

लुड्विक स्टर्नबाख
अभिनन्दन-ग्रन्थ

LUDWIK STERNBACH
FELICITATION VOLUME

PART ONE

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अभिलेख-संग्रह

LUDWIK STERNBACH
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PART ONE

Publishers

Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad
Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Hazratganj
Lucknow (India)
Dec. 1979



Price : Rs. 400.00 (Complete set)

Printers

Pnar Mudrak
117, Nazirabad
Lucknow (India)

Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad
Lucknow (India)

TEXT-CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON VĀLMĪKI-RĀMĀYAṆA

S. Pollock

In deciding how most appropriately to pay tribute to a scholar who has done so much to enlarge our knowledge of the textual history of Sanskrit poetry, a particularly fitting contribution seemed to me some observations on the text of the *ādikāvya*, gathered during my preliminary work on *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* for the annotated translation of the critical edition of the poem undertaken by the Rāmāyaṇa Translation Project.¹

A close re-examination of the materials exploited for the critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* abundantly confirms the soundness of the basic principles upon which the work is predicated. The manuscripts fall unmistakably into two main recensions, from the continual concordance of which we can indubitably postulate a common, archetypal source. Consequently the procedures² for constituting the text *en gros*—i.e., for determining interpolations—seem powerfully cogent, and it is rather rarely the case that I find myself in disagreement with editorial judgments at this “maximal” level.³

1. Under the general editorship of R. P. Goldman, University of California, Berkeley.

2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, crit. ed., Vol. I., p. xxxiv.

3. Some examples with regard to Book II. (I leave out of consideration those places where the critical edition constitutes a passage in a way exhibited by no MS. at all, e.g., 50.15, 52.14, etc.) After 31.25, 816+ should be read: it has precisely the same MS. authority as, say, 30.24, and is contextually essential. 53.24 as constituted (with switch to direct address of Kausalyā) without 1297+, makes little MS. or contextual sense. Ch. 92 appears to be an interpolation. The chapter is missing D_{4,5,7} and there are strong narrative reasons telling against its authenticity. Carefully examining the southern and northern recensions we find: between *pāda-s* d and e of 18.32 either 474+ or 475+ is necessary; after 49.4 either 1164+ or 1165+ (cf. v. 13 of the *sarga*); after 67.14 1735+, 5-7 or 1732+. 9-11; comparing 526+ and 527+, we conclude the archetype must have contained a verse or two in which Kausalyā protests that she will be burnt by a fire whipped up by the wind of separation, stoked by grief, etc.; comparing 716+.7-12, 717+.11-19, 718+.1-4, 13-15, especially lines 11, 16 and 13 respectively of the three passages, we conclude the

At the "minimal" level, however,—the level of the single *śloka*, of the phrase, of the individual reading—the implications of these sound critical principles, of the large text-critical credo, seem not always to have been fully appreciated or systematically pursued. Agreements on individual readings among isolated southern and northern MSS do not appear to have been consistently accorded the same hearing, and allowed as impartial a judgment, as their testimony with regard to larger portions of the text (perhaps an inescapable consequence of the sheer volume of material). Nowhere are we provided with a clear explanation of the editorial procedures at this level, and indeed they often appear very eclectic.

What does it signify, we must ask ourselves, when a good variant (that is, not a natural facilior substitute) is found, say, in G_1 , M_2 , \dot{S} , V and \tilde{N} ? or \dot{S} , B , D_{4-6} and T ? or \tilde{N} and M ? Must there not be some critical degree of inter-recension consensus that certifies a reading more conclusively than the unanimous testimony of either recension singly? I have not been able to ascertain this degree—the concordances seem quite random, the chance for stemmatic arrangement of the MSS remote; but I am nonetheless convinced that the primary textual principles must be applied here, too. In lieu of the determination of the critical threshold, all cases of such agreement, however exiguous, will have to be carefully reasoned through, for in the absence of a sure genealogy of MSS none of them can lay claim to any greater sincerity than another. Moreover, the consideration of variants should (in practice as well as in theory) consist in weighing them, not simply counting up MSS; one-sided support, however loud, should not be the criterion for awarding the prize. And additionally, given the special interests of the northern recension, which I shall enlarge on, "agreement" need not always be verbatim to convince.

