma was then the chief factor that shaped men's lives. As the artistic sense colours the entire outlook of the artist and gives a touch of individuality and beauty not merely to his painting or
music but also to his writings and discourses, nay, even his walking, eating, and sitting, so also dharma was meant to give a holy, blissful, loving, and heroic turn to the outlook of its votary and introduce its distinctive fragrance and sweetness into all the activities of his daily life. The Rā. is composed in and reflects on age where the socio-economic and politico-religious conditions were quite different from that of to day. But, its message and relevance remain unsullied by changes in time and space. If properly heeded to, the Rā. may go a long way in salvaging man from an imminent ruin. Hence it is imperative to unearth and reconstruct the suggestions implicit, therein.

In the Rā. one gets an immaculate picture of a monarchical order of administration. The subjects were by and large loyal, law abiding and peace loving. The office of the monarch was considered to be sacred and divinely ordained. Though the monarch was sovereign with all the powers vested in him, it was constitutional and most democratic in spirit. Vaśiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Kāḷyāyana, Jābāla and others are found to figure in the epic as the venerated royal counsellors, pre-eminent on account of their spiritual and moral excellence. The significance of this practice is well brought out by a striking contrast when Vālmīki portrays Rāvaṇa as a self-flattered, conceited, arrogant autocrat who, in his characteristic insolence, having flouted the well meaning advice of Mārīca, Vibhīṣaṇa, Niśaṇa, Mālyavāna, Kumbhakarṇa, Mandodarī, heightens his own doom. It goes to show that the king, the ruler or the administrator, in the interest of the subjects or the ruled, ought to bank upon the counsel and guidance of the expert body as and when the occasion demands. Kumbhakarṇa in his maiden attempt to attempt to prevail on Rāvaṇa observes;
That the king who falls back on the timely advice of the ministers in pursuance of *dharma, artha* and *kāma* does not court suffering or set-back. Similarly, Mālyavāna, the maternal grandfather, in his elderly concern for Rāvana, struggles to make him see the truth,

He who accepts the timely advise of the counsellors reigns in eternal prosperity with his enemies subdued. Thus, it stands out that the ruler should be surrounded by the galaxy of counselors. They are in other words, a group of reference-individuals, well versed in the scriptures, established in morality, standing by the king in matters of exigencies. In enumerating the qualities of the courtiers Rāma, while greeting Bharata observes:

That the minister, even if one; if (he is) meritorious, heroic, efficient and dynamic can bring immense prosperity to the king. Vālmīki appears to be quite exhaustive and eloquent in delineating the essential virtues of a king in relation to the subjects.

The king verily is the truth, the *dharma*, the symbol of racial dignity, the father, mother and the agent of peoples well being. This introduces one to the sacred relationship between the ruler and the ruled.
quite alien to the various institutions of modern statecraft. The king, instead of being conceived as a sovereign for removed from and inaccessible to the commoners is, supposed to serve as the trustee, the custodian of the people and the state. The analogy likening the office of the king to that of a father and mother is highly suggestive. The power of the king consists not in the size of the army or richness of armory, but in his steadfastness in adhering to *dharma*. When Viśvāmitra having been actuated by greed asks for Kāmadhenu and Vaśiṣṭha demurs to comply to his wish. Eventually, finding him totally crushed, Viśvāmitra acknowledges the efficacy and superiority of the powers of *dharma* over that of the physical strength.

 ether, *dharma* signifies the cardinal principles, which ought to serve as the watchword and the highest court of appeal in dispensing the affairs of the state. The king, being the source of *dharma* and victory should preserve it (*dharma*) at all costs.

The king ought to rule the state, joyfully, by taking refuge in *dharma*, which is sure to fortify him against all odds. *Dharma* protects its preserver (*dharmaḥ rakṣati rakṣitah*) when the ruler rules in consonance with the tenets of *dharma*, he in turn , secures immunity by *dharma*. But by acting conversely he only precipitates ruination of his subjects. Vālmīki enumerates the negative virtues that the ruler should steer clear. Rāma, in course of his advice to Bharata (when the latter fails to win, in persecuting him to return to Ayodhyā to assure the throne and ultimately fields to the advice of the Vaśiṣṭha to rule as a regent
The king, in the interest of state ought to be above the short
comings, such as, astheism, untruthfulness, anger, follies, procrastination,
inattention, indolence, indulgence (in sense of gratification), taking
crucial decision by oneself, seeking counsel from the evil minded,
inability in timely execution of the work at hand, inability to keep
secrecy, non-beginning of the auspicious work and the uncalled for
humility. Truth is considered to be a supreme virtue that the ruler should
be wedded to. The term “truth” is quite nebulous because of its various
uses in various contexts. In matters of administration, truth ought to be
the highest court of appeal. Hence conformity to “truth” enables the ruler
to administer, in enforcing discipline, in giving justice; in according
favour or punishment without any preference.

नयनायायं प्रसुखो वा जागरितं नवचक्षुरं।
व्यक्त्वरोग प्रसादश्च स राजा पूज्यते जैनः। ॥ अर.क. ३३/२१

The above couplet enjoins that the ruler who (even if physically
asleep) is ever vigilant and perceptive in meeting out justice with his
anger and favour clearly pronounced, is adored by the people. Justice is
the functional expressions of truth. Kumbhakarṇa in his advice to Rāvaṇa
observes that the king who conducts his royal affairs with justice repents
not afterwards-
Rāma exhorts Bharata to avoid *adarśana*. The king by virtue of being the custodian of everyone, irrespective of the social, political and religious considerations must be sensitive enough to their weal and woe. He should hare the feelings of the mass; exercise utmost respect and concern for the opinion of the populace. This is, subsequently, exemplified in the life of Rāma himself when he remains unwilling to take Sītā back (after victory) because of her prolonged stay in Laṅkā (as it would have offended the popular sentiment) even though he was quite sanguine of Sītā’s fidelity and integrity. Similarly, on later occasion Rāma, banishes her to the forest to respect peoples opinion, though he knew it to be unfounded and even if, it meant for him psychic torture and suffering. This goes to show that the individual wishes and personal comfort of the ruler ought to be subservient to the public morality. *krodha* is decried as a positive vice more so on the part of the ruler. Tārā persuades Vālī to shun anger (which over floods one like the swift current of the river) as one gives up the bed after sleep and the garland having worn it. But Vālī despite his unconquerable velour falls a victim to his wrath, as he fails to see the virtues in Sugrīva and the pertinence of Tārā’s advice and courts his eventual fall.

The ruler should be a guard against omissions and commissions. A small irregularity on his part might spell disaster for the populace. Hence it is incumbent on him that he ought not take crucial decisions by himself but has to have an open and receptive mind in seeking counsel from the select and the worthy under the necessities of circumstances. The king is expected to the paradigm of virtues and
morality. He should not, on any account, be a victim to the passer
passions or instincts. It is observed that a king, under the sway of meanest
pleasures, observed with greed and passions is not rated high by the
people, rather ignored as the cremation fire.

राजा धर्मश्रव्य कामश्रव्य दल्याणां चोतमो निधि: ॥ Ar.K. 50/10

The office of the king is considered most enviable and sacred.
Anything, good or evil in the state is said to accrue from the king.

राजा धर्मश्रव्य कामश्रव्य दल्याणां चोतमो निधि: ॥ Ar.K. 50/10

The king is the strength of the weak and the helpless, the eye
to the eyeless, the path to the pathless. The king is deemed as
indispensable for the existence of the state. In the absence of the ruler
(Vaśiṣṭha observes) there ensures chaos and anarchy. The state witnesses
the extremities in nature, failure of crops, reign of untruth, poverty,
absence of marital fidelity, state of insecurity for the righteous, marital
defeat (Ay.K. 67/9-10, 18, 29, 31). The state without the king has been
compared to the night without the moon and the cattle without the bull.

यथा चन्द्रः बिना रात्रियथा गायो बिना भूष्मः ॥
एवं हि भविता राज्यं वं राजा न दृष्यते ॥ Ay.K. 14/56-57
Conversely, if the king is righteous, one does not find the voluptuous, cruel, ignorant or atheist. Men and women are self-restrained and lead a clean life in obedience to the principles of *dharma*. There remains no place for the thieves, burglars, and the bastards. There exists mutual concordance among people of different walks of life. People, at large, become generous, gallant, grateful. Gods and quests get due worship (B.K. 6/8-9, 12, 17, 19).

The king is equated with the five gods, Agni, Indra, Soma, Yama and Varuṇa, in possessing warmth (of love), Valour. Capacity to punish (evil) and in being agreeable and benign. Hence we deserves unconditional loyalty and obedience. (Ar.K. 40/12-14). But the observations, above, ought not mistake one into viewing the *ṛajadharma* (in the *Ra.*) at par with the divine theory of kingship of the west. There is a world of difference between the two. The latter rests on the rationale that king, being a representative of God on the earth partakes of his nature. He is the God on earth. Hence goes the norm: “The king can do no wrong”. But here in the epic, though the king is portrayed as the embodiment of all divine qualities, he is considered as a mere servant of the subjects. The king is held accountable for anything good or evil, noble or sordid in the state. The demeanors or action of the king is subject to criticism and evaluation against the eternal moral principles by the select and the ruled, at large. The king is not an autocrat. He is supposed to be solicitous of the opinions and guidance of the expert body in matters of importance. It is precisely this element of accountability to the subjects and acceptance of *dharma* that is distinct from its western counterpart.

In this respect, it is worthwhile to take note of the observations, calling into question the conduct of Daśaratha in dispensing Rāma’s exile. “Daśaratha...... supposedly more constitutional monarch, banishes
Rāma arbitrarily, consulting no-one, and against the wishes of the populace; indeed, though the citizens openly grieve to hear the decision, and threaten to depart with Rāma, they make no direct representations to the king. An administrator should avoid the following faults: Atheism, untruthfulness, inattention, anger, procrastination, companionship with evil persons, indolence, gratification of senses, consultation with a single person concerning the needs of a kingdom, taking counsel with those who are cognisant of evils alone, omission to take in hand a task that have been decided upon, divulgence of counsel, non-commencement of a course in the morning, hunting, gambling, sleeping in the day, calumny, addiction to woman, wine, dancing, singing, playing and roving without purpose.

The Rā. presents the picture of a state, which is most democratic. It contains the basic values of democracy "Vox populi Vox die, the voice of the people is the voice of God". The state or the king is not an end in itself but an agency, instrumental to the good of the people. This is elucidated in Rāma’s momentous decision to banish Sītā, knowing for certain that she was pure and not at the cost of love and the justice nor did it mean, paying unmerited respect to the prejudiced laity, though scholars like Brockington suggest so. ".... His sacrifice of both love and justice in banishing Sītā, otherwise parallel to his father’s, is made to placate his subjects prejudice".

It, rather, brings out the moral that Rāma in banishing Sītā although sanguine of her integrity and it meant the harrowing personal agony was only sacrificing the individual morality with his utmost concern and regard for the public morality. The ruler as a sovereign,

16. Righteous Rama, J.L.Brockington, p-125
17. Ay.K., 100/65,66,67,68 (The whole can to deals with Kingship)
18. Righteous Rama, p-126
deserves unconditional obedience from the ruled but in twin, is called upon to harness himself to the service of the populace. In this regard, the rājadharma or the state ethics is opposed to totalitarianism, which degrades man to the status of a log in the wheel. The system of the administration pleaded for in the Rā was its strength, sustenance and dynamics from its ethical or spiritual core which prevents the ruler and the ruled from deviating from the path of Truth. Justice, Love, Tolerance, Sacrifice, ‘Live and let Live’ become the motto.

Another important thought that we find in the concept of rājadharma of Vālmīki is that the state is never an end in itself but it is a means for the realisation of dharma. “The task of the state (or the king who represented the state) was to repress by threat and use of force any violation of the rights of personal freedom and property, to enforce the practices of people’s own traditional customs and usages and to take serious care of virtues and dharma”.

The end of the state was to enable men to achieve the goal of their life. The early death of a brāhmana boy and then the killing of sūdra by Rāma is highly suggestive of the facts stated above. Rā. set an model of ideal society. The rule of law there, for anyone today is more conceptual than perceptual. Therefore rājadharama can not be seen in isolation. It follows from the Rā.’s concept of man, nature and the world.

B) Strīdharma

The Vedic and the Upanisadic literature, (the source of Indian cultural ethos) bear unmistakable testimony to towering personalities like- Maitreyī, Gārgī and Lopāmudrā who remain legendary for their scholastic eminence and spiritual elevation. The Rā. being a continuation of the Upanisadic tradition stands to corroborate the above contention.

A woman is deemed as indispensable as the man for a healthy, compact society. Rather the varied roles of a woman as the mother, wife, sister, nurse, friend, and preceptor have been extolled in superlative terms by Vālmīki. The cherished ideals of the womanhood have been brought into bold relief through the character portrayals of Sītā, Kausalayā, Tārā, Mandodarī. Vālmīki restores dignity and sanctity to womanhood by conceiving woman not as a biological instrument for the perpetuation of species but as a veritable partner of the husband in securing merits, in psychic and as well as spiritual realism. It is rightly observes that father, mother, son, brother and other kith and kin reap the fruits of their respective karmas, whereas it is the wife alone who shares the merits and democits of the action of her husband

आय्युष्ट्र पिता माता प्राता पुज्वत्था स्नायुभाण ।
स्वानि पुण्यानि भूज्ज्वानि: स्वं स्वं भाग्मधुप्पास्वते ॥
भूनभूष्यं तु नार्यंका प्राप्तीति पुरुषपर् । Ay.K.27/4-5

The Rā. presents us with a glorious illustration of an ideal womanhood in Sītā so much so that her purity of moral character and her devotion to her husband in prosperity and poverty have become proverbial. In the Vedic age, women were considered of equal importance with men, in all social, cultural and religious affairs, e.g., Viśvavārā was brahmavādinī (a philosopher and well versed in the sacred texts).20 Similarly, Ghoṣī and Lopāmudrā were (mantradraṣṭrī) women who composed some parts of the hymns of the Rgveda21 or more correctly seers to whom the hymns were revealed. Queen Sāsvati of King Asanga, Apala, Indrāni Sikatā and Nivavari- all these women were highly intellectual and mantradraṣṭrī.

20. Rg.veda, V.28
In the Rā. the attitude of society towards women remains unaltered. In the Vedic age women were allowed to perform penances and religious worship and the study of Vedas so also in the Rā. Kausalayā, Sītā, Ahalyā, Anasūyā, Sabarī, Tārā, Mandodarī, depicted as gifted women, politicians, Tapasis, performing religious rites and well versed in the Vedic lore. Rāma seeks to prevail on Sītā and asks her to stay back in Ayodhyā, so that she could discharge her obligatory duties for the decrepit, disconsolate king and the broken hearted Kausalyā. Rāma’s insistence that she must shun the thought of going to the forest on the pretext that the woods with their characteristic disadvantages. But her deep and consuming love for Rāma can be read off from her observation that the shade of her husbands feet is more enviable than opulence and luxuries in heaven and earth.

