

Bhandarkar Oriental Series, No. 26

**THE RĀMĀYANA
ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH
A STATISTICAL STUDY**

By
M. R. YARDI

**Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
Poona 411 004 (India)
1994**

CHAPTER III

RĀMA'S JOURNEY TO LANĀ

Rāma's journey to Lanā can be conveniently divided into four stages : from Ayodhyā to Citrakūṭa, from Citrakūṭa to Pañcavaṭī, from Pañcavaṭī to Ṛṣyamūka and from Ṛṣyamūka to Lanā. The problem of identifying the places visited by Rāma has become intricate as a result of interpolations in the text of Vālmīki, the vast topographical changes which have taken place since then in the region and our lack of knowledge about the geographical terms used by Vālmīki. The problem of interpolations has been solved by this Statistical Study. The other two factors will have to be borne in mind in determining the places visited by Rāma in his journey to Lanā.

As regards the changes in the topography of the region, T. Paramasiva Iyer (p. 100) says that Prayāga (now known as Allahabad) did not exist in those days. Prayāga was under an extensive *sāgara* or lake in those days, which the Gaṅgā and Yamunā entered by distinct mouths. Rāma says in the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* (105. 19), " Ever does the Yamunā flow into the *samudra* of swelling waters ". This sarga has been added by the author of the U-style. So Prayāga did not exist until the 1st century A. D., which will be the period during which the author of the U-style lived. In support of his view, Iyer adds that Bhāsa and Patañjali do not refer to Prayāga and in his knowledge there is no reference to it in pre-Christian Sanskrit literature. Other lakes which have become dry are Pampā and the Sāgara round Trikūṭa.

Vālmīki seems to have employed some geographical terms of non-Aryan stock, with meanings which are not currently in use. Such words are Daṇḍaka, Godāvarī, Lanā, *sāgara* and *yojana*.

According to G. Ramdas, the word *daṇḍaka* is derived from words *dana*, *daḥ*, both meaning water in Śavara language and so

means land with plentiful water. In *A Bonda Dictionary* by Sudhir-bhusana Bhattacharya (Poona 1968), *danai* means *ghāt* on the hills and *dak* means water. So Daṇḍak may also mean a hilly region full of water.¹

Dr. Hiralal takes *godāri* as a word of non-Aryan stock, perhaps of Dravidian origin meaning a river. He says that he heard the word being used in this sense by a peasant in the North of Amarakaṇṭaka.² Rai Krishnadas says that even now in the Bundelkhandi dialect, Godā is a place where a river is divided into two streams with a piece of (island-like) land in between.³

Dr. Hiralal again takes the word *lanḱā* as a non-Aryan word meaning a mound, hill or island. Dr. Sankalia accepts this meaning of the word *godā* and Muṇḍa word *lanḱā* in the sense of an island on a hill-top. He says that even now Lanḱā is used in this sense by the Adivāsīs of Chanda district. The Imperial Gazetteer says that the word Lanḱā is used to denote alluvial islands formed and surrounded by a river on all sides.⁴

Sāgara, in addition to its usual meaning 'sea', also means a big lake.⁵ As the Critical Editor of *Uttarakāṇḍa* points out (Intr. p. 47) there exists in the heart of the Baroda city a big lake called Sūrasāgara. The Anāsāgara of Ajmir, a much bigger lake, exists at least from the Mughal period. A big tank Kirātasagar was built by the Chandellas at Mahoba.

Vālmīki has used the word *yojana* in a sense, which is different from its present dictionary meaning. According to Monier Williams, it is the distance traversed in one harnessing or without unyoking the horse and so is equivalent to four or five English miles or nine miles. The other unit of distance used is a *kośa* (*kosa* in Hindi), which is one-fourth of a *yojana*. Iyer (pp. 3-5) says that

1. Critical Editor, *Uttarakāṇḍa*. Intr. p. 40.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 41, n. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

5. Kauṭilya's *Arthasūtra*, 2. 38.

the word *yojana* is used by Vālmīki in two senses, one of which is four *krośas* of one thousand *dhanus* each. In this, the units of measurement are *hasta* equivalent to eighteen inches, a *dhanus* equivalent to four *hastas* or two yards, a *krośa* equivalent to one thousand *dhanus* and a *yojana* equivalent to four *krośas*. This gives about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles to a *yojana*, which tallies with one of the dictionary meanings.

