Tulsidas (c. 1532-1623) is regarded as the greatest of all Hindi poets, and with good reason. Examples of broad vision, technical skill, musicality, spiritual and psychological insight, humour, compassion and emotional intensity may be found individually in many poets; but nowhere else do we find such fine examples of all these qualities within the work of a single individual. With lesser poets, the vision of their subject is like the view of a theatre performance in which the audience willingly accepts the dramatic artifice and enjoys the play while knowing, intuitively, that to step onto the stage would be to see the two-dimensionality of the props, unpainted on their reverse side. A great poet such as Tulsī, on the other hand, delivers a panoptic vision: whichever way the eye looks, and from whichever angle, it sees a perfectly conceived multidimensional world, with every detail set out in astonishing clarity. Tulsī takes the chaos of life and lends it order; and he takes the infinite variety of language and lends it shape and form.

Numerous factors combine to yield this sense of a deeply connected realm of experience in Tulsī’s poetry. The hagiographer Nabhādās maintains that ‘To save souls in this Kali age Vālmīki became Tulsī’ (Bhaktamāl 141) – a conceit which lends Tulsī an impeccable pedigree and the greatest possible aura of spiritual authenticity. Meanwhile, in his own Rāmcaritmānas narrative, when Tulsī has the exiled Rāma encounter Vālmīki in the forest and ask him where he should pitch camp, the sage’s reply indicates Rāma’s transcendent ubiquitousness: ‘tell me where you are not, and I shall show you a place!’ (Ayodhyākāṇḍ 127 2). Then in Kavitāvalī, by varied use of his chāp or poetic signature, Tulsī positions himself and his narrative lens at various different positions in the story, sometimes looking directly at its protagonists, sometimes examining his own self, sometimes serving as intermediary between the narrative and us, his readers. Thus the complex interplay of multiple components – Tulsī and Vālmīki as narrators of and participants in Rāma’s story, complementary aspects of Rāma as both immanent and transcendent, and ourselves as closely involved onlookers – produces a multidimensional ground against which new poetic variations of the narrative can be played to very great effect.

1 कलि कुटिल जीव निस्तार हित बालीक तुलसी मयो | Nabhādās, Śrī bhaktamāla (with commentary by Ganeshdas). Govardhan, Devidas Gupta, N.d. p.309.

2 पूछेहु मोहि कि रहों कहें मूछा सकुचाउं | जहैं न होहु तहैं देहू कहि तुहो देखावो ठाउं || १२७ ||
Tulsī’s major exploration of the Rāmāyaṇa was of course in his magnum opus, the Awadhi Rāmcaritmānas, begun in 1574 AD. But the motivation for his returning to the Rāmāyaṇa subject-matter is clear: despite the great range of moods and effects produced by the Mānas, other metres offer expressive opportunities that are not to be found in the epic’s caupāt-dohā structure. For example, the shortest of Tulsī’s various iterations of Rāmāyaṇa themes, a fragmentary and little-studied miniature called Barvai Rāmāyaṇ (in the tiny barvai metre), includes several couplets of almost unbearable delicacy. In the couplet below, Tulsī praises Sitā’s fineness in the terms of a traditional trope – ‘decoration is outshone by the thing it decorates’: Sitā’s white champak garland blends completely with her skin until the moment when its petals wither, then revealing both its presence and its inferiority against the heroine’s ever-fair complexion.

चफम हरवा आँग मिलि अधिक सोहाइ |
जानि परे सिय हियरे जब कुँभिलाई ||५ ||

Her garland’s pastel petals, bosom-fair: It’s only when they fade we see they’re there.

The effect here exploits the structure of the barvai’s line: the closing cadence of its short second foot (adhika sōhā; jaba kūbhālā) achieves a lightness of touch that the more solidly foursquare dohā, for example, cannot readily deliver. Similarly, the kavītā and savaiyā metres used in Kavitāvalī lend themselves to very particular literary effects: the dazzling rhythmic fireworks of kavītā are to be seen and heard in 27 and other stanzas below, while the hypnotic, lilting music of the savaiyā is apparent from the very opening of the text. Poetic structure is the heart of the matter here, the aesthetic effect of savaiyā-kavītā having a lyrical quality quite different from the efficient story-telling capacity of caupāt-dohā sequences, while as already noted, the use of the chāp or poetic signature in these metres intimates the poet’s direct and personal involvement in the scenes being described. Thus the distinction is one of genre as much as it is one of metre.

So much for poetic form; but Kavitāvalī is also marked out from Tulsī’s other Rāmāyaṇ narratives in terms of its content. Tulsī’s combination of devotional intensity with humour and lyricism allows him to develop brilliant new variations on inherited Rāmāyaṇa episodes. Our passages below are taken from three of the poem’s seven traditional kāṇḍas. The first (stanzas 1–7) is from the opening of the Bālkānd, and describes the infant Rāma in the arms of his father; both a royal and a divine epiphany, this palace-doorway darśan is reminiscent of the staged public ‘showings’ of Mughal emperors contemporary to Tulsīdās. Rāma is then seen as a

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3 Kavitāvalī is thought to be a late work, perhaps written after 1615. McGregor 1984:116
4
youth, roaming with his companions on the banks of Ayodhyā’s Saryu river. The next scene (8–9) is from the beginning of Ayodhyākāṇḍ and shows Rāma, Sitā and Lakṣman leaving Ayodhyā as they set out on their forest exile. This leads directly into an episode (10–15) where the wayfarers seek a ferryboat to cross the Ganga, and then appear as living icons to a party of villagers (16–19). The final, longer extract (20–35) has a very different tone: it describes Hanumān’s Lanka mission, in which he allows himself to be captured and to have his tail set on fire, only to break free and set the beautiful but demonic city alight before finally extinguishing his tail in the ocean, collecting a token from the imprisoned Sitā, and flying back to an ecstatic welcome from his simian friends on the mainland. This is one of the most brilliant dramatic descriptive passages in the whole of Braj literature.

Let us look in a little more detail at some of these episodes. The text begins rather mysteriously with the vision of the infant Rāma in proud Daśrath’s arms. The ‘mystery’ involves the mode of narration in these opening verses: the first stanza begins (‘[??] went betimes to the Lord of Awadh’s door’), with not so much as a pronoun – still less a name! – to identify the subject. All we know is that the subject is female. But is it ‘I went’ or ‘She went’ or even ‘You (tū) went?’ The issue is resolved in the opening of the fourth line with the word sajanī, ‘friend’ (it is synonymous with sakhi, but, just like the poet’s name tulasī, sits especially comfortably in savaiyā rhythm); so the poem’s words are those of a (still anonymous) female observer, and we are in territory like that of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa poetry in which sakhi play an important role as go-betweens, confidantes, narrators… and as the vicarious female ‘eyes’ of the male poet. Perhaps Tulsī himself adopts the sakhi role here – for only females have privileged access, as direct onlookers, to intimate divine moments.