In answer to the farewell advice of Kausalyā, Sītā affirms her determination not to flinch from the path of dharma. She considers herself as integral to the destiny of her consort. As the strings are to the harp, the wheels are to the chariot, so is the husband to the wife. Unlike father, mother, sons it is only the husband who is the source of infinite happiness for the wife.

When Kausalyā in the height of emotional frenzy at the thought
of Rāma’s exile in the forest bemoans her fortune and insists on accompanying Rāma to the forest the latter consoles her with the wise thoughts that one who otherwise defaults in the worship of God respect for the elders is, sure to secure the highest good by serving her husband, who is verily the God personified. This is what is enjoined by the Vedas and smrtis.

Sumantra the courtier, counsels the malicious Kaideyī not to override the adorable husband for, the wishes of the husband ought to be more prized and preferred to that of sons,

Sītā in pleading for accompanying Rāma in the exile argues that unlike the father, mother and kinsmen the husband is the only resort of the wife in this world and hereafter.

She considered it to be her cherished fortune to share the fate of her husband in the forest. Sītā is portrayed as the paragon of wifely fidelity, devotion and sacrifice. Though one finds in Sītā the manifestation of an womanly virtues and perfections, Vālmīki invests
her with the human formalities so that she does not appear for removed from the common run of life but remains, humanly, ideas. Sītā in the characteristic womanly ways, insists on Rāma and grows obstinate to get the golden deer, live or dead, inspite of the dissuasions by the latter. It, consequently, paves the way for the tragic turn of events. Sītā’s taunting vilification of Rāvana at the latter’s promiscuous advances only anticipate her determination, steadfastness, the unswerving devotion for Rāma which is subsequently put to acid test in the Aśoka forest where she is encircled by the dreadful rākṣasīs, (Ar.K.-51/21-22). Rāvana brags of his fortune and power, promises Sītā all that is precious and enviable, if she concedes to be his queen and describes Rāma as deprived and forlorn, a poor ascetic bereft of might and retorts with fortitude, “Rāma, poor or deprived, is her husband and the only husband”.

दीनो वा राज्यहीनो वा यो मे भरताः स मे गुरुः ||
तं नित्यमसुस्तामि यथा सूर्य सुवर्चला || S.K. 24/9

When Hanumāna having read the affliction and anxiety in Vaidehī offers to carry her on his back Sītā exhibits the unchartered dimension of her chastity in saying that her unswerving devotion for Rāma constrains her from touching the body of anyone else, even though, in spite of herself, weak and helpless, she became victim of being physically abducted by Rāvana.

भष्ट्रभोक्ति पुस्कृत्य रामादन्त्यत सानार ||
नाह स्याह स्याहो गात्रिनिच्छेयं वानरोतम ||
यदहं गात्रसंस्थामि रावणस्य गता बलात् ||
अनीशा किं करिष्यामि विनाथा किवशा सती || S.K. 37/62-63

Her unalloyed devotion and chastity is ocularly certified in the fireordeal. Finding Rāma recalcitrant to take her back for fear of obloquy, Sītā asks Saumitrī to prepare the fire for, that could only redeem her of
the infamy. Sītā invokes ‘fire’ the mute witness to her mind and heart, her innocence and man transgression of righteousness in thought, word or action for her protection and of the righteous Rāma.

\[ अर्जुन \text{ कर्मणा नमसा यथा यज्ञानवर्धयते } \]
\[ 
\text{राष्ट्रसंस्थितम केषाय मा पातु पातकः } \]
\[ \text{Yu.K. 116/27} \]

The God of fire appears with Sītā unscathed; rather, with added brilliance, only to proclaim her untarnished purity. Again, Sītā is called upon to testify her purity before the people. She calls upon and supplicates the Mother Earth to make room for her. Her exit into the Earth’s interior the providential corroboration of her consummate devotion and chastity. Conversely, it is a positive caricature on the public morality. The capacity to forgive and forget is also deemed to be a necessary virtue of women. Sītā is portrayed as the embodiment of forgiveness. After the eventual triumph of Rāma with the complete ruination of Rāvaṇa and Laṅkā, when Hanumāna solicits Sītā’s wish to kill the rākṣasis who are instrumental in perpetrating torture and affliction on her. Sītā envinces large heartedness, the nobility of heart and mind in dissuading Hanumāna from doing any harm to them for they are only doing their part at the behest of their master where as she suffered her lot, as she was so destined.

Kausalyā is depicted as an ideal mother and on ideal wife though her consuming love for Rāma; who was her only hope and prop amidst all neglect and humiliations; appears to be preponderant over to her wifely loyalty and devotion towards Daśaratha. Despite the non-compromising insistence to follow Rāma, as a cow follows the calf, she is found to be, eventually, won over by Rāma when the latter appeals to the ideals of the wife arguing that the foremost duty and the supreme fruition of all the penance and austerities consist in serving one’s husband
in weal and woe. One finds Kausalyā, guiltfully, acknowledging her moral dereliction and sinful transgression, saying that it was all but due to her emotional upsurge at the cruel and the uncalled for fate of her dear son. Kausalyā’s lament at Daśaratha’s death and her bitterest vilifications of Kaikeyī bear on eloquent testimony to the magnitude of her warmth and devotion for her husband who died for the cause of dharma. Vālmīki, in the portrayal of Kaikeyī pictures her as a paradigm of womanly fragilities and vices, bringing into bold relief the ideals of strīdharma. Finding Kaikeyī bent upon in getting her wishes fulfilled; pictures her as a veritable demoness in human form.

The graphic contrast only goes to highlight the principles of strīdharma, the violation of which is bound to spell disharmony and discord in the individual as well as the social sphere. Mantharā represents a class of woman who find pleasure and look for the occasions to be instrumental in causing suffering to others. They are the evil forces that take advantage of the frailities latent in others. Kaikeyī, who initially breaks into jubilation at the news of Rāma’s coronation and regards her with gifts, later falls a victim to Mantharā as the latter successfully rakes up the evil dormant in her. Tārā, is also depicted as a well meaning, affectionate wife who, having been imbued with the great concern for the safety of her husband and the overall peace in the family advises Vālī to restrain anger and forbids him not to challenge Sugrīva who; she smells must have been in alliance with the mighty Rāma. Finding her advices unheeded, only pities him for the imminent ruin and prays for his good. She represents the worldly wisdim and appears as a caring, loving and the sweet spoken wife.
Hanumāna seeks to console Tārā in her pitiable plight at the fall of Vālī in urging her to look to the future of Aṅgada when Tārā breaks into the most vociferous assertions of her wifely pride saying that a husband is the most prized possession of a wife and preferable to son and kingdom.

पुष्ण मम कि कार्य राज्येनापि किमात्माम ||
कर्मित्वंहे महाभागे तस्मिन् भतौरी नर्णयिति || Kis.K. 19/18

The fact that she does not accuse Sugrīva and Rāma for the death of Vālī and her confession that Vālī courted his own fall for his pride and wrath shows the extent to which she is national and worldly wise. Mandodarī can also be taken as an ideal wife because the concern for Rāvaṇa appears to be uppermost in her mind. Her insistence and well meaning advice to restore Sītā to Rāma, the non-compliance of which may entail complete ruin of the rākṣasa race was turned down with passion and arrogance, but came to be true in the fall of Rāvaṇa. Mandodarī, yelling and bemoaning the loss of her husband brings to view the wealth of emotions and wifely concern towards her husband. Thus, the ideal of womanhood has been extolled and dignified. Woman is portrayed as sweet spoken, well meaning, in her different roles as mother, wife, sister, friend and nurse.

यदा यदा च कौसल्या दासीच च सखीव च ||
भार्यानव भगिनीवच मातुकवचोपतिति ||
सततं प्रियकर्मा मे प्रियपुज्रा प्रियंबद्ध || Ay.K. 12/68-69

Some historians as well as sociologists maintain that the Rā. accords an inferior and subordinate position to women. They seem to substantiate the thesis by appealing to certain passages, and considering them in isolation i.e. beyond context. Women, they argue, have been
treated as dependent and therefore, subservient to men, for their subsistence, protection and welfare. In the youth, on the husband and in the old age, on the grown up son and hence, does not possess the autonomy and independence of her own.

As a virgin, she is to adore the father as the lord and the sole arbiter of her future life. Father’s word in choice of her partner in life is to be deemed sacrosanct and binding.

As a wife she is to treat her husband as the guru, the latter deserving unconditional obedience and respect of the former. When Anasūyā discourses on the wifely duties, Sītā assures her about her prior knowledge with regard to these values.

This points to the fact of indoctrination of the patriarchal values. As a rejoinder to the above it deserves pointing out that the above observations, rather, tend to advocate a contrary thesis. They do not degrade but dignify the status of women. The fact that a woman secures the patronage of the father, husband and the son, in different phases of her life suggests that she remains the focal points of social concern and responsibility. She is not a liability nor an object of sympathy and pity. She is the object of love and veneration. Her roles as a mother, sister, wife, friend and counselor are unique. Her well being is integral to the
well being of man and the human destiny as such. Hence, she deserves protection and nourishment. Sītā confesses that the woman’s life without the husband is not worth living and she feels, absolutely secured and protected, in the company of Rāmā.

The woman is not seen as object of gratification or indulgence but as a sacred partner in life’s journey to fancy at other’s wife is considered, highly reprehensible. This is brought out in Bharata’s apprehension of the supposed conduct of Rāma which he thinks might have led to the exile of Rāma. It is enjoyed that others wives need protection as one’s own. In the words of Jatāyu,

It is often observed by the critics that the practice of polygamy points to the fact of the masculine despotism, But to appreciate the sociological factors that might, at times, justify the practice of polygamy. More over, a polygamous social set up is not necessarily degenerate. One can notice promiscuity or moral degradation even in a monogamous set up i.e. irrespective of whether the society is polygamous or monogamous so, polygamy being the accepted social practice, it would be unfair to accuse Daśaratha of moral turpitude in having more than one queen. This is well made out in portrayal of the constructing character in Rāvana who is given to lust for his indiscriminate indulgence with the seven thousand women in his harem and of Sugrīva for his extra-marital indulgence with Tārā. Some zealous pioneers of women
liberation movement call into question the very propriety of Sītā's taking food after Rāma and Lākṣmāṇa, which according to them is suggestive of male chauvinism. Such criticisms are not only misplaced but unfortunate. The housewife sharing the remnant of the food, so characteristic of Indian families, does not speak of her imposed deprivation but points to the subtle dimension of the familial bond. She is not only the creator, the protector but the nobility and sacrifice incarnate.

Another very important psychological point about the husband and wife relationship, which Vālmīki has brought to out notice is about the sex intercourse between men and women. Vālmīki thinks that a wife is not a mere vessel for one's sex satisfaction, but sex satisfaction in the complete sense could only take place when there is mutual willingness. If there is no mutual willingness, such a union never satisfies but heightens lust. He says, “He who desireth an unwilling dame burneth his own person and he who desireth a willing damsel attaineth excess of delight”.22 Vālmīki not only enumerates the duties of a wife towards her husband but through the good husbandly character of Rāma he conveys to us that like Rāma a man should take ('ekapatnivrata') the vow of only one wife. The concept of 'ekapatnivrata' not only means that a man should have only one wife but its real meaning is that a man should only be devoted to one wife. He says that a husband's love towards his wife should be like that of a parent besides that of a husband and a lover. Thus, Sītā23 tells Anasūyā about her husband,

स्थिरतार्णो धर्मात्मा मातृविद्वृत्तिविस्तरितः || Ay. K., 118/4, 74/48, U.K., 49/8.

“That he was of a steady affection and that his affection for her was like

23. Sita was of blank colour, probably of Dravidian race, Ay.K. 61/4
that of her parents besides being that of a husband and a lover”.

C) **Bhrāṭṛdharma**

Invariably, all readers and the critics take Rāma as the focal point of virtue and righteousness and other characters are considered secondary. But in respect of the ideals of brotherhood Bharata symbolizes the height of love, renunciation and virtue. Vālmīki appears to be at his best in the portrayal of Bharata. Kaikeyī, finding in her son the imminent fulfillment of her long nourished desire to see Bharata enthroned, grows philosophical. She, curtly, replies “Your father has courted the inevitable that all the beings are destined to”.

या गति: सर्वभूतानां तां गति ते पिता गताः । अय.क. 72/15

Blinded by infatuation, she fails to foresee the reaction of Bharata, who, unable to withstand the shock, collapses into virtual numbness and bemoans the memory of his father. It is here that, Bhatrata remembers Rāma who for him is the brother, father, master and the friend in one. He wishes to be announced to Rāma, who is now his sole refuge, because for one, who tread the path of righteousness, the elder brother is truly the father.

यो मे प्रात्मा पिता वन्ययथा दासोदस्मि सम्मत: ।
तस्य मां श्रीग्रहायाहि रामस्याक्षितकरणं: ॥
पिता हि भवति ज्येष्ठो धर्मययथया जाताः: ।
तस्य पादी प्रहोधयमि स हीदानी गतिर्मयं ॥ अय.क. 72/32-33.

A brother is seen as the possible competitor or rival. Against this, the *Ra*. introduces us to an ideal pattern of living, where of, the elder brother is deemed as the virtual father. Fatherhood symbolises sacrifice and implies a necessary function of nourishing and guarding
the interest of the youngsters. The youngsters are in their turn, expected to live in unconditional obedience and resignation to the wishes and dictates of the father. It is on this, that the entire theme of the text revolves. In invoking Rāma as the father, Bharata discloses not only his rich fund of fraternal affection, which so, spontaneously, overwhelms him in the height of utter despondency and helplessness but shows that he is steadfastly, rooted in the principles of dharmas. The brazen confession of Kaikeyī that she had been instrumental for Rāma’s exile so as to pave the way for her son’s coronation puts Bharata at his wits end who hurls the vilest possible accusations. This is suggestive of the conflict between a value and disvalue, Kaikeyī, representing the lot of ordinary self-seeking mortals and Bharata representing the pristine ideals of fraternal love and sacrifice “of what avail is the kingdom without father and the father like brother?”

किं तु कार्य हतस्मे मम राज्येन शोचतः ।
विहीरस्वयं पित्रा च प्राणा पितुसमेन || Ay.K., 73/2

What is the very consummation of all ambitions for Kaikeyī is a worthless bauble for her righteous sow. What is paramount for the latter is his unqualified love and devotion for Rāma who is the ‘dharma’, personified and who, rightfully, deserves the throne. He, at the outset, confesses his sheer incompetence to rule the kingdom in absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. This is expressive of his sheer humility.