According to Iyer (p. 101), the distance from the Yamunā bluff to Citrakūṭa is about forty-one miles. But this distance is mentioned as ten *krośas* in the southern recension or three *yojanas* in the Northern (2. 48. 25), and later as $2\frac{1}{2}$ *yojanas* (2. 86. 10). This gives an equivalence of four miles to a *krośa* and fourteen to sixteen miles to a *yojana*. The inference is, therefore, irresistible that Vālmīki was not very familiar with the exact location of places to the south of the Yamunā river and had only vague ideas about the distances between them. As Rāma further proceeds south, the distance tends to be expressed in terms of a day's journey. The poet does not give the distance between Śarabhaṅga's *āśrama* and Sutīkṣṇa's place, but says that Rāma reached it after a long journey across rivers in full spate, *sa gatvā dūram adhvānam nadīs tīrtvā bahūdakāḥ* (3. 6. 2), which commentators explain as *gatvā adūram adhvānam*. Agastya tells Rāma that Pañcavaṭī is not very far (*nātidūre*) from his *āśrama* (3. 12. 18). When Rāma proceeds still further to the south, the distances are expressed in round figures of ten or hundred *yojanas*, obviously expressive of short or long distances.

Iyer (pp. 3-5) further states that Vālmīki uses the word *yojana* in another sense also. According to this, *yojana* is a *dhanuḥśata* i. e. about 200 yards, over which Vālin had thrown the corpse of Dundubhi after killing him. Sugrīva tells Rāma that he would be convinced of Rāma's superior strength, if he raised the skeleton of Dundubhi by his foot and hurled it at a distance of *dvi-dhanuḥśute* (4. 11. 50). Rāma hurled it over ten *yojanas*, which strikes us as an incredible feat. However, exaggerations are a feature of epic poetry and hyperbole (*atiśayokti*) is reckoned as a

figure of speech in Sanskrit poetics. This meaning seems to have been intended, when on one occasion we are told that the bank of Śarayu is $1\frac{1}{2}$ *yojanas* distant from the city or the royal palace (1. 21. 9 and 7. 100. 1). These statements are, however, made by later writers. Again, when Bharata is on his expedition to meet Rāma in his forest exile, he leaves his army behind before meeting Bharadvāja and then Rāma. On the first occasion the distance from which he can see Bharadvāja's *āśrama* is said to be only a *krośa* (2. 84. 1), which according to this meaning, is only 50 yards i. e. a distance from which *krośa* or a cry can be heard. On the second occasion, the distance is said to be only $1\frac{1}{2}$ *yojanas* i. e. 300 yards, where he could be seen by Lakṣmaṇa from his observation point on the *sāla* tree.

Rāma started in a royal chariot from Ayodhyā, followed by the people of Ayodhyā. By night they reached the bank of the river Tamasā and passed the night there. Early morning they left before the people of Ayodhyā had woken up and after crossing Tamasā, Vedaśrutī, Gomatī and Śyandikā, they reached the Gaṅgā bank at Śṛṅgarverpur. At Śṛṅgarverpur they crossed the Gaṅgā and after visiting the sacred Banān tree, they stayed at the *āśrama* of sage Bharadvāja on the north bank of the Yamunā. As this *āśrama* was very near Ayodhyā, Rāma sought the advice of the sage about a place where they could live undisturbed by the people of Ayodhyā. As advised by him, they settled down at Citrakūṭa, after building an *āśrama* there.

This was also the route taken by Bharata when he went to persuade Rāma to return to Ayodhyā. After constructing a road, he started with a large army and reached the bank of Yamunā where he stayed for the night (2. 71). Then he reached the *āśrama* of Bharadvāja, who showed him the way to Citrakūṭa.

After Bharata's departure, the hermits in Citrakūṭa leave Citrakūṭa due to the harassment caused by the Rākṣasas (2. 108). Rāma too leaves Citrakūṭa and goes to Atri's *āśrama*. After spending the night there, they start the next day and enter the

Dandaka forest (3. 1), which means that Atri lived just on the northern border of Dandakāranya. Then they march to Śarabhaṅga's place, and killing and burying Virādha on the way they go on the advice of Śarabhaṅga to Sutīkṣṇa's place. Sutīkṣṇa requests Rāma to stay at his *āśrama*. Rāma politely declines and expresses his desire to visit all the hermitages in Janasthāna. This means that there was a colony of hermits staying at Janasthāna in Dandakāranya not too far away from Sutīkṣṇa's *āśrama*.

After staying for a period of ten years in various *āśramas* of Janasthāna, Rāma revisits Sutīkṣṇa's *āśrama*. After staying there for sometime, he expresses a desire to visit sage Agastya. Sutīkṣṇa tells him that Agastya's brother had his *āśrama* at a distance of about four *yojanas* from his hermitage and Agastya's place was one *yojana* further south. Rāma inquires of Agastya about a place full of water, where he can have his *āśrama* and live. Agastya recommends to him Pañcavaṭī in the following words (3. 12) :

sa deśaḥ ślāghanīyaś ca nātidūre ca rāghava |
godāvaryāḥ samīpe ca maithilī tatra rañsiyate || 18 ||

This creates a problem in identifying Pañcavaṭī to the north of Vindhya mountain. Rai Krishnadas solves this hurdle by taking Godāvarī as a word of non-Aryan origin meaning a river. This word, however, could not have been used as a common name or for a small river such as Gupta Godāvarī. The Critical Editor of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (Intr., p. LV) states that this verse is absent in three Mss. (N1, G2 and Dn). This is also borne out by the fact that all the places Citrakūṭa, Śarabhaṅga's *āśrama*, Sutīkṣṇa's place and Pañcavaṭī were near one another, as one can guess from what follows.