The ferry narrative is well known from the Rāmcaritmānas, where the ferryman’s dilemma is set out in a lyrical chanda stanza (Ayodhyākāṇḍ 100). In Kavitāvalī, Tulsī lingers lovingly on the episode, further developing its sympathetic portrayal of a simple, literal-minded faith. The basic trope here is that Rāma’s persona is so richly imbued with sanctity that even the very dust of his feet ( hierarchically the most insignificant aspect of the lowest part of the body) has the power to affect transformations. (In Rāma’s case, the feet are as beautiful as lotuses, and their dust is therefore like pollen.) The ferryman has heard the story of Ahalya, cursed to turn into stone but then returned to living flesh by Rāma gracious intercession; and now, fearing that the wooden boat through which he earns his livelihood may similarly be turned into a living being, he insists on washing Rāma’s feet before allowing him to board. In this tale’s inverted logic, the dust itself (and not Rāma or even the metonym of his feet!) becomes the location of Rāma’s sanctity per se, and accordingly the boatman assumes that its transformative power can be removed by a simple
footwashing. The knowing sees understands the logical flaw here, and understands that Rāma’s innate salvific power is not so easily washed away.

The gently humorous ferryman episode is deservedly popular. But no less powerful is the short sequence of stanzas that follow, presenting iconic views of Rāma in a manner that typifies Tulsi’s genius. One of the many tropes in which Tulsi excels is what K.E. Bryant (1978), writing of Sūrdas and Kṛṣṇa, has called ‘the verbal icon’. Tulsi brings a sense of deep reverence to the image of Rāma and likes nothing better than to invoke his presence through finely-crafted description. In the kavīt beginning ठाढ़े हैं नौ दुम ढार (18), the dignified stasis of the opening phrase (‘He stands…’) is perfectly suited to the iconic mode; for some, it may recall the intense dignity and moment of the Stabat Mater hymn from the Christian devotional tradition. Tulsi often weaves such visions into the surrounding narrative in such a way that their static, iconic value becomes heightened by a contrast with the bustle of the surrounding narrative. In the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍ (fourth book of the Rāmacaritmānas), at a moment of great drama in which Rāma has fatally wounded the monkey warrior Bāli with an arrow, we find these lines:

परा बिकल महि सर के लागें | पुनि उठि बैठ देखि प्रभु आगें ||
स्याम गात सि जटा बनाएं | अरुन नयन सर चाप चढ़ाएं || (Kiṣkindhā 9.1)

[Bāli] fell to the ground maimed as the arrow struck, then sat up seeing the Lord before him: dusky body, matted hair on head, reddened eyes, arrow nocked on bowstring!

With the smoothest of transitions, Tulsi has switched from narrator’s viewpoint to that of the fallen warrior. Bāli looks up at Rāma towering over him, and the words italicised in the prosaic translation above are presented as Bāli’s vision. He is awestruck by the majesty of the iconic divine figure. Through such subtle shifts, Tulsi suggests the epiphany experienced by those who encounter Rāma – even by those who may be the targets for his arrows! And when Bāli finally expires from his wound, secure in Rāma’s grace, his life slips away ‘like a garland falling unnoticed from the neck of an elephant’.

We return to Kavitāvalī. After the ठाढ़े हैं stanza, Tulsi widens his lens to take in Lakṣman, who stands close by, and Sītā, who is framed between the two brothers. The opening lines of the stanza are neutral in terms of perspective; but in 19.3 we come to an anonymous ‘supposition’ in the words काहू भूप के कुमार हैं (‘they are the princes of some monarch’), evidently spoken by an as yet unidentified third party since this is clearly not Tulsi’s voice. So who is speaking here – who is this observer, this person or persons unknown, describing the threesome standing there? We are in as much uncertainty as we were in the opening line of the text, discussed above. The liltingly alliterative half-line that follows, तुलसी बोलोिक के तिलोक के तिलक बीन (‘Tulsi! seeing this trio, the adornment of the three worlds…’) indicates that there must be an animate subject behind the ‘seeing’ verb … and then in the stanza’s closing phrase
the subject is at last revealed: रहे नरनािर ज्यों चितेरे चितसार हैं (‘the men and women were left like artists in a gallery’). Finally we realise that this whole stanza has been painted, as it were, from the perspective of these ‘artists’ – a group of bystanding villagers whose words have been recording the majesty of the sight before them. In this closing line, Tulsī has again changed the camera angle, switching from the tableau of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇ and Sīta, to the opposite tableau of the entranced onlookers.

Tulsī chooses Hanumān’s burning of Laṅkā as another special focus in Kavitāvalī, dedicating some 23 stanzas (3-26 in the full text; 22-31 in our selection below) to an event covered quite briefly in the Mānas (Sundarkāṇḍ 25-26). Adopting the conventional descriptions of kāvyā as found in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇ’s city of demons is described as a place of beauty and grace, quite unlike the infernal Gormenghast that might be imagined in Western demonologies. Hanumān’s adventures there are recounted in loving detail. This section has none of the grimly bloody images that will later describe the main battle of Laṅkā: rather, the pandemonium created by Hanumān in this solo foray is portrayed as gleeful monkey-business, a mischievous (if effective) game rather than a military mission. But there is room for some derring-do, and the hugely energetic rhythms of the kavíta verses in particular suggest that a version of Longfellow’s trochaic ‘Hiawatha rhythm’ (–˘) might serve in translation here:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Market, roadway, fortress looming,} \\
\text{rooftops, threshold, stairways, dwellings!} \\
\text{Running, running, lane and byways,} \\
\text{Hanumān set all things burning —} \\
\text{Shouting, screaming, no-one helping,} \\
\text{fleeing hither, thither flying…} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(see 27: with apologies to Tulsīdāś)

A metaphor in 30 portrays the burning Laṅkā as a mithāṭ-vala’s searing saucepan, with the demons steeped in the hot syrup of Laṅkā’s molten gold, their bodies neatly stacked like so many tasty morsels. As usual with Tulsī’s descriptions of the monkeys’ actions, the account combines heroism with humour: a key term is kautuka or kautukī (33.3 below), combining senses of sensational show, jovial prank and divine lilā. In the whole text there is no more joyful image than that of the gleeful monkeys celebrating heroic Hanumān’s safe return across the ocean: whooping and leaping, gesticulating, dancing wildly, they wheel madly and playfully along the sandy shore.
_BIBLIOGRAPHY_ The text is based on _Tulsi-granthavalī_ II; _mūl_ text-numbering begins anew with each chapter. For a complete translation of and introduction to _Kavitāvalī_, see Tulsi Dās 1964; for textual history see Bangha 2011. Many extra-literary aspects of Tulsi’s _oeuvre_ are covered in Lutgendorf 1991. There is, as yet, very little written in English on the literary accomplishment of Tulsi. For a view that vigorously challenges his literary status see Sandahl 1994.


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कवितावली

वालकाण्ड

अवधेस के द्वारे सकारे गई सुत गोद के भूपति ले निकसे ।
अवलोकित हैं सोच विमोचन को ठगी सी रही जे न ठगे धिक से ॥
तुलसी मनरंजन रंजित अंजन नैन सुखजन जातक से ।
सजनी ससि में समसील उभे नवनील सरोरूह से बिकसे ॥ १ ॥

पण नूपुर औ पहुँची कररंजनि मंजू बनी मनिमाल हिये।
नवनील कलेवर पीत झाँगा झलके पुलके नूपुर गोद लिये ॥
अरविन्द सो आनन रूप मंद अनंदित लोचन भूंग मिये ।
मन मो न बस्यो अस बालकु जी तुलसी जाग में फलु को जिये ॥ २ ॥

तनकी दृष्टि स्याम सरोरूह लोचन कंजक मंजु लताई हैं ।
अति सुंदर सोहत धूरी भरे छवि भूरी अनंग की दूरी थरे ॥
दमके दैवयां दृष्टि दामिनि ज्यों किलके कल बाल बिनोद करे ।
अवधेस के बालक चारि सदा तुलसी मन मंदिर में बिहरे ॥ ३ ॥

कबहूँ ससि मांगत आरि कहूँ प्रतिविन्द निहारि हैं ।
कबहूँ करताल बजाइके नाचत मातु सबे मन गोद भरे ॥
कबहूँ रिसिआइ कहूँ हठक पुनि लेत सोई जेहि लागि अरे ।
अवधेस के बालक चारि सदा तुलसी मन मंदिर में बिहरे ॥ ४ ॥
KAVITĀVALI

CHILDHOOD

1 I went to the Lord of Awadh’s door at dawn – the King came out with the baby in his arms; Beholding the Remover of Care I was as if enchanted (shame on those who are not so!). Tulsī, [his] heart-pleasing eyes, coloured with kohl, were like a sweet young wagtail; friend, it was as though two matching fresh blue lotuses blossomed on the moon.