अहं हि पुश्यतः इव राज्यार्यं रमलक्ष्मणं ।
केन शक्तिभाषे राज्यं रक्षितं तुवोत्सः || Ay.K., 73/14.

Bharata, immediately, adds that even if he could rule the kingdom by wielding of yogic power, he would not do so to see that her nefarious designs do not fructify. He reminds Kaikeyī that her crooked
design has not only caused death of Daśaratha and brought infamy to the race but has caused untold suffering to Kausalyā who must be subject to the pangs of separation from her only dearest son, Rāma. The magnanimity of Bharata in his utmost concern for Kausalya is heightened when the latter, betrays her subterranean resentment in insisting that Kaikeyī should expel her to the forest or Bharata should leave her in the forest so as to make the smooth way for others. Bharata fails to reconcile with mother Kausalyā’s distrust of his sincere and unswerving devotion for Rāma and swears the worst damnations to one who could consent or cause Rāma’s expulsion. The emotional outbursts of his at the unjust suspicion of Kausalyā reflects the frailty of motherhood which blinds Kausalyā to Bharata’s consuming love for Rāma, bringing into focus the unchartered dimension of brotherly love in Bharata.

Again, subsequently, Bharata becomes the object of suspicion of the Nisāda King, Guhaka, who having come to learn about the large retinue headed by Bharata, is haunted by the fear of the imminent Threat to the security of his new and to Rāma’s life (Ay.K. 84/4). The fear of the Nisāda king is born out of the genuine concern for Rāma’s safety. Bharata’s clarificatory protestations (Ay.K. 85/9-10) reveal his appreciation of such protective concern as well as his agony for being an object of suspicion for causing harm to Rāma. Bharadvāja, in suspecting Bharata’s intention was only voicing the natural doubts of the inmates as to Bharata’s arrival, more so, when he was decreed to enjoy the throne at the cost of Rāma. His suspicion and Bharata’s innocent confession shows the depth of the brotherly devotion which is put to the acid test of humiliation, from time to time.

For Bharata, Rāma is the only object of devotion. For him Rāma is not only his uterine brother but the ‘Righteousness’ personified.
Bharata’s confession that he would not even hesitate to kill her mother, though forbidden by dharma but for the reprobation of Rāma; does not suggest that Bharata was not steadfastly, established in dharma nor that his affection for Rāma outweighs all considerations, what so ever. It rather suggests that Bharata, by being non compromisingly attached to the ways of Rāma, who was, verily the embodiment of dharma, was, also, tenaciously wedded to dharma. Interestingly enough, among all the characters it is only Rāma who appears to be unfailingly cognisant of Bharata’s devotion and dedication. When the subjects of Ayodhyā grow insistent to follow Rāma into the forest he assures them that Bharata, the noble and the virtuous would invest himself in securing them good and prosperity. Hence they should transfer their respect and devotion to Bharata.

Subsequently, one finds Rāma reprimanding Laksmana, as the latter having surveyed the large army following Bharata imputes murderous motive to Bharata. But Rāma assures that Bharata, who is dearer to him than his own life, always respectful of the law, conscientious, must be coming solicitous of seeing them, over powered with love and agony.
This is soon after certified in the momentus meeting of the two brothers, Bharata growing obstinate in urging Rāma to return to Ayodhya and rule, Rāma refusing to flinch from his commitment to “dharma” and the “satya” which consists in carrying out the pledge of their noble father. Bharata argues that Rāma ought to condescend to accept the throne, for, it rightfully, belongs to the eldest born; etc. How could an ass imitate the speed of a horse and a bird that of Garuda.

Finding Rāma unbending, Bharata decided to fast unto death. The celestial bodies and saints, in view of the inevitability of the death of Rāvana persuade Bharata to concede to the wishes of Rāma. Eventually, Bharata takes the sandals of Rāma and returns to Ayodhya and enthrones the sandals as a sacred symbol of his brother’s presence and rules the kingdom with renewed determination, staying in the outskirts of the city at Nandigrama, having shunned the royal splendours, living the life of a renunciate, putting on bark and matted hair, taking roots and fruits, in absolute empathy with the life of an exile that his beloved Rāma was destined to court. Bharata’s ecstatic jubilation in seeing him enthroned on return from exile having confessed that he, by Rāma’s grace, could succeed in enhancing the prosperity and happiness of the kingdom bespeaks of his proverbial humility and marks the consummation of the fraternal tie.

On the other hand, the character of Lakṣmana unravels a different dimension of brotherhood. Unlike, Bharata, Lakṣmana appears
to be more rush, quick tempered and more pragmatic. He is celebrated for his dogged and unconditional devotion for Rāma. He would lay aside all considerations in safeguarding the interest of Rāma. He would not even feel any scruple to raise arms against Daśaratha for his supposed folly under infatuation and any one siding Bharata’s coronation at the cost of the righteous Rāma. He would not hesitate to vow vengeance against Bharata for his supposed sinister advance to Citrakūṭa. He tends to be blind to sense and reason in the event of the actual and possible stake to Rāma’s interest. Thus one comes across Lakṣmaṇa determinedly, following Rāma inspite of the latter’s advice for him to stay back so that he could look after the broken hearted Kausalyā and the mother Sumitrā and on latter occasion when he is asked to go back to Ayodhya, on the pretext that they might be suffering indifference and negligence by Bharata and Kaikeyī.

माता स्मलकारणाद् देवी सुमिष्ठा तुःैः खमाचरेत्।
अयोध्यायित एवं लं काले प्रविषा लक्ष्मण॥
शुद्रकर्मा हि कैलेन्द्रे देवानायमाचरेत्।
परिद्वादि धर्मज्ञ गर्ते मम मातम्॥ अय.क., 53/16-18

His love for Rāma outweighs and engulfs his love and obligation for others. Thus one finds Lakṣmaṇa in the role of guardian, procuring the provision for the comfort of Rāma and Sītā, accompanying them with solemn resolve to guard and protect with all price, however dear it be. The height of sacrifice and purity fills Guhaka with respect and admiration when the latter offers him a soft bed to lie down and the latter refuses to rest when Rāma and Sītā, used to the life of regal comforts sleep in utter discomfort and deprivation. From these one ought not conclude that Lakṣmaṇa’s tie with Rāma was merely sentimental. In safeguarding Rāma against all odds and hindrances, Lakṣmaṇa was
only protecting dharma, for to him Rāma was but the dharma incarnate.

Lakṣmana’s concern for his brothers interest makes him react with violence at Sugrīva’s utter apathy and supposed breach of loyalty who forgets his onerous obligations to Rāma. Lakṣmana wounds and rouses him from his voluptuous indulgence with words breathing venom and vengeance. Such movements of wrath born of agony, only, discloses the death and magnitude of his love and devotion.

Lakṣmana follows Rāma as a shadow, treating him as the father and Sītā as the mother, ever obedient and committed. It is only once that he fails in his enjoined duty. Sītā falls a prey to the sorcery of Mārica when the latter simulates Rāma in making the distress cry “Hā Sītā, Hā Lakṣmaṇa”. Presuming her husbands life to be at stake, she asks Lakṣmaṇa to run to his rescue. But finding Lakṣmaṇa adamantly committed to his brother’s words as he was in know of the crooked ways of the rākṣasas. She wounds him with scathing accusations ulterior motives and ultimately, with threats of suicide which overwhelm the pious innocence of Lakṣmaṇa and the latter leaves her to the inevitable.”Lakṣmaṇa, failing in his bounden duty’ does not speak of the imperfections of the brotherly devotion nor that his commitment was too tenuous, to withstand the sentimental unslaughters of Sītā. It, rather discloses the fraility, as such, of man, when pitted against the ‘Inevitable’.

The multifaceted expressions of Lakṣmaṇa’s character is discernible in the swift transition of his rules quite in keeping with the changing exigencies. One finds the rash and the ireful Lakṣmaṇa as a counselor in giving strength and solace to Rāma when he breaks down in the traumatic shock and agony at the dreadful thought that Sītā might have been devoured and killed by the rākṣasas. In the moments of harrowing grief, too overwhelming to put Rāma into veritable numbness,
Lakṣmaṇa rises to the occasion in vowing with his characteristic adamantine gesticulations of prowess, to destroy the whole universe together with gods and on the other hand, in admonishing Rāma to Shave off despondency, so unbecoming of his valour and sagacity and counsels him to summon, instead, all his might so that he could meet any eventuality on the way of finding Sītā. (Ar.K. 65/13-14).

Similarly, when Rāma is about to break down at the pining thoughts for Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa cautions him not to be under the sway of the emotional excesses so that he could rise to the exigencies, which in fact, awakens the latter to a state of equipoise. (Ar.K. 65/15-16).

Thus, one finds Lakṣmaṇa at times, haughty and revengeful needing to be pacified and reprimanded by Rāma and at times, composed, protective, counseling and even, admonishing Rāma. But remarkably, what runs in and through the apparent fluctuations in his state of mind, is his love and concern for Rāma. His concern and identification with Rāma is, in otherwards, his concern for and identification with righteousness. The uniqueness of the love is, duly, certified by Rāma, when the latter finding Lakṣmaṇa unconscious by the dreadful weapon of Rāvana, laments that the company of Lakṣmaṇa is even more enviable than the glory of sovereignty and the happiness in the company of Sītā.

Thus the reciprocity is total and absolute. Rāma appears to be the focal point or the nucleus around which the love and devotion of
Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna revolve. What renders their love so unqualified and sublime is not the fact that they were bound by the umbilical chord but obviously, the fact of it being broad based on dharma. The self-courted suffering and sacrifice is not for Rāma the brother but Rāma the righteous. It is against this that Bharata’s vile accusations of mother Kaikeyī, Lakṣmaṇa’s wrath against Daśaratha, suspicion of Bharata, his provocations and bellicosity are rendered significant and ennobling. Who is an alien? There is a sense in which all-being the children of the providence are bound to each other in the eternal bond of fraternity. But, when seen in the perspective of the social dynamics a uterine brother is not necessarily a kindred and the ‘supposed other’ is not necessarily alien. This is born out by the contrary examples. Sugrīva, in spite of his loyalty and devotion is expelled by the arrogant and the iry Vālī. Vibhiṣāṇa’s well meaning brotherly advice incurs him the humiliating expulsion. These bespeak of the ‘Evil’ repelling the righteous. Though thrown out by their own brothers Sugrīva and Vibhiṣāṇa find refuge in Rāma, ‘Good’ can co-exist with the ‘Good’, not with the ‘Evil’. So, only the righteous can be the kindred. It is also truistic that two evils can not co-exist. They destroy each other. When evil is pitted against good it invites it’s eventual ruination. Hence the rapport with the good, and the righteous is noble and enduring and is, verily, the “Brotherly Love”.

D) Mitradharma

Vālmīki did realise the value of friendship as a necessary institution for individual moral development and therefore he says, “pious friends look upon silver and gold and the elegant ornaments of pious friends as a common property. Whether rich or poor, happy or miserable, good or bad, a friend is a great refuge of his friend. Witnessing
such affection people can say, O sinless one, forsake wealth, comfort and even their native lands for the sake of their friend.24

Further Vālmiki says that in this world, "it is easy to contract friendship but very difficult to sustain it, for owing to the fickleness of our mind, a very slight cause brings about separation".25 This is very true of the seasonal friendship that we see these days. Friendship requires sacrifice, but in these days, too often friendship has as its basis utility or pleasure. Vālmīki says:

उपकारकर्मार्यं निःस्वार्थसंसारश्यामपूर्वक || Kīś.K 32-7

"Benefits make friends while injuries denote enemies" Vālmīki, like Aristotle, believes that there cannot be a friendship between two evil persons.

न रस्लेखमभिगच्छति तथानायेव सौहदम् || Kīś.K 8-21

Friendship does not stay long within an unworthy person. "And, as winter clouds do not rain, so is the friendship with an unworthy person. As the bees fly away after sucking honey so is a selfish friend. As an elephant after being bathed covers its body with dust so is the friendship with an unworthy person"26 Vālmīki is condemning the artificial association which is more for personal gain than for betterment of self. According to Vālmīki, "A friend is he who obliges afflicted soul whose fortune is at stake. (And) a kinsman is he who is able to render help to those who have deviated from the right course".27 This is what friendship demands. Whenever a friend is on the wrong track, it is our

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24. Kīś.K.7/8,9 see also Nicomacbean Ethics of Aristotle, Tr.Peters, p.304, Ed.1893
25. Y.K., 16/11
26. Y.K., 16/12-13
27. Y.K. 63-27
duty to set him right. Vālmīki totally condemned that idea of friendship which pronounces that a friend must only be concerned with friendship and not with the actions of a friend.

Thus, friendship is loving, friendship is self sacrifice, and lastly, Vālmīki says, friendship is imperishable wealth. “He who loseth friendship with a qualified friend loseth wealth”.

“अर्थोपन्द्र्मितजस्यनाशोगुणवत्तोमहान्म” Kiṣ.K., 33-47

He exhorts us that “friends and people following the right path should not be for saken. This is a great sin even Śakra would lose his luminosity” (Ay.K. 36/29). The Rā. acquaints one with the ideals of true friends. It introduces us to a novel dimension of friendship brought into focus through the characters of Rāma, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa. Vālmīki seeks to bring home the ideals of friendship, in and through the dialectics of the episodes and the conflict of emotions, expressed through the pronouncements of different characters.

The Rā. attested the ideal friendship to be based on the principles of righteousness irrespective of whether it is conducive or non-conducive to one’s interest. The observations of Rāma in granting refuge to Sugrīva goes to show that true friendship is not necessarily bilateral. Against this it is worth while to re-examine the commonly held views that Rāma’s friendship with Sugrīva was based on common interest. Rāma wanted Sugrīva to be instrumental for recovering Sītā and Sugrīva wanted him to be instrumental for regaining his wife and kingdom by killing Vālā. The Rāma-Sugrīva accord (at least from the point of view of the former) was prompted by considerations of the righteous principle that one seeking help at the time of danger or need, has to be attended to, at all costs.
The ideal tie between Rāma and Sugrīva, Rāma and Vibhīśaṇa, certifies that true friendship frustrates the barriers of clime and race. This, also, lends scriptural sanction to the cultural synthesis of the Aryan and the Non-Aryan. Adjudged against this, the view that the Rā. advocates the Aryan supremacy and contains blasphemy against the Non-Aryans is groundless and unfair. The conduct of Sugrīva comes as a total contradiction of his earlier protestations of friendly ideals. “A friend, rich or poor, happy or unhappy, faulty or faultless is the highest refuge and one ought to sacrifice wealth, happiness and even one’s life on account of the love for the friend.

