

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE CARDINAL TEACHINGS OF ŚRĪ VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAṆA

*As an introduction to Chapter 5 of Canto 1 of Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, the commentator Śrī Govindarāja analyses the eighteen cardinal teachings of the Rāmāyaṇa that Rāmānujācārya had learnt from one of his spiritual masters, Śailapūrṇa.<sup>1</sup> The following is an abridged English rendition of this part of this commentary.<sup>2</sup> Because this is the most important part of the commentary, we have placed it at the beginning in this edition to orient the readers towards a proper understanding of the great Rāmāyaṇa of the great sage Vālmīki.*

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1. Those who accept Vedic authority accept the principle of *eka-vākyatā* and *samanvaya*, that is, the principle that all the Vedic scriptures harmoniously point towards the same conclusion. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains this in the Gītā (15.15) by saying *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ*: “I alone am the subject matter to be known, understood and realized by all the Vedas.” Since Rāmāyaṇa is greatly respected by Vyāsadeva in his writings, it is naturally understood that Vālmīki cannot have a purpose different from Vyāsa’s purpose, which is to clarify the teachings of the Vedānta (which is also clarified in the Bhagavad-gītā). The Rāmāyaṇa describes itself as a *kāvya*, a poem. Rhetoricians in India have long recognized that one of the impressive features of a *kāvya* is its suggestiveness, the importance of which is clear from rhetorical classics such as Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvany-āloka* (“Suggestiveness Illuminated”). Indeed, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra and Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa have accepted the critical importance of *suggestiveness* in good poetry in their writings. So, is it not reasonable to conclude that the original poet and God-realized sage Vālmīki, *upon being instructed by Lord Brahmā himself to write a poem on Rāmacandra*, would have extensively used the poetic technique of suggestion instead of directly trumpeting out the spiritual teachings he intends to convey? There is nothing unreasonable in Śrī Govindarāja’s assertion that these teachings *suggested* by Vālmīki in his Rāmāyaṇa are *factually* the cardinal teachings of this great work.

2. Sometimes we have quoted complete verses here when the commentator quotes fragments of those verses. We have done so to help the reader better comprehend the context of his discussion.

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The first four chapters of this Canto establishes the three extraordinary features of this literature in order to be respectfully accepted by great souls.<sup>3</sup> Thus, these chapters constitute an introduction to the Rāmāyaṇa containing the essence of this book.

One might wonder how the sage could describe the extraordinary features of a work *that he has not yet written*. The answer is that Śrī Vālmīki is a *tri-kālaḥ*, that is, capable of seeing the past, present and future—therefore, it is quite possible for him to do so.<sup>4</sup>

Another objection: How is it possible for sage Vālmīkī to compose Chapters 2 to 4 that glorify himself?<sup>5</sup> The answer to this is that they

3. The three extraordinary features of the Rāmāyaṇa are (1) the extraordinary characteristics of the author of this work, (2) the extraordinary characteristics of the mode of composition of this work, and (3) the extraordinary characteristics of the work itself. These features are pointed out and explained in the commentary to Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Canto 1 of the Rāmāyaṇa.

4. The question might arise: “Will not an author know his work even before he commits it to pen? Is it necessary to drag a *tri-kālaḥ* attribute for the author?” In response, it should be noted that when ordinary human beings plan to write a book, they have *some* idea of what they are going to write, and then begin writing over time as their ideas develop; they also revise their writing. But even before the great sage Vālmīki began to put the 24,000 verse Rāmāyaṇa into writing, he knew *exactly in detail* what would come out as the end result. This is not possible for ordinary or even talented human beings. But by the blessings of Lord Brahmā, Maharṣi Vālmīki became *tri-kālaḥ*, a knower of past, present and future. Even prior to that, he was a *ṛṣi—ūrdhva-retās tapasy ugro niyatāsī ca samyamī / śāpānugrahayoḥ śaktaḥ satya-sandho bhaved ṛṣiḥ*: “A ṛṣi is one whose semen flows upward, who is fierce in observing austere vows, who eats moderately, controls his senses, is able to curse and bless, and adheres firmly to the truth.” (Devala Ṛṣi quoted by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary on Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta 2.1.106)

5. *Svayam eva sva-māhātmyam kathayate yan na tat satām / sammataṁ syāt*: “Describing one’s own glories is disapproved by spiritual authorities.” *Tat sva-māhātmya-kathanam satām sammataṁ na syāt, “sva-prasamsā dhruvo mṛtyuḥ” ity-ādy-ukteḥ*: “Spiritual authorities disapprove describing one’s own glories through statements such as ‘Self-praise is as good as death.’” (Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta 2.1.106 and

recount incidents that otherwise would remain unknown, and the sage was obliged to include them in order to interest the intelligent to read the Rāmāyaṇa.

Rāmānujācārya, the best of the renunciants, learnt from Śrī Śailapūrṇa the eighteen [cardinal] teachings of the Rāmāyaṇa. I will present them as I have learnt them from my spiritual master.<sup>6</sup>

## SECTION 1

This composition, Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, elucidates the Veda and as such it also elucidates the Vedānta:

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commentary) From the third chapter of the Rāmāyaṇa, it is clear that the sage Vālmīki saw in meditational trance events from the pastimes of Lord Rāma and His associates *in vivid detail* even though they don't appear in Nārada Muni's brief outline of the Rāmāyaṇa in the first chapter of the Rāmāyaṇa. The second chapter describes that he was directly blessed by Lord Brahmā *who came to his āśrama* and instructed him to write the Rāmāyaṇa. His Rāmāyaṇa was also very appreciated by *other* renunciants of his time as being sweet and bona fide as noted in the fourth chapter. All of this is a description of Vālmīki's glory of being the recipient of the special blessings of Nārada Muni and Lord Brahmā. But he had to write out his glory in order to convince intelligent readers that his huge work is worthy of being studied by them. As we will see later on, Śrī Rāmāyaṇa describes Rāma-līlā and is also a part of Rāma-līla. Indeed, it is Lord Rāma's eternal message to the conditioned souls.

6. These two sentences appear in the original at the end of the first cardinal teaching of Rāmāyaṇa. We have placed them here to make the subject clearer. There is no reason to doubt the validity of the assertion that Rāmānujācārya had learnt these teachings from one of his gurus, Śailapūrṇa. The other biographical traditions of the Rāmānuja school *do* say that Śrī Rāmānuja had learnt the import of the Rāmāyaṇa. This is also not an area of dispute between the two main branches of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya. It is also generally acknowledged that a significant portion of knowledge transmission in the traditions of medieval India was *oral* in nature, with texts serving more as mnemonic aids rather than as exhaustive descriptions of their thought systems. In fact, the venerated scholar Sudarśanācārya, an elder contemporary of Vedānta-deśika, gave his monumental subcommentary on Śrī Rāmānuja's Śrī-bhāṣya called *Śruta-prakāśikā*, "the subcommentary that reveals what I have learnt [from my guru]." So, Śrī Govindarāja's statement that he understood these 18 teachings of the Rāmāyaṇa through an oral tradition starting from Śailapūrṇa and coming through a disciplic succession *is* reasonable.

*prāyeṇa pūrva-bhāgārtho dharma-śāstreṇa kathyate  
itihāsa-purāṇābhyām vedāntārthaḥ prakāśyate*

“The teachings of Śrī Jaiminī’s Pūrva-mīmāṃsā are mainly stated in the Dharma-śāstras and the teachings of Śrī Vyāsa’s Vedānta-sūtra are revealed in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas.”<sup>7</sup>

In this regard, the Śruti states:

*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat prayanty  
abhisamviśanti tad vijijñāsasva.*

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7. Jaiminī’s Pūrva-mīmāṃsā presents the teachings of the Brāhmaṇa, Saṁhitā and Araṇyaka portions of the four Vedas; these teachings are elucidated in the Dharma-śāstras. Vyāsadeva’s Uttara-mīmāṃsā (also known as the Vedānta-sūtra) presents the teachings of the Upaniṣad portion of the four Vedas, which are elucidated in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas. The Itihāsas are Vyāsadeva’s Mahābhārata and Maharṣi Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa. The Purāṇas are eighteen in number. See Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 12, Chapter 7 for more details on the Purāṇas. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī notes in his Tattva-sandarbhā (12)—*veda-śabdasya samprati duṣpāratvād duradhigamārthatvāc ca tad-artha-nirṇāyakānām munīnām api paraspara-virodhād veda-rūpo vedārtha-nirṇāyakaś cetihāsa-purāṇātmakeḥ śabda eva vicāraṇīyaḥ*: “Because the texts of the [four] Vedas cannot be studied in present times [completely], its meaning difficult to be understood and because even the sages who have described the teachings of the [four] Vedas contradict each other, one should examine the Veda in the form of the Itihāsas and Purāṇas that [accurately] describe the import of the [four] Vedas.” This reaffirms the point that the Rāmāyaṇa, as an Itihāsa, elucidates the teachings of the Veda that contains the Upaniṣads which teach Vedānta philosophy. Traditionally, systems of philosophy in India are categorized into those that do accept Vedic authority and those that do not. The former are traditionally enlisted as six: (1) Nyāya, (2) Vaiśeṣika, (3) Sāṅkhya, (4) Yoga, (5) Pūrva-mīmāṃsā and (6) Vedānta-sūtra which rationally points out the problems with the concepts espoused by adherents of the first five systems of philosophy and summarizes and clarifies the teachings of the Upaniṣads correctly. Śrī Vedānta-deśika of the Rāmānuja school presents strong arguments to show that Jaiminī’s Pūrva-mīmāṃsā text was not properly understood by those who claimed to be his followers, and that it has to be studied in tandem with the Vedānta-sūtra. Those interested in studying these philosophies can go through Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s Govinda-bhāṣya and Siddhānta-ratna with the Sūkṣma-ṭikā commentary as well as the commentaries on the Vedānta-sūtra by exponents of the four Vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas.

“Inquire about the [Supreme Brahman] who is the source of the creation, maintenance and dissolution and liberation of all creatures [of this world].” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1)

Is that Supreme Brahman Viṣṇu or one among deities such as Brahmā and Rudra? The Rāmāyaṇa asserts that Supreme Brahman is Viṣṇu, who has descended as Rāma, alone.

This is ratified by examining the following six signs:

*upakramopasamhārāv abhyāso ’pūrvatā phalam  
arthavāḍopapattī ca liṅgam tātparya-nirṇaye*

“The signs used to determine overall meaning are *beginning, conclusion, repetition, novelty, result, praise and logical reason.*”<sup>8</sup>

This method of analysis by checking for these six signs will now be applied to ascertain the identity of the Supreme Brahman in the Rāmāyaṇa.<sup>9</sup>

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8. *Praise and logical reason* count as a single sign. This verse from Bṛhat-saṁhitā is quoted by Śrī Madhvācārya in his commentary to the Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.4.