2 On his feet are anklets, bracelets on his wrists, a lovely jewelled necklace on his breast; a yellow wrap glows on his fresh blue body, and the king thrills, holding him in his arms. Delighted eye-bees drink the pollen of beauty from his lotus-like face; If such a child dwells not in the heart, Tulsī, for what purpose would one live in the world?

3 The brilliance of his body is a blue lotus; eyes defeat the loveliness of the (white) lotus; utterly lovely, it shines, even dust-covered! Its lustre outstrips the Lovegod’s great lustre. The brightness of his teeth flashes like lightning as he chirps, playing in sweet childish joy. May the four sons of the Lord of Awadh revel forever in the temple of Tulsī’s mind.

4 Sometimes he stubbornly demands the moon, sometimes he’s afraid to see his reflection; sometimes he claps and dances, filling the hearts of all mother and all with joy. Sometimes, angered, he speaks sulkily – only to get the very thing he’d been set on getting; May the four sons of the Lord of Awadh revel forever in the temple of Tulsī’s mind.

1.1 gaṭ – ‘[I] went’; though no subject is announced, the locative sajant in line 4 eventually reveals that this speech is between one female companion (or sakhi) and another.
1.1 suta goda kai – ‘with his son in his arms’; absolutive kai (MSH karke) functions as a postposition.
1.2 ṭhagi – the primary meaning is of being ‘charmed, enchanted, deluded’ – although the negative associations of ‘deception’ usually innate in ṭhag- do not apply here.
1.3 tulsī manaranjana – it is often possible to interpret the poet’s name as part of the syntax of the line: the infant Rāma’s eyes ‘please Tulsī’s mind’.
1.3 The wagtail is so named because of the constantly flickering movements of its long black and white tail-feathers; this ‘restlessness’ underlies the metaphor of ‘wagtail eyes’.
1.4 saroruha – the first of many ‘lotus’ images in this sequence of verses. English translation obscures the variety of lexical choices, alliterative variations, and distinctions of species specified in the original. making the metaphor seem overworked.
2.4 tulasī jaga mā phalu kauna jiye – again, the poet’s name can be the subject here.
4.2 mātu sabai – i.e. Daśarath’s four queens; alternatively ‘all mothers’, or ‘mothers and all’.
4.3 puni leta soṭ sojī lāgi araṭ – the success of a childish sulking fit is nicely caught with the emphatic juxtaposition of soṭ with jehi: the child gets exactly what he wanted all along.
बर दंत की पंगति कुंदकली अधराधर पल्लव खोलन की ।
चपला चमके घन बीच जगी छबि मोतिन माल अमोलन की ॥
घुंघुरारि लटैं लटके मुख ऊपर कुंडल लोल कपोलन की ।
निवछावरि प्रान करे तुलसी बलि जाउँ लला इन बोलन की ॥ ५ ॥

पदकंजनि मंजु बनीं पनहीं धनुहीं सर पंकज पानि लिये ।
लरिका साँग खेलत डोलत हैं सरजू तट चौहट हाट हिये ॥
तुलसी अस बालक सों नहीं नेहु कहा जप जाग समाधि किये ।
नर ते खर सूकर स्वान समान कहीं जग में फलु कौन जिये ॥ ६ ॥

सरजू बर तीरहि तीर फिरें रघुबीर सखा अरु बीर सबे ।
धनुहीं कर तीर निषंग कसे कटि पीत दुकूल नवीन फवे ॥
तुलसी तेहि औंसर लावनिता दस चारि नौ तीन इकीस सबे ।
मति भारति पंगु भई जो निहारि बिचारि फिरी उपमा न पवे ॥ ७ ॥

अयोध्याकाण्ड

कीर के कागर ज्यों नूप चीर विभूषण उपम अंगनि पाई ।
औध तजी मण्डवाक के रुख ज्यों पंथ के साथी ज्यों लोग लुगाई ॥
संग सुबंधु पुनीत प्रिया मनो धर्म किया धरि देख सुहाई ।
राजिवलोचन राम चले तजि वाप को राज बटाऊ की नाई ॥ १ ॥ ८ ॥
For the line of his fine jasmine-bud teeth, the opening of the petals of his lips:
For the dawning beauty of the necklace of priceless pearls – flashing lightning midst a cloud:
For the curls of hair dangling over his face, and earrings tremulous against his cheeks:
Tulsī offers his life [for all these]… and devotes himself to these words of the beloved boy.

His sandals are made pretty by lotus feet, his bow and arrows [lie] in lotus hands;
he plays and roams with the boys on Saryu’s bank and among the squares and markets.
Tulsī, what is the point of recitation, yoga and meditation if one has no love for such a lad?
Such people are like asses, swine and dogs – say, with what aim could they live in the world?

Along Sarayū’s fine banks they roam – Raghubīr and all his companions and friends;
Bows in hand, arrow-quiver bound to waist, a fresh yellow sash looking splendid.
Tulsī, the loveliness on that occasion…searching and thinking, Bhārati roams the fourteen, the nine,
the three, and the twenty-one – [but] her wit has been lamed, and no simile suits.

Like a parrot’s plumage were the king’s clothes and jewels: his limbs acquired this simile.
Awadh he left like a tree at a traveller’s halt, its men and women like wayfarers on the road.
With him were his fine brother and pure beloved, like duty and action in sweet bodily form:
Lotus-eyed Rāma set off, leaving his father’s kingdom as would a wayfarer.

The list of qualities given in this stanza is cumulative, but is given extra point by the fact that after
three lines describing physical beauty, the crowning quality in line four is abstract – the infant Rāma’s
first words.

khola kī – the rhyme-word kī anticipates its complement in line 4, nichāvari.

Something that is meant to adorn the body is itself beautified by the body.

larikā sāgā – the noun is perhaps in this form for metre, since ‘larikāni’ (to postulate a plural oblique
alternative – see stanza 7) would not fit the savaiyā rhythm. Note also that sāgā must have two short
syllables.

bīra – the literal sense is ‘hero/heroic’, while the extended sense includes both ‘friend’ and ‘brother’,
either being apposite here. A light irony marks the ‘heroism’ of these fine young fellows on their
riverbank stroll.

pīta dukāla – this ‘yellow garment’ implies that the line describes Rāma specifically.

Bhārati (Sarasvatī), goddess of learning and the arts, cannot find an appropriate metaphor for Rāma’s
beauty in all the 14 cosmological spaces (bhuvana), earth’s 9 regions (khaṇḍa), 3 worlds (loka), or 21
galaxies (nakṣatra).