His inability to be true to his resolve, in total disregard of the friendly ideals, of which he is so explicitly aware, makes him the object of the wrath of Rāma and fury of Lakṣmaṇa. But, it is worth noting that Rāma’s reproof does not make Sugrīva less ideal as a friend. He falls back into obliviousness not because of his lack of concern or warmth for Rāma nor because of his positive disregard for Rāma after the fruition of his desires but because of his proneness to sensuous indulgence, on account of the limitations, native to his monkeyish existence. When Hanumāna reminds him of his gross violation of the friendly norms in not discharging his onerous obligations for the noble and righteous Rāma;

मित्रार्थभिभिन्नता यथावत्त् कङ्गुमहति
संतप्तः सर्वकर्माणि मित्रार्थे यो न वर्तति।
सम्भ्रामः विक्वतोत्साहः सोजनेनबक्ष्यते।
यो हि कालव्यतिते मित्रक्षणेऽथ वर्तति।
स कृत्त्वा महतोद्ययात्रि मित्रार्थेन युज्यते।

Ⅱ Kiś. K. 29-12,13,14
He is roused from the slumberous indulgence and gives stringent commands to the subordinates to move heaven and earth to find Vaidehi, the non fulfillment of which would mean their death.

उध्रे मातास्त्र वस्त्राय मस्तन् वण्यो भवेत्रम्गा ।
सिंहराय: संविदाइवधामन्य च मैथिलीम् ॥ Kiṣ.K. 40/70

When informed of Lakṣmaṇa’s rage and fuming, Sugrīva appears to be penitent of his guilt in not fulfilling his obligations to Rāma for his sheer fickleness of mind. It is easy to make friendship but difficult to sustain it.

सर्वत्रा सुकरं मित्रं दुःखरं प्रतिपत्तान्य।
अनित्यवातं तु चित्तान्य प्रीतिलपेवपि भिखले ॥ Kiṣ.K. 32/7

He is also apologetic before Lakṣmaṇa for his immoral transgression of faith and love, against Rāma, who has been the sole cause of his fortune and happiness.

यदि किंचिदतिक्रान्ता विख्यातात् प्रणवेण वा ।
प्रेणस्य क्रिष्णस्य मे न कस्थििप्रांत्राध्यत्ति ॥ Kiṣ.K.-36/7

He renews the vow to put his mite in carrying out the wishes of Rāma, though the (Rāma) is able to achieve his objective unaided.

सीतात् प्राप्त्यति धर्मांत्य व्यवस्थति च रावणम्।
सहायमात्रायेऽगि राज्यव: स्वेन तेजसः।
सहायकृतं किं तस्य चेत सान महादुमा:।
गिरिरथ मस्तुथा चैव बायेनं वारिता ॥ Kiṣ.K.-36/7-8

He prostrates himself at Rāma’s feet beseeching his forgiveness. All these together bring into surface the innocence, humility and mobility in Sugrīva, overshadowing his limitations as a vānara for
his failure to rise up to the expectations of men. Sugrīva’s emphatic concern for Rāma is discernible from the way he counsels Rāma when the latter gives way to overpowering lamentations at the sight of the ornaments of Sītā. He seeks to win over the grief with the well meaning admonitions that such despair is not becoming of him who is so resolute, humble and noble hearted, more so, when he being (Sugrīva) to inferior as a vānara withstands the pangs of separation from his wife.

Painfully aware of his limitations and lest it may be counted as sheer audacity on his part to counsel Rāma, he affirms that such words are prompted by his concern for Rāma’s welfare, not out of the desire to instruct him.

This squarely, points to his concern and humility. The two episodes bordering on the Rāma-Sugrīva and Rāma-Vibhīṣaṇa alliance points to the distinct polarization of good and the evil. Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa represent goodness and virtue, pitted against the evil represented by Vālī and Rāvaṇa. Rāma is seen to act in collusion with the righteous forces to eradicate the evils. Restoration of the good by destruction of the evil is the dharma. Any means to that end is also righteous. So the killing of Vālī was not only appropriate but also obligatory for Rāma as a kṣatriya. And in killing Vālī, Rāma, also fulfills his sacred resolve to Sugrīva, which is again in keeping with dharma.
Who is a friend and who is an enemy? Good and evil are mutually incompatible. They repel each other. The persuasive brotherly advice in urging Rāvana to give back Maithilī and to restrain from encounter with Rāma, incurs Vibhīṣaṇa, the wrath and humiliation from Rāvana. He is accused of envy, and treason. Realising the imminent doom of Rāvana along with the rākṣasa race, Vibhīṣaṇa seeks refuge in the righteous Rāma. The absolute surrender of Vibhīṣaṇa which marks the beginning of the momentous rapport between the two is suggestive of the fact that the good has natural affinity with the good and that it is enduring.

भविष्यति हि मे राज्यं जीवितं च सुखानि च || Y.K. 19-5

This is brought into relief in the dialogue between Indrajit and Vibhisana, the former accusing the latter of ingratitude for forsaking the kith and kin and seeking refuge and collaborating with the enemy. “Company with own men, (who are) bereft of merits is preferable to the friendship with the alien even if they are virtuous", observes Indrajit.

गुणवन् वा प्रजन: स्वजनो निगुणोधिमि वा ।
निगुणं: स्वजन: श्रेयायन्र: परं पर एव स: || Y.K. 87/15

Vibhīṣaṇa’s retort proves the inappropriateness of the above accusations in showing the distorted view of morality pleaded for by Indrajit. Vibhīṣaṇa disowns his rākṣasa lineage in asserting that though born in the rākṣasa race, he imbibes the higher virtues, by virtue of which he parts company from his brother, who being arrogant and wrathful is given to unrighteousness and evils, like hostility wealth, reduction of other’s wife and ruination of his own men.

गुणो य: प्रथमो नूः तने शीलमाराक्षसम्
न मे दार्शनाः ह चाध्यमेण वे सर्वे ।
अभिमानरङ्ग रोषर्च वैतन्त्व प्रतिकूलता ||
The dialogue is indicative of the conflict between two orders of morality, Indrajit voices the common morality that is temporarily expedient but ultimately indefensible and unrewarding. The death of Indrajit and Rāvana and the ruination of the rākṣasa once bear testimony to the fact that truth or morality based on righteousness or dharma ultimately prevails. (satyameva jayate). Rāma’s victory, the restoration of Sugrīva and coronation of Vibhisana testify that the true friendship is possible only among the righteous and that the friendship based on dharma is true, and abiding. The Rā. envisages and enunciates friendship’ in terms of dharma. Genuine friendship does not aim at personal or selfish gains but upholds and furthers the cause of dharma. It is already argue out through the course of different chapters that dharma is one of the key concepts in the Rā. and all other concepts hover round it. The concept of friendship is peripheral and has to be understood in the light of dharma alone.

E) Sevakadharma

In the Rā., Hanumāna, Guhaka, Śabarī and Jatāyu are the examplars of the dāsyabhāva or the sevakadharma. The word 'sevaka' is derived from the root 'seva' which means 'to serve'. There is no english equivalent of the word 'seva'. It can be understood as the selfless, unconditional service for the cause of righteousness or dharma. Hence, it would not be appropriate to translate 'seva' as service', 'sevaka' as 'servant' and 'sevita' as the master'. As a matter of fact, the master-servant relationship is alien to the spirit of the Rā. Rāma is not the master nor Hanumāna the servant. The relation, there in, transcends the considerations of selfish interest or mutuality. The service and the self-
courted suffering of Hanumāna is not for any ulterior gain but is actuated by the spontaneous and unqualified love and devotion for the righteous Rāma. Hanumāna's devotion for Rāma is born, out of his respect for righteousness. This is reflected in his advice to Sugrīva when he reminds the latter of the breach of loyalty to Rāma. Promise has to be kept. dharma has to be upheld. To violate the promise is to militate against dharma.

राज्यं प्राप्तं वराहोऽवृत्तं कौली श्रीभिवर्धिता।
मित्यादि तं गंधर्वदं भवानं कुतुर्महिति॥ Kiṣ.K., 29/9

Though Hanumāna is sanguine of his prowess, he is fond to be remembering Rāma in invoking his blessings and grace before his proverbial feat of crossing the oceans.

स वेनचानं वेण समाहिताम्य हरिप्रवीरं परवीरहस्ताः।
मनं समाधाय महातुभावो जगाम लक्ष्मणं मनसा मनस्वी॥ Kiṣ.K., 67/49

This goes to indicate that valour or the physical might coupled with the divine grace can work wonders in fulfilling ones mission. He is unmindful and unconcerned of the imminent dangers, hazards and risks. Finding his life to be at stake in his encounter with Surasā, the mother of the Nāgas, he implores her to be spared for the time being so that he could make himself available for her food after the completion of his mission.

तस्याः सक्तां दुषोऽहं गण्ये रामाध्यानोत।
कुतुर्महितस्मि रामस्य जाहि विभवासिनि॥
अथवा मैथिलीं दृष्टा रामं चाक्षुषकारिणं।
आगामिण्यामि ते वक्तं सत्यं प्रतिष्ठाणोमि ते॥ S.K., 1/154-155

This shows that Hanumāna's concern for Rāma is uppermost
in Hanumāna and outweighs all other considerations. The service rendered not a means to further personal ends but prompted by the desire to be a sacrifice at the altar of dharma. His torture and humiliation in the court of Rāvana are eloquent testimonies of his endurance for the cause of dharma. Instead of loosing spirit, he continues his hectic search for Vaidehī and remains steadfast to the mission all through. He conjures of frightful plights on the event of Sītā, not being found. If Sītā is not traceable and rescued it might lead to the utter despair and disappointment to Rāma causing his ruination, in the process leading further to the death of the widowed mothers in Ayodhya, Sugrīva, Rūmā, Tārā, Aṅgada and eventually the entire vānara race. Despair ridden Hanumāna, decides, then to court death by entering into fire and in the height of fury born out of utter disappointment he thinks of killing Rāvana.

The exploits of Hanumāna should not be treated as a mere help towards Rāma in his moments of distress but his sincerest commitment and identification with the latter’s plight. Though he possesses the unmatched valour, there is no indication any where in the text of his
arrogance born out of his physical prowess. Rather, on every juncture, he remembers Rāma, offers prayers before initiating anything momentous and consequential.

Adventures are embarked upon, daring feats are accomplished by Hanumāna not to parade his courage and valour but to rescue Sitā and thereby to safeguard dharma.

It has already been pointed out that a sevaka is not a servant or a subordinate of the master. The considerations of personal interest or utility, gain or loss, do not simply enter into the relationship between the lord and the sevaka. It is the preservation, protection or safeguarding of dharma that guide and nurture the relationship and render it eduring. The Rā. lays emphasis on the concept of ‘one’s station and duty’ in life. It provides the convincing answer as to ‘what one should do? ‘One’s duty is determined by the station one occupies in the society. One is to discharge one’s duties with non-compromising devotion and commitment irrespective of any consideration whatever. No other consideration except that of righteousness or dharma should determine and regulate one’s duties in life. It will not be out of place to emphasize in this connection that the Rā. advocates the supremacy of Varnāśrama dharma. A close look at the different characters portrayed in the epic is corroborative of this. The king, the father, the son, the wife discharge their respective duties and obligations in accordance with the tenets of dharma. Seen in this perspective, there is no concept of master and servant, superior and inferior in the Rā. Hanumāna is no less important
than Rāma, Lakṣmana and Sītā. He may be a vānara but he attains immortality by discharging his duties in accordance with dharma.

Guhaka is another sevaka. On his first encounter to Rāma he not only welcomes him with lavish hospitality but offers him his kingdom with all his subjects. He request Rāma to consider his kingdom as Ayodhyā and his subjects, as his own subjects.

What is it indicative of? Why does Guhaka unconditionally surrender his subjects and kingdom to Rāma, relatively unknown? What could be the answer? Is it out of any consideration for any ulterior gain? The answer is an emphatic ‘no.’ Rāma, the avatāra of Viṣṇu is the dharma incarnate. So the rule of Guhaka kingdom by Rāma is the rule of righteousness. Dharma is the keystone in the Rā. This is reflected subsequently in Guhaka’s utmost concern for the trio when he offers himself to guard Rāma and Sītā asking Lakṣmana to rest on the soft bed. His suspicion of Bharata is corroborative of his protective concern for Rāma’s safety and well being and his deep sense of identification.

Guhaka is a Niṣāda king. Niṣādas are the hills men, the forest dwellers. Vālmīki in portraying the character of Guhaka has sought to encompass even the forest dwellers within the orbit of varnāśrama
dharma. It is left to the historians to ascertain if as a matter of fact the hills men and the forest inhabitants were also covered by varnāśrama dharma. But for Vālmīki, dharma knows no limitation of caste, community and tribe. ‘Man’ according to him, is a value concept. Man’s worth is determined to the extent he pursues dharma. It might have been a fact that the untouchables and the tribals were looked down upon. But the Ra. gives a scriptural sanction to the effect that everybody has the right to live and lead life in accordance with dharma. Scripturally, no one is a brahmin or a non-brahmin by birth or heredity. It is the action that makes a man noble or ignoble. The discriminations are but symptomatic of degeneration and decadence of the social ethos.

Śabarī is another important character. She has been portrayed as a sevikā. The name suggests that she is a forest dweller; undergoing penance in the hermitage of Mataṅga, the sage. What does it speak of? Why does a woman forest dweller choose the path of austerity, penance and renunciation? One may opine that these values are prerogative or monopoly of the upper class. The episode tells us that Śabarī had been waiting wistfully for the arrival of Rāma. She was in knowing of Rāma’s divinity from different sages and seers. On meeting Rāma, she feeds him with tender fruits culled from the forest and Rāma takes it with zest and flavour. Śabarī feels blessed. All her life’s endeavours and penance find fruition at the sight of the Lord.

अखे मे सफलं तांस्वर्गस्वैव भविष्यति ।
त्वति देवतारे राम पुजिते पुर्यत्वभ ॥
तवाहं चक्षुषा सौम्य पूला सीम्येन मानद ।
गमिष्याम्यश्वयं ह्योकावस्त्रूशप्रसादादीर्दिम ॥ Ar.K., 74/12-13

She lights the pyre, consigns herself into it and attains the eternal abode. The pristine simplicity of Śabarī expressed in her
wholehearted love and devotion for Rāma earns her the final redemption. The act of feeding is not merely the physical act of giving food to one who is in need of it. It is accompanied by the consuming concern, the absolute commitment, devotion and surrender to Rāma, the righteous. There are various ways of realising Godhood. Śabarī realises it through seeing and serving Rāma. Jatāyu, the vulture king, a sevaka of first water lays down his life in frantic efforts to protect Sītā from the iron clutches of Rāvaṇa; the rākṣasa. What does the episode signify? He had hardly had any firsthand acquaintance with Rāma. Even then he comes forward to make the dearest sacrifice for the cause of righteousness. This is reflected in his accusation of Rāvaṇa.

