
तुलसीदास – कवितावली

Tulsīdās (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 Nābhādās 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 बाल्मीकि तुलसी भयो । Nābhādās, *Śrī bhaktamāla* (with commentary by Ganeshdas). Govardhan, Devidas Gupta, N.d. p.309.

² पूँछेहु मोहि कि रहौ कहँ मैं पूछत सकुचाउँ । जहँ न होहु तहँ देहु कहि तुम्हहि देखावौं ठाउँ ॥ 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 returning³ 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 *caupāī-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 Sītā's fairness in the terms of a traditional trope – 'decoration is outshone by the thing it decorates': Sītā'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 अँग मिलि अधिक सोहाइ ।
जानि परै सिय हियरे जब कुँभिलाइ ॥ ५ ॥⁴

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 sōhāi; jaba kūbhalāi*) achieves a lightness of touch that the more solidly foursquare *dohā*, for example, cannot readily deliver. Similarly, the *kavitt* and *savaiyā* metres used in *Kavitāvalī* lend themselves to very particular literary effects: the dazzling rhythmic fireworks of *kavitt* 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-kavitt* having a lyrical quality quite different from the efficient story-telling capacity of *caupāī-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 Rāmāyaṇa 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 *Bālkāṇḍ*, 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

³ *Kavitāvalī* is thought to be a late work, perhaps written after 1615. McGregor 1984:116

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, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇ 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 Sītā, 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 *sakhī*, 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 *sakhīs* play an important role as go-betweens, confidantes, narrators... and as the vicarious female 'eyes' of the male poet. Perhaps Tulsī himself adopts the *sakhī* 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 Tulsī's genius. One of the many tropes in which Tulsī excels is what K.E. Bryant (1978), writing of Sūrdās and Kṛṣṇa, has called 'the verbal icon'. Tulsī 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 *kavitt* beginning ठाढ़े हैं नौ द्रुम डार (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. Tulsī 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 *Rāmcaritmānas*), 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 सिर जटा बनाएँ | अरुन नयन सर चाप चढ़ाएँ ॥ (*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, Tulsī 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, Tulsī 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, Tulsī widens his lens to take in Lakṣmaṇ, 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 Tulsī'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 liltily alliterative half-line that follows, तुलसी बोलोकि कै तिलोक के तिलक तीन ('Tulsī! 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 नरनारि ज्यों चित्तेरे चित्रसार 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 *kāvya* 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 kavitta verses in particular suggest that a version of Longfellow's trochaic 'Hiawatha rhythm' (- ∨) might serve in translation here:

*Market, roadway, fortress looming,
rooftops, threshold, stairways, dwellings!
Running, running, lane and byways,
Hanumān set all things burning —
Shouting, screaming, no-one helping,
fleeing hither, thither flying... (see 27: with apologies to Tulsīdās)*

A metaphor in 30 portrays the burning Laṅkā as a *miṭhāī-vālā*'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 līlā. 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.

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कवितावली

बालकाण्ड

अवधेस के द्वारे सकारे गई सुत गोद कै भूपति लै निकसे ।
अवलोकिहौं सोच बिमोचन को ठगि सी रही, जे न ठगे धिक से ॥
तुलसी मनरंजन रंजित अंजन नैन सुखंजन जातक से ।
सजनी ससि में समसील उभै नवनील सरोरुह से बिकसे ॥ १ ॥

पग नूपुर औ पहुँची करकंजनि मंजु बनी मनिमाल हिये ।
नवनील कलेवर पीत झंग्गा झलकैं पुलकैं नृपु गोद लिये ॥
अरविंद सो आनन रूप मरंद अनंदित लोचन भृंग पिये ।
मन मो न बस्यौ अस बालकु जौ तुलसी जग में फलु कौन जिये ॥ २ ॥

तनकी दुति स्याम सरोरुह लोचन कंजकी मंजुलताई हरैं ।
अति सुंदर सोहत धूरि भरे छबि भूरि अनंग की दूरि धरैं ॥
दमकैं दँतियाँ दुति दामिनि ज्यों किलकैं कल बाल बिनोद करैं ।
अवधेस के बालक चारि सदा तुलसी मन मंदिर में बिहरैं ॥ ३ ॥

कबहूँ ससि माँगत आरि करैं कबहूँ प्रतिबिंब निहारि डरैं ।
कबहूँ करताल बजाइकै नाचत मातु सबै मन मोद भरैं ॥
कबहूँ रिसिआइ कहैं हठिकै पुनि लेत सोई जेहि लागि अरैं ।
अवधेस के बालक चारि सदा तुलसी मन मंदिर में बिहरैं ॥ 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.