The ‘plumage’ has two characteristics: its splendour, and its tendency to be shed or moulted; but the
second of these is not made specific until 9.1 (see note below).

The zuegma or dīpaka (with two complements to the one verb tajī) lends pathos; and a chiasmus.
काग तक ज्यों भूषन चीर साधी लस्यी तजी नीर ज्यों काई ।
मातु पिता प्रिय लोग सब सनपान सुभाष सनेह सगाई ॥
संग सुभाषिनि भाइ भलो दिन ते जस आध हुते पहुँचाई ।
राजविधोचन राम चले तजी बाय को राज बटाऊ की नाई ॥ २ ॥ ९ ॥

नाम अजामिल से खल कोटी अपार नदी भव बृहत काहै ।
जो सुमेर गिरि मेरू सिला कन होत अजाखुर बारिधि बाढ़े ॥
तुलसी जेहि के पदपकज ते प्रभु तत्तनी जो हरे अत गाढ़े ।
सो प्रभु सदा सरिता तरिक कहै मागत नाय करेह दीठाइह ॥ ५ ॥ १० ॥

एहि घाट तेघो धरिक दूर अहे कटि लों जल थाह देखाइहं जू ।
परसे पण धूरि तेरे प्रभु घर सवा समझाइहं जू ॥
तुलसी अवलंब न और कछू लरिका केहि भोंति जिजाइहं जू ।
बरु मारिए मोहि बिना पण भोए हों नाथ न नाय चढाइहं जू ॥ ६ ॥ ११ ॥
9 His body shone like water free of scum on shedding the parrot-plumage of garments and gems. Showing respect and instinctive love to mother and father, to all his dear ones, with his good wife and fine brother, as though after two days’ guest-stay in Awadh Lotus-eyed Rāma set off, leaving his father’s kingdom as would a wayfarer.

10 He whose name drew millions of drowning villains like Ajāmil from the uncrossable river of the world: meditation on whom a Mount Meru becomes a fragment of stone, and a goat’s hoof-print expands into an ocean: Tulsi, from whose lotus feet was born the river which removes heinous sins – that Lord, standing on the riverbank, calls for a boat to cross this very stream.

11 “A little way from this ghat the water is just waist-deep – I’ll show you sir! If my boat ‘crosses over’ at the touch of the dust of your feet, how shall I explain it to my wife at home, sir? (Tulsi) I have no other support at all – how shall I keep my lad alive, sir? Better that you kill me: for without washing your feet I shall not let you board my boat sir!”

9.1 kāgara kīra...bhūṣana cīra...taij – the phrasing works a variation on 8.1-2: finery ‘parrot-plumage’ is now seen as disposable frippery which actually conceals Rāma’s innate beauty. In another zeugma, taij does triple duty for the Rāma’s royal finery, the parrot’s plumage, and the water’s scum.

9.2 lagāī – a rhyme-form for absolutive lagā (modern Hindi lagākar).

9.3-4 The repeat of 8.4 as 9.4 is complemented by the near repeat of the third lines also (with 8.3 saṅga subandhu punīta priyā recycled and inverted as 9.3 saṅga subhāmint bhāi bhalo, the metrically convenient prefix su- being transferred from Lakṣman to Sītā); this yields a highly plangent tone, as if the poet can hardly believe the intensity of the episode and feels the need to repeat its basic terms.

10.2 Allchin 1964 translates as ‘a tiny stone becomes Mount Meru’; but the line is more potent if it suggests two different but complementary siddhis – one of extreme shrinking and another of extreme growing.

10.2 silā kana – the wording seems oxymoronic, as silā/sīlā usually has a sense of massiveness (‘rock, crag’ etc.) quite unlike the diminutive kana/kāṇa ‘spec, particle’.

10.4 te prabhu yā saritā – the unusual specificity of pronouns indicates that the line speaks of the same lord and the same river spoken of in line 3.

11 A ferryman, remembering how Rāma’s touch restored Gautam’s wife (see 13 below) from stone to living flesh, fears that his boat may be similarly animated, ruining his livelihood. With nice irony, while the ferryman’s obsequious ‘jī huzūrī’ shows his subservience to Rāmā, his arguments invoke the very images that feature in standard eulogies of Rāma’s salvific power – the transformative power of a touch of the dust of Rāma’s feet, and the absence of any alternative ‘support’.
रावरे दोष न पायें को पग धूरी को भूरी प्रभाव महा है ।
पाहन तें बन बाहन काठ को कोमल है जल खाई रहा है॥
पावन पारं पखारि के नाव चढ़ाइहं आयस होत कहा है ।
तुलसी सुनि केवट के बर बैन हँसे प्रभु जानकी ओर हहा है॥ ७॥ १२॥

पात भरी सहरी सकल सुत बारे बारे ।
केवट की जाति कछूँ बेद न पढ़ाइहं ।
सब परिवार मेरो याही लापि राजा जू ।
ही दीन बिरहैन केसे दूसरी गढ़ाइहं॥
गौतम की घरी ज्यों तसी तरगी मेरी ।
प्रभु सों निषाद हैं के बाद न बढ़ाइहं ।
तुलसी के ईस राम रावरे सों साँची कहं ।
विना पग धोए नाथ नाव न चढ़ाइहं॥ ८॥ २३॥

जिनको पुनीत बारि धारि सिय पैर पुरारि ।
त्रिपथामिनी जसू बेद कहे गाड़ के ।
जिनको जोगींद मुनिवंड देव देह भरि ।
करत विराग जप जोग मन लाड़ के ॥
तुलसी जिनकी धूरी परसि अहिल्या तरी ।
गौतम सिधारे पुज गौनो सो निवाड़ के ।
तेई पारं पाईके चढ़ाइ नाव धोए बिनु ।
ख्वेहों न पठावनी के हेहों न हेसाड़ के ॥ ९॥ २४॥
“It’s no fault of your feet, [but] the great effect of their dust is mighty; my wooden boat, made of timber, is softer than stone and already waterlogged. I could bathe your sacred feet and let you board the boat – what is your command?” 

Tulsī: hearing the boatman’s fine words the Lord [looked] at Sītā and laughed.

“A leaf-plate of little fishes, and all my sons very young – a boatman by caste, I’m not about to preach the Vedas! All my family depends on this [boat], Raja ji – I’m poor, penniless, how could I hew another? My [boat] would ‘cross over’ like Gautam’s wife... and being a Nishad I should not quarrel with the Lord; [but] O Tulsī’s master, Rāma, I say to you in truth: without washing your feet, lord, I’ll not have you board the boat.

“Whose sacred waters Purāri took on his head and the Veda celebrates as ‘traveller through the three worlds’; those whom great yogis and hosts of sages and gods, subjugating their bodies, attentively practice various yogas and meditations; (O Tulsī!), by touching whose dust Ahalyā passed over and was escorted home by Gautam as in a bride-bringing; neither shall I lose my paṭhāvanī qq nor shall I make myself a laughing-stock – by finding those feet and letting them board my boat without washing.”

12.2 jala khāi raha hai – khā- here has the sense ‘absorb’, and the meaning is that the wooden boat is already saturated, and cannot stand further interference. raha hai (or rahāhai, a rhyme-form analagous to rahāhī (a form found in Sūrdās) and distinct from the continuous of progressive tense of modern Hindi) suggests an enduring state – the boat has long been like this, and its decrepitude makes it a poor candidate for divine miracles.