कर्ष राजा स्थितो धर्मं पदार्थं प्रामुश्रेत् ॥
रक्षणीयं विदशेषणं राजदार्यं महाबलं ।
राजा धर्मश्च कामश्च इव्याणां चोतमो निधि: ॥
धर्मं शुभं वा पापं वा राजमूलं प्रकर्ति ॥ Ay.K., 50/6-9

This shows that though a bird, the consideration of propriety and righteousness are uppermost in his mind. Rāma breaks down at the sight of his pitiable plight and acknowledges his supreme sacrifice. Jatāyu is put to the flames by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and repairs to the celestial abode. It will not be redundant to reiterate in this connection that Vālmiki seeks to enunciate the supremacy of dharma in all spheres. dharma embraces within its compass not only the humans but also all the living species. The service and sacrifice for dharma are self-rewarding, it secures to one the summum bonum.

I.13 Rāmakathā in world literature

V.R. is believed to be the primary source of Rāmakathā, although several scholars have sought to trace the original source of
Rāmakathā and the prototypes of its main characters in the Vedic literature. The Rā. by the sage Chyavana written prior to Vālmiki’s Rā., has been discussed in Buddhacarita by Aśvaghoṣa. It can also be maintained that many ākhyānas dealing with Rāmakathā were prevalent before V.R. However, traditionally, Vālmiki is accepted as ādikavi. Rāmakathā is nattated at several places in the Mbh as well, in which the most elaborate is rāmopākhyāna in 704 verses. Even though Rāmakathā is included mainly in Viṣṇupurāṇa, Vāyupurāṇa, Bhāgavatapurāṇa and Kūrmapurāṇa apart from Varāha, Agni, Vāmana, Brahmā, Garuḍa, Skanda, Padma, Brahmavaivarta and other purāṇas, the character of Rāma has not been fully developed. Rāma of Vālmiki’s Rā. is a fully developed human being and not a divine incarnation. Rāma of Ādhyātma Rā. and Bhāgavata Rā. is installed as a household deity. Sahasrāgīti of Rāmānujācārya and Rāmārcanapaddhati established Rāmahākti as a particular sect. Abundant literature has been written in Sanskrit in pursuance of the tradition of Rāmahākti. Yogavāśiṣṭha Rā., Ādhyātma Rā., Adbhuta Rā., Ānanda Rā., Bhūsundi Rā. Mahārāmāyaṇa, Hanumantasaṁhitā, Rāmagītagovinda are the important sacred treatises based on Rāmakathā and they can be well discussed.

Bṛhadhārmapurāṇa describes the Rā. as the original source of history, purāṇas etc. The author of Prasannarāghava has raised a question in his introduction: kathāṁ punarapi kavayaḥ sarve rāmacandraṁ eva varṇayanti “Why do all the poets go on describing only Rāmacandra again?” The narrator answers this question by saying “The fault is not with poets. It is because of all the virtues that have been epitomized only in Rāma, and hence, the tree in the form of poetic diction can never be attain significance without the fruit in the form of adulation of Rāma.
Tulsīdas says:

\[
\text{sad jānat prabhu prabhutā soyī} \\
\text{tadapi kahe binu rahā na koyī} //
\]

All know about the great power of the Lord (Rāma) yet none can help talking about it. Lord Rāma, who is eternally praised by Sarasvatī, Seṣa, Śīva, Brahmā, Śastras, Vedas and Purāṇas by referring to him as neti-neti. Yet no one can help narrating the story of his greatness. In the words of Maithiliśaraṇa Gupta.

\[
\text{raṃa turīhārā vṛttā svayatn hi kāvyā hai} \\
koyī kavi ban jāy sahaj sarībhāvyā hai //
\]

The noble character of Rāma has remained a source of inspiration not only for religious writing but also for belle letters. Apart from RV of Kālidāsa the abundant Sanskrit poetic literature includes Rāmacarita by Abhinanda, Rā-maṇjarī by Kṣemendra, Udārarāghava by Sāktyamalla, Raghunāthacarita by Bāṇabhaṭṭa which deserve to be mentioned. The Uttararāmacarita by Bhavabhūti, Kundamāla by Dinnāga are based mainly on the story contained in the Uttarakāṇḍa. Among other works can be mentioned Anargharāghava by Murāri, Bālārāmāyaṇa by Rājaśekhara, Prasannarāghava by Jayadeva, Udattarāghava by Anaṅghaharṣa Māṭṛāja and Hanumānṭaka by an anonymous poet. Rāmakathā has an important place not only in Vaiṣṇava literature, but in Jaina and Buddhist literature as well. In Buddhist Rāmakathā, Daśaratha Jātaka, the Buddha says in conclusion: “At that time, king Siddhodana was king Daśaratha, Mahāmāya was Rāma’s mother, Yaśodhārā was Sītā, Ānanda was Bharata and I was Rāma Pandit. Two other Buddhist Rāmakathā, Anāmaka Jātaka and Daśaratha Kathānārin are available in Chinese translations. In the puranic literature, both Rāma and Buddha are the incarnations of Viṣṇu. In Buddhist
literature, Rāma is the previous incarnation of the Buddha.

In Jaina literature, Rāma, Laksmana and Rāvana are among the *trīṣaṭṭhi* great Jainas. Among the Jaina Rāmakathā, Vimalasuri’s “Pauma cariu” (*Padmacarita*) is the most well-known. This poetical composition was originally written in Prākrit and was later translated into Sanskrit as *Padmapurāṇa* by ācārya Jinasena. Another form of the Jaina Rāmakathā can be found in *Uttarapurāṇa* written by Guṇabhadra. Both these Rāmakathās, though different, are in accordance with the tenets of Jainaism and Buddhism. In both, Rāma attains salvation after being initiaed to the order. Based on these *kathās*, several Jaina Rāmakāvyas were composed in *apabhramaśa* as well. Among them, Padmacarita by Svayambhu and Mahapurāṇa by Puspadanta are particularly important.

Among the modern Indian languages, Punjabi is the only language in which no significant Rā. has been written. One reason may be that during the particular period of Rāmabhakti, the Sikh Gurus and the majority of poets of Punjab wrote their works only in Hindi. Among the modern Indian languages, Kamba Rā. in Tamil, written in the 10th century, is the most ancient. Among other Rāmakathās, Tiruppukal by an unknown poet deserves a special mention. In Telugu, there are nearly 200 works related to Rāmakathā, among which the most important and the earliest is Dwipada Rā. (12th Century) by Gauṇ Buddha Reddy. The earliest Malayalam poetical work is Rāmacaritam (12th century) written by Cīrāman. Among other works, the most famous are Kaṇṇasaśa Rā. (14th century) by Kaṇṇasaśa Panicker, Rā. *Campū* (15th century) by Punam Nambūdirī Ādhyātma Rā. (16th century) by Tuṅcattu Ezuttacchan, Kīragīta (17th century), Kerala Verma Rā. by Raja Kerala Verma. In Kannada, between the 10th and 14th centuries, innumerable
Rāma-kāvyaṇas were written by the poets who rose from the common ranks. Narahari, who belonged to the Tokhe village, wrote the Tokhe Rā. (16th century) in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Like Telugu, Kannada literature is also very rich in poetical works dealing with Rāmakathā.

The earliest Assamese poetical work, Saptakāṇḍa Rā. by Mādhava Kandali, is believed to have been written in the 14th century. Its U.K has been written by Shankara Deva and adikāṇḍa by his disciple Mādhava Deva. Among other Assamese Rāmakāvya, Gīti Rā. (16th century) by Durgavar is quite well-known, Kṛttibāṣa Rā. (15th century) written in Bengli by Kṛttibāṣa is as important as Rāmacaritamānas by Tulsīdās. Dāṇḍī Rā. (latter half, 15th century) in Oriya, written by Balaramadasa is the best known work. The most important works in Marathi are Bhāvārtha Rā. (17th century) by Eknātha and Rāmavijaya (18th century) by Śrīdhar. In Gujarati, in spite of the greater importance given to Kṛṣṇalīlā a large number of ākhyāṇas devoted to Rāma are available. Girdhardāsa Rā. (18th century) and Narmad’s Rā. (19th century) are the important works. Kāśmīrī Rā. (latter half 18th century) was written by Diwakara Pravarabhatṭa Rāmalabhāyā Ānand Dilsād’s Rā. (18th century) was written in Punjabi.

This widespread impact of Rāmakathā was not confined to India. The modern version of Budhist Jātaka tales is the Pāli translation of a fifth century Singhalese work. Anāmakaṁ Jātakaraṁ and Daśaratha Kathānāraṁ were rendered into Chinese in the third and the fifth centuries respectively. Innumerable manuscripts related to Rāmakathā are available in the Tibetan and Khotanese (Eastern Turkey) languages. These were said to be of the eighth and the ninth centuries. We are familiar with the widespread influence of Rāmakathā in South-East Asia. The earliest Indonesian Rā. Kakawin, by Yegeśvara, is believed to be an 18th century
work. It has also been translated into Dutch. Among *Rāmakathās* of Java, Carit *Rā*. (Kāvi Jānakī) and Saratarāmā are worth mentioning. Prambanan (Param Vanan) in central Java has a Śiva temple (9th century), and on its walls the incidents from *Rā*. have been engraved. *Rā*. was widely known in the ancient Champa state in Indo-China. There is a statue of Vālmīki in a 7th century temple there. In one of the edicts in that temple, Vālmīki has been described as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. According to the 18th century version of *Rā.*, Rāvaṇa’s domain was south of Annām and Daśaratha’s kingdom was in north Annām. In that *Rā.* Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā after a military attack on Daśaratha’s kingdom. In the world-famous sprawling temple at Angkor Wat, the ancient capital of modern Cambodia (Khmer), there are number of stone-engravings pertaining to *Rāmakathā*, believed to be of 11th-12th centuries. The Khmer *Rā.* is called “Re ām ker” (Rāmakirti). The ancient capital of Siam (Thailand) was called Ayutthaya (Ayodhya). The ruler of that place is called Rama even today. The Siamese *Rā.*, “Rāmmakītān” has been translated into English as Rāmakīrti. The Rāma Jātaka was written in the 16th century in the Lao language. An Indian scholar, Dr. Sachchidanannd Sahay has made a through study of the Lao *Rā.* From Siam, Rāmakathā reached Burma in the 18th century. Around 1800, U Ta wrote the Burmese *Rā.*, Rāmājaṇa plays related to Rāmakathā (yām dev) have always been very popular in Burma.

In Akbar’s time, Mullah Abdul Qadir Bedayuni translated *Rā.* into Persian in verse at the emperor’s behest. Even in Jāhāngīr’s time, there were two Persian translations of *Rā.*, one by Girdharadas and the other by Mullah Sadulah Masih Panipati. Mullah Panipati had learnt Sanskrit, spending 12 years in Kāsī. His Persian translation was published in 1899 by the Nawal Kishore Press. Chandraman Bedil wrote the Persian *Rā.* entitled Nargisistan, butlished in 1875 by the Nawal
Kishore Press. In 1884, Misir Ramadas Qabil’s Persian translation, Raā, was published by the Madho Press. Munshi Jagan Kishore Hasan, the author of Nairange Hasan or Bahir Ajudhya (1867) in his brief life of 21 years, has described the places associated with Rāma in a very touching manner, in his aforesaid works. Makkhanlal Jaffer wrote Ramaśvamedha in the māsnavi style which was published in 1872 in Lucknow. This sage the substance of Ramakatha in 250 shers. Rai Mahadev Wali wrote Rā. Manjūrīn in the kaseeda styly. It was published in 1915. There is a manuscript of a persian Rā. in the Library of the India office in London, whose author is in the Maulana Azad Library at Aligrah, its author too is unknown. All these works are written in verse. Considerable literature related to Rāmakathā is available in Persian prose too. Mullah Abdul Qadir Badauni has translated the complete Rā. in Persian prose and the manuscript is well-preserved. Devidas Kayasth has translated Rāmacaritamānas of Tulsīdās fully in prose. Amersingh’s Persian Rā. in prose, Amar Prakāsh was done by Professor Abdul Badood Azhar Dehalvi and was published in 1972 by ‘Buniyade Farhange Iran’. In Prof. Azhar’s view, the original source of Rāmakathā lies in the central Asian legend “Vis o Rāmani”. The Aryans had brought the tale with them to India. This tale has also similarities with the Buddhist, Jaina and South Asian Rāmakathās. That is exactly why the references about the Rā. characters have been found even before Vālmīki, who, with poetic imagination, adopted popular ākhyāṇa to suit the local social conditions and turned it into an immortal epic.

With the European races coming into contact with the Asian countries, the elements of Rāmakathā entered the narratives of many European travelers and missionaries. However, these accounts have no significance in the European languages. In 1609, Libro dā Saitā was written by a missionary called J. Phinicio. In 1651, a Dutch priest A.
Rosario’s, Rāmakathā Open Doru was published. Ofgodarai der os Indische Hydenen by P Baldeus was published in 1672, which contains the story up to Rāma’s ascent to heaven. Dr. Carles wrote the Rā. in Portugese which he also translated into Dutch. Rāmakathā has been included in several accounts in various European languages, whose list is available in the Rāmakathā of Camil Bulcke.

The Vr is available in many English translations. In the past few decennium, many English translations of Tulsi’s Rāmacaritamānas have been done. The earliest English translation is probably by F.S.Growse which appeared in 1880 under the title The Rā. of Tulasidās. This translation is in prose. In 1952, W. Dagnal P. Hill’s prose translation The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rāma was published by the Oxford University Press. Raymond Alacin translated Kavitāvali and Vinaya Patrika under the titles Kavitavali and The Petition to Rāma and were published in 1934 and 1966 respectively. The Jaico publishing house published from Bombay in 1972 S.P. Bahadur’s translation The Ra. of Tulasidas which is partly prose and partly in verse. A.G. Atkinson’s translation of Rāmacaritamānas, published by the Hindustan Times in 1954, can be said to be the most significant translation. It is a translation in verse and, as far as possible, the style of the original Rāmacaritamānas has been maintained. Like in the original, in the translation too, the metres are changed. This translation is in three parts and is the result of 35 years of hard work, by the translation.

