

SOME LEXICAL PROBLEMS IN THE VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAṆA

Sheldon Pollock

For all the apparent simplicity of its style, the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* bristles with passages where we simply must confess that we cannot understand exactly what is meant. Virtually every page of the text can in some way reproach us for the vagueness of our comprehension of its