9. Regarding the six signs, Śrī Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu has commented as follows in his explanation to the Tattva-sandarbhā Sarva-saṁvādinī text 54: “An extended passage of a text may discuss several themes, thus causing difficulty in judging what the main theme of the passage is. The method of deciding by these six signs is provided for resolving such doubts. If an idea is mentioned both at the beginning and at the end of a passage, that idea is likely to be the central theme. Again, the idea is likely to be the central theme if it is mentioned repeatedly, if it is introduced as new information not revealed before, if knowing or executing the idea is said to lead to a special result, if the idea is highly praised, and if a logical argument is presented to establish its importance. By comparing which of these signs are present or absent for each of a number of alternative themes, one can determine the actual theme. And when an alternative has *gati-sāmānya* or the concurrence of more than one sign, it becomes an especially likely candidate. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses this method several times in the *Sandarbhās*—for example, near the end of *Śrī Paramātma-sandarbhā* (105) when he demonstrates the Bhāgavatam’s principal theme.”

## BEGINNING

The Rāmāyaṇa begins with Vālmīki's questions (1.1.1-5) to Nārada. These questions aim at ascertaining whether the Supreme Brahman, described in the Upaniṣads as possessing the qualities expressed in those questions, is Viṣṇu or someone else, that is, one among those headed by Brahmā. Nārada Muni answers by identifying the person with those qualities as Rāma born in the dynasty of Ikṣvāku (1.1.8). [In other words, it is Lord Viṣṇu who possesses all those attributes of the Supreme Brahman.]

## CONCLUSION

Towards the end of the Rāmāyaṇa is a statement by the four-faced Brahmā [conveyed to Lord Rāma through Rudra]:

*tavāhaṃ pūrva-sad-bhāve putraḥ para-purañjayaḥ*  
*[māyā-sambhāvito vīra kālāḥ sarva-samāharaḥ*  
*pitāmahaś ca bhagavān āha loka-patiḥ prabhuh]*

*sañkṣipyā ca purā lokān māyayā svayam eva hi*  
*mahārṇave śayāno 'psu mām tvaṃ pūrvam ajījanaḥ*

*padme divye 'rka-saṅkāśe nābhyām utpadya mām api*  
*prājāpatyaṃ tvayā karma mayi sarvaṃ niveśitam*

[Rudra told Rāma:] “In a former birth, I was Your son, O conqueror of the cities of Your opponents. [O hero, I was born to Māyā then. I am Time, the all-destroyer.] The powerful grandfather, Lord and master of the worlds Brahmā has stated as follows [in a message to be conveyed to You]: ‘In the past, You Yourself wound up the worlds of the animate and inanimate through Your varied potency of Māyā. While lying on the waters of great [Garbhodaka] ocean, You gave birth to me. . . . You gave birth to me from Your divine

lotus navel that was as brilliant as the sun and gave me the entire responsibility of the creation of the creatures.” (7.104.2, 3, 4 and 7)

Through statements such as the above, it is admitted that Lord Viṣṇu alone is the Supreme Brahman, the cause of all the universes, since He has been stated to be the cause of all universes and the generator of the creator of the creatures.

### REPETITION

This point that Lord Viṣṇu alone possesses the features of the Supreme Brahman as described in the Upaniṣads is repeated [throughout the Rāmāyaṇa].

1. Canto 1 (Bāla-kāṇḍa):
  - a. When Lord Brahmā approached Lord Viṣṇu to incarnate as the son of Daśaratha, it is mentioned that He is the cause of the universe—*etasminn antare viṣṇur upajāto mahā-dyutiḥ / śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-pāṇiḥ pīta-vāsā jagat-patiḥ*: “At this time, the greatly effulgent Lord of the universe, Lord Viṣṇu bearing in His hands a conch, discus and mace, dressed in yellow cloth, appeared.” (1.15.16).
  - b. The demigods then prayed to Him acknowledging Him to be the Supreme Being whose uncommon quality is that He is object of surrender for all— *tvam gatiḥ paramā deva sarveṣāṃ naḥ parantapa*: “O Lord, You alone are the supreme means of auspiciousness for all of us. O tormentor of Your enemies, kindly resolve to incarnate in the world of humans to kill the enemies of the devas.” (1.15.26).
  - c. Then, it is mentioned that all of the devas offered prayers unto Him, demonstrating that He is meant to be offered

prayers by everyone—*tato deva-rṣi-gandharvāḥ sarudrāḥ sāpsaro-gaṇāḥ / stutibhir divya-rūpābhis tuṣṭuvur madhusūdanam*: “Then, devas, ṛṣis, gandharvas, the rudras and the apsarās glorified the killer of the Madhu demon with poetic praises that describe His divine, spiritual nature.” (1.15.32).

- d. Then there is the statement of Viśvāmitra—*ahaṁ vedmi mahātmānam rāmaṁ satya-parākramam / vasiṣṭho 'pi mahā-tejā ye ceme tapasi sthitāḥ*: “I am aware that Rāma is the Supreme Soul and that His prowess is true. Even Vasiṣṭha of great prowess and all those here situated in austerities also know this.” (1.19.14). Without the strength of austerity, one cannot know and understand the nature of the Supreme Being, the Mahāpuruṣa. This is stated in the Śruti as follows: (1) *vedāham etaṁ puruṣam mahāntam*: “I know this Supreme Being to be the Mahāpuruṣa, the Great Being.” (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8), and (2) *tam etaṁ vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasānāśakena*: “Brāhmaṇas desire to understand this Supreme Person through Vedic studies, sacrifices, charities, austerities and fasting.” (Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.22)
- e. During Sītā's wedding, Vasiṣṭha also revealed that Lord Viṣṇu is the original cause of all—*avyakta-prabhavo brahmā śāśvato nitya avyayaḥ / tasmān marīciḥ saṁjajñe marīceḥ kāśyapaḥ sutaḥ*: “From the unmanifest Lord was born Brahmā, eternal, ever-lasting and inexhaustible. From him, Marīci was born. Marīci's son was Kaśyapa.”



(1.70.19) [The “unmanifest Lord” is none other than Lord Viṣṇu as seen from the statement of Lord Brahmā to Lord Rāma in 7.104.7 quoted above.]

- f. Paraśurāma also pointed out that Lord Viṣṇu is the supreme among the worshipable deities—*adhikam menire viṣṇuṁ devāḥ sarṣigaṇās tadā*: “The devas and ṛṣis concluded that Lord Viṣṇu is greater [than Lord Śiva].” (1.75.20)

2. Canto 2 (Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa):

- a. Lord Viṣṇu is described as being eternal—*sa hi devair udīrṇasya rāvaṇasya vadhārthibhiḥ / arthito mānuṣe loke jajñe viṣṇuḥ sanātanaḥ*: “Indeed, that eternal Lord Viṣṇu, upon being beseeched by the devas who wanted the vehement Rāvaṇa killed, took birth in the world of humans.”<sup>10</sup> (2.1.7)
- b. Later, He is also referred to as the self-effulgent and all-pervading source of Brahmā—*ākāśa-prabhavo brahmā śāśvato nitya avyayaḥ*: “From the all-pervading self-effulgent Lord was born Brahmā who is everlasting, eternal and inexhaustible.” (2.110.5)

3. Canto 3 (Araṇya-kāṇḍa): Mārīca tells Rāvaṇa that Rāma is of unbounded glory—*aprameyam hi tat-tejo yasya sājānakātmajā*: “Unbounded is the prowess of the possessor of Janaka’s daughter.” (3.37.18)<sup>11</sup>

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10. That Lord Viṣṇu is *eternal* is clear evidence that He has an eternal identity and hence cannot be a *conditioned* soul, whose names, forms and identities are non-eternal.

11. In the same conversation, Mārīca tells Rāvaṇa quite explicitly that Śrī Rāma is the Lord of everyone just as Indra is the Lord of the devas: *rājā sarvasya lokasya devānām maghavān iva* (3.37.13)

4. Canto 4 (Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa): Tārā describes Lord Rāma as being a reservoir of all auspicious qualities headed by knowledge and bliss.<sup>12</sup>

a. Tārā to Vālī—*nivāsa-vṛkṣaḥ sādḥūnām āpannānām parā gatiḥ / ārtānām samśrayaś caiva yaśasaś caikabhājanam; jñāna-vijñāna-sampanno nideśo nirataḥ pituḥ / dhātūnām iva śailendro guṇānām ākaro mahān*: “He is a sheltering tree for the sādhus, the ultimate sanctuary for those who approach Him for shelter, the refuge of those who surrender unto Him in distress and the sole repository of fame. Endowed with knowledge and realization, He is absorbed in carrying out the instructions of His father. Like the Himālayas for valuable minerals, He is a great reservoir of all auspicious qualities.” (4.15.19-20)

b. Tārā to Rāma—*tvam aprameyaś ca durāsadaś ca jitendriyaś cottama-dhārmikaś ca / akṣayya-kīrtiś ca vicakṣaṇaś ca kṣiti-kṣamāvān kṣatajopamākṣah*: “You are unfathomable, unassailable, sense controlled, supremely dhārmika, filled with inexhaustible fame, expert, forgiving like the earth and with eyes red in the corners.” (4.24.31)

5. Canto 5 (Sundara-kāṇḍa):

a. Lord Rāma is pointed out as the destroyer of all—*brahmā svayam-bhūś caturānāno vā rudras tri-netras tripurāntako vā / indro mahendraḥ sura-nāyako vā trātum na śaktā yudhi rāma-vadhyam*: “Neither the self-born Brahmā

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12. How did Tārā know about Rāma? That is noted in 4.15.15-16. She learnt about Rāmacandra and Lakṣmaṇa from Aṅgada who learnt about Them from his spies in the forest who had observed Sugrīva’s pact with Rāma. This confirms that people in general knew very well that Lord Rāma is the Supreme Being. Even Maṇḍodarī, Rāvaṇa’s wife, knew this, as we will notice in Canto 6.

of four faces, nor the three-eyed Rudra who destroyed Tripura, nor the opulent Mahendra who rules over the devas can protect in battle a person Rāma wants to kill.” (5.51.45)

- b. The form of Lord Viṣṇu is described as being unlimited—*kim vaiṣṇavaṁ vā kapi-rūpam etya rakṣo-vināśāya paraṁ sutejaḥ / anantam avyaktam acintya-rūpaṁ sva-māyayā sāmpratam āgataṁ vā*: “Or did the great transcendental prowess of Lord Viṣṇu appear now, having assumed, by His magical powers, the form of a monkey to destroy the rākṣasas? That prowess is unlimited, unmanifest, inconceivable, unrivalled.” (5.54.48)