It is not possible to think of Hindi literature without Rāmacaritamānas. Before Tulsidās, Rāmaākhyānas of Bhupati (14th century) and Bhagavatidas (15th century) are available. Prithviraj Raso of Candbardai also contains the narration of Rāmakathā. Rā. of Visnudas is a work written 1442, in which chaupais, dohās metres and sloka styles
have been used. It was published in 1872 by the Sagar University. *Rāmacaritamānas* of Tulsīdās has greatly contributed to the spread of Rāma-bhakti in North India. Apart from *Rāmacaritamānas*, Tulsīdās depicted various incidents of *Rāmakathā* in his works like Kavitavālī, Dohāvalī, Gītāvalī, Jānakī Maṅgalramalalānahačchu, Baravai *Rā*. written in almost all the the styles in vogue at the time. Even though no other poet after Tulsīdās has been able to attain the popularity he has enjoyed, an uninterrupted current of *Rāmakathā* literature has run through in Hindi till today. There is a long list of poets like Swami Agrādās (Dhyānmanaṅjarī), Nabhdās (Aṣṭayām) Haridayaram (Hanumannāṭaka) Prāṇchand Chauhan (Rā. Mahānāṭaka, Māndās (Rāmacaritra), Mohandās Mishra (Ramāsvāmedhā), Sahajrām (RV Dipaka), Jānki Prasād (Rāmarasāyana), Babā Rāmcharandas (Amar Rā.), Baba Raghunathadas (Viśrām Sāgar), Maharaja Raghuraj Simh (Rāma Swayārīnvara, Ramaṣṭayām etc) Sambhunatha (Kuṣāramvilās) who have kept up the trend of *Rāmakathā* unnterrupted till the 20th century. After Tulsi’s *Rāmacaritamānas*, another significant work depicting *Rāmakathā* is Ramacandrikā by Keshavdas, written in the style prevalent in the past medieval period. In 1858, Sant Dharamdas wrote Avadhā Vilās in Avadhi language, following the *dohā-chaupai* style of *Rāmacaritamānas*. It is a work giving detailed description of the social conventions and customs, along with the rites and rituals from the time of Rāma’s birth to his marriage. It is mellifluous devotional poetic composition dominated by śṛṅgāra sentiment. The original text has been written in the Persian script.

In the first half of the 20th century, Ayodhya Singh Upadhyay wrote Vaidehi Vanavāś, Maithiliśaran, Gupt wrote Pancavati and Saket and Nirāla wrote Rāma ki Sakti-Puja and thereby, carried the *Rāmakathā* tradition up to khari boli which is the recognized form of Hindi today.
Saket is a significant work of the modern times in which, in the background of Rāma’s exile to forest, his return to Ayodhya has been narrated in a natural, fluent and captivating style. As a devotional poetic work, Radhesyam Rā of Radheshyam, the Kathāvācaka, has been fairly popular in North India. In the seventies, Narendra Kohli wrote a quartet in the form of four novels, Dīkṣā Avsar, Saṅgharṣ ki or, and Yuddha, (two parts), and thereby gave a new dimension to Rāmakathā in prose. In Narendra Kholi’s novels, the historical and mythological characters of Rā are reborn as the main characters belonging to the present age. Discarding the elements of miracles, Narendra Kohli has given a lively and thought-provoking analysis of the conflict between the local and world power.

The uttarsāket of Sohanlal Ramarang is the latest epic in the tradition of Rāmakāvya. Based on the U.K. of Rā, it is an epic of 1200 pages written in two parts and the bhavana in which he has narrated in varied poetic dictions the story of Rāma after his coronation. The story of Rāmacaritamānas ends and concludes with Rāma’s great departure. The poet has strung together various stands of the story. “Meghdoot” and “padavali” can be called the significant parts of uttarsāket for which the poet was probably inspired by Kālidāsa and Maithilīśaran Gupt. The entry of Lava-Kuśa on the occasion of Rāma’s rajasuya yajna is the most touching and effective portion in uttarsāket.

From ādikavi Vālmīki to Rāmrang, innumerable poets and thinkers in every age have sung Rāmakathā in the light of their own feelings and aptitudes. Rāma belongs to every place where Rāmakathā has reached. And these too is Rāma’s Ayodhya, as also all the characters included in Rāmakathā an the spots where they indulged in all their acts. Rāma is the concrete embodiment of the concept of Universal Man. He
is an incarnation as well as human being of highest virtues. Instead of being a special possession of any particular country, *Rāmakathā* is an invaluable cultural heritage of the whole world.

I.14 The relevance of *Rā*. in modern life

Epics reflect the culture and the way of life of the country where they originate. They are aptly described as the ‘Measuring Roads’ of its culture. The *Rā*. and the *Mbh.* are the two characteristic epics of India. Though they primarily tell the stories of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the chief incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, they hold a mirror to the everlasting norms of *dharma* and ethical values. That is why they became university relevant and venerable all over the world. *Rā*. the immortal epic, has greater relevance for the society. Rāma, by his righteous behaviour, became a ‘model’ and was presumed as an ‘embodiment of dharma’. He also proved how a ‘mortal’ could be worshiped as ‘deity’ (immortal), through his benevolent and pious behaviour. The story of Rama was described by Vālmīki in his *ādikāvya Rā*. He described the temperaments and attitudes of different human beings, animals, five-elements and also in-human rākṣasas. He also narrated the results of good and bad actions in the *Rā*. The characters described in the *Rā*. can be identified with the attitudes, similar to those human beings which we come across in our routine life at all times and at all places. They will remain as ‘models’ for the future generations.

The attachment between wife and husband, the affection between father and son, the amicability between brothers, relationship between master and servant, cordiality among friends and other human relationships and responsibilities are all illustrated in the *Rā*. To be concerned to all at all times, to prevent unhappy events (*sivetara kṣtaye*) to provide utmost enjoyment-are some of the main features of a great
kāvyā and Ra. contains all those traits. The ‘victory of dhārama over adharma’ is the main theme of Ra. Rāma, even though lost his kingdom, was supported not only by devatas, but also five-elements, animals, birds etc., as he had chosen the path of dhārma Rāvaṇa, living in a strong fort-Lānkā, surrounded by the sea on all sides, and also having the support of his son-Indrajit, mountain-bodied brother Kumbhakarṇa, and other great warriors, was killed by Rāma, as he choose the path of adharma. He was even deserted by his brother Vibhīṣaṇa. We find incidents in Ra. which are applicable in our day to day life.

Vālī and Sugrīva represent those brothers who are prepared even to kill their own brothers for the sake of woman, wealth and so on. Whereas Rāma and his brothers represent those brothers who sacrifice their wealth for the love in between them. They do not care for their separation with their wives, mothers and other relations. Vālī and Rāvaṇa represent those husbands who give a deaf ear to the good words of their wives for which they face bad results in their future life. Kaikeyī represents those wives who do not mind ever the death of their husbands for the sake of their children and wealth. Whereas Kausalyā and Sumitrā represent those women who for looking after their husbands and keep up their promises, bear the separation of their children. Daśaratha represent those fathers who bear the painful separation of their dear children to keep up their promises and even prepare to die for the purpose. On the other hand Rāma represents those sons who smilingly sacrifice their royal comforts and wealth to help their fathers to keep up their promises and commitments. Lakṣmaṇa represents those rare brother in the society, who consider their elder brothers, next to their fathers and do not hesitate even to part with wealth and bear the separation with their life-partners for the sake of brothers. (jyeṣṭha bhrāto pitṛ samāna).
Sumitrā represents those stepmothers who permit their sons to follow their step-sons even to forest; unmindful of all their discomforts. It is very rare to find such women in the society. Sumitrā instructs Laksmana:

"रामं दशारथ विद्विद्मा विद्विद्मा जनकालम्भाम्।
अयोध्यामर्गी विद्विद्मा गच्छ तात यथासुखम्॥ अय.क. 40/9

Sītā represents those pativratās of India who do not relish the heavenly happiness without the present of their husbands.

स्वेगोपिणि च किन्ना बासो भविताय यति राजवः।
लया किन्ना नत्वयाण्ड नाहं तद्वपि रोचे॥ अय.क. 27/21

Sītā, even though she was not instructed by Kaikeyi, followed Rāma to forest without caring for any sort of discomforts. In Rā, not only the ideal kings but also the highly devoted public are represented. The people of Ayodhya accompanied Rāma to forest, leaving their houses and families. Viśvāmitra and other saints even though capable to destroy or create the world, sought the help of their king Daśaratha to protect their yāga from rākṣasas. This is to show that the public should not take law into their hands. When great people approach a person for some purpose one should not deny their request, however hard the task may be, because their grace will bring immediate good results (prasāda cihnāṇi purāṇi phalāṇi). Rāma and Laksmana deputed by Daśaratha for this mission secured bāla and atibāla vidya and other ‘astras’ from Viśvāmitra. ‘Enemy and spark’ should never be neglected, Mārīca, leftover by Rāma, helped Rāvana, in disguise as ‘golden deer’ in stealing away Sītā. Even a woman should not be exempted from punishment if she is harmful to human beings. That was why Viśvāmitra compelled Rāma to kill Tatakā, while Rāma was hesitating to kill a woman. One
must enjoy the fruit of the good or bad actions done either want only or un-noticed, just as spark burns either way. Ahalyā become the victim of the curse and suffered as a stone, even though she was not concerned with the deception played by Indra.

To be proud is a curse even for the saints. The incident of Parasurāma being defeated by Daśaratha Rāma, established this truth. One need not go out of the way of dharma even if he is goaded by his own mother. Bharata did not accept the kingdom secured by his mother Kaikeyī in an improper way and thus become an ideal for the future generations. Irrespective of the existence or demise of the person to whom a promise was given, a man of truth should keep up his promise without going back. Rāma did not accept to come back and take up the throne when Bharata came to the forest and requested Rāma to do so; informing the death, of their father Daśaratha. This is the most prevailing example given by Vālmīki, elevating the character of Rāma. What is meant by friendship in the real sence and how it should be kept up, was disclosed in Rā through the character of birds and animals like, Jatāyu and Sugrīva. To keep up the old friendship between himself and Daśaratha, Jatāyu sacrificed his life in trying to protect Sītā from the hands of Rāvaṇa. Sugrīva helped Rāma not only by his army but by involving himself whole heartedly in the battle with Rāvaṇa.

What is the duty of faithful servant and how is it to be performed can be learnt through a study of the various achievements of Hanumāna. Hanumāna, rid Sugrīva of his un-founded fears about Rāma and arranged friendship between them. Hanumāna cautioned Sugrīva when he was engrossed in the luxuries after the death of Vālī. He also reminded him of his duty of gathering a large army, from different places to search for Sītā in reciprocation to the help done by Rāma to him in
securing \textit{vānararājya} from the hands of the mighty Vālī. Thus Hanumāna stands as an example for those faithful servants who secure strength, awake and remind the duties of their masters and take a lead in performing his own duties. Hunumāna, when sent on the mission of searching for Sītā, not only detected her at Laṅkā, but burn it and destroyed large army and killed many warriors of Rāvaṇa. He also advised Rāvaṇa to give back Sītā to Rāma and surrender himself. He also warned Rāvaṇa that he had to forego not only his life, but the lives of entire rākṣasa community in the battle with Rāma, if he fails to return Sītā. Even in case of an enemy, the justice can not be different. Vibhīṣaṇa warns Rāvaṇa when he orders to kill Hanumāna, stating that a messenger should not be killed under any circumstances. Even though the messenger incurs irreparable loss, except death, he can be punished to any extent. This is a standing advice to all the future rulers. 'Vibhīṣaṇa śaraṇagati' discloses the \textit{dharmasūtra}, that if an enemy seeks for protection, surrendering himself, assurance can be given after watching the circumstances and obtaining the advice from the well-wishers. Rāma, seeking the advice from his council consisting of Sugrīva, Jāmbavāna, Hanumāna etc., agreed to give protection to Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of his enemy Rāvaṇa. Even though one conquers Yama, with the strength of one’s ‘\textit{tapas}’ one cannot escape death if he teases a ‘\textit{pativrata} women’. Rāvaṇa lost his life for having un-lawful desire for Sītā.

The \textit{Rā}. states that a faithful servant and a sincere friend, would not flinch to give good advice to his master or friend even though he is wronged by him. Rāvaṇa ordered Vibhīṣaṇa to quit Laṅkā, but Vibhīṣaṇa, while leaving Laṅkā, again advised Rāvaṇa to give back Sītā to Rāma to save not only his life, but also the lives of other rākṣasas. ‘\textit{dharma}’ protects those who practice it. (\textit{dharma rakṣati rakṣitah}).
Rāma preached *dharma*, while practicing it himself. He was acclaimed as an ‘embodiment of *dharma*’. (*rāmo vigrahavān dharma*). Even though Rāma had to face some difficulties in the beginning. He could come out successfully and establishment the truth that victory could be attained even in the end by those persons who stick to the path of *dharma*. Humiliating a *bhakta*, a faithful follower or a pious gentleman, will result in immediate troubles. Sītā was taken-away by Rāvana within no time following her aspersions on Lakṣamaṇa. Adamant and arrogant people will not be changed easily by good words and appeals. Threat or punishment only can bring them to the right path. Despite Rāma’s appeals, the SEA did not heed his words. But as soon as Rāma was prepared to punish the SEA paved the way to Rāma and his army.

A devotee or a *bhakta* of god is more honourable than God. Hanumāna, a true devotee of Rāma, was provided with good hospitality by the sea on its own, through Maināka. But Rāma’s own request was not heeded immediately by the sea, until it was threatened by Rāma with punishment. There is a special significance in crossing over the sea by Hanumāna. In the beginning, mountain Maināka came in the way of Hanumāna and urged him to take rest on his towers for a while, explaining him the connection between himself and vāyu, the father of Hanumāna. But Hanumāna gently slipped over, stating that he would oblige his request while returning. Procted by Indra, *surasā* in disguise of *rākṣasī*, stood in the way of Hanumāna with a wide-opened mouth, to test his valour and strength. Hanumāna enlarged his body and in a second’s time, dwindling himself into pigmy size, entered and came out from the mouth of *surasā*. Plead with sharpness of mind, *surasā* blessed him in her divine form and allowed him to proceed further. Lastly, Sirñhikā the ‘*chāyāgrāhi*’ caught the shadow of Hanumāna and thus reduced his speed with a view to swallow him. Knowing her bad
intention, Hanumāna reduced his body, entered her wide-opened mouth, plucked her heart and came out. Hanumāna reached Laṅkā (thus) killing Śrīṁḥikā.

This is an ever-lasting example to the society. A person who tries to attain ‘salvation’ will have obstructions from his own ‘kith and kin’ in the beginning like Maināka. Afterwards, he will be tested by like Surasā (mother of Nāgas). He will have to come out successfully with his will-power and shrewdness of his mind. Lastly, some evil spirits come in his way to destroy him (like Śrīṁḥikā). He has to over-come that calamity with might and courage. Then only he can reach his destination (Laṅkā) and can attain the darsan of God (Śītā).