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- 1.1 *gai* – '[I] went'; though no subject is announced, the locative *sajanī* in line 4 eventually reveals that this speech is between one female companion (or *sakhī*) 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 manarāñjana* – 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 mē 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 sōī jehi lāgi arāī* – the success of a childish sulking fit is nicely caught with the emphatic juxtaposition of *sōī* with *jehi*: the child gets *exactly* what he wanted all along.

बर दंत की पंगति कुंदकली अधराधर पल्लव खोलन की ।
चपला चमकै घन बीच जगै छबि मोतिन माल अमोलन की ॥
घुँघुरारि लटै लटकै मुख ऊपर कुंडल लोल कपोलन की ।
निवछावरि प्रान करै तुलसी बलि जाउँ लला इन बोलन की ॥ ५ ॥

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

सरजू बर तीरहि तीर फिरैं रघुबीर सखा अरु बीर सबै ।
धनुहीं कर तीर निषंग कसैं कटि पीत दुकूल नवीन फबै ॥
तुलसी तेहि औसर लावनिता दस चारि नौ तीन इकीस सबै ।
मति भारति पंगु भई जो निहारि बिचारि फिरी उपमा न पबै ॥ ७ ॥

अयोध्याकाण्ड

कीर के कागर ज्यौं नृप चीर बिभूषन उप्पम अंगनि पाई ।
औध तजी मगबास के रुख ज्यौं पंथ के साथी ज्यौं लोग लुगाई ॥
संग सुबंधु पुनीत प्रिया मनो धर्म क्रिया धरि देह सुहाई ।
राजिवलोचन राम चले तजि बाप को राज बटाऊ की नाई ॥ १ ॥ ८ ॥

- 5 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.
- 6 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?
- 7 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.

AYODHYĀ

- 8 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.

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- 5 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.
- 5.1 *kholana kī* – the rhyme-word *kī* anticipates its complement in line 4, *nichāvāri*.
- 6.1 Something that is meant to adorn the body is itself beautified *by* the body.
- 6.2 *larikā sāga* – the noun is perhaps in this form for metre, since '*larikani*' (to postulate a *plural* oblique alternative – see stanza 7) would not fit the *savaiyā* rhythm. Note also that *sāga* must have two *short* syllables.
- 7.1, 3 *sabai / sabai* – unusually, Tulsī recycles a pair of rhyme words in this stanza.
- 7.1 *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.
- 7.2 *pīta dukūla* – this 'yellow garment' implies that the line describes Rāma specifically.
- 7.3-4 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*).
- 8.1-2 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).
- 8.2 The zuegma or *dīpaka* (with two complements to the one verb *tajī*) lends pathos; and a chiasmus.

कागर कीर ज्यौं भूषन चीर सरीर लस्यौ तजि नीर ज्यौं काई ।
मातु पिता प्रिय लोग सबै सनमानि सुभाय सनेह सगाई ॥
संग सुभामिनि भाइ भलो दिन द्वै जनु औध हुते पहुनाई ।
राजिवलोचन राम चले तजि बाप को राज बटाऊ की नाई ॥ २ ॥ ९ ॥

नाम अजामिल से खल कोटि अपार नदी भव बूढत काढ़े ।
जो सुमिरे गिरि मेरु सिला कन होत अजाखुर बारिधि बाढ़े ॥
तुलसी जेहि के पदपंकज तें प्रगटी तटिनी जो हरै अघ गाढ़े ।
सो प्रभु स्वै सरिता तरिबे कहँ माँगत नाव करारे ह्वै ठाढ़े ॥ ५ ॥ १० ॥