6. Canto 6 (Yuddha-kāṇḍa): One might object to the assertion that Lord Viṣṇu alone is the ultimate cause of the universes on the basis of statements such as: (1) *hiranyagarbhaḥ samavartata agre*: “Hiranyagarbha was in the beginning.” (Ṛg Veda 10.121), (2) *yadā tamas tan na diva na rātrir na san na cāsac chiva eva kevalaḥ*: “When there was darkness, there was neither day nor night, neither existence nor non-existence—Śiva alone [existed].” (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.18), (3) *indro māyābhiḥ puru-rūpa īyate*: “Indra appears in many forms by dint of his mystic powers.” (Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.5.19) However, in answer to this, it is pointed out that in the context of each of these statements, these names (Hiranyagarbha, Śiva and Indra) are not names of the deities commonly known by those names; rather, they are actually words [literally] describing Lord Viṣṇu [because, literally, Hiranyagarbha means “the source of the golden Brahmāṇḍa,” Śiva means “the auspicious one” and Indra means “the Lord”]. They are similar to words like Sat (“eternally existing”), Brahman (“the Great Being”) and Ātmā

(“the ultimate soul”) [which are generic adjectives describing Lord Viṣṇu]. With this in mind, the following statements have been made [in Canto 6]:

- a. [Maṇḍodarī tells Rāma] that He is the Supreme Soul, the eternal husband of Śrī and so on—*vyaktam eṣa mahā-yogī paramātmā sanātanaḥ / anādi-madhya-nidhano mahataḥ paramo mahān; tamasaḥ paramo dhātā śaṅkha-cakra-gadādharah / śrīvatsa-vakṣā nitya-śrīr ajayyaḥ śāsvato dhruvaḥ*: “Certainly, this is that great yogī, the eternal Supreme Soul without beginning, middle and end, the great one superior to the great, situated far beyond the darkness of matter, the nourisher, the one who holds a conch, disc and a mace, the one who has Śrīvatsa on His chest, who is eternally with Śrī, the one who is unconquerable, who is beyond decay and transformation.” (6.114.14-15)
- b. Later on, [Lord Brahmā] states that He [alone] can be referred to by the expression “Nārāyaṇa”—*bhagavān nārāyaṇo devaḥ śrīmāṁś cakrāyudho vibhuḥ / eka-śṛṅgo varāhas tvaṁ bhūta-bhavya-sapatnajit*: “You are the all-pervading Lord Nārāyaṇa, the husband of Śrī, and the wielder of the disc. You were the one-horned Varāha. You have conquered Your opponents in the past and will do so in the future.” (6.120.13)<sup>13</sup>

## NOVELTY

*Novelty* indicates an understanding that can come from no other source of valid knowledge. Indeed, the fact the Supreme Truth is

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13. The commentator does not present statements about the glorious position of Lord Viṣṇu as set out in Canto 7 (Uttara-kāṇḍa) probably because this Canto is *too* explicit in presenting the details of His glories.

Lord Viṣṇu cannot be understood from any other source of valid knowledge.

## RESULT

The result [of surrendering unto Lord Rāma] is attainment of His abode and so on. This is very explicit at the end of the Rāmāyaṇa.<sup>14</sup>

## PRAISE AND LOGICAL REASON

The supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu [over Lord Śiva] has been shown in Canto 1, Chapter 75. This chapter first praises Lord Viṣṇu and then [describes an incident proving Lord Viṣṇu's supremacy over Lord Śiva thus: After Lord Śiva destroyed Tripura, an extremely difficult task, desiring to see who among Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu is strong and and who is weak, all the demigods asked Grandfather Brahmā who among the two is stronger. Having understood the intention of the demigods, Grandfather Brahmā, the best of the truthful, created a quarrel between them. When a quarrel between them came about, there was a great battle between Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu, each desiring to conquer the other, that caused the hairs on the bodies of the viewers to stand on end. Then, by Lord Viṣṇu's sounding of hum, Lord Śiva's bow of terrible prowess was stretched and Mahādeva of three eyes was brought to a standstill. The devas then came together with the ṛṣis and the cāraṇas and pleaded for peace. Consequently, both of the best of the celestials became peaceful. Having noticed that Lord Śiva's bow was stretched by Lord Viṣṇu's prowess, the devas and ṛṣis concluded that Lord Viṣṇu is greater than Lord Śiva. Then, having worshipped Lord Viṣṇu and having taking permission from Lord Śiva, the demigods departed

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14. At the end of the Rāmāyaṇa, it is described that by the mercy of Lord Rāmacandra, all of the residents of Ayodhyā were liberated from material existence. Indeed, they attained His abode along with Him when He returned to the spiritual world.

to the heavens while keeping Lord Brahmā, Indra and other leaders in front of them.]

In this description, the following text occurs:

*jṛmbhitam tad dhanur dr̥ṣṭvā śaivam viṣṇu-parākramaiḥ  
adhikam menire viṣṇum devāḥ sarṣi-gaṇās tadā*

“Having noticed that Lord Śiva’s bow was stretched by Lord Viṣṇu’s prowess, the devas and ṛṣis concluded that Lord Viṣṇu is greater [than Lord Śiva].” (1.75.20)

A logical reason is presented here in the context of this event for the devas headed by Brahmā and the sages rationally investigated [the issue of who is supreme] and ascertained that Lord Viṣṇu is superior to Lord Śiva.

One cannot counter-argue that *menire* (literally “considered”) in the above quoted verse indicates that Lord Viṣṇu’s victory over Lord Śiva was due to some benediction [He had received], for in that case, Lord Śiva would *not* have been angry about this incident.<sup>15</sup> That is noted immediately after this incident:

*dhanū rudras tu saṅkruddho videheṣu mahā-yaśāḥ  
devarātasya rāja-rṣer dadau haste sasāyakam*

“The angry Rudra, however, gave away his bow and arrows to the hands of the greatly famous and saintly king Devarāta in the country of Videha.” (1.75.22)

One might object, “If Lord Viṣṇu is the supreme worshipable deity, how come He takes *birth* as Rāma?” This is a baseless objection because the Śruti notes:

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15. If Lord Viṣṇu conquered over Lord Śiva due to some benediction, there would have been no reason for the latter to continue to retain his anger. See the note to 1.75.1 to better understand incidents such as this and others about Lord Śiva as found in the Rāmāyaṇa.

*ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate*

“The Supreme Being takes birth in many forms while remaining unborn.” (Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 3.12.13.8) He appears in the material worlds to award protection to them.

The Supreme Being also possesses another extraordinary feature: the ability to bestow liberation from material existence. In the Rāmāyaṇa (3.68.29-30), [Lord Rāma blesses Jaṭāyu with liberation from material existence]:

*yā gatiḥ yajna-śīlānām āhitāgneś ca yā gatiḥ  
aparāvartinām yā ca yā ca bhūmi-pradāyinām*

*mayā tvaṁ samanujñāto gaccha lokān anuttamān  
grdhra-rāja mahā-sattva saṁskṛtaś ca mayā vraja*

“With My permission, go to those unrivalled worlds that are the goals of those who properly perform fire sacrifices, the goals who perform austerities surrounded by fires, the goals of those who do not return [to material existence] and the goals of those who renounce their properties. O king of the vultures, O great being, purified by Me, go!”

In these Rāmāyaṇa verses, “those who do not return” refers to those who are liberated from material existence, as noted in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.15.1.4—*na ca punar āvartate*: “[One who reaches the abode of the Supreme Lord] does not return [to this material world.]”

“Those who do not return” in these Rāmāyaṇa verses does not refer to kṣatriyas who do not turn back because if a kṣatriya who does not turn back dies, he will naturally attain its result—it does not require the Supreme Lord’s [special] favor. Rather, this expression in these Rāmāyaṇa verses refers to attaining liberation, the superior result

of fire sacrifices, austerities and so on. Therefore, the Narasimha Purāṇa has stated in this regard:

*mat-kṛte nidhanam yasmāt tvayā prāptam dvijottama  
tasmāt tvam mat-prasādena viṣṇu-lokam avāpsyasi*

[Lord Viṣṇu said:] “O best of the twice-born, because you have given up your body for My sake, by My mercy, you will attain Viṣṇuloka.”

Thus, it is clear that Śrī Rāmāyaṇa elucidates the teaching of the Upaniṣads [also known as the Vedānta] that the Supreme Truth who can be known, understood and realized through the Vedānta in accordance with the six signs used to determine the overall meaning of śāstra is Lord Viṣṇu, not Brahmā, Śiva and so on. This is also stated by Brahmā towards the end of the Rāmāyaṇa:

*asyās tu pariṣan-madhye yad bravīmi nibodha tat  
etad eva hi kāvyam te kāvyānām uttamam śrutam  
sarvam vistarato rāma vyākhyāsyati na samśayaḥ  
ādi-kāvyam idam rāma tvayi sarvam pratiṣṭhitam  
na hy anyo ’rhati kāvyānām yaśo-bhāg rāghavād ṛte*

“Listen to what I say in the midst of this assembly. This is the best of all poems that have been heard [by me]. O Rāma, the entirety of this poem will be elaborately made known [by Vālmiki and his followers]. This original poem is entirely based on Your activities, O Rāma. Other than You, Rāghava, no one else deserves to be famous in poems as a hero.” (7.98.15-16, 18)

Under these circumstances, the idea babbled by a newcomer [to the study of the Rāmāyaṇa] that the Rāmāyaṇa is actually indirectly suggestive of the supremacy of Lord Śiva [over Lord Viṣṇu] as the Supreme Being is nothing but a joke, a prattle of an ignoramus,



for the last verse quoted above clearly states that [according to the highest authority, Lord Brahmā,] no one other than Lord Viṣṇu deserves to be famous in poems as a hero. Activities of Rāma such as His approaching the sun-god for help should be understood to be in line with His humanlike mood similar to His worship of and service to Viśvāmitra and other elders. Specific details will be pointed out wherever appropriate.