The human body is compared to Laṅkā. The five senses and manas etc., are compared to the mighty rākṣasas. ‘Jīva’ is identified with Śītā. If Jīva, like Śītā, craves for God, day and night, having no attachment or without surrendering to any evil, God sends guru (Hanumāna) is findout the whereabouts of Jīva and lastly comes down himself to save and take Jīva with him, after destroying all the obstructions. It is like Rāma coming over to Laṅkā and taking back Śītā, after killing Rāvaṇa and other rākṣasas. Similarly we come across many characters and incidents in Rā. which are akin to those that we come across in our routine life and in the society. Thus the Rā. has a greater impact on the society and exercise an everlasting healthy influence on the human race.

I.15  Rā. tradition in other Sanskrit works

The Rā. has been of great value to the later poets as its author has set a norm for them to follow. Vālmīki is never tried of describing the lotus which is the national flower of India. When he sees the beautiful
face of a woman, his imagination at one runs to the lotus, or next to the moon - objects which have become stock standards of comparison in later Indian literature. Again the poet was the first to see and feel the love of ocean and paint its first conqueror of its expansive breast.

The Rā. abounds in beautiful alāmikāras which we do not find in the other great epic, the Mbh. The poet has a natural knock of producing maximum effect with a minimum of words. He never indulges in the inartistic habit of a full description of every part of the feminine body as most of the later poets in India have done. Even in the B.K, he places Sītā’s noble qualities first and her peerless beauty after words ‘गुणादृष्टिः गुणावचापि प्रीतिः मूलोद्वार्चित’ Kālidāsa is generally applauded with a rare compliment of ‘उपना कालिवासस्य’. But even he can come now here near Vālmīki who is the peerless master of malopama as a matter of fact, Kālidāsa owes the blossoming of his genius to Vālmīki, who modestly and gratefully says so:

अथवा कुत्र-वागङ्गरे चंपेश्विनि पूर्व-सूरिभि: ।
मणि वज्र-समुद्रकिंम सूवस्ये वास्ति मे गतिः ॥ RV-1/4

Kālidāsa’s RV is the Rā. itself in a condensed form. He has taken words and phrases and even scenes from his master and used them effectively in his own works. The very title of his two poems Kumārasambhavam and RV, are from the Rā. The lyric poem Meghadūtam owes its inspiration to the Hanumat-Sandeśa in the śādikāvya. In the fourth act of Vikramorvaśīyam, the description of the love-lorn condition of Purūravas bears evident signs of the influence of the Rā. Kālidāsa was so much fascinated by the epic descriptions that he could not help putting the following verse verbatim in the mouth of the king Purūravas:
Again king Pururavas asks a peacock for some clue to his beloved Urvasīs whereabouts.

this verse bears a close resemblance to the description of the wistful plight of Rāma at the sight of the Pampā lake:

Vālmīki’s choicest expressions like the ring episode of Sakuntala reminds one of the showing of Ramas ring to Sītā by Hanumāna in the Āsokavātikā. Vālmīki’s personification of Lāṅkā in the S.K. has been the model of Kālidāsa’s personification of Ayodhyā in the RV.

Even an earlier poet like Bhāsa was inspired by the magic effect of the Ra. and wrote some of his beautiful plays on themes taken from...
this epic, e.g. Abhiṣeka and Pratimāṇāṭaka. In the Buddhist Daśaratadhā-Jātaka, the tale of Rāma occurs in which Sītā is described as Rāma's sister, and Rāma is said to have been earlier than the Buddha. In the Post-Kālidāsa period the number of poets and playwrights who owe their inspiration to Vālmīki is very large. Aśvaghoṣa was greatly influenced by Vālmīki. The dramas of Bhabhabhūti, Murāri, Rājaśekhara and Jayadeva are based on the story of Rāma. Bhaṭṭikāvyā is a long poem in which the poet narrates the story of the Rāma in verse which fulfils another purpose, viz. of illustrating the rules of Sanskrit grammar. Not only did the poets draw inspiration from the Rā., but great writers on aesthetics also have turned again and again to this fountain-head for their illustrations, of them, the greatest is Ānandavardhana, the author of DL.

All branches of Sanskrit Literature have been enriched by Vālmīki's Rā. First, it may be noted that the Vanaparvan of the Mbh contains the famous Rāmopākhyāna, which, while giving the Rāma story as we find it in VR, neither mentions the fire ordeal of Sītā nor the incidents of the U.K. There exists also a number of later religious works either narrating the Rama story, e.g. the famous Adhyātma-Rā. (c. Fourteenth Century A.D.), the Yogavāsīṣṭha-Rā., the Ananda-Rā., and the Adbhuta-Rā. or dealing with the Rāma cult, e.g. the Rāma-purva-tāpanīya Upaniṣad, the Rāmottara-tāpanīya Upaniṣad, and Rāmarahasya Upaniṣad. Many of the purāṇas and the upapurāṇas the Rāma story generally according to VR only at times differing in minor details.

A) Mahākāvyā and works of Kālidāsa

Kālidāsa (Fifth Century A.D) was a great admirer of Vālmīki. In narrating the Rāma story in his RV he has drawn largely on Vālmīki's Rā. Both Vālmīki and Kālidāsa, are supremere poets. With his RV,
Kālidāsa came to be known as a great Ra. poet next in importance only to Vālmīki. Kālidāsa was led to perfection in his literary style and diction, poetic imagery and embellishments, by the great work of Vālmīki. His artistic skill, calm and serene outlook on life, deep penetration into the human mind, his romantic treatment of nature all these have been foreshadowed in VR. Even in the development of the plot of some of his works and the delineation of his characters, the influence of Ra. on Kālidāsa is evident. For instance, his Kaṇva is no other than Vālmīki himself, the most human of Indian ṛṣis in another garb. The plot of the closing acts of the Abhijñānaśākuntalam showing śakuntalā repudiated by Duṣyanta and living in the hermitage of Mārīci, where she gave birth to Bharata, seems to i.e. modeled on the similar episode in the U.K of the Ra. describing Sītā’s banishment by Rāma, her giving birth to the twin sons. Though Kālidāsa drew largely on VR., he was independent of it in many respects. He shows considerable ingenuity in depicting Rāma’s love for Sītā. While Vālmīki has depicted the heroic nature of Rāma, Kālidāsa’s Rāma is not only a great warrior but also one who on appropriate occasions did express his profound love for Sītā:

Father Bulcke holds that Kālidāsa seems to have been well acquainted with the U.K of the Ra. is apparent from his narration in the RV of the banishment of Sītā, the slaying of Lavaṇāsura, the birth of Lava, and Kuśa, the slaying of Šambūka, the death of Lakṣmaṇa and the ascent of Rāma and his brothers to heaven. (Bulcke, op.cit. p. 186). Sukumar Sen holds almost on apposite view to this. According to him, the authors of the U.K while treating the episodes betrays a good deal of acquaintance with Kālidāsa’s RV. (Sukumar Sen, Origin and Development of the Rāma Legend, Calcutta, 1977, p.6). Almost of the same period or slightly later than is the Rāvaṇapavaha or the Setubandha in Prakrit which
is a work of Pravarasena, who was either a king of Kashmir is the vākātaka king of the same name (fifth century). This work follows mainly the outline of VR. A special feature of the work is the description of the love sports of the rākṣasas in the tenth sarga, presumably based on the Paumncaria (Bulcke, op.cit., p.183)

B) Kāvya (Bhaṭṭi and other)

Bhaṭṭi (c. sixth-seventh century A.D.) describes the story of the Rā. in his Rāvaṇaṇavadha, better known as Bhaṭṭikāvya, composed for the avowed purpose of illustrating the niceties of Sanskrit grammar. This work once enjoyed some popularity even outside India and influenced the authors of the Javanese Rā.- kāvya and Carita-Rā. Kumāradāsa, highly praised by the rhetorician and poet Rajasekhara, dealt with the Rāma story in his celebrated poem Jānakīharaṇa, which has been presented partly. Some later ornate poems (kāvyaśas) which give the main story of Rā. are:

1. the Rāmacarita of Abhinanda, which gives the Rāma story beginning at Sītā’s abduction and ending with the death of kumbha and Nikumbha;

2. the highly artificial Udāra-rāghava of Śākalyamalla, alias Mallācārya or Kavimalla, which has been partly preserved;

3. the Citrabandha-Rā. of Venkatesvara written in the highly artificial and difficult Citrabandha style (in which verses are diagrammatically written ‘in the form of sword, cross, wheel, and so forth’);

4. the voluminous Rāmacandrodaya in thirty cantos and;

5. the Yamakāvya Rāma-yamakārapava of Veṅkateśa, of Śrīnivāsa, written in A.D. 1635 and A.D. 1656, respectively; and
6. the Ra.-mañjarī of the Kaśmiri polymath Kṣemendra (eleventh century A.D.)

C) Śleṣakāvyā

The practice of producing śleṣakāvyā (stanzas having double meaning) has led to a few works of little merit dealing simultaneously with two or more stories: e.g.

1. the Rāmacarita of Sandhyākara Nandin (eleventh century A.D.), which gives simultaneously the story of Rāmacandra and that of Rāmapāladeva, the younger brother of king Mahīpāla II of varendra (North Bengal);

2. the Rāghavapanaṇḍavīya of Dhanañjaya, a Digambara Jaina of the twelfth century A.D.; and

3. a work of the same name by Kavirāja (twelfth century A.D.), both giving the stories of the two epics at the same time;

4. the Rāghavanaisadhiya of Haradatta Sūri giving the stories of Rāma and Nala;

5. the Yādavarāghavīya of Veṅkaṭādhvarin (seventeenth century A.D.), giving the stories of the Rā. and the Bhāgavatapurāṇa and;

6. the Rāghavapāṇḍavayādavīya (or kathatrayī) of Cidambara (sixteenth-seventeenth century A.D.), giving the stories of the Rā. the Mbh, and the Bhāgavatapurāṇa.

D) Campū

The famous Ra.-campū, ascribed to king Bhoja (twelfth century A.D.) is written in mixed verse and prose- a style called the campū.
E) Plays

A large number of Sanskrit plays based on the main story or different episodes of the \textit{Rā.} has been written from quite an early period down to modern times. Probably the earliest of the Rāma plays are the \textit{Pratimānaṭaka} and the \textit{Abhisekanāṭaka} attributed by some to Bhāsa (c. third century A.D.), a predecessor of Kālidāsa. Bhāsa dramatizes in the first play almost the entire \textit{Rā.} story in seven acts, while in the six acts of the second play he deals with the Rāma story beginning at the slaying of Vālī and the anointment of Sugrīva, and ending with the fire or deal of Sītā and coronation of Rāma. In the development of the plots and the delineation of the characters the author has deviated in both these dramas considerably from the original \textit{Rā.} He has shown a great deal of ingenuity in presenting the theme. The chief interest of the \textit{Pratimānāṭaka} centers round the character of Bharata and Kaikeyī. He has dealt with Kaikeyī’s character with a lot of sympathy. She is a ‘voluntary victim of public calumny to which she patiently submits for the sake of her husband’s honour and the life of her dear step-son…. (S.K. De, ‘The dramas attributed to Bhāsa’, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol.-XVII, 1941, pp. 415 ff.). One of the touching scenes of the drama is the sorrow and death of Daśaratha. Regarding the chief features of the \textit{Abhiseka} S.K. De observes: “The \textit{Abhiseka}, however, takes up the \textit{Rā.} story at the point of slaying Vālī and coronation of Sugrīva and supplies in six acts the episodes omitted in the other play, ending with the ordeal of Sītā and coronation of Rāma. Its main feature is the sympathetic characterization of Vālī and Rāvana. Rāma is directly identified with Viṣṇu, but he is here more or less a ruthless warrior of whose treacherous slaying of Vālī, no convincing explanation is offered. In crossing the ocean the miracle of divided water is repeated from the
episode of Vasudeva’s crossing the Yamuna in the *Bālakarita*" (Indian Historical Quarterly; Vol.- XVII, 1941 pp. 415 f &) (8th century A.D.)

F) Bhavabhūti and his famous dramas

The great poet and dramatist, Bhavabhūti, who flourished in the eighth century seems to have been specially attracted towards the Rā. these, as is evident from two of his dramas, the *Mahāvīrakarita* and *Uttararāmacarita*. Both these dramas were well appreciated by scholars. The *Mahāvīrakarita* deals with the early life and the *Uttararāmacarita* the latter life of Rāma. The former begins a little before Rāma’s marriage and ends with his coronation. Bhavabhūti has deviated from the well-known epic in many places. He has conceived the theme in the form of a feud between Rāvana and Rāma, and the feud originated as a result of Rāvana’s discomfiture as suitor of Sītā’s hand. Rāvana is shown as having sent his messenger to Mithilā seeking marriage alliance with Sītā, but Rāvana’s proposal was termed down and Sītā was married to Rāma. This enraged Rāvana and he at the advice of his minister Mālyavat sent Surpanakhā in the guise of Mantharā to Mithilā (as the drama shows) and provoked Kaikeyī to ask boons as a result of which Rāma had to go to the forest and Bharata to be installed as king of Ayodhyā. When Rāma was banished and he settled in Pañcavaṭi, Rāvana to like revenge, carried away Sītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa came to Kiṣkindhā and entered into friendship with Sugrīva, to thwart Rāma’s efforts to serchout Sītā, Rāvana of the advice of Mālyarat sent Vālī to kill Rāma. Vālī was defeated and killed by the latter. The whole plot can tree round the intrigues of Mālyavat. This was, however, a novel way of presenting the Rā. story.

The *Uttararāmacarita* which deals with the latter life of Rāma is Bhavabhūti’s masterpiece. It begins with the exile of Sītā and ends
with her reunion with Rāma. Though Bhavabhūti has derived his plot from the epic, he has introduced many new events or episodes to heighten the dramatic effect. (S.K. De and S.N. Dasgupta, op. cit. Pp. 287-89). Bhavabhūti was a native of Vidarbha (now Maharastra). Rajaśekhara, who also belonged to Maharastra, wrote the Bālarāmāyaṇa giving the entire story of the Rā. up to his coronation. Following Bhavabhūti’s manner of presentation in the Mahāvīra-carita, Rajeśekhara shows Rāvāṇa’s passion for Sītā as the main cause of feud between Rāma and Rāvana. Mālāyavat’s intrigues figure prominently in the Bālarāmāyaṇa (S.K. De and S.N. Dasgupta, op. cit., p.456)

There are innumerable other Rā. works in Sanskrit. For exigency of space it will not be possible to mention all of them. Mentioned below are some of the important Rā. work in Sanskrit. The poet Abhinandana wrote the Rāmacarita at the instance of the Pāla king Hārāvarṣa (9th century). The poet describes in 36 cantos the Rā. episodes from Rāma’s stay in the Prasravana mountain up to the slaying of Kumbha and Nikumbha. It is said a poet called Bhīma added the YK in four cantos to it Abhinandana’s narratives follow’s VR.