एहि घाट तें थोरिक दूर अहै कटि लौं जल थाह देखाइहौं जू ।
परसे पग धूरि तरै तरनी घरनी घर क्योँ समुझाइहौं जू ॥
तुलसी अवलंब न और कछू लरिका केहि भाँति जिआइहौं जू ।
बरु मारिए मोहि बिना पग धोए हौं नाथ न नाव चढ़ाइहौं 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:
Tulsī, 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?
(Tulsī) 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...taj-* – 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, *taji* 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 *lagāī* (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 subhāminī bhāī bhālo*, the metrically convenient prefix *su-* being transferred from Lakṣmaṇ 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/silā* usually has a sense of massiveness ('rock, crag' etc.) quite unlike the diminutive *kana/kaṇa* '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 पायँन को पग धूरि को भूरि प्रभाउ महा है ।
पाहन तें बन बाहन काठ को कोमल है जल खाइ रहा है ॥
पावन पायँ पखारि कै नाव चढ़ाइहौं 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 कछू बेद न पढ़ाइहौं ।
सब परिवार मेरो याही लागि राजा जू
हौं दीन बित्तहीन कैसे दूसरी गढ़ाइहौं ॥
गौतम की घरनी ज्यों तरनी तरैगी मेरी
प्रभु सों निषाद हैकै बाद न बढ़ाइहौं ।
तुलसी के ईस राम रावरे सों साँची कहौं
बिना पग धोए नाथ नाव न चढ़ाइहौं ॥ ८ ॥ १३ ॥

जिनको पुनीत बारि धारे सिय पैर पुरारि
त्रिपथगामिनी जसु बेद कहै गाइ कै ।
जिनको जोगींद्र मुनिवृंद देव देह भरि
करत बिराग जप जोग मन लाइ कै ॥
तुलसी जिनकी धूरि परसि अहिल्या तरी
गौतम सिधारे गृज गौनो सो लिवाइ कै ।
तेई पायँ पाइकै चढ़ाइ नाव धोए बिनु
खवैहौं न पठावनी कै हैहौं न हँसाइ कै ॥ ९ ॥ १४ ॥

- 12 “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 is 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.
- 13 “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.
- 14 “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 pathāvanī 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 analogous 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 pakhāri*), 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 caṛhāihaū* – the negative is anticipated and thus strengthened by *three* earlier appearances of *nā* – in *binā*, *nātha*, and *nāva*. The ferryman determinedly states his case.
- 14.1 *tripathagāminī* – 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 रुख पाइ कै बोलाइ बाल घरनिहिं
बंदि कै चरन चहूँ दिसि बैठे घेरि घेरि ।
छोटे सो कठौता भर आनि पानि गंगाजू को
धोइ पाँय पीयत पुनीत बारि फेरि फेरि ॥
तुलसी सहाहैं ताको भाग सानुराग सुर
बरषैं सुमन जय जय कहैं टेरि टेरि ।
बिबुध सनेह सानी बानी असयानी सुनी
हँसे राघौ जानकी लषन तन हेरि हेरि ॥ १० ॥ १५ ॥

पुर तै निकसी रघुबीर बधू धरि धीर दये मग में डग द्वै ।
झलकीं भरि भाल कनी जल की पुट सूख गए मधुराधर वै ॥
फिरि बूझति हैं चलनो अब केतिक पर्ण कुटी करिहौ कित ह्वै ।
तिय की लखि आतुरता पिय की अँखियाँ अति चारु चलीं जल च्वै ॥ ११ ॥ १६ ॥

जल को गए लखन हैं लरिका परिखो पिय छाँह घरीक ह्वै ठाढ़े ।
पोंछि पसेउ बयारि करौं अरु पायँ पखारिहौं झूझुरि डाढ़े ॥
तुलसी रघुबीर प्रिया स्रम जानि कै बैठि बिलंब लौं कंटक काढ़े ।
जानकी नाह को नेहा लख्यौ पुलको तन बारि बिलोचन बाढ़े ॥ 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 glimmered 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 absolute 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.