Canto 1 of the Rāmāyaṇa reveals that Śrī Viṣṇu is the cause of the appearance of the universe. Canto 2 reveals that He is the cause of its maintenance. Canto 3 reveals that He is the giver of liberation. Canto 4 describes Him as the possessor of the prosperity of all auspicious qualities. Canto 5 describes Him as the destroyer of all. Canto 6 describes Him as knowable through the Upaniṣads. Canto 7 describes Him as the cause of the creator of the universe. Thus it has been clearly ascertained that Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Lord Rāma is the Supreme Truth.<sup>16</sup>

## SECTION 2

By what means can the above-mentioned Supreme Truth be attained? Anticipating this question, the sage Vālmīki describes the process of surrender unto Him in this Rāmāyaṇa, thus elucidating the Vedic description of the process of surrender unto Him:

*yo brahmāṇaṁ vidadhāti pūrvaṁ yo vai  
vedāṁś ca prahiṇoti tasmai  
taṁ ha devam ātma-buddhi-prakāśaṁ  
mumukṣur vai śaraṇam ahaṁ prapadye*

“Because I desire liberation, let me surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who first enlightened Lord Brahmā in Vedic knowledge through Lord Brahmā’s heart. The Lord is the

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16. Meaning He is the Supreme Brahman.

original source of all enlightenment and spiritual advancement.”<sup>17</sup>  
(Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.18)

Indeed, from the beginning of the Rāmāyaṇa to its end, Śrī Vālmīki presents *surrender* as the means to attain all sorts of benefits by illustrating the attainment of specific results by persons eligible for them by surrendering [unto those who are capable of fulfilling those desires and who are compassionate upon such surrendered souls].<sup>18</sup>

[There are six items of surrender as taught in the scriptures: (1) to do whatever is pleasing to the object of surrender, (b) to avoid whatever is displeasing to the object of surrender, (c) to have great faith that the object of surrender will protect the surrendered soul, that is, will grant the result desired by the surrendered soul and protect the surrendered soul from all obstacles to the fulfillment of their desired result, (d) to beseech the object of surrender to protect him, (e) to submit oneself completely, that is, to give up the consideration of submitting unto anyone else, and (f) to

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17. The translation is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s and occurs in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 8.264 purport.

18. *Surrender* unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead is also the central teaching of Bhagavad-gītā. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in his Preface to *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*: “Lord Kṛṣṇa’s ultimate instruction in Bhagavad-gītā is that everyone should surrender unto Him, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa promises to take immediate charge of such a surrendered soul. The Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is already in charge of the maintenance of this creation by virtue of His plenary expansion, Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, but this maintenance is not direct. However, when the Lord says that He takes charge of His pure devotee, He actually takes direct charge. A pure devotee is a soul who is forever surrendered to the Lord, just as a child is surrendered to his parents or an animal to its master.” Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has also elaborately described the process of surrender in his Bengali prayer booklet *Śaraṇāgati*. We request interested Vaiṣṇavas to go through it to better understand what *surrender* unto the Lord means and what it does not mean. At *Rūpa Raghunātha Vāñī Publications*, we intend to publish an edition of this important booklet with Bengali-English equivalents, translation and detailed references to the writings of our predecessor-ācāryas and śāstra.

submit oneself helplessly, that is, to give up all other endeavors in this regard. This is what is technically referred to as *śaraṇāgati* or surrender.]<sup>19</sup>

The various aspects of the process of surrender are set out below with reference to incidents described in the Rāmāyaṇa.

1. At the beginning, Śrī Vālmīki describes the supreme master and Lord of all as waiting for the opportunity to protect His surrendered devotees. [As soon as the devas surrender unto Him and beseech Him to save them from the torments of Rāvaṇa,] He became brilliant [in satisfaction] thinking, “I have now got the opportunity to protect those who have surrendered unto Me,” and appeared with His weapons for protecting them,

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19. Lord Caitanya quotes the following verse from the Vaiṣṇava-tantra—*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam / rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso goptṛtve varaṇam tathā / ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ*: “The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one’s guardian or master, full self-surrender, and humility.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.100) Śrīla Prabhupāda has commented, “One who is fully surrendered is qualified with the six following characteristics: (1) The devotee has to accept everything that is favorable for the rendering of transcendental loving service to the Lord. (2) He must reject everything unfavorable to the Lord’s service. This is also called renunciation. (3) A devotee must be firmly convinced that Kṛṣṇa will give him protection. No one else can actually give one protection, and being firmly convinced of this is called faith. This kind of faith is different from the faith of an impersonalist who wants to merge into the Brahman effulgence in order to benefit by cessation of repeated birth and death. A devotee wants to remain always in the Lord’s service. In this way, Kṛṣṇa is merciful to His devotee and gives him all protection from the dangers found on the path of devotional service. (4) The devotee should accept Kṛṣṇa as his supreme maintainer and master. He should not think that he is being protected by a demigod. He should depend only on Kṛṣṇa, considering Him the only protector. The devotee must be firmly convinced that within the three worlds he has no protector or maintainer other than Kṛṣṇa. (5) Self-surrender means remembering that one’s activities and desires are not independent. The devotee is completely dependent on Kṛṣṇa, and he acts and thinks as Kṛṣṇa desires. (6) The devotee is meek and humble.”

and stood amidst them, fully ready to award them protection [from any danger]. This is stated as:

*etasminn antare viṣṇur upayāto mahā-dyutiḥ  
śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-pāṇiḥ pīta-vāsā jagat-patiḥ*

“At this time, the greatly effulgent Lord of the universe, Lord Viṣṇu bearing in His hands a conch, discus and mace, dressed in yellow cloth, appeared.” (1.15.16)

2. At that time, the devas headed by Brahmā and Rudra surrendered unto Lord Viṣṇu, begging Him to award them the result of killing Rāvaṇa:

*vadhārthaṁ vayam āyātās tasya vai munibhiḥ saha  
siddha-gandharva-yakṣās ca tatas tvām śaraṇaṁ gatāḥ*

“We have assembled here along with the sages so that he may be killed. The siddhas, gandharvas and yakṣas take shelter of You for this reason.” (1.15.25)

3. In the Rāmāyaṇa, the sage Vālmiki also describes in detail how persons such as Triśaṅku and Śunaḥśepa surrendered unto persons such as Viśvāmitra. He does this to point out that (a) the highest duty (dharma) is to award protection to a surrendered soul and that (b) if one surrenders unto a person who is fully capable of awarding the desired protection and who is compassionate upon the surrendered soul, such surrender will invariably lead to the desired success.<sup>20</sup>

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20. Triśaṅku was a king in the line of Ikṣvāku who had wanted to go to Svarga in his own body through certain Vedic procedures. Though he was cursed by Vasiṣṭha’s sons to attain the status of one who is born as a caṇḍāla, he surrendered unto Viśvāmitra who was capable of fulfilling his desire and who became compassionate upon him. Viśvāmitra fulfilled his desire, even at the risk of inconveniencing the demigods. Śunaḥśepa was Viśvāmitra’s nephew. He had been sold off by his parents to a king as a man-animal to be sacrificed by that king. By providence, Śunaḥśepa happened to meet Viśvāmitra and surrendered unto

4. Śrī Vālmīki also points out that while surrendering unto the Supreme Lord, one must first submit to His consort, who mediates between the surrendered soul and the Lord and pleads for His mercy upon the surrendered soul:

*sa bhrātuś caraṇau gādham nīpīḍya raghu-nandanah  
sītām uvācātiyaśā rāghavaṁ ca mahā-vratam*

“Holding His brother’s feet tightly, the greatly famous Lakṣmaṇa, the beloved descendant of Raghu, spoke to Sītā and Rāghava of great resolve.” (2.30.2)

5. Bharata surrendered unto Rāma desiring the result of Rāma’s coronation as the king of Ayodhyā. [Indeed, He even said:]

*śeṣye purastāc chālāyā yāvan na pratiyāsyati*

“I will sleep in front of a hut here until Rāma returns [to Ayodhyā and becomes its ruler].” (2.111.14)

[But it appears that Rāmacandra did not fulfil Bharata’s desire though He surrendered unto Him. Why is that?] In this situation, Rāma had come out [of Ayodhyā] to grant the result of the devas’ surrender unto Him when they had beseeched Him to kill Rāvaṇa. Therefore, Lord Rāma gave Bharata His sandals (*pādukā*) as His representative [as the ruler of Ayodhyā], thus making His surrender unto Him fruitful, and after fulfilling the cherished desires of the devas, He [returned to Ayodhyā and] coronated Himself as its

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him, knowing him to be capable of fulfilling his desire to be alive and not be sacrificed by that king. Viśvāmitra became compassionate upon him and taught him two mantras to be chanted. Śunaḥśepa did so and was set free and alive by the intervention of Indra who was pleased upon his chanting of those two mantras. Both of these histories are found in Canto 1 of the Rāmāyaṇa; the history of Triśaṅku is found in Chapters 57 to 60, and the history of Śunaḥśepa is found in Chapters 61 and 62.

ruler. Therefore, one cannot object that surrender unto Him can be fruitless.

6. At Daṇḍakāraṇya, the residents of that forest surrendered unto Rāma to destroy the [evil] opponents [to their spiritual practices by praying to Him thus]:

*te vyaṁ bhavatā rakṣyā bhavad-viṣaya-vāsinaḥ  
nagarastho vanastho vā tvaṁ no rājā janeśvaraḥ*

“We reside in Your territory. [Therefore,] You should protect us. Whether You reside in the city or the forest, You are our king and ruler.” (3.1.19)

From this it is clear that residing in the territory of the Supreme Personality of Godhead like the residents of Kosala is itself surrender unto Him. <sup>21</sup>

7. While describing the incident of the crow [who had bitten Sītā-devī and at whom Lord Rāma had hurled a Brahmāstra], the sage shows that simply offering obeisances unto the Lord [in full submission] is surrender unto Him:

*sa pitrā ca parityaktaḥ suraiś ca samaha-rṣibhiḥ  
trīṅl lokān samparikramya tam eva śaraṇaṁ gataḥ*

*sa taṁ nipatitaṁ bhūmau śaraṇyaḥ śaraṇāgatam  
vadhārham api kākutsthaḥ kṛpayā paryapālayat*

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21. This refers to residing in a place where the Lord eternally resides through an eternal Deity form of His, etc. Some places like Ayodhyā and Vṛndāvana are saturated by the Lord’s pastimes. Some places are eternally sacred because they are abodes of the Lord on earth—like Badarīnātha. The Lord’s *personal presence* is the determining factor. Not that because He is present in the form of Paramātmā everywhere, it is alright to reside anywhere. To reside in the Lord’s own abode is one of the top five items out of the sixty-four items of devotional service, even according to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. See *The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 13 entitled “Five Potent Forms of Devotional Service.”