I should like to examine a few cases (restricting myself exclusively to Vol. II) where a reconsideration of the rich materials stored in the critical apparatus of the Baroda *Rāmāyaṇa* may help us to constitute a text of greater precision and of greater fidelity to our manuscript sources and their common descent. Besides simple cases of variants to be preferred on the grounds of varying degrees of inter-recension I want to investigate some instances where the northern recension can give us to perceive its retention of correct readings which have been virtually lost from the southern; and finally to isolate certain features of the northern recension which can serve as an interpretative tool of the critically constituted text. The examples I offer are not always meant to be significant per se, but I

archetype must have contained some lines in which Lakṣmaṇa addresses Rāma, telling him that he wishes to accompany him to the wilderness, and that indeed Rāma had already given him permission to do so.

notice them in the hope that they are illustrative of procedures by means of which, analogically, other text problems may be addressed.¹

43. (13-) 14.

(*kadāhaṃ punar āgamyā...mṛgayāṃ paryāṭiṣyāmi...||*
nātyartham abhikāṅkṣāmi mṛgayāṃ sarayūvane ||
ratir hy eṣātulā loke... ||

G₂, M₁, Ñ, V, B, D₁₋₃, 5 : *atyartham*. All commentators agree on the text of the critical edition; it has the unmistakable look of a pious falsification.

12.6.

saritām tu patiḥ svalpāṃ maryādāṃ satyam anvitāḥ |
satyānurodhāt samaye velām sām nātivartate ||

M₁, G₂ : *samayam*; Ñ, V, B : *samayaṃ* (*pālayan velām*; similarly D₁, 2; the NR otherwise omits); so too C_k. The ocean's compact is its shoreline, as its truth is its limit (cf. also the following verse, 7. : *samayaṃ ca mamāryemaṃ yadi tvam na kariṣyasi... .*).

111.5

ete cāpy abhiṣekādrā munayaḥ phalaśodhanāḥ |

All commentators, G₂ : *kalāśodyatāḥ*; Ś, Ñ, D₂, 4-6 : *kalāśapaṇayaḥ* (probably a simplification of the somewhat unusual *paṇipāta* of *udyata*—). *kalāśa*—thus corroborated as the true reading (cf. eg., III.15.3) in place of the absurd *phala*—, though the *uttarapāda* must remain uncertain.

63.15

evam etan mayā dṛṣṭam imām rātrīm bhayāvahāṃ |

T₃, G₁, 2, M₁₋₃ : *bhayāvaham*; NR 1607+ : *evam eṣa mayā svapno dṛṣṭaḥ pāpo bhayāvahaḥ*. It is the dream, not the night, which is terrifying.

78.8

yadā tuṣṭas tu bharato rāmasyeha bhaviṣyati |
seyaṃ svastimatī senā gaṅgāṃ adya tariṣyati ||

T₁, 2, M₁, 2, G₂, 3, C_v, R, M : (a) *duṣṭas*; while the NR 1922+ offers, *yadi yāsyati sanduṣṭo* (*neyam...*). Cf. 79.7, *kaccin na duṣṭo vrajasi rāmasya...* Read thus : *yadāduṣṭas*.

77.19

nirikṣyānugatām senām tām ca gaṅgāṃ śivodakām |
(niveśayata me sainyam . . . (iti bharato 'bravid .) ||

1. The abbreviations used are those of the critical edition; additionally, NR=northern recension; SR=southern; C_{RA}=the commentary called *Rāmāyaṇaśirumaṇi*, C_S the commentary of Śaṭyātīrtha. [ā has been substituted by A for technical reasons—Editor]

T_{1,2}, G₃, D_T, D_D : *anutthitām* (C_{RA} : *gaṅgātire śamsthītām*; C_T : *gamane anudyogām* [*gaṅgayā nirodhāt*]); Ś, Ñ₁, V, B : (ca) *sthitām*; Ñ₂ : *stambhitām*. The verse presents a slight hysteron proteron (not at all uncommon in the epics), which perhaps occasioned the weak variant *anugatam* : “He saw the Gaṅgā with its kindly waters and the army halted (at it)”. Ñ₂ has brought out the full intention of the word with its “gloss”. Read thus : *anutthitām*.