ठाढ़े हैं नौ ड्रुम डार गहे धनु कांधे धरे कर सायक लै ।
बिकटी भ्रकुटी बड़री अँखियाँ अनमोल कपोलन की छबि है ॥
तुलसी असि मूरति आनि हिये जड़ डारिहौं प्रान निछावरि कै ।
स्रम सीकर साँवरि देह लसै मनो रासि महा तम तारक मै ॥ १३ ॥ १८ ॥

जलजनयन जलजानन जटा है सिर
जोबन उमंग अंग उदित उदार है ।
साँवरे गोरे के बीच भामिनी सुदामिनी सो
मुनि पट धारे उर फूलनि के हार हैं ॥
करनि सरासन सिली मुख निषंग कटि
अतिही अनूप काहू भूप के कुमार हैं ।
तुलसी बोलोकि कै तिलोक के तिलक तीनि
रहे नरनारि ज्यों चितेरे चित्रसार हैं ॥ १४ ॥ १९ ॥

सुन्दरकाण्ड

बासव बरुन बिध बन तें सुहावनो
दसानन को कानन बसंत को सिंगारु सो ।
समय पुराने पात परत डरत बात
पालत ललात रति मार को बिहारु सो ॥
देखे बर बापिका तड़ाग बाग को बनाव
रामबस 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.

SUNDARKĀND

- 20 More lovely than the forests of Indra, Varuṇa and Brahmā
Rāvaṇa’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 Sitā’s state beneath the Ashoka tree,
O Tulsī, what he beheld was as the essence of grief in the three worlds.

-
- 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 Sitā (see line 4 and note), the rhyme-word *haī* 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 Sitā shining like lightning between them. The ‘garland’ image also suggests Sitā’s sweetness contrasted with the rough ‘*muni*’ attire worn by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇ.
- 19.4 *citere citrasāra haī* – 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 *-sā*), indicating ‘such a one as Hanumān’.

माली मेघमाल बनपाल बिकराल भट
नीके सब काल सींचै सुधासार नीर को ।
मेघनाद तें दुलारो प्रान तें पियारो बाग
अति अनुराग जिय जातुधान धीर को ॥
तुलसी सो जानि सुनि सीय को दरस पाइ
पैठो बाटिका बजाइ बल रघुबीर को ।
बिद्यमान देखत दसानन का कानन सो
तहस नहस कियो साहसी समीर को ॥ २ ॥ २१ ॥

बसन बटोरि बोरि बोरि तेल तमीचर
खोरि खोरि धाड़ आड़ बाँधत लँगूर हैं ।
तैसो कपि कौतुकी डरात ढीलो गात कै कै
लात के अघात सहै जी में कहै कूर हैं ॥
बाल किलकारी कै कै तारी दै दै गारी देत
पाछे लागे बाजत निसान ढोल तूर हैं ।
बालधी बढन लागी ठौर ठौर दीन्हीं आगि
बिंध की दवारि कैधों कोटिसत सूर हैं ॥ ३ ॥ २२ ॥

लाइ लाइ आगि भागे बाल जाल जहाँ तहाँ
लघु है निबुकी गिरि मेरु तें बिसाल भो ।
कौतुकी कपीस कूदि कनक कँगूरा चढ़ि
रावन भवन जाइ ठाढ़ो तेहि काल भों ॥
तुलसी बिराज्यो ब्योम बालधी पसारि भारी
देखे हहरात भट काल तें कराल भो ।
तेज को निधान मानो कोटिक कृसानु भानु
नख बिकराल मुख तैसो रिस लाल भो ॥ ४ ॥ २३ ॥

- 21 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.
- 22 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.
- 23 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.
-
- 22.3 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.
- 22.4 *kaidhō* – for parallels to such menus of metaphors likewise set out in *kavitt* metre, see 24.2-3 below.
- 23.2 The ability to assume tiny and huge sizes: two of the *siddhis* characteristic of Hanumān.
- 23.2 *tehi 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'.)
- 23.3 *virājyo* – the translation needs two words, 'shone majestically', to capture two complementary senses.

बालधी बिसाल बिकराल ज्वाल जाल मानौं
लंक लालिबे को काल रसना पसारी है ।
कैधौं ब्योम बीथिका भरे हैं भूरि धूमकेतु
बीर रस बीर तरवारि सी उघारी है ॥
तुलसी सरेस चाप कैधौम दामिनी कलाप
कैधौं चली मेरु तें कृसानु सरि भारी है ।
देखे जातुधान जातुधानी अकुलानी कहैं
कानन उजायौं अब नगर प्रजारी है ॥ ५ ॥ २४ ॥