“Rejected by his mother and father as well as the demigods and the great sages, Jayanta in the form of the crow went around the three worlds and finally fully surrendered unto Rāma. The descendant of Kakutstha, the object of shelter [for all], out of mercy, protected that crow that had fallen on the ground [while offering Him obeisances], though he deserved to be killed.” (5.38.33-34)<sup>22</sup>

8. When Sugrīva had offended Lord Rāma [by not searching for Sītā after Vālī was killed], surrender is again described as joining one’s palms in supplication [and sincerity]:

*kṛtāparādhasya hi te nānyat paśyāmy ahaṁ kṣamam  
antareṇāñjalim baddhvā lakṣmaṇasya prasādanāt*

[Hanumān to Sugrīva:] “Indeed, I do not see any way for you [to atone] for your offense [unto Lord Rāma], except by joining your palms in supplication and seeking Lakṣmaṇa’s [forgiveness and] favor.” (4.32.17)

9. The author Vālmīki informs us through the following words of Sītā-devī that surrender unto the Supreme Lord means being favorably disposed to Him in submission:

*mitram aupayikaṁ kartuṁ rāmaḥ sthānaṁ pariṣatā  
vadhaṁ cānicchatā ghoraṁ tvayāsau puruṣa-rṣabhaḥ  
viditaḥ sa hi dharmajñāḥ śaraṇāgata-vatsalaḥ*

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22. This incident will be narrated by Sītā-devī to Hanumān in Canto 5. When Sītā and Rāma were in the forest, Indra’s son Jayanta had assumed the form of a crow and bitten Sītā-devī, while Lord Rāma was sleeping on Her lap. She didn’t protest, and didn’t want to retaliate and so didn’t want to wake up the Lord. But her blood did touch Him and He woke up. The Lord turned and found the crow with its beak with blood and understood the situation. Mother Sītā is the ultimate mediator between the living entities who are averse to serving His lotus feet and the Lord, and an offense to her is worse than biting the hand that feeds one. So, to correct Jayanta, Lord Rāma took a blade of grass and empowered it to become a Brahmāstra and hurled it against Jayanta who after seeking shelter elsewhere and being refused, finally unconditionally surrendered unto Lord Rāma and Sītā Rāma forgave Jayanta.

*tena maitrī bhavatu te yadi jīvitum icchasi  
prasādayasva tvaṁ cainam śaraṇāgata-vatsalam*

[To Rāvaṇa:] “If you want safety and do not want a dreadful death, establish a useful friendship with the Supreme Person Rāma. He knows dharma and is affectionate to those who surrender unto Him. Therefore, if you wish to live, become friendly [towards Rāma]. Please Him. He is affectionate to those who have surrendered unto Him.” (5.21.19-20)

10. Sage Vālmīki points out that before surrendering unto the Lord, one should abandon the association of all those who oppose such surrender. This is can be seen in Vibhīṣaṇa’s surrender unto Lord Rāma:

*so ’haṁ paruṣitas tena dāsavac cāvamānitaḥ  
tyaktvā putrāṁś ca dārāṁś ca rāghavaṁ śaraṇam gataḥ*

“Having been dealt with harshly and insulted like a servant by Rāvaṇa, I have abandoned my sons and wife and come to surrender unto Rāghava.” (6.17.16)

11. [When Rāma wanted to cross the ocean,] He surrendered unto the presiding deity of ocean [in order that the ocean would part, and He and His army of monkeys could walk to Laṅkā]. This is described as:

*tataḥ sāgara-velāyām darbhān āstīrya rāghavaḥ  
añjalim prāṇ-mukhaḥ kṛtvā prati śīśye mahodadheḥ  
bāhum bhujaga-bhogābham upādhāyāri-sūdanaḥ*

“Then Rāghava spread kuśa grass with sharp edges on the shore of the ocean, joined His palms in supplication while facing the east and lay down against the great ocean. That destroyer of enemies



used His arm that resembled the tender body of a snake as a pillow.”  
(6.21.1)

Through this act, it is pointed out that one should not consider an eligible person to be ineligible or an ineligible person to be eligible. Vibhīṣaṇa surrendered unto Lord Rāma *as soon as* he left Laṅkā, a place of impurity. Authorities state that Rāma’s surrender [unto the presiding deity of the ocean] did not yield His desired result because He had surrendered to someone who was *not* competent to award the desired result and compassionate unto the surrendered soul.<sup>23</sup>

12. [The sage Vālmīki also describes an incident concerning the rākṣasīs who were deputed by Rāvaṇa to take care of Sītā in the Aśoka-vana grove in Laṅkā. At a certain point in time, on Rāvaṇa’s order, they threatened to kill her and feed Rāvaṇa with her flesh if she did not agree to Rāvaṇa’s proposal. At that time, Trijaṭā, a rākṣasī friendly to Sītā, chastised the rest of the rākṣasīs and related a terrible dream she had the previous night in which she saw Sītā reunited with Rāma, and Rāvaṇa and his followers sent to hell and punished.] Trijaṭā then advised them:

*tad alam krūra-vākyair vaḥ sāntvam evābhidhīyatām  
abhiyācāma vaidehīm etad dhi mama rocate*

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23. Lord Rāma did this to show that surrender unto the demigods is not useful. In Canto 1, we come across a similar incident. In Chapters 63 and 64 of Canto 1, Indra instructs Rambhā to sensually allure Viśvāmitra who is engaged in austerities in order to conquer over lust and anger. Rambhā is frightened that Viśvāmitra would curse her. Indra assures her, however, that he and Kāmadeva would be with her [and so there is no need for her to be afraid]. She surrenders to Indra’s instructions and, lo behold, she is indeed cursed by Viśvāmitra to become a stone! (Indra and Kāmadeva just flew away from the scene.) This is another illustration that surrender unto a person who is incompetent to grant one’s desired result and who is compassionate upon the surrendered soul is simply useless. The Rāmāyaṇa thus teaches all aspects of the process of surrender.

*yasyām evaṁ vidhaḥ svapno duḥkhitāyām pradṛśyate  
sā duḥkhair vividhair muktā priyam prāpnoty anuttamam*

*bhartsitām api yācadhvaṁ rākṣasyāḥ kiṁ vivakṣayā  
rāghavād dhi bhayaṁ ghoraṁ rākṣasānām upasthitam*

*praṇipāta-prasannā hi maithilī janakātmajā  
alam eṣā paritrātuṁ rākṣasyo mahato bhayāt*

“Enough of your cruel words! Console her. I think we should beseech Vaidehī [to protect us]. I saw the dream [that I related] because she has been put to distress. She will certainly be freed from all kinds of miseries and and attain her excellent beloved husband. Though she has been scolded by us rākṣasīs, we should beg her [to protect us] for the rākṣasas have attained a terrible danger because of Rāghava. Why hesitate to ask her this? When we humbly submit to Maithilī, the daughter of Janaka, and make her happy, she alone will be able to protect the rākṣasīs from the great danger [befalling them].” (5.27.52-54)

[Later, after Rāvaṇa was killed, Rāma sent Hanumān to Sītā-devī, informing her of this good news. At that time, Hanumān expressed his desire to torment and kill all those rākṣasīs who had tormented her. But,] all these rākṣasīs were protected by Sītā simply because they had acted on Trijaṭā’s advice.

Thus, the sage Vālmīki illustrates the principle that even if one surrenders unto [a competent and compassionate person] other than Rāma, that surrender will yield the desired result.

13. When Vibhīṣaṇa surrendered unto Lord Rāma, his assistants [favorable to him] were also protected by Rāma. Thus, the sage Vālmīki points out that when a person surrenders unto the Supreme Lord Rāma, even his relatives [favorable to him]

become recipients of the merciful glance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

14. [The above is merely illustrative.] There are several other incidents that the reader can examine [to understand the various aspects of the process of surrender].

Thus, the Rāmāyaṇa states that only the process of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), as set out from the beginning to the end of the book, is capable of granting all desired results, and it itself is the cause of liberation from material existence. Specific details will be set out in the commentary [as we go through the text].

### SECTION 3

The Rāmāyaṇa also establishes that this means of surrendering unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead [Nārāyaṇa] should be for the purpose of attaining Him in order to attain exclusive devotional service unto His lotus feet.

1. In the beginning, it is stated that the primary result of the celestials' surrender unto Him was the attainment of their devotional service to Him because Lord Brahmā instructed them to take birth in the wombs of apsarās and others and then serve Him [in the form of monkeys]. The killing of Rāvaṇa is an incidental result, a side benefit [they derived from Lord Rāma].
2. [When Sītā and Rāma decided to go to the forest,] Lakṣmaṇa surrendered unto Rāma and requested Him:

*bhavāms tu saha vaidehyā giri-sānuṣu raṁsyate  
aham sarvaṁ kariṣyāmi jāgrataḥ svapataś ca te*

“Your Lordship can be happy with Vaidehī in the mountain plains. I will do everything for You while You are awake or asleep.” (2.31.27)

It is thus revealed that the [actual result of surrendering unto Lord Rāma] is to render all kinds of devotional services unto the Supreme Lord at all time, at all places, and under all circumstances.

3. It is for the sake of attaining such devotional service to Rāma that Bharata also prayed to Him to return to Ayodhyā and be coronated as His ruler. By rendering devotional service to Lord Rāma's sandals, Bharata attained His cherished desires to serve Lord Rāma.
4. Regarding the surrender of the residents of the Daṇḍaka Forest unto Śrī Rāmacandra, it is stated:

*te taṁ somam ivodyantaṁ dṛṣṭvā dharmā-cāriṇaḥ  
lakṣmaṇaṁ caiva dṛṣṭvā tu vaidehīṁ ca yaśasvinīm  
maṅgalāni prayuñjānāḥ pratyagrḥṇan dṛḍha-vratāḥ*

“Upon seeing Him who resembled the rising moon and upon seeing Lakṣmaṇa and the famous Vaidehī, those performers of dharma firmly fixed in their vows invoked auspiciousness through speech while receiving them [very well into their āśrama].” (3.1.11)

From this, it is understood that by surrendering unto Lord Rāma, those residents of Daṇḍakāraṇya, they achieved the result of devotional service unto Him rendered through speech and so on.

5. When Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa and others surrendered unto Lord Rāma, it is clear from statements such as the following that the primary result of such surrender was the attainment of devotional service and that other results of such surrender were merely incidental:

*atha hari-vara-nāthaḥ prāpya saṅgrāma-kīrtim  
niścara-patim ājau yojayitvā śrameṇa*

*gaganam ativiśālaṁ laṅghayitvārka-sūnur  
hari-vara-gaṇa-madhye rāma-pārśvaṁ jagāma*

“Having thus laboriously gauged the master of the night-rangers in battle, Sugrīva, the Lord of the excellent monkeys and Sūrya’s son, attained fame in battle and then jumped on to the very extensive sky and approached Rāma in the midst of the excellent monkeys.” (6.40.29)<sup>24</sup>

*parityaktā mayā laṅkā mitrāṇi ca dhanāni ca  
bhavad-gataṁ me rājyaṁ ca jīvitam ca sukhāni ca*

[After Vibhīṣaṇa abandoned Rāvaṇa, he surrendered unto Lord Rāma and confided as follows:] “I have abandoned Laṅkā, my friends and wealth. I place my kingdom, life and happiness at Your disposal.” (6.19.5)<sup>25</sup>

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24. As noted in Canto 6, Chapter 40, before Lord Rāma began to attack Rāvaṇa, He inspected Rāvaṇa’s palace and other parts of Laṅkā from a distance along with Sugrīva and they saw Rāvaṇa in his palace. Without speaking a word to Rāma, Sugrīva immediately jumped up on to the sky and landed at Rāvaṇa’s palace and fought with him, one on one, for quite some time. When Rāvaṇa began to use his mystic powers, Sugrīva [considered that if he also uses his mystic powers, Śrī Rāmacandra would become unhappy with him and so] jumped back to join Rāma. This incident is evidence that Sugrīva was not helping Rāma merely out of the official dhārmika bond of friendship that they had forged in Kiṣkindhā earlier on. He was *factually* interested in rendering selfless devotional service to Lord Rāma.