During Rāma's visit to Śarabhaṅga's *āśrama*, hermits approach him and tell him that many *tāpasas* had been killed by the Rākṣasas (3. 5).

ehi paśya śarīrāṇi munīnām bhāvitātmanām |
hatānām rākṣasair ghorair bahūnām bahudhā vane || 15 ||

pampānadīnivāsānām anumandākinīm api |
citrakūṭalayānām ca kriyate kadanām mahat || 16 ||

The Critical Editor of *Uttarakāṇḍa* remarks, " Obviously the regions of Pampa (forest, lake or river), the Citrakūṭa and the valley of Mandākinī are not too far from this area " (Intr. p. 40). Sutīkṣṇa tells Rāma that during his visit to Citrakūṭa he had heard that he was deprived of his kingdom (3. 3. 10). This shows that Sutīkṣṇa used to visit Citrakūṭa and so it must not have been far from his *āśrama*. Thus the verse 12. 18 of *Aranyakāṇḍa* may have been inserted by a later redactor, perhaps by Harivaṃśakāra, who has added the sargas 16-42 to that Kāṇḍa.

It was at Pañcavaṭī that Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa. When Rāma did not see Sītā in the *āśrama*, he was shaken with grief, and he, along with Lakṣmaṇa, wandered in the forest in search of Sītā (3. 56-60). In their search they met Jaṭāyus who gave them the news of Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa and died. Rāma then arrived at Pampā (3. 70) and having crossed Pampā, he arrived at Ṛṣyamūka. Ṛṣyamūka was a part of Ṛkṣavat mountain which was inhabited by the Ṛkṣa tribe. Jāmbuvat, who was a great fighter and good counsellor of Sugrīva, belonged to the Ṛkṣa tribe. Sugrīva resorted to Ṛṣyamūka (4. 45. 16), because it belonged to a friendly tribe of Ṛkṣas and was out of bounds for Vālin. Ṛṣyamūka was very near Kiṣkindhā. Kiṣkindhā was a township situated in a mountain hollow with a narrow entrance passage (Kiṣkindhādvāra), *babhūva nagarī ramyā kiṣkindhā girigahvare* (4. 25. 37). In this Kiṣkindhā Vālin and later Sugrīva lived in a cave, *guhām praviṣṭe sugrīve* (4. 29. 1). It was from here that Sugrīva sent the search party headed by Aṅgada southwards (4. 40. 1-8)

After Rāma killed Vālin, Sugrīva was crowned king of Kiṣkindhā. Since the rainy season had set in, it was not possible to send a search party immediately. Rāma passed the rainy season on mount Prasavaṇa (4. 26), which must have been near Kiṣkindhā. After the rain was over, Sugrīva sent a search party

headed by Aṅgada, which carried out a search for Sītā in the Vindhya forest. It is beyond doubt that this search party met Sampāti on the Vindhya mountain. In Sarga 57 of the *Kiṣkindhā-kaṇḍa* it is stated :

tam aham bhrātaram dṛṣṭvā sūryaraśmihir arditam |
pakṣābhyaṃ chādāyāmāsa snehāt paramavivhalam || 6 ||
nirdagdhapakṣaḥ patito vindhye 'ham vānarottamāḥ || 7ab ||

When Sampāti learns about the death of his brother Jaṭāyus, he requests the Vānaras to carry him to the 'Sāgara'. After Sampāti offers libation to his dead brother, the Vānaras carry him back to the same spot (4. 57. 31-34). This shows that the *sāgara* was also close to this spot on the Vindhya. Hanumat then leaped into the *sāgara* from Mahendra hill, which too must have been not far from the this spot. After consultation with his colleagues, Hanumat gets ready to cross the *sāgara* and stands on the Mahendra hill (4. 66).

tatas tu mārutaprakhyāḥ sa harir mārutātmajaḥ |
āruroha nagaśreṣṭham mahendram arimardanaḥ || 34 ||

This shows that the Mahendra hill was close to the (end of) the Vindhya. This is also now confirmed by the original *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki as determined by this statistical study. We shall discuss in the next chapter the journey by Hanumat and Rāma and his army to Laṅkā.