जहाँ तहाँ बुबुक बिलोकि बुबुकारी देत
जरत निकेत धाओ धाओ लागि आगि रे ।
कहाँ तात मात भ्रात भगिनी भामिनी भाभी
ढोटे छोटे छोहरा अभागे भोर भागि रे ॥
हाथी छोरो घोरा छोरो महिष बृषभ छोरो
छेरी छोरो सोवै सो जगावो जागि जागि रे ।
तुलसी बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहैं
बार बार कह्यो पिय कपि सों न लागि रे ॥ ६ ॥ २५ ॥

रानी अकुलानी सब डाढ़त परानी जाहि
सकैं न बिलोकि बेष केसरीकुमार को ।
मींजि मींजि हाथ धुनै माथ दसमाथ तिय
तुलसी तिलौ न भयो बाहिर अगार को ॥
अब असबाब डाढ़ो मैं न काढ़ो तैं न काढ़ो
जिय की परी सँभार सहन भँडार को ।
खीझति मँदोवै सबिषाद देखि मेघनाद
बयो लुनियत अब याही दाढ़ीजार को ॥ १२ ॥ २६ ॥

- 24 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.”
- 25 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!”
- 26 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 kṛsānu sari* – recall that ‘Meru’ was established as an image for Hanumān in 23.1.
- 24.4 *prajārihai* – this *-ihai* future form takes some licence with the rhyme, though some editions read *prajāri 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. *cūḍāmani 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 Pāṇḍey’s *jaltī huī*; 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 parī* – the feminine subject is an elliptical *bāta*; the verb is *par-* (Hindi *parṇā*): ‘when [the matter of] life [itself] is concerned’.
- 26.4 The seeds of the ‘harvest’ were the demons’ folly in meddling with Hanumān: *dāṛhijāra* 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 ओट अट्टनि अगार पौरि
खोरि खोरि दौरि दौरि दीन्ही अति आगि है ।
आरत पुकारत सँभारत न कोऊ काहू
ब्याकुल जहाँ सों तहाँ लोग चले भागि हैं ॥
बालधी फिरावै बार बार झहरावै झरैं
बूँदिया सी लंक पघिलाइ पाग पागि है ।
तुलसी बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहैं
चित्रहू के कपि सों निसाचर न लागिहै ॥ १४ ॥ २७ ॥

कोपि दसकंध तब प्रलय पयोद बोले
रावनजराइ धाइ आए जूथ जोरि कै ।
कह्यो लंकपति लंक बरत बुताओ बेगि
बानर बहाइ मारौ महा बारि बोरि कै ॥
भले नाथ नाइ माथ चले पाथप्रदनाथ
बरषैं मुसलधार बार बार घोरि कै ।
जीवन तें जागी आगी चपरि चौगुनी लागी
तुलसी भभरि मेघ भागे मुख मोरि कै ॥ १९ ॥ २८ ॥

पान पकवान बिधि नाना को सँधानो सीधो
बिबिध बिधान धान बरत बखारहीं ।
कनक किरीट कोट पलंग पेटारे पीठ
काढ़त कहार सब जरे भरे भारहीं ॥
प्रबल अनल बाढ़ै जहाँ काढ़ै तहाँ डाढ़ै
झपट लपट धरै भवन भँडारही ।
तुलसी अगार न पगार न बजार बच्यो
हाथी हथिसार जरे घोरे घोरसारहीं ॥ २३ ॥ २९ ॥

- 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.

27.1 *pauri* – either ‘threshold, gate’ or ‘step, stair’.

27.2 *loka* – more universal in connotation than its mundane *tadbhava* form *loka*.

27.3 The image is from sweet-making, in which ‘droplet-sweets’ (*bundiya*) 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 *nāi mātha* – ‘bowing his head’, alluding to the storm-clouds’ lowering towards the earth.

28.3 *musaladhāra bāra bāra* – with *bāra bāra* ‘time & again’ punning as ‘water & more water’, the standard image of pelting rain is *mūsādhāra*, ‘a torrent of clubs or pestles’.