12.4 kevaṭa ke bara baina: what made Rāma laugh was partly the naïve redundancies of the boatman’s words, with its paired adjectives bhūri and mahā, its tautological bana...kāṭha ko, and the innocent irony of ‘cleansing’ the already ‘pure’ feet (pāvana pāya pakhāṭi), all of which are redolent of charmingly untutored rustic speech.

13.1 The arguments all relate to the the boat as being the sole source of livelihood for the family.

13.8 nā carhatthā – the negative is anticipated and thus strengthened by three earlier appearances of nā – in bīnā, nālha, and nāva. The ferryman determinedly states his case.

14.1 tripathaṁminī – the Ganges flows from Viṣṇu’s foot in heaven, is caught on earth by the head of Śiva (‘Purāri’), and proceeds to the netherworld.

14.3 gaunā so – ‘is in the bringing-home of a bride’; this further reference to the Gautam-Ahalyā narrative indicates that Ahalyā’s ‘saving’ by Rāma had rendered her as pure as a virgin bride.

14.4 The rhetoric of this fourth line is hard to translate. The meaning is, ‘at the moment of being in the sacred presence of Rāma’s sacred feet, I’m not willing to lose everything by failing to wash them’.
प्रभु सुख पाई के बोलाइ बाल घरनिहि
बंदि के चन चहूं दिसि बेठे घर घरि ।
छोटे सो कठोता भर आनि पानि गंगाजू को
धोइ पौय पीयत पुनीत बारि फेरि फेरि ॥
तुलसी सहाह ताको भाग सानुराग सुर
बरशु सुमन जय जय कहें टेट टेट ।
बिशुध सनेह सानी बानी अस्यानी मुनी
हें राघो जानकी लपन तन हें हेरि ॥ २० ॥ २५ ॥

पुर ते निकसी रघुबीर बधू धरि धीर ददे मग में झग है ।
झलक भरि माल कनी जल की पूर सूख गए मधुराधर है ॥
फि बुझति हैं चलनो अब के तिक पर्ण कुदी करहो कित है।
तिय की लखि आतुरा पिय की अंखियाँ अति चारु चर्लों जल चहे ॥ ११ ॥ १६ ॥

जल को गए लक्खन है लरिका परिखो पिय छांह घरीक है घाड़े ।
पौछि पसेउ बयारि कहो अरु पाये पखारि हो झूझुरि ढाड़े ॥
तुलसी रघुबीर प्रिया सम जानि के बैठि बिलंब लों कंटक कहड़े ।
जानकी नाह को नेहा लख्यी पुलको तन बारि बिलोचन बाड़े ॥ १२ ॥ १७ ॥
15  Gaining the Lord’s assent he called his children and wife;  
they saluted his feet and sat encircling him.  
They brought a small bowl filled with Ganga ji’s water,  
washed his feet, and in turn drank the sanctified liquid.  
Tulsī: praising his [the boatman’s] fortune, the gods affectionately  
rained blossoms, calling “Victory! Victory!” over and over.  
Hearing the various naïve words [of the family], imbued with love,  
Rāghava looked repeatedly at Lakṣmaṇ and Sītā and laughed.

16  Raghubīr’s wife set out from the city and holding courage,  
took two steps upon the way;  
beads of sweat glistened on her whole brow,  
and her sweet lips themselves became dry.  
Then she asks, “How far is there to walk?  
At what point shall we make a hut of leaves?”  
Seeing his wife’s distress, her beloved’s eyes  
welled up with the sweetest tears.

17  “Lakṣmaṇ’s gone for water – he’s [just] a boy,  
[so] watch for him, standing under the shade of a tree awhile.  
I shall wipe your sweat and fan you  
and wash you feet, burning from the hot stones.”  
Tulsī: comprehending his beloved’s tiredness, Raghubīr  
sat, tarrying long and drawing thorns from [her] feet;  
Jānakī saw her lord’s love –  
her body thrilled and her eyes shed tears.

15.1  gheri gheri – the repeated absolutive sets up a pattern for all four lines, the force of the resulting emphasis shifting slightly with each line.  
15.2  bāri – ‘water’, but also ‘time, turn’ anticipating the identical sense of pheri pheri. (The already sacred Ganges water has been further sanctified by contact with Rāma’s feet.)  
15.4  hāse – emphatically not ‘burst out laughing’ as Allchin and some Hindi commentators have it: Rāma’s laughter here is more subtle and compassionate than a crude guffaw. Braj does not lack expressions for boisterous laughter when required.  
16.2  vai – an emphatic, stressing the fact that Sītā’s lips, normally moist and tender, dried up.  
17  The stanza, which begins with Sītā speaking, is an extremely tender invocation of Rāma’s loving kindness (fully reciprocated) towards his delicate wife, and rewards close reading. The second couplet may also be read as describing Tulsī’s intense devotion for the divine couple – an interpretation that stands well before the sublime darśan scene of the following stanza, where Rāma’s heroic stature is showcased in lines of great beauty.
ढाढ़े हैं नौ टुंग डार गहे धनु कांघे धरे कर सायक ले।  
बिकटी अकुंटी बड़री अंधियाँ अनमोल कमोलन की छवि है।  
तुलसी असी मृति आनि हिये जड़ डारीहैं प्रान निछावरी के।  
सम सीकर सोवरि देह लसे मनो याचि महा तम तारक मे। ॥ १३ ॥ १८ ॥

जलजनयन जलजानन जटा है सिर।  
जोबन उमंग अंग उदित उदार है।  
सुभरे गोरे के बीच भाभी सुद्राभी सो।  
मुनि पत धारे उर फूलनि के हार हैं। ॥  
कहरि सरासन सिली मुख निघंग कटि।  
अतिही अन्नपुष्प काहू भूप के कुमार हैं।  
तुलसी बोलोकि के तिलोक के तिलक तीनि।  
रहे नरनारि ज्यों चितेरे चितसार हैं। ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥

सुन्दरकाण्ड

बासव बहत विध बनते सुहावनो।  
दसानन को कानन बसत न सिंगार सो।  
समय पुराने पात परत इतत बात।  
पालत ललात रति मार को विहार सो। ॥  
देखे बर वाइकिता तड़ाग बाग को बनाव।  
रामयस्न भो बिरागी पवनकुमार सो।  
सीय की दसा बिलोकि बिटप असोक तर।  
तुलसी बिलोक्यो सो तिलोक सोक सारु सो। ॥ १ ॥ २० ॥
18. He stands holding the bough of young tree
   with bow at his shoulder, holding arrows in his hand:
   arched his eyebrows, great his eyes,
   priceless is the grace of his cheeks.
   Tulsī: bring such an image into your heart –
   rather, O fool, throw down your life in sacrifice!
   Beads of sweat shine on his dark body
   like the tenebrous firmament spangled with stars.

19. “Lotus eyes, lotus faces, sadhus’ knotted hair upon their heads,
   youth’s rapture risen ripely in their bodies;
   Between the fair one and the dark, a lady like lightning;
   wearing sages’ attire, bearing flower-garlands on their chests.
   Bows in their hands, arrows in the quivers at their waists,
   utterly peerless, they’re the princes of some king!”
   Tulsī: seeing these three adornments of the three worlds,
   men and womenfolk were like artists in a gallery.