25. The second sentence here is clear evidence that Vibhīṣaṇa isn’t merely surrendering unto Rāma for safety from Rāvaṇa. He wanted to serve Lord Rāma *exclusively and fully*. Why did he want to do so? It is because he understood the position of Lord Rāma as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Nārāyaṇa, the eternal compassionate shelter of all living entities in the universe. Therefore, he tried to make Rāvaṇa understand that he should give Sītā-devī back to Rāmacandra. But Rāvaṇa rejected him and so Vibhīṣaṇa took shelter of Lord Rāma fully—something he always wanted to do. Vibhīṣaṇa is recognized in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as a spiritually enlightened devogtee of the Supreme Lord (SB 2.7.43-45) and as one who attained spiritual perfection due to spiritual association (SB 11.12.3-6). Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura notes that Vibhīṣaṇa had associated with Hanumān [and thus became pure-hearted in order to surrender unto Rāmacandra purely].

6. Similarly, when Jayanta, the son of Indra, in the form of a crow, surrendered unto Rāma, begging for [forgiveness for his offense of biting Sītā-devī and] his life, Rāma granted him his life. Thus, that crow's surrender unto Rāma yielded his desired result. [If Rāma did not want to kill that crow, why did He discharge the Brahmāstra weapon on him?] Rāmacandra discharged the Brahmāstra on the crow in order to subdue him. He did this so out of His compassion (*anugraha*) upon the crow in order to discipline him so that such evil behavior does not reoccur on his part due to his offensive propensities.
7. This is similar to Rāma's discharging an arrow using Lord Viṣṇu's bow at Paraśurāma. He did this only to remove his unsubmitive attitude towards Rāma and so he discharged it at the pious credits accumulated by Paraśurāma that were unfavourable [to the attainment of his liberation], as chosen by Paraśurāma himself. [This incident is described in Canto 1, Chapter 76.]<sup>26</sup>
8. [When Rāma had reached the shore of the ocean with Sugrīva's army of monkeys, He wondered how to have them transported

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26. After Rāma and His brothers married Sītā and her sisters respectively, Daśaratha and the entire family and entourage departed from Mithilā to Ayodhyā. While on the path, by seeing various inauspicious omens, Daśaratha became distressed. In the meanwhile, Lord Paraśurāma appeared from another forest. Daśaratha became frightened upon seeing him, but Vasiṣṭha and others pacified him. Quickly, they brought arghya and other items for worship and worshipped him. Discarding Daśaratha's prayer, Paraśurāma informed Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, of the history of the bows of Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu. He then gave Him Lord Viṣṇu's bow to test His strength and requested Him to bend and string it. Rāma took the bow, stretched it, fixed an arrow on it and asked Paraśurāma where He should shoot the arrow which necessarily requires to be released, once it has been fixed on the bow for shooting. Paraśurāma told Him that He can shoot the arrow at the worlds earned by his pious activities. Lord Rāmacandra did as told. Then, in the presence of the demigods and other celestials, the son of Jamadagni asserted that Lord Rāma is none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself and departed for Mahendra Mountain.

to Laṅkā to battle Rāvaṇa and his forces. Vibhīṣaṇa requested Him to take shelter of the presiding deity of the ocean. Rāma did so through austerities for three days and nights. When the deity of the ocean still did not appear in person, Rāma decided to take action against that deity.] When He took up His bow and arrow against the presiding deity of the ocean, ready to destroy him, that deity appeared in person and surrendered unto Lord Rāma in repentance. Then Lord Rāma considered that the sinful reactions of those who have surrendered unto Him should go to those hateful of them and discharged His powerful arrow of destruction at some asuras disturbing the ocean [as requested by that deity].<sup>27</sup>

9. Rāma's surrender [unto the presiding deity of the ocean] was fruitless because of two reasons: (a) Rāma did not surrender unto that deity with an utter attitude of helplessness and because He did not give up the thought of an alternate arrangement to attain His desired result [in case that deity does not grant His desired result], and (b) The presiding deity of the ocean, the object of Rāma's surrender, had little knowledge and little potency.

Rāma wanted to teach the world that if one lacks in even one of these items, and if the object of surrender is not capable of granting one's desired result, not compassionate upon the surrendered soul or not of a good character, such surrender will be useless.

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27. *Tasya putrā dāyam upayanti, dviṣantaḥ pāpa-kṛtyāṁ suhṛdaḥ sādhu-kṛtyām*: “[A liberated soul's] sons attain his property. His ill-wishers attain his sinful reactions while his well-wishers attain his pious credits.” (Quoted in Śrī Rāmānuja's Vedānta-sāra commentary to Vedānta-sūtra 4.1.17) In Govinda-bhāṣya, this statement is identified as coming from the Śāṭyāyī branch of the Śruti. This topic is discussed in Govinda-bhāṣya with reference to the same Vedānta-sūtra. The explanation is practically the same as we see above.

[Rāma surrendered unto the presiding deity of the ocean,] on the request of Vibhīṣaṇa:

*samudraṁ rāghavo rājā śaraṇaṁ gantum arhati*

“The kingly descendant of Raghu should surrender unto the presiding deity of the ocean.” (6.19.32)

Vibhīṣaṇa stated the above because of his surrender to Rāma.

10. Thus, it is pointed out that though there is no restriction regarding place, time, candidate and the desired result in the process of surrender, there *is* a restriction regarding the object of surrender. And it is this process of surrender that is primarily established in this composition, Śrī Rāmāyaṇa. Therefore, the saying—*śrī-rāmāyaṇaṁ dīrgha-śaraṇāgatih*: “Śrī Rāmāyaṇa is an elaborate exposition on the process of surrender.” Everything else brought out in this scripture is simply to bring out *this* teaching of surrender. For instance, surrender unto one who is capable, compassionate and accessible certainly awards one his desired result.
11. In order to establish that Lord Rāma is the Supreme Truth and hence [supremely] capable, omniscient and so on, the sage Vālmīki describes His breaking the bow of Lord Śiva [at Mithilā], His defeat of Paraśurāma [while returning from Mithilā to Ayodhyā], His piercing the *sāla* trees [to convince Sugrīva that He is capable of killing Vālī], His having a bridge constructed over the ocean [to cross over to Laṅkā] and so on.
12. In order to describe Rāma’s supremely compassionate nature, the sage Vālmīki describes how He separated Sītā-devī from Him [in Canto 7].<sup>28</sup>

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28. It is a basic principle that the common people do whatever the leaders do (Bhagavad-



13. In order to describe Rāma's supreme accessibility, the sage Vālmīki describes Rāma's uninhibited intimate dealings with Guha, Śabarī, Sugrīva and others [of low birth].<sup>29</sup>

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gītā 3.21). It is another basic principle that [only] the intelligent can distinguish between following and imitating powerful leaders (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.33.31). It is described in Canto 7 of this great book that since some less intelligent people in Rāma's kingdom misunderstood the mother of the universe Sītā and began to take advantage of her life to indulge in sinful activities, the gravely thoughtful Rāma, the very personification of dharma, decided to sacrifice His association with His most beloved Sītā for the sake of steering His citizens, who were like His sons and daughters, towards the right track of auspiciousness. That is the point brought out in the commentary above. Another point of consideration is that Sītā-devī is more merciful than Rāma and as such she would not have been able to tolerate the misconceptions and criticisms of her character by her *own* subjects because Sītā-devī also loved the citizens like her children. It should be noted that when Indra's son in the form of a crow bit her, she didn't even complain about it to Rāma, and she forgave the rākṣasīs who had tormented her and protected them from Hanumān's fury. Rāma knew Sītā's nature very well and so protected her from having to hear such cruel words. By the arrangement of Lord Brahmā and Nārada, two pure devotees of Sītā-Rāma, the entire Rāmāyaṇa was then arranged to be composed by a neutral third party, Vālmīki, an acknowledged authority absorbed in samādhi, in order to enlighten the citizens of Ayodhyā about the truth of Sītā's character and the project succeeded: towards the end of the Rāmāyaṇa, the citizens realized their error and wanted her to return.

29. See 1.1.58 commentary. Guha was from the niṣāda tribe, but he was a devotee of Lord Rāma and the Lord was extremely kind to Him in reciprocation, when He was banished from Ayodhyā to the forest. Even in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, we come across personalities like the tailor and florist in Mathurā, who were devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa even though they had never previously interacted with Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes (He had just come from Vṛndāvana to Mathurā). As the Supersoul in the bodies of all living entities, He certainly knows who is who. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lord Rāma was so kind to Guha and considered him His devotee even though there is no record in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa that they had met prior to that. Regarding Śabarī: Though she was from a low background, she was blessed with the vairāgya (internal and external renunciation), vidyā (spiritual knowledge, understanding and realization) and intense Rāma-bhakti by the disciples of Mataṅga Muni. They had instructed her to wait until Lord Rāma arrives, and then she served Him and begged Him to bless her to attain service to her spiritual masters (Mataṅga Muni's disciples) who had now attained the spiritual world. Her service attitude greatly pleased Lord Rāmacandra and He blessed her as she had asked.

14. In order to point out that Rāma protects one and all [from difficulties], the sage Vālmiki describes His protection of Viśvāmitra's fire sacrifice from the demons, His protection of the sages residing at Daṇḍakāraṇya, His protection of the devas headed by Indra when they were obstructed by Rāvaṇa, and His awakening love for His lotus feet in the hearts of the residents of His kingdom and then bestowing upon them liberation in the form of [everlasting] residence in His abode [in the spiritual world]—the factual purpose of His descent.

Therefore, it is very clear that though surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is [supremely] capable, compassionate and accessible is the means to award all desired results, its primary result is liberation in the form of [uninterrupted and everlasting] devotional service to Him when it is executed by those specially qualified for it and that all other results are merely incidental.

This is a point to note while going through the Rāmāyaṇa.

#### SECTION 4

Such surrender unto the Supreme Lord does not yield the desired results without a mediator who requests the Supreme Lord to bestow His mercy upon the surrendered soul and forgive his previous sins and offenses.<sup>30</sup> This is a cardinal teaching of the Rāmāyaṇa.