19.9

anvag evāham icchāmi vanam gantum itaḥ punaḥ /

M₁, G₂; Ś, Ñ, V, B, D₁, 6 (ad 489+. 10) : *itaḥ purāt*. The corroborant testimony of the N MSS, hidden in a parallel version of the passage, was neglected. Similarly in 19.19,

kaścid daivena saumitre yoddhum utsahate pumān /

T, G₁, M₂, 3, C_K, T; Ś, Ñ, D₆ (ad 489+. 35 v. l.) : *kaś ca* (text of the parallel passage in the NR incorrectly established).

90.25

śarāṇām dhanuṣaś cāham anṛṇo 'smi mahāvane /

T_{1,2}, G_{1,3}, M₂ : *mahāmṛdhe*; Ñ₂, B, D₃, M₃ : *mahāhave* (which is probably the correct reading, though to account for the variant *mahāvane* one might conjecture *mahāraṇe*, cf. 16.21).

58.48

yadi mām śaṃspṛśed rāmaḥ sakṛd adyālabheta vā /

The commentators are quite at a loss on the second *pāda* : C_G reads *labheta*, glossing : *caḥsurviśayātām prāpnuyāt* (though Daśaratha will say in the next verse that he is blind); C_K interpolates a line to supply a direct object with *labheta*; C_{T,RA} read *anvārabheta* (C_T, *kiñciddvārā vā spṛśet*; C_{RA}, *paścādgamanārambham kuryāt*). On the other hand, G₂, M_{1,2} : *apy ālapeta*. This reading, recommended by sense, receives confirmation from the “gloss” of the NR, which unanimously offers, *saṃbhāṣetāpi (cāgataḥ)*. Both readings, however, may be faciliior for D_D, D_M *anvālabheta*, which is attested in *Mbh.* (crit. ed. V.35.10), glossed by Devabodha ad loc. as “*vade*”.

There are instances where the correct reading appears to have been lost throughout the SR, and can only be recovered by inferring from the NR.

30.10

adya nūnam daśarathaḥ sattvam āviśya bhāṣate /

As the line stands it is quite meaningless. The NR presents :

nūnam daśaratho 'nyena sattvenāviśacetanḥ / (785+)

The correct reading of the critical text should be : *daśaratham* (suggested also in C_K ed, note ad loc.).

21.11

tathety uvāca supṛitā (kausalyā)

In the NR we find : *tathety uvāca duḥkhārtā*. Obviously the reading required is : (a) *supṛita*, for the following verse is :

... (rāmaḥ) *abravid vākyam mātaram bhr̥ṣaduḥkhitām* |

60.2

kausalyā . vividham śokakarṣita |

Read *dvividham*; cf. NR (1518+) : *dvividhenāpi duḥkhena kausalyā bhr̥ṣaduḥkhitā*, and verse 4 of the same *sarga* : *vihāya mām gato rāmo bhartā ca svargato mama* |

68.2

(rājyād bhram̐śosva kaikeyi) |*parityaktā ca dharmena mā mṛtcm rudati bhava ||*

The commentators take *mā* either as negative (but Kaikeyī has not in any case been weeping for Daśaratha), or = *mām* (which is contextually meaningless—“abandoned by *dharma* bewep me who am, will be, dead”—and solecistic : a *pāda* may not, and in Vālmiki never does, commence with an enclitic. The NR (1741+.6) gives, *mām ṛte (sukhini bhava)*, suggesting we so read in the critical edition and understand, “*dharma* has abandoned you, and I shall too, and may you cry your eyes out without me”, *ṛte* with the accusative is, admittedly, rare (attested so far as I can tell in epic and purāṇic literature only in *Bhg.* 11.32 and *MatsyaP.* 106.24); but it is precisely this rarity coupled with the fact that Vālmiki should employ the construction elsewhere—VI.23.31—that adds conclusive support to the NR *pāṭha*.