SUN DARKĀND

20. More lovely than the forests of Indra, Varuṇa and Brahmā
   Rāvana’s grove was like the ornament of spring;
   Old leaves fall at their [appointed] time, the wind fears [to disturb them],
   tending and fostering [the forest] as a pleasance for Kāmdev and Rati.
   Seeing the design of fine wells ponds and gardens,
   [even] that ascetic Son of the Wind fell prey to ardor.
   [But] beholding Sītā’s state beneath the Ashoka tree,
   O Tulsī, what he beheld was as the essence of grief in the three worlds.

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18.4 The allusively ‘cosmic’ vocabulary in this line calls for lofty translation equivalents, as the imagery transcends the context of mere physical beauty.

18.4 tāraka mai – mai is the suffix -maya, ‘filled with, consisting of’.

19 As villagers or bystanders try to identify the true character of Rāma Lakṣmaṇ and Sītā (see line 4 and note), the rhyme-word haṭ makes each statement a definitive description.

19.2 The fair and dark (Lakṣmaṇ and Rāma respectively) are like white clouds and dark sky (see 18.4), with Sītā shining like lightning between them. The ‘garland’ image also suggests Sītā’s sweetness contrasted with the rough ‘muni’ attire worn by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇ.

19.4 citere citrasāra haṭ – Allchin has ‘like pictures in a gallery’, and Pāṇḍey ‘citrasār ke citra’; but citere means ‘artists’, not ‘pictures’, and the image invokes the villagers’ attempts to depict the divine trio in the word-paintings of these verses. And with a sly twist, Tulsī’s demonstration of their eloquence suggests praise of his own.

20.2 so – either the pronoun ‘he/that’, or a suffix (Hindi -sil), indicating ‘such a one as Hanumān’.
माली मेघमाल बनपाल विकराल भट
नीके सब काल शांचे सुधासार नीर को।
मेघनाद तें दुनारो प्रण तें पियारो बाग
अति अनुराग जिय जातुधान धीर को॥
तुलसी सो जानि सुनि सीय को दस पाइ
पैठो बाटिका बजाइ बल रघुबीर को॥
विद्यमान देखत दसानन का कानन सो
तहस नहस कियो साहसी समीर को॥ २ ॥ २१ ॥

बलन बटोर बोर बोरि तेल तमीचर
खोर खोरि धाइ आइ बाँधत लँगूर हैं।
तेसो कपि कौतुकी द्रात ढीलो गात के के
लात के अघात सहे जी में कहें कूर हैं॥
बाल कलकारी के के तारी दे दे गारी देत
पाछे लागे बाजत निसान ढोल तू हैं।
बालधी बड़न लागी ठोर ठोर दोनहीं आगि
बिंध की दवारि केघों कोटिसत सूर हैं॥ ३ ॥ २२ ॥

लाई लाई आगि भागे बाल जाल जहाँ तहाँ
लघु है निखुरी गिरि मेरु तें बिसाल भो।
कौतुकी करीस कूदि कनक कँगूरा चढ़ि
राजत भवन जाइ ठाड़ो तेहि काल भो॥
तुलसी बिराज्यो व्योम बालधी पसार भारी
देखे हहरात भट काल तें काराल भो।
तेज को निधान मानो कोटिक कृसातु मानू
नख विकराल मुख तैसो रिस लाल भो॥ ४ ॥ २३ ॥
The gardeners were wreaths of cloud, the forest-guardians dreadful warriors: 
fully and and constantly they irrigated it with water’s nectarous essence.
Dearer than Meghnād and more beloved than his life was the garden [to Rāvaṇ] –
great was the affection [for it] in the demon hero’s heart.
Tulsī, knowing and seeing this, and having sight of Sītā,
[Hanumān] entered the garden, heralding Rāma’s power.
The brave [son] of the wind wrecked and ruined that garden of Rāvaṇ
[even while Rāvaṇ] was present and watching.

Gathering many cloths and steeping them in oil, the demons
came running down every lane and tied them to the monkey.
Accordingly the monkey, feigning fear, made his body slack and limp;
enduring their kicks he said to himself “What cowards they are!”.
Children, all hooping in delight, clapping and slanging him repeatedly,
tagged along behind; they sounded kettledrums, drums and trumpets.
His tail began swelling, and set fire to many a place
– like a conflagration in the Vindhya, or a billion suns.

After setting [the tail] aflame, the throng of children fled hither and thither;
he grew tiny, slipped his bonds, and became greater than Mount Meru.
In sport, the monkey lord jumped up and climbed a golden turret:
scaling Rāvaṇ’s mansion he stood there as an instant doom.
Tulsī, he shone majestically in the sky and mightily extended his tail:
seeing it the warriors trembled – he’d become fearsome as Death.
A mass of brilliance like a crore of fiery suns;
his nails were terrifying, his face equally become red with rage.

Hanumān’s particular variety of heroism is often accompanied by the carnival atmosphere of līlā,
representing the effortless ease lent him by Rāma’s power.

kaidhō – for parallels to such menus of metaphors likewise set out in kavīt metre, see 24.2-3 below.
The ability to assume tiny and huge sizes: two of the siddhis characteristic of Hanumān.
tehī kāla – both ‘at that moment’ and ‘as Death to it (the house of Rāvaṇ)’; the translation attempts to
conflate both meanings. (Cf. Allchin, ‘and in that moment stood there’.)
virājo – the translation needs two words, ‘shone majestically’, to capture two complementary senses.
बालभी बिसाल बिकराल ज्याल जाल मानों
लक्ष लालिबे को काल रसना पसारी है।
केहों व्योम बीरिक्खा भरे हैं भूरी धुमकेतु
बीर रस बीर तस्वारि सू उधारी है।

tulsidas-kavitali

तुलसी सरेस चाप केहीं दामिनी कलाप
केहीं चली मेरू तें कृसानु सारं भारी है।
देखे जातुधान जातुधानी अकुलानी कहें
कानन उजायें अब नगर प्रजारी है।|| ५ || २४ ||

जहाँ तहाँ बुबुक बिलोकि बुबुकारी देत
जरा निकेत धाओ धाओ लागि आगि है।
कहाँ तात मात भात महिनी महिनी भाभी
ढोंट छोटे छोटे अभागे भोर भागि है।
हाथी छोरो घोरा छोरो महिष स्रष्ट छोरो
छोरी छोरी सोवै सो जगावो जागि जागि है।
तुलसी बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहें
बार बार कहनो पिय कपि सों न लागि है।|| ६ || २५ ||

रानी अकुलानी सब डाँड़त परानी जाहि
सफेर न बिलोकिवे चेर केरीकुमार को।
मीज़ मीज़ हाथ धुन माथ दसमाथ सिद्धि
तुलसी तिलिनी न भयो बाहिर अगार को।
अब असवाब डाढो में न काढो तै न काढो
जिय की परि सभार सहन भेंडार को।
खीझति मंदोधे सबिषाद देखि मेधानाद
बयो लुनियत अब याही दाढीजार को।|| १२ || २६ ||

Tulsidas, Kavitavali
That mighty tail: a fearsome mesh of flames – as though
Death lolled out a tongue to lick up Lanka;
or as if the skyways were thronged with teeming falling stars
[or] the Heroic Sentiment's hero had unsheathed his sword.
Tulsī: it was Indra's bow, or otherwise a bale of lightning
or else a mighty stream of fire that flowed from Meru.
Seeing [it/him], demons and demonesses panicked and said,
“He's laid waste the forest and will now burn up the city.”