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30. In Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 11.28), Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu quotes the following verse from the Ādi Purāṇa—*ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha na me bhaktās ca te janāḥ / mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ*: “[Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna:] ‘Those who are My direct devotees are actually not My devotees, but those who are the devotees of My servant are factually My devotees.’” This is further clarified in a prayer by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—*kabe śrī caitanya more karibena dayā / kabe āmi paiba vaiṣṇava-pada-chāyā; kabe āmi chāḍiba e viṣayābhimāna / kabe viṣṇu-jane āmi kariba sammāna; gala-vastra kṛtāñjali vaiṣṇava-nikaṭe / dante tṛṇa kari' dāḍaiba niṣkapaṭe; kādiyā kādiyā jānaiba duḥkha-grāma / saṁsāra-anala haite māgiba viśrāma; śuniyā āmāra duḥkha vaiṣṇava ṭhākura / āmā' lāgi' kṛṣṇe āvedibena pracura; vaiṣṇavera āvedane kṛṣṇa dayāmaya / e hena pāmara prati ha'bena sa-daya; vinodera nivedana vaiṣṇava-caraṇe / kṛpā kari' saṅge laha ei akiñcane*:

1. Indeed, the Rāmāyaṇa is itself referred to as *sītāyāś caritaṁ mahat*, “the great [poem] describing the activities of Sītā-devī.” (1.4.7) She has been described as having the characteristics of a mediator. In her presence, the son of Indra in the form of the crow was allowed to live. In her absence, Rāvaṇa was not allowed to live.
2. When Vibhīṣaṇa wanted to surrender unto Rāma, he did so only through mediators:

*sarva-loka-śaraṇyāya rāghavāya mahātmane  
nivedayata mām kṣipraṁ vibhīṣaṇam upasthitam*

[Vibhīṣaṇa told Sugrīva and other monkeys:] “Quickly inform the great soul Rāghava, the worthy object of surrender of everyone, that I, Vibhīṣaṇa, has arrived [to surrender unto Rāma].” (6.17.17)

3. Rāma also accepted Vibhīṣaṇa as a surrendered soul only through a mediator:

*ānayayainam hari-śreṣṭha dattam asyābhayaṁ mayā  
vibhīṣaṇo vā sugrīva yadi vā rāvaṇaḥ svayam*

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“When will Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu show His causeless mercy to me by allowing me to attain the shade of the lotus feet of all the Vaiṣṇavas? When will I be able to give up this false ego which is so deeply engrossed in sense gratification? And when will I be able to properly honor the associates of the Lord? I will stand before the Vaiṣṇavas with my palms joined in submission, a cloth binding my neck, and a straw in between my teeth, sincerely awaiting their order. Weeping and weeping, I will understand the real nature of this abode of misery, and I will beg for relief from the blazing fire of this material world. Hearing about all of my miserable sufferings, the Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura will submit an appeal unto the Lord Kṛṣṇa on my behalf. By the prayer of the Vaiṣṇava the all-merciful Lord Kṛṣṇa will then become compassionate towards such a sinner as me. Bhaktivinoda's prayer unto the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇava is: ‘Please be merciful and take this worthless person into your association.’” (Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Ucchvāsa, Prārthanā Dainyamayī 1)

“O Sugrīva, best of monkeys, whether he is Vibhīṣaṇa or Rāvaṇa himself, I have given him an assurance of safety. Bring him here.”  
(6.18.34)

4. Similarly, it should be understood that Sugrīva also surrendered unto Rāma through Rāma’s devotee, Hanumān.

## SECTION 5

The nature of the candidate for this means to liberation is one of servitude and dependency upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead.<sup>31</sup> Servitude is revealed in the behavior of Lakṣmaṇa through statements such as:

*aham asyāvaro bhrātā guṇair dāsyam upāgataḥ  
kṛtajñasya bahujñasya lakṣamaṇo nāma nāmataḥ*

[Lakṣmaṇa to Hanumān:] “I am His younger brother famous by the name Lakṣmaṇa. [Captivated] by His qualities, I have become His servant for He is grateful and considers little acts of service to be great.” (4.4.11)

*kuruṣva mām anucaram vaidharmyam neha vidyate  
kṛtārtho ’ham bhaviṣyāmi tava cārthaḥ prakalpate*

[Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma:] “Please make Me Your servant. There is nothing inappropriate in this. My purposes will become fulfilled and Your needs can be taken care of.” (2.31.24)

## SECTION 6

Dependency on the Lord is shown through [the activities of] Bharata as described in the following verses beginning with:

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31. *Servitude (śeṣatva)* refers to rendering personal services to the Supreme Personality of Godhead in pure devotion. *Dependency upon Him (pāratantrya)* refers to carrying out His orders in pure devotion.

*vilalāpa sabhā-madhya jagarhe ca purohitam*

“[After Rāma’s exile to the forest and Daśaratha’s death, when Bharata was informed that he was to be appointed as the ruler of Kosala,] Bharata lamented in the midst of His assembly and criticized his priest.” (2.82.10)

*rājyaṃ cāhaṃ ca rāmasya dharmam vaktum ihārhasi*

[Bharata then said:] “Both this kingdom and I belong to Rāma. You should speak dharma in this regard.” (2.82.12)

[Bharata’s activities and attitude are described in the Rāmāyaṇa up till the very end when He agreed to be coronated as Rāma’s heir apparent:]

*sarvātmanā paryanunīyamāno yadā na saumitrir upaiti yogam  
niyuḥyamāno bhuvī yauvarājye tato ’bhyāṣiñcad bharataṃ mahātmā*

“The great soul Rāma humbly and repeatedly requested the son of Sumitrā in all possible manner to be appointed as [His] heir apparent on earth, [but] Lakṣmaṇa refused the offer. Then Rāma coronated Bharata [as His heir apparent].” (6.131.92)<sup>32</sup>

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32. This verse distinguishes the ways in which Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata pleased Lord Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa is conscious of His position as a *servant* of the Lord in pure devotion; He wants nothing but service to Him, even by disobeying His instructions, if required. But Bharata’s *dependency* on the Lord is focused on carrying out His orders in pure devotion. Lakṣmaṇa did not want to accept the position of the heir apparent because that would obstruct His service to Rāma. Bharata, on the other hand, considered carrying out the instructions of the Lord to be of paramount importance. In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava language, the Lakṣmaṇa’s *service* is *vapuḥ-sevā* to the Supreme Lord and Bharata’s *dependency* is *vāṇī-sevā* to the Supreme Lord.

## SECTION 7

The sage Vālmīki has revealed dependency on pure devotees of the Supreme Lord through the activities of Śatrughna, through statements such as:

*gacchatā mātula-kulam bharatena tadānaghaḥ  
śatrughno nitya-śatrughno nītaḥ prīti-puraskṛtaḥ*

“When Bharata went to His maternal uncle’s house, the sinless Śatrughna, the destroyer of one’s eternal enemies, was also taken [by Bharata] out of love.” (2.1.1)<sup>33</sup>

## SECTION 8

There are five subject matters (*artha-pañcaka*) that a person eligible [to surrender unto the Supreme Lord in order to attain liberation in the form of uninterrupted and unmotivated devotional service unto Him] should know. They are stated in this Rāmāyaṇa.

The five subject matters to be known are:

*prāpyasya brahmaṇo rūpaṁ prāptuś ca pratyag-ātmanaḥ  
prāpty-upāyaṁ phalaṁ prāptes tathā prāpti-virodhi ca  
vadanti sakalā vedāḥ setihāsa-purāṇakāḥ  
munayaś ca mahātmāno veda-vedāṅga-pāragāḥ*

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33. As it will be clear from Canto 2 of Rāmāyaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna were selflessly devoted to serving and pleasing Him. But the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas have revealed the different shades of pure service attitudes each of Them exhibited towards Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa wanted nothing other than personal service to Rāma. This will become obvious as we proceed with the text. Bharata simply wanted to carry out the orders of the Lord—which is referred to here as *dependency*. He agreed to be in Nandigrāma and wait until Lord Rāma returned to Ayodhyā, but Lakṣmaṇa would not even leave Rāma for a day. Śatrughna was attached to Bharata as Lakṣmaṇa was to Rāma as it will become clear in 1.18.34.

“All the Vedas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas as well as the great souls, the sages well-versed in the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas, describe the nature of the Supreme Brahman, the individual soul, the means to attain Him, the result of attaining Him and obstructions to attaining Him.”<sup>34</sup>

It should be understood that by bringing in [a detailed description of] Rāma, the nature of the Supreme Being has been described here. The nature of the individual soul is brought out in incidents concerning Lakṣmaṇa and so on. The nature of the means to attain the Supreme Being is set out by describing [various aspects of] the process of surrendering unto Him. The nature of the result of attaining Him, that is, devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is brought out through narrations concerning Vibhīṣaṇa and so on. And the nature of obstructions to attaining Him is described through incidents concerning Rāvaṇa and so on.

## SECTION 9

In order to point out that a person eligible [to surrender unto the Lord in the above-mentioned manner] requires to surrender unto Him *helplessly* and *exclusively*, it is pointed out that the following are not worthy of being accepted as one’s [ultimate] protectors [and helpers]: (a) deities other than the Lord Himself such as Brahmā and Rudra because though they had blessed Rāvaṇa with boons, he was ultimately vanquished, (b) one’s father through a description of Daśaratha’s life, (c) one’s mothers and other superiors through incidents describing Kaikeyī and so on, and (d) one’s brothers, sons

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34. These five topics are so important that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura presented an abridged rendition of *Artha-pañcaka*, a booklet on these topics by an ācārya of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya named Pillai Lokācārya, in Bengali *and elaborated on these same five topics in further detail* in his very important book *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* (5.3). Interested readers can consult them to better understand these topics. They will also be dealt with in the Rāmāyaṇa, of course.

and other dependents through incidents describing Vibhīṣaṇa and Indrajit.

### SECTION 10

Such a person eligible to surrender unto the Lord in the above manner requires a bona fide ācārya to help him attain [proper] knowledge concerning the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is shown through a description of the life of Hanumān. We will describe this in Canto 5 (Sundara-kāṇḍa).