63.4

vādayanti tathā śāntim lāsanty api cāpare |*(nāṭakāny apare prāhur . . .)*

śāntim is the reading of the entire SR, and its relation with *vādayanti* confuses the commentators (CGMTRA all must add *uddiṣya*, “in order to pacify [him]”; PW s. v. *śānti* understands “to wish one well”, which simply does not fit here, while the parallel it cites [V.69.28 vulg.] is removed in the critical edition [V.66.29]). The critical apparatus notes, “D₄, 5, 7 *gānti* (sic)”. The NR as a whole offers,

avādayaṇ jaguś cānye nanṭur . . . (1594+)

The three D MSS have preserved the correct reading (in fact the difficilior, as is *vādaya*—absolute), which the NR has glossed. The form of the verb, mistaken as a corruption by the editor, is authenticated by *Mbh.* V.107.9 (crit. ed.).

Occasionally the want of conclusive MS evidence requires that we approach the border of conjecture, which, though rightly eschewed by the editors of the critical edition,

we must be allowed judiciously and circumspectly to utilize when otherwise nonsense will remain.¹

101.22

bhūmiḥ kīrtir yaśo lakṣmiḥ puruṣaṃ prārthayanti hi |
svargasthaṃ cānubadhnanti satyam eva bhajeta tat ||

All MSS, according to the apparatus, agree on *svargasthaṃ*, save D_T, D_D, D_M, which offer *satyam samanuvartante*. Land and wealth do not attend the dead : you cannot take it with you even in Sanskrit poetry. A comparison with 99.19 (*narēndram satyastham... carāma*), and the evidence of the three D MSS, strongly suggest : *satyastham*.

20.5

asthāne sambhramo yasya jāto vai sumahān ayam |

None of the MSS which preserve this line convincingly clarifies the syntax of *yasya*, which has no referent (the commentators “*yasya te prasiddhasya*” is desperate). Conjecture : *sumahānayaḥ* [“This consternation is out of place, from which this great impolicy has come” (i.e., Rāma’s decision to abandon the kingship and retire to the forest)]: cf. 8.14, *sumahān anayaḥ* (*anaya* appears to be a Schlagwort of Vālmiki’s : II.72.4, V.19.10, 20.29, etc.).

I have had occasion more than once to use the term “gloss” for variants found in the NR. It is a peculiar, perhaps unique feature of this recension that it does not (unlike, say, either of the *Mahābhārata* recensions) only or merely transmit the archetype of the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*; it adapts it as well. In countless cases where the received text was evidently regarded as too obscure or difficult the NR simplifies—sometimes only with respect to a single lexical item, sometimes with respect to the syntactical organization, while sometimes it recasts the whole thought of a *śloka* into a more perspicuous form. (One might even hazard the suggestion that what we have here is the commencement of that process of “popularization” that issues ultimately in the great medieval vernacular translations.) The NR, as I hope to have shown, continues to corroborate the SR continues even sometimes to preserve or confirm the *lectio difficilior*—its evidence for constituting the text is in no way impugned by this additional objective, which elsewhere and frequently allows it to function as what could be regarded as our oldest commentary on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But of course like any other commentary its judgment must be scrutinized before being accepted.

Glosses :

17.7 *kṛtamaṅgalā* = *maṅgalavāḍinī* (409+.1)

1. One must, however, never be so bold as to over-rule the unanimous testimony of the MSS, as for example Vaidya has done ad II.23.30,

83.11 *svastikavijñe āḥ* (*rācch*) = *svastil acih āṅkāḥ* (contra the commentators, “(boats) called ‘svastikas’”)

21.11 *śubhadarśanā* = *dharmadarśini*

94.49 *vyāsane kaccid ādhyasya durgatasya ca...* = *kaccid ivadato ‘rtheṣu balino durbalasya ca* (2161+; *vyāsena* appears to be hapax in the sense of “at law”)

cf. above ad 77.19, 54.48. 63.4.

Syntactical reconstructions and periphrases :

19.22 *buddhiḥ praṇitā yeneyaṃ manaś ca susamāhitam* |
tat tu nārhaṃi saṃkleṣṭum pravrajīṣyāmi mā ciram ||

yena tat—“since...then”, *saṃkleṣṭum* used absolutely (contra all commentators), as appears from NR 489+.21-22 :

evam me niścītā buddhir manaś caiva samāhitam |
na vilambitum icchāmi...