Seeing flames everywhere, [the Lankans] cried out,
“Houses are burning! Flee! Flee! Fire has caught!
Where is father, mother, brother, sister, wife and sister-in-law,
lads, little ones and boys – O luckless fools qq, run!
Leave the elephants, leave the horse, leave the buffalo and the bull
leave the goat, rouse the sleeping, wake up, wake up!
Tulsī: looking on in distress, the demonesses said
“Time and again I said, dear, don’t meddle with the monkey!”

In distress, the queens all fled away as the burning continued;
they could not bear to behold the semblance of the Son of the Wind.
Repeatedly wringing their hands and beating their brows, Ten-Brow's wives
[said, with] Tulsī, “not so much as a sesame seed was brought out of the house!”
All the property is burned, neither I rescued it nor you –
[when] life is at stake, who would take care of the courtyard or storeroom?
Vexed, Mandodarī looked despairingly at Meghnad:
“Everyone is reaping the [harvest] they sowed with this burnt-beard qq!”

24.3 *meru tē kṛṣānu sari* – recall that ‘Meru’ was established as an image for Hanumān in 23.1.
24.4 *prajārīhai* – this -ihai future form takes some licence with the rhyme, though some editions read *prajārī hai* to conform to the rhyme (but also spoiling the meaning). The ‘*prajā*’ element suggests the ‘populace’ which is at risk from the impending inferno.
25.3 *choro* – humanely interpreted by Allchin as ‘loose, untie’ (cf. *cūḍāmanī chori kai*, 31.2); but in 29.4 below, the elephants and horses are burned in their stables; perhaps ‘leave’ is intended.
25.4 The demon wives (always right of course), address this ‘told you so’ line to their husbands, though the narrative context suggests a more specific address of Mandodarī to Rāvaṇ.
26 A glimpse of domestic tensions: cf. the Sudāmā story.
26.1 *ḍāṛhata* – the verb is transitive and is not quite accommodated by Allchin’s ‘frightened by the fires’ or Pāṇḍeya’s *jalt huṭ*; rather, the subject – ‘fire’ – seems to be unexpressed.
26.2 *agāra* – both ‘house’ and ‘store, treasury’, both meanings indicating material prosperity.
26.3 *jiya kī pari* – the feminine subject is an elliptical *bāta*; the verb is *par-* (Hindi *parnā*): ‘when [the matter of] life [itself] is concerned’.
26.4 The seeds of the ‘harvest’ were the demons’ folly in meddling with Hanumān: *dāṛhitara* is a term of abuse used by women for stupid husbands, and means ‘burnt-beard’ (rather than ‘beard-burner’ as Allchin has it); it is lent special significance by Hanumān’s antics.
हाट बाट कोट नीट अगार पोरि
खोर खोर दोर दोर में ताज़ा आया है।
आजट पुकारत संभारत न कोक काहु
व्याकुल जहाँ सों तहाँ लोग चले भागी हैं।
बालधी फिराये बार बार झार झार झार
बूंदिया सी लंक पत्थिलाड पाग पागी है।
तुलसी बिलोकि अकुलानी जानुधानी कहँ
चित्रू के कप सों निसाचर न लागिये॥ १४॥

कोपि दसकंद तब प्रलय पयोद बोले
रामनजराई घाइ आए नूथ जोरे के।
क़द्दों लंकपति लंक बरत बुताओ बेगी
बानर बहाइ मारी महा बारी बोरे के॥
भले नाथ नाइ माथ चले पाथपदनाथ
बरपै मुसलधार बार बार घोरे के॥
जीवन ते ज़ागी आगी चरपर चोपनी लागी
तुलसी भभरि मेघ भागे मुख मोरि के॥ १९॥

पान पक्वान बिथि नाना को संधानो सीधो
बिथि बिथि धान बरत बखाराहिं।
कनक किरीट कोट पलय पेटारे पीठ
काण्ड कहार सब जरे भरे भाराहिं॥
प्रबल अनल बाहे जहाँ काहे तहाँ बाहे
झपट लपट घरे भवन भंडाराहिं।
तुलसी अगार न पणार न बजार बच्चो
हाथी हथिसार जरे घरे घोसाराहिं॥ २३॥

27 Market, roadway, fortress bulwark, rooftops, dwellings, threshold, stairways, and lane upon lane – running, running, [Hanumān] set all afire;
Calling out in distress, nobody assisted any other;
all the people ran distraught from place to place,
He whirls his tail and brandishes it time and again, shedding gobbets as though he’d melt Lanka and steep it in [boiling] syrup.
Tulsī: the distressed demonesses said as they watched,
“Demons shall not [again] tangle with even the picture of a monkey”.

28 Enraged, Ten-Head then summoned doomsday clouds:
at Rāvaṇ’s royal command they came, massing forces.
Said Lanka’s Lord: “Douse burning Lankā quickly,
deluge the monkey in mighty waters, sluice him to his doom.”
“Indeed, Lord!” said the Raincloud-lord, bowing his head as he set out, and, rumbling, poured torrents of rain one after another.
Roused by this life-giver, the fire instantly grew fourfold:
Tulsī: terrified, the clouds about-faced and fled.

29 Drinks and delicacies of many kinds, pickles and provisions,
and various types of grain burned there in the granaries;
golden crowns, countless bedsteads, chests and chairs
were all consumed as carriers bore the heavy loads away.
As the mighty fire grew, whatever was rescued burned where it stood;
leaping tongues of flame filled mansion and storeroom.
Tulsī: neither dwelling nor wall nor market escaped –
elephants burned in the elephant-houses, horses in the stables.

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27.1 *paurī* – either ‘threshold, gate’ or ‘step, stair’.
27.2 *loka* – more universal in connotation than its mundane tadbhava form *loga*.
27.3 The image is from sweet-making, in which ‘droplet-sweets’ (*bundīya*) are deep-fried in dangerously hot syrup; even at his most destructive, Hanumān is imbued with sweetness!
28 *pralaya* – the stanza invokes the apocalyptic ‘dissolution of creation’, while also, in this Vaiṣṇava context, recalling Kṛṣṇa’s subjugation of the Vedic storm-king Indra in the ‘Govardhan’ episode.
28.3 *nātī mātha* – ‘bowing his head’, alluding to the storm-clouds’ lowering towards the earth.
28.3 *musaladhrā bāra bāra* – with *bāra bāra* ‘time & again’ punning as ‘water & more water’, the standard image of pelting rain is *musaladhrā*, ‘a torrent of clubs or pestles’.
28.4 *jīvana* – meanings include ‘water’ (as life-sustainer); see Bhāgavata purāṇa X, 20.6.
28.4 *capari* – from Sanskrit *capala*, the word neatly suggests also *capalā* ‘lightning’.
29.2 *pīṭha* – seats or sitting-platforms (grander than Allchin’s ‘stools’); but ‘chairs’ for alliteration!
हाट बाट हाटक पिथिलिचलो घी सी घनो
कनक कराही लंक तलफूँति ताय सों।
नाना पक्वान जातुधान बल्वान सब
पागि पागि देरी कीही भली भौति भाय सों॥
पाहुने कृसानु पवमान सों परोसो
हतुमान समानि के जंवाये चित चाय सों।
तुलसी निहारि अरि नारि दे देगारि कहें
बावे सुरारि बैर कीहों रामराय सों॥ २४॥ ३०॥