The Udāttarāghava by Anangaharsa Māyurāja is a drama in six acts which present Rāmāyaṇic episodes from Rāma’s exile to his return to Ayodhyā after the Laṅkā war. Māyurāja flourished in the eighth century. Murari’s drama called Anargharāghava (c.900) begins with Viśvāmitra’s arrival at Daśaratha’s court and ends with Rāma’s coronation at Ayodhyā. The poet has followed Bhavabhūti’s Mahāvīra-carita in respect of certain episodes, namely Śurpaṇakhās arrival in the garb of Mantharā and demanding Rāma’s banishment, etc. Kavirāja (c.800) composed the Rāghavapāṇḍaviya which describes simultaneously the actions of Rāma and the Pāṇḍavas. The Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi of Saktibhadra (about 9th century is a South Indian
drama which presents the Rā. story beginning with Śurpanakhās coming to Pañcavaṭī and ending with Sītā’s fire ordeal. The play shows many deviations from the well-known Rāma story. Its main features are as follows:

1. Rāma and Sītā received from the sages a ring and crest jewel which had the power of revealing the true form of the rāksasas who appeared in disguise.

2. Rāvana assuming the form of Rāma abducted Sītā. Rāvana’s aides assumed false garbs; Śurpanakhā assumed the form of Sītā and Mārīca that of Lakṣmaṇa (Bulcke, op.cit., p.204)

The Hanumānanāṭaka or Mahānāṭaka a Sanskrit drama on the Rā. theme, seems to be a work of the 10th century with some later accretions. It has two versions, one of Damodara Mishra, and another of Madhusudana. Damodara Mishra’s readings seem to be closer to the original drama. The Hanumānanāṭaka, like most of the Sanskrit dramas, is marked by some special features as deviations from Vālmīki’s Rā. Among these deviations or innovations mention may be made of a few as follows:

1. Rāvana’s messenger arrives at Mithilā conveying Rāvana’s proposal seeking Sītā’s hand.
2. Paraśurāma’s arrival and defeat in Mithilā itself.
3. Rāma’s love sports with Sītā, bordering almost on obscenity at place after marriage.
4. Bharata was present in Ayodhyā at the time of Rāma’s exile.
5. The redemption of Ahalyā took place somewhere between the hermitage of Agastya and Pañcavaṭī.
6. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa go together to pursue the golden deer Mārīch.
7. Vālint induces Rāma to fight (Bulcke, op.cit., pp. 202-03)

The *Bālarāmāyana* by Rājaśekhara (10th century) is a drama in ten acts which describes the Rā. events from Sītā’s *Svayatīvara* to Rāma’s installation as king of Ayodhyā. Kṣemendra, a Kašmirian poet (1037) has given the entire Rā. story in abridged form in his *Rāmāyanamañjarī*. It is bowed on the North-western recession of *VR*. Kṣemendra has narrated from a new angle the Rāma story in his *Daśavatārācarita*. The story begins with Rāvaṇa’s austerities and achievements. Again, Sītā is described as Rāvaṇa’s daughter. Rāvaṇa steals Sītā with the aid of Māṛīca. Therefore, Suketu, (a spy of Ravana) narrates to Rāvaṇa the Rāma episodes from Māṛīca’s death up to the burning of Lāṅkā. Both Suketu and Vibhīṣaṇa request Rāvaṇa to return Sītā to Rāma (Bulcke, op.cit., pp. 189-90) The *Prasannarāgāhāva* by Jayadeva (who is different from the poet of the same name who was the author of the *Gītāgovinda*) is a seven-act play, which describes the Rā. events from the Sītā *Svayatīvara* to the death of Rāvaṇa and the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā. The special features of the drama are:

1. Rāvaṇa and Bāṇāsura came to Sītā’s *Svayatīvara*, and their failure to lift the bow of Śiva;
2. Rāma and Sītā met in Mithilā before their marriage;
3. Paraśurāma come to Mithilā, etc. The author belonged to 12th or 13th century (S.K. De and S.N. Dasgupta, op.cit., p. 463)

In the same century, Bhoja wrote his *Rā.campū* which is based on the Southern recension of *VR* as is evident from inclusion in it the story of Ayomukhi’s punishment, the conversation between *Laṅkādevī* and Hanumāna, the mention of Anala, the daughter of Vibhīṣaṇa, the duel between Sugrīva and Rāvaṇa (Bulcke, op.cit. pp. 215-216). The *Ullagharāgāhava* of Someśvara from Gujarat (13th century) presents the
Vālmīki version of the Ra. story from the concluding chapters of the BK to the end of the YK. It is a drama in eight acts. The Unmattarāghava of Bhaskara (14th-15th century) is a one-act play describing Rāma's search and maddened soliloquies on Sītā's transformation to a gazelle by the curse of Durvāsas and her recovery with the help of Agastya (S.K. De and S.N. Dasgupta, op.cit., p. 464). The Adbhutadarpaṇa is a ten-act drama, which was written by Mahādeva, son of krṣṇasūrī of Tanjore (17th century). It begins with Rāma's coronation. The center of interest is the magic mirror which shows Rāvana the happenings at which shows Rāvana the happenings at Laṅkā (S.K. De and S.N. Dasgupta, op.cit., p. 464).

The Jaimini Aśvamedha, which is considered to be a part of Jaimini Bhāratā seems to be a work of about 13th century. Its main concern is to describe the horse sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhīra, though it brings in some Ra. episodes, such as the banishment of Sītā, the birth of Kuśa and Lava, the capture of Rāma sacrificial horse by Kuśa and Lava and their fight with Rāma's army and the reunion of Rāma and Sītā, etc. The Rāmakathā is endless. There are a hundred other Sanskrit kāvyas, dramas and other works describing the story of Rāma including the Jānakī-pariṇaya of Cakrakavi (13th century), the Rāmalingāmrita of Advaita Kavi of Banaras, a contemporary of Tulasīdāsa; the Maithilikalyāṇa of Hastimalla (13th century), the Dūlāṅgada of Subhata (14th century) and many others (See Bulcke, op.cit., pp. 172-216 for a detailed treatment of the subject).

1.16 Popularity

The popularity of the Ra. did not diminish with the growth of vernacular literature. On the other hand, some of the greatest books in regional languages are those which are on the Ra. theme. For example,
Mādhava Kaṇḍli’s Assamese Rā., Krittīvāsa’s Bengali Rā., Tulasidāsa’s Rāmacaritamānasā in Hindi, Kamban’s Tamil Rā., Gona Buddha’s Ranganātha Rā. in Telugu, etc.

I.17.a) Śrī Aurobindo on the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa

The Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa are Sanskrit literature’s most considerable and important works of poetry Śrī Aurobindo says “One is struck in perusing the Mbh. by the presence of a mass of poetry which bears the style and impress of single, strong and original, even unusual mind, differing in his manner of expression, tone of thought and stamp of personality not only from every other Sanskrit poet we know, but from every other great poet known to literature.28 He continues about Vyāsa “...those who have bathed even a little in the fountain-head of poetry, and can bear the keenness and purity of these mountain sources, the naked and unadorned poetry of Vyāsa is as delightful as to bathe in a chill fountain in the heats of summer. They find that one has an unfailing source of tonic and refreshment to the soul; one comes into relation with a mind whose bare strong contact has the power of infusing strength, courage and endurance. There are certain things which have this inborn power and are accordingly valued by those who have felt deeply its properties; the air of the mountains or the struggle of capable mind with hardship and difficulty; the Vedānta philosophy, the ideal of the nīskāmadhārma, the poetry of Vyāsa, three closely related entities are intellectual forces that exercise a similar effect and attraction.

The style of this powerful writer is perhaps the one example in literature of strength in its purity, a strength undefaced by violence and excess, yet not weakened by flagging and negligence. It is less propped or helped out by any artifices and aids than any other poetic style Vyāsa takes little trouble with similes, metaphors, rhetorical turns,

28. Śrī Aurobindo birth Centenary Library (S.A.B.C.L) vol-III, p.144
the usual paraphernalia of poetry, nor when he uses them, is he at pains to select such as will be new and curiously beautiful; they are there to define more clearly what he has in mind, and he makes just enough of them for that purpose, never striving to convert them into a separate grace or a decorative element. They have force and beauty in their context but cannot be turned into elegant excerpts; in themselves they are in fact little or nothing”. After citing many examples from the *Mbh.*, Śrī Aurobindo says “Vyāsa’s art, as I have said, is singularly disinterested, *nīskāma*; he does not write with a view to sublimity or with a view to beauty, but because he has certain ideas to impart, certain events to describe, certain characters to portray. He has an image of these in his mind and his business is to find an expression for it which will be scrupulously just to his conception. This is by no means so facile a task as the uninitiated might imagine; it is indeed considerable more difficult than to bathe the style in colour and grace and literary elegance, for it demands vigilant self-restraint, firm intellectual truthfulness and unsparing rejection, the three virtues most difficult to the gadding, inventive and self-indulgent spirit of man. The art of Vyāsa is therefore a great, strenuous art; but it unfitted him, as a similar spirit unfitted the Greeks, to voice fully the outward beauty of nature. For to delight infinitely in nature one must be strongly possessed with the sense of colour and romantic beauty, and allow the fancy equal rights with the intellect.

For all his occasional strokes of fine nature-description he was not therefore quite at home with her. Conscious of his weakness Vyāsa as he emancipated himself from Vālmīki’s influence ceased to attempt a king for which his genius was not the best fitted. He is far more in his element in the expression of the feelings, of the joy and sorrow that makes this like of men; his description of emotion far excels his

30. S.A.B.C.L., vol-III, p. 159
He compares Vyāsa’s style with Vālmīki’s. He says “A comparison with Vālmīki is instructive of the varying genius of these great masters. Both excel in epical rhetoric, if such a term as rhetoric can be applied to Vyāsa’s direct and severe style, but Vyasa’s has the air of a more intellectual, reflective and experienced stage of poetical advance. The longer speeches in the Ra. those even which have most the appearance of set, argumentative oration, proceed straight from the heart the thoughts, words reasoning’s come welling up from the dominant emotion of conflicting feeling of the speaker; they palpitate and are alive with the vital force from which they have sprung. Though belonging to a more thoughtful, gentle and cultured civilization than Homer’s they have, like his, the large utterance, which is not of primitive times, but of the primal emotions. Vyāsa’s have a powerful but austere force of intellectuality. In expressing character they firmly expose it rather than spring half-unconsciously from it; their bold and finely planned consistency with the original conception reveals rather the conscientious painstaking of an inspired but reflective artist than the more primary and impetuous creative impulse. In their management of emotion itself a similar difference becomes prominent. Vālmīki, when giving utterance to a mood or passion simple or complex, surcharges every line, every phrase, turn of words or movement of verse with it; there are no lightning flashes but great depth of emotion swelling steadily, inexhaustibly and increasingly in a wonder of sustained feeling, like a continually rising wave with low crests of foam. Vyāsa has a high level of style with a subdued emotion behind it occasionally breaking into poignant outbursts. It is by sudden beauties that he rises above himself and not only exalts, stirs and delights us at his ordinary level, but memorably seizes the heart and imagination. This is the natural result of the peculiarly disinterested art which never seeks out anything striking for its own sake, but admits it only when it arises uncalled from the occasion.
I.17.b) Vyāsa and Vālmīki

Vyāsa is therefore less broadly human than Vālmīki, he is at the same time a wider and more original thinker. His supreme intellect rises everywhere out of the mass of insipid or turbulent redaction and interpolation with bare and grandiose outlines. A wide searching mind, historian, statesman, orator, a deep and keen looker into ethics and conduct, a subtle and high-aiming politician, theologian and philosopher, it is not for nothing that Hindu imagination makes the name of Vyāsa look so large in the history of Aryan thought and attributes to him work so important and manifold. The wideness of the man's intellectual empire is evident throughout the work; we feel the presence of the great rṣi, the original thinker who has enlarged the boundaries of ethical and religious outlook."31 He continues “From this difference in temper and mode of expression arises a difference in the mode also of portraying character. Vyāsa’s knowledge of character is not so intimate, emotional and sympathetic as Vālmīki’s; it has more of a heroic inspiration, less of divine sympathy. He has reached it not like Vālmīki immediately through the heart and imagination, but deliberately the spirit of shaping imagination has come afterwards like a sculptor using the material labour has provided for him. It has not been a light leading him into the secret places of the heart. Nevertheless the characterization, however reached, is admirable and firm. It is the fruit of a lifelong experience, the knowledge of a statesman who has had much to do with the ruling of men and has been himself a considerable part in some great revolution full of astonishing incidents and extraordinary characters. With that high experience his brain and his soul are full. It has cast his imagination into colossal proportions. Provided him with majestic conceptions which can dispense with all but the simplest language for expression; for they are so great that the bare precise statement of what is said and done seems enough to make language epical. His character-drawing indeed

31. S.A.B.C.L., p.163-64
is more epical, less psychological than Vālmīki’s. Truth of speech and action gives us the truth of nature and it is done with strong purposeful strokes that have the power to move the heart and enlarge and ennoble the imagination which is what we mean by the epic in poetry. In Vālmīki there are marvellous and revealing touches which show us the secret something in character usually beyond the expressive power either of speech and action; they are touches oftener found in the dramatic artist than the epic, and seldom fall within Vyāsa’s method. It is the difference between a strong and purposeful artistic synthesis and the beautiful, subtle and involutes symmetry of an organic existence evolved and inevitable rather than shaped and purpose.

His deep preoccupation with the ethical issues of speech and action is very notable. His very subject is one of practical ethics, the establishment of a dharmarājya, an empire of the just, by which is meant no millennium of the saints, but the practical ideal of government with righteousness, purity and unselfish toil for the common good as its saving principles. It is true that Vālmīki is a more humanely moral spirit than Vyāsa, in as much as ordinary morality is most effective when steeped in emotion, proceeding from the heart and acting through the heart. Vyāsa’s ethics like everything else in him takes a double stand on intellectual scrutiny and acceptance and on personal strength of character; his characters having once adopted by intellectual choice and in harmony with their temperaments a given line of conduct, throw the whole heroic force of their nature into its pursuit. He is therefore preeminently a poet of action. Kṛṣṇa is his authority in all matters, religious and ethical, and it is noticeable that Kṛṣṇa lays far more stress on action and far less on quiescence than any other Hindu philosopher. Quiescence in God is with him as with others the ultimate goal of existence, but he insists that quiescence must be reached through action and, so far as this life is concerned, must exist in action; quiescence of the soul from desires there must be but there should not be and cannot be quiescence of prakṛti from action.32

32. S.A.B.C.L., p. 165-66