47.26 *adharmabhayaabhītaś ca paralokasya cānagha* |
(tena lakṣmaṇa nādyāham ātmānam abhiśecaye ||

C_G, K, T : “(afraid) of the loss of the world to come”; C_s suggests *paraloka-parakiyajana*, which finds corroboration in NR 1122+ :

adharmaprapṛtibhīto ‘haṃ lokavāḍabhayena ca

(cf. 20.6, crit. ed. : *lokasyānatisaṅkayā*, where C_s’s understanding “from worry about the people’s respect [*ānati*, against all other commentators, who divide *anatisaṅkayā*], finds support in the NR, *lokavāḍabhayena*).

24.7 *prāsādāgrair imānair vā vaihāyasagatena vā* |
sarvāvasthagatā bhartuḥ pādacchāyā viśiṣyate ||

viśiṣyate to be construed exceptionally with the instrumental (for ablative), as per C_v, contra C_{K,T,RA}, for cf. NR 618+ :

harmyaprasādabhavanavimāṇebhyo ‘pi me prabho |
tava pādāśrayaḥ śreyān....

51.12 *kiṃ samarthan janasyāsya kiṃ priyaṃ kiṃ sukhāvaham* |
iti rāmeṇa nagaram piṭṛvat paripālitaṃ ||

C_M, K, T, RA : “The city (once) guarded by Rāma became worried thinking, ‘What will be good... (sc., from now on, since Rāma has left)’.” The NR adequately clarifies the construction intended :

... iti cintayātā tena jano ‘yaṃ paripālitaḥ ||¹

1. With the help of the NR we can, I think, fairly and certainly explain the old crux in the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, over which all commentators have been so exercised :

10.8 (santi me kuṣalā vcidyā) adhītuṣṭās ca sarvaśaḥ /
NR composite : *su vibhaktās ca ṛttibhiḥ*

56.10 *naiṣā hi sā stri bhavati ślāghaniyena dhimatā /*
ubhayor lokayor vira patyā yā samprasādyate //

C_M, K, T, R_A construe together *pāda*-s b and c, incorrectly ;
cf. NR 1359.+ (3—) 4

(devabhūtena bhartrā yā yāceta na prasidati /
kṛtāñjalibhṛṣārtena) hatā seha paratra ca //

27.26 *tava sarvaṃ abhiprāyaṃ avijñāya śubhānane /*
(vāsaṃ na rocaye 'raṇye . . .)

The implication—"I did not approve your dwelling in the wilderness just to see how you would react"—has been surmised also by the NR ; cf. 702+ :

tathā tava ca jījñāsur niścayaṃ śubhaniścaye /
(uktavān na naviṣye 'ham . . .)

The greater and far more difficult task of assembling the vast mass of manuscript materials has been excellently performed by the editors of the critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* ; but this raw stuff of textual criticism must continue to be processed by new readers, for what is written above the line must, to some extent, be considered provisional only.

respect to a single lexical item, sometimes it is a matter of degree, and sometimes it is a matter of kind. While sometimes it recasts the whole of a passage, sometimes it is a matter of degree, and sometimes it is a matter of kind. The process of "popularization" that issues ultimately in the SR continues even sometimes to preserve or confirm the facts, which elsewhere and

V. 7.68.

babhūva buddhis tu hariśvarasya yadīdṛśī rāghavadharmapatnī /
imā yathā rākṣasārājābhāryāḥ sujātam asyeti hi sādhubuddheḥ //

(69). *punaś ca so' cintayad ārtarūpo dhruvaṃ viśiṣṭā guṇato hi sītā /*
athāyaṃ asyaṃ kṛtavān mahātmā lañkeśvaraḥ kaṣṭham anāryakarm //

NR v. 1 ad 68d, *asyā iti*, which is intended to remove the old and difficult double *sandhi* of the archetype: The thought crossed Hanumān's mind—his thoughts were reasonable: if Sītā had been like these other women, it would have been far better for her. (For Sītā, he saw on further reflection, and to his bitter sorrow, excelled them all, and this it was which drove Rāvaṇa to do the ignoble thing he did).