जारि जारि के बिभूम बारिधि बुताइ लूम
नाई माथो पगानि भो ठाड़ो कर जोरि के।
मातु कृपा कीजे सहदानि दीजे सुनि सीय
दीहीं हे असीस चारु चुड़िमनि छोरि के॥
कहा कहाँ तात देखे जात ज्यों बिहात दिन
बड़ी अयलंब ही सो चले तुम तोरि के।
तुलसी सनीर नेन नेह सों सिखिल बैन
बिकल बिलोकि कपि कहत निहोरि के॥ २६॥ ३१॥

दिवस छ सात जात जानिये न मात धरु
धीर आर अंत की अवधि रही थोरिके।
बारिधि वांस्थान सेतु ऐहे भानुकुल केसु
सानुज कुसल कपि कटक बटोरि के॥
बचन बिनीत कहि सीता को प्रबोध करि
तुलसी निकूट चढ़ि कहत डफोरि के।
जै जै जानकीस दससीस करि केसरी
कपीस कूडो बातबात बारिधि हलोरि के॥ २७॥ ३२॥
30 In market and roadway, gold melted and flowed like thick ghee as Lankā’s golden skillet seethed with heat. Like diverse delicacies were all the mighty demons steeped in it and neatly piled in proper order. The guests were the fires, as with great respect Hanumān had helpings served by [waiter-] winds, gratifyingly. Tulsi: beholding this, the enemy’s wives abused him roundly, saying “Crazy enemy of the gods, you have shown hostility to King Rāma.”

31 Having burned and seared [Lankā] smokeless, [Hanumān] doused his tail in the sea and bending his head to [Sītā’s] feet he stood with hands folded. “Mother, graciously give me a token” – hearing which Sītā removed her lovely forehead jewel and gave it with a blessing. “What shall I say, my kinsman? You see how my days pass. The great support I had, you break in leaving!” Tulsi: her eyes were tearful and her voice unsteady with love; seeing her distressed, the monkey said beseechingly:

32 “Six or seven days pass without being aware, mother: take courage, little remains of the time ’til the enemy’s end! Building a bridge across the ocean, the Light of the Solar Dynasty will come with his skilful younger brother, having mustered a simian army.” Reassuring Sītā by speaking these humble words, Tulsi, he scaled the Triple Peak, proclaiming with a roar, “Victory! Victory to Jānakī’s lord, a lion to the elephant Ten-Head!”

The monkey leapt, his aerial wake rippling the ocean.

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30.1 talaphati – the image is of the writhing appearance of an object seen through heated air.
30.2 The ‘feast-cooking’ metaphor continues: the demons/sweetmeats are steeped in their own molten gold/ghee and ‘consumed’ by the flames/guests. The active verb kīnhī lacks a subject (unless it is taken as the ‘chef’, Hanumān), and has been made passive for the translation. The paired adverbs bhālī bhānti and bhāya sō are hard to accommodate in translation (as also sanamānī kai and cita cāya sō in line 3); to clarify the syntax, the translated “bhāya sō rhyme-phrases are kept in line-final position in all four lines of the translation.
30.4 ari – literally ‘enemy’, but also a feminine vocative, ‘O!’ In either or both senses it is reinforced by appearing within the words nihāri, nāri, gāri, surāri.
37.3 tāta – both ‘father’ and ‘son’, the fundamental sense being of closeness (hence ‘kinsman’).
31.3 barī avalamba hī – Sītā refers to the ‘support’ of Hanumān’s presence; but the feminine agreement of adjective and verb (hī = Hindi thī) is unexplained.
32.3 kusala can refer either backwards (to Rāma’s brother Lakṣmaṇa) or forwards (to the monkeys).
32.4 kara kesarī – according to the ‘lore’ of the jungle, lion (kesarī, ‘the maned one’) always defeats elephant (kari ‘the one with a trunk/hand’).
गणन निहारि किलकारी भारी सुनि ।
हनुमान पहिचानि भये सानंद सचेत हें ॥
बूढ़त जहाज बच्चों पथिक समाज मानो ।
आजु जाये जानि सब अंकमाल देत हें ॥
जै जै जानकीस जै जै लखन कपीस कहि ।
कूदै कपि कोई तिन नचत रेत रेत हें ॥
अंगद मंदद नल नील बलसील महा ।
बालभी फिरायें सुख नाना गति लेत हें ॥ २९ ॥ ३३ ॥

आयो हनुमान प्राणहें अंकमाल देत ।
लेत पगधूरि एक चूमत लंगूल हें ।
एक बुझे बार बार सीप समाचार कहें ।
पवनकुमार भो बिगत बलसील हें ॥
एक भूखे जानि आगे जाने कंद मूल फल ।
एक पूजे बाहुबल तोरि मूल फूल हें ।
एक कहें तुलसी सकल सिखि ताके जाके ।
कृपापाधनाथ सीतानाथ सानुकुल हें ॥ ३० ॥ ३४ ॥

सीप को समेह सील कथा तथा लंक की ।
चले कहत चाय सों सिरानो दध छन में ।
कघों जुजराज बोलि बानर समाज आजु ।
खाह फल सुनि पैलि पैठ मधुबन में ॥
मारे बागवान ते पुकार देवान गो ।
उजारे बाग अंगद दिखाए धाय तन में ।
कहें कपिलज करि काज आये कीस ।
तुलसीस की सपथ महामोद मेरे मेन में ॥ ३१ ॥ ३६ ॥
Scanning the skies, and hearing a great whooping cry, [the monkeys] recognised Hanumān and became joyful and alert; like a group of voyagers saved from a sinking ship, born today in a new birth, they all embraced [each other]. Saying “Hail, hail Sītā’s Lord! Hail, hail Laksmana and the monkey-lord!”, the monkeys jumped feistily and danced along the sands. Angad, Mayand, Nal, Nil – mighty and great – waved their tails and made various expressions with their faces.

They embrace Hanumān, come as their soul-saviour: one takes the dust from his feet, one kisses his tail. One asks for news of Sītā, and announcing it the Prince of the Wind became free of tiredness and pain. One, knowing him hungry, sets tubers, roots and fruits before him; one worships his strength of arm, picking flowers. One says, Tulsī, “All accomplishments are his to whom the lord of mercy’s ocean, Sītā’s lord, is favourable”.

Telling stories of Sītā’s love and virtue, and of Lankā, they moved on in ease, completing the journey in a trice. Then the crown prince spoke to the monkey horde, saying “Today eat fruit!”; and hearing this, they stormed into the honey-forest. The assaulted gardeners, they went to the court [saying], “Angad has destroyed the garden”, and showed the wounds on their bodies. The monkey-king said “The monkeys have come after accomplishing their task: I swear by Tulsī’s Lord, I have great joy in my heart.”

33.2 kapīṣa – though it is tempting to think of this as Hanumān, Angad is the actual ‘monkey lord’ (or juvarāja ‘crown prince – see 35.2).
33.4 nānā gati leta hai – Tulsī pictures accurately-observed simian behaviour for this surprisingly naturalistic description of the excited monkeys’ wild grimacing. The phrase refers to facial expressions – not verbal ones as in Allchin’s ‘giving tongue’; and Pāṇḍey’s ‘āṇandaśītak ākṛtiya’ has quite the wrong register. The word gati is, inter alia, a dance term – suggesting the playful līlā aspect of the celebration.
34.1 eka has dual reference, backwards and forwards.
35.4 Like many an army commander since, Sugrīv gives his loyal troops licence for their disorderly conduct after a successful mission.