### SECTION 11

A person who is eligible to surrender unto the Lord in the above manner should [engage in devotional service in full surrender on a daily basis and] wait for the time his body falls dead:

*prāyeṇākṛta-kṛtyās tu mṛtyor udvijate janaḥ  
kṛta-kṛtyāḥ pratīkṣante mṛtyum priyam ivātithim*

“Generally, those who have not perfected their existence are terrified of their death. Those who have perfected their existence should wait until their death as if waiting for a dear guest.” (Mahābhārata, Aśvamedha-parva)<sup>35</sup>

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35. This teaching has been very beautifully explicated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in *The Nectar of Devotion* (10) as follows: “In the Tenth Canto, Fourteenth Chapter, verse 8, it is said, ‘My dear Lord, any person who is constantly awaiting Your causeless mercy to be bestowed upon him, and who goes on suffering the resultant actions of his past misdeeds, offering You respectful obeisances from the core of his heart, is surely eligible to become liberated, for it has become his rightful claim.’ This statement of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam should be the guide of all devotees. A devotee should not expect immediate relief from the reactions of his past misdeeds. No conditioned soul is free from such reactionary experiences, because material existence means continued suffering or enjoying of past activities. If one has finished his material activities then there is no more birth. This is possible only when one begins Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, because such activities do not produce reaction. Therefore, as soon as one becomes perfect in Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, he is not going to take birth again in this material world. A devotee who is not perfectly freed from the resultant actions should



This is conveyed through a description of Sītā's determination [to be reunited with Lord Rāma despite formidable adversities]:

*śarais tu saṅkulām kṛtvā laṅkāṁ para-balārdanaḥ  
mām nayed yadi kākutsthas tat tasya sadṛśam bhavet*

“If Kākutstha, the destroyer of His opponents' armies, would overwhelm Laṅkā with His arrows and take me with Him, that would be like Him.” (5.39.30)

Laṅkā refers to the body. Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa represent the egoistic sense of “I” and “mine” respectively. Indrajit and others represent lust, anger and so on. Vibhīṣaṇa represents intelligence. Sītā imprisoned in Laṅkā represents the [conditioned] living entity. That living entity attains knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through Hanumān representing the bona fide ācārya. The Supreme Lord Himself destroys that body and rescues the living entity imprisoned within that city. This will be elaborated later on.

## SECTION 12

The Rāmāyaṇa also teaches us that as long as the body of a person [eligible to surrender to the Lord as mentioned above] functions, he should carry out his duties like Rāma and others [who follow Him], not like Rāvaṇa and others [who follow him].

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therefore continue to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, even though there may be so many impediments. When such impediments arise he should simply think of Kṛṣṇa and expect His mercy. That is the only solace. If the devotee passes his days in that spirit, it is certain that he is going to be promoted to the abode of the Lord. By such activities, he earns his claim to enter into the kingdom of God. The exact word used in this verse is *dāya-bhāḥ*. *Dāya-bhāḥ* refers to a son's becoming the lawful inheritor of the property of the father. In a similar way, a pure devotee who is prepared to undergo all kinds of tribulations in executing Kṛṣṇa conscious duties becomes lawfully qualified to enter into the transcendental abode.”

## SECTION 13

Only a place where the Supreme Lord is personally present [in His Deity form, etc.] is fit to be resided in by such a person eligible to surrender unto Him as mentioned above.<sup>36</sup> This is described through the incident describing the residents of Kosala.

## SECTION 14

One should pass his time in studying the Rāmāyaṇa, for it explains the meaning of the Dvaya-mantra [which is:

*śrīman-nārāyaṇa-caraṇau śaraṇam prapadye  
śrimate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*

“I surrender unto the lotus feet of Nārāyaṇa, the husband of Śrī, that grants shelter. I offer my obeisances unto Nārāyaṇa, the husband of Śrī.”]

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36. This cardinal teaching is also one of the cardinal teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—*mathurā-maṇḍale sthitiḥ*: “One should reside in Vṛndāvana.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.132) Śrīla Prabhupāda has commented: “Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung: *śrī gauḍa-maṇḍala-bhūmi, yeba jāne cintāmaṇi, tāra haya vrajabhūmi vāsa*, ‘One who understands the transcendental nature of Navadvīpa and its surrounding area, where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enacted His pastimes, resides always in Vṛndāvana.’ Similarly, living in Jagannātha Purī is as good as living in Vṛndāvana. The conclusion is that Navadvīpa-dhāma, Jagannātha Purī-dhāma and Vṛndāvana-dhāma are identical. However, if one goes to Mathurā-maṇḍala-bhūmi for sense gratification or to make a livelihood, he commits an offense and is condemned. Whoever does so must be penalized in the next life by becoming a hog or a monkey in Vṛndāvana-dhāma. After taking on such a body, the offender is liberated in the next life. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura remarks that residing in Vṛndāvana with a view to enjoy sense gratification surely leads a so-called devotee to a lower species.” And Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has commented in this regard that this also includes other pastime spots of the Lord. So, to live in the place where the Lord had personally manifested Himself to the conditioned souls is extremely important for those serious about attaining pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (who is substantially nondifferent from His other Viṣṇu forms such as Rāma, Nṛsimha and so on).

Śrī Rāmānujācārya has instructed that one should constantly contemplate on its meaning.<sup>37</sup>

Canto 1 of the Rāmāyaṇa states the meaning of “the husband of Śrī.” Canto 2 states the meaning of “Nārāyaṇa” because it contains a description of Rāma’s auspicious qualities.<sup>38</sup> Canto 3 states the meaning of “the lotus feet” by describing the beauty of the divine and auspicious body of Lord Rāma as seen by the residents of Daṇḍakāraṇya (3.1.11).<sup>39</sup> Cantos 4 and 5 state the meaning of “that grants shelter.” Canto 6 states the meaning of “I surrender.” The meaning of “I offer my obeisances unto Nārāyaṇa, the husband of Śrī” is stated in Canto 7 that describes the result—liberation [in the form of uninterrupted and unmotivated devotional service unto Him].<sup>40</sup>

## SECTION 15

In order to point out that such a person eligible to surrender to the Lord in the above-mentioned manner is meant to recite the

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37. Śrī is a name of Lakṣmī. The Dvaya-mantra is noted in the Padma Purāṇa. The scriptural thirty-two syllabled mantra propagated by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his predecessor ācāryas is a prayer to the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself to engage the chanter of this mantra in Their devotional service. Since, as Śrīla Prabhupāda points out, this mantra can be chanted while remembering its meaning and while meditating on Kṛṣṇa or Rāma or any form of Viṣṇu with Their respective consorts, this mantra fulfils the purpose of the Dvaya-mantra.

38. One of the meanings of the name *Nārāyaṇa* is “the shelter of all auspicious qualities.”

39. As described in Canto 2 of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, meditation on the beautiful spiritual form of the Lord begins with meditation on His lotus feet.

40. In other words, while studying the Rāmāyaṇa we should remember our relationship with the Lord as our eternal master, ourselves as His eternal servants, the ultimate desirable goal as attainment of uninterrupted and unmotivated devotional service to His lotus feet at all times, places and situations, and the means to attaining that as full-fledged surrender unto Him.

Rāmāyaṇa regularly [like the Gāyatrī], the meaning of the Gāyatrī is set out here in the Rāmāyaṇa.<sup>41</sup> Canto 1 of the Rāmāyaṇa states the meaning of *tat-savituh* since it describes the nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the cause of the creation of the universe, a fact well-known in the Vedas. Cantos 2 and 4 state the meaning of *vareṇyam* since they describe many of the auspicious features of the Lord. Canto 3 states the meaning of *bhargah* since it describes His body filled with effulgence and prowess. Canto 5 states the meaning of *devasya* since it describes His divine auspicious body. Canto 6 states the meaning of *dhīmahi*. Canto 7 states the meaning of the third portion of the Gāyatrī because it describes the result of liberation [as mentioned above].

## SECTION 16

Such a person eligible to surrender unto the Lord in the above-mentioned manner should not even touch the writings of [deviant] philosophies such as Cārvāka hedonism, Buddhistic nihilism and so on.<sup>42</sup> This can be concluded from Lord Rāma's rejection of the ideas presented by Jābāli and Lakṣmaṇa and so on.<sup>43</sup>

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41. The Rāmāyaṇa consists of 24,000 verses and every thousandth verse contains a syllable of the Gāyatrī mantra. This itself indicates that this scripture is an explanation of the Gāyatrī mantra, like the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam which is directly proclaimed in scripture to be a commentary on the Gāyatrī-mantra.

42. Includes various misrepresentations of the conclusions of the Vedic scriptures such as Māyāvāda or Kevalādvaita-vāda (popularly known as Advaita-vāda) of Ādi Śaṅkara and his followers and much of what goes on the name of *Hinduism* today.

43. In Canto 2 of the Rāmāyaṇa, Jābāli speaks the ideology of Cārvāka hedonism to convince Rāma to return to Ayodhyā from the forest. Rāma rejects it. Lakṣmaṇa too at times speaks various ideas to convince Lord Rāma to something or to permit Him to do something and Rāmacandra rationally rejects ideas contrary to scriptural conclusions.

## SECTION 17

Even great souls encounter calamities. Therefore, one should develop the desire to get out of material existence.<sup>44</sup> In order to [help the reader] accumulate the prosperity of renunciation and detachment, the Rāmāyaṇa explicitly describes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa being bound by Indrajit's Nāga-pāśa noose, Hanumān being bound by the Brahmāstra weapon, the kidnapping of Sītā, Rāma's loss of His kingdom [just before He is to be coronated as Daśaratha's heir apparent] and so on. The details will be shown in their proper places. This is merely indicative [as there are several other such incidents].

## SECTION 18

For common purposes, information regarding the 64 arts have been summarily presented in the Rāmāyaṇa on the logic of *yad ihāsti tad anyatra yan nehāsti na tat kvacit*, "That which is here is elsewhere. That which is not here is not elsewhere."

The teachings of the Vedas [and their ancillary disciplines, the Vedāṅgas] are indicated in the Rāmāyaṇa. While glorifying Hanumān's words, information concerning Śikṣā or proper pronunciation and Vyākaraṇa or Sanskrit grammar is found in Canto 4, Chapter 3. Sections describing the Aśvamedha sacrifice and so on, contain information concerning the [performance of such sacrifices as found in the] Kalpa-sūtras. In the same way,

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44. "In this material world there are classifications of people, but, after all, this world is not a happy place for anyone. [...] This world is declared by the Supreme Personality of Godhead to be temporary and full of miseries. [...] Arjuna was born in a saintly royal family. To him also the Lord says, 'Take to My devotional service and come quickly back to Godhead, back home.' No one should remain in this temporary world, full as it is with miseries. Everyone should attach himself to the bosom of the Supreme Personality of Godhead so that he can be eternally happy." (Bhagavad-gītā 9.33 purport)

information relating to all of the other Vedāṅgas can be found by a reader of subtle intelligence.<sup>45</sup>

These are the eighteen [cardinal] teachings of the Rāmāyaṇa that we have learnt from our spiritual master.

Firstly, the sage Vālmīki sets the scene to reveal the surrender of the demigods unto Lord Nārāyaṇa, desiring the result of having Rāvaṇa killed, till Daśaratha's Aśvamedha sacrifice. Then the sage describes the attainment of that result, from the incident of the appearance of the person who appears from the sacred fire [to give Daśaratha pāyasa sweet rice for his wives], until the incident describing the death of Rāvaṇa. Then, in Canto 7, the sage describes the purpose of Rāma's descent—to establish dharma and to grant liberation [to all who surrendered unto Him seeking it].

Other teachings are noted in their appropriate contexts [within the commentary].

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45. Since the Rāmāyaṇa is practically an encyclopedia of Vedic culture, it is not surprising that it also contains references to the Vedāṅgas.