28.4 *jīvāna* – 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 पिघिलि चलो घी सी घनो
कनक कराही लंक तलफति ताय सों ।
नाना पकवान जातुधान बलवान सब
पागि पागि ढेरी कीन्ही भली भाँति भाय सों ॥
पाहुने कृसानु पवमान सों परोसो
हनुमान सनमानि कै जेंवाये चित चाय सों ।
तुलसी निहारि अरि नारि दै दै गारि कहें
बावरे सुरारि बैर कीन्हों रामराय सों ॥ २४ ॥ ३० ॥

जारि जारि कै बिधूम बारिधि बुताइ लूम
नाइ माथो पगनि भो ठाढ़ो कर जोरि कै ।
मातु कृपा कीजै सहदानि दीजै सुनि सीय
दीन्हीं है असीस चारु चूड़ामनि छोरि कै ॥
कहा कहौं तात देखे जात ज्यों बिहात दिन
बड़ी अवलंब ही सो चले तुम तोरि कै ।
तुलसी सनीर नैन नेह सों सिथिल बैन
बिकल बिलोकि कपि कहत निहोरि कै ॥ २६ ॥ ३१ ॥

दिवस छ सात जात जानिबे न मात धरु
धीर अर अंत की अवधि रही थोरिकै ।
बारिधि बँधाय सेतु ऐहैं भानुकुल केतु
सानुज कुसल कपि कटक बटोरि कै ॥
बचन बिनीत कहि सीता को प्रबोध करि
तुलसी त्रिकूट चढ़ि कहत डफोरि कै ।
जै जै जानकीस दससीस करि केसरी
कपीस कूद्यो बातघात बारिधि हलोरि कै ॥ 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.
Tulsī: 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!”
Tulsī: 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,
Tulsī, 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 *bhalī bhānti* and *bhāya sō* are hard to accommodate in translation (as also *sanamāni kai* and *cita cāya sō* in line 3); to clarify the syntax, the translated *āya 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*.
- 30.3 *tāta* – both ‘father’ and ‘son’, the fundamental sense being of closeness (hence ‘kinsman’).
- 31.3 *baṛī 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 Lakṣmaṇ) or forwards (to the monkeys).
- 32.4 *kari kesarī* – according to the ‘lore’ of the jungle, lion (*kesarī*, ‘the maned one’) always defeats elephant (*kari* ‘the one with a trunk/hand’).

गगन निहारि किलकारी भारी सुनि
हनुमान पहिचानि भये सानंद सचेत हैं ।
बूड़त जहाज बच्यो पथिक समाज मानो
आजु जाये जानि सब अंकमाल देत हैं ॥
जै जै जानकीस जै जै लखन कपीस कहि
कूदैं कपि कौतुकी नचत रेत रेत हैं ॥
अंगद मयंद नल नील बलसील महा
बालधी फिरावैं सुख नाना गति लेत हैं ॥ २९ ॥ ३३ ॥

आयो हनुमान प्रानहेतु अंकमाल देत
लेत पगधूरि एक चूमत लंगूल हैं ।
एक बूझै बार बार सीय समाचार कहे
पवनकुमार भो बिगत स्रमसूल हैं ॥
एक भूखे जानि आगे जाने कंद मूल फल
एक पूजे बाहुबल तोरि मूल फूल हैं ।
एक कहैं तुलसी सकल सिधि ताके जाके
कृपापाथनाथ सीतानाथ सानुकूल हैं ॥ ३० ॥ ३४ ॥

सीय को सनेह सील कथा तथा लंक की
चले कहत चाय सों सिरानो पथ छन में ।
कर्यो जुवराज बोलि बानर समाज आजु
खाह फल सुनि पैलि पैठ मधुबन में ॥
मारे बागवान ते पुकारत देवान गो
उजारे बाग अंगद दिखाए धाय तन में ।
कहैं कपिराज करि काज आये कीस
तुलसीस की सपथ महामोद मेरे मेन में ॥ ३१ ॥ ३५ ॥

- 33 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 Lakṣmaṇ and the monkey-lord!”,
the monkeys jumped feistily and danced along the sands.
Angad, Mayand, Nal, Nīl – mighty and great –
waved their tails and made various expressions with their faces.
- 34 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”.
- 35 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 *kapīsa* – though it is tempting to think of this as Hanumān, Angad is the actual ‘monkey lord’ (or *juvārāja* ‘crown prince – see 35.2).

33.4 *nānā gati leta haī* – 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 ‘*ānandsūcak ākṛtiyā*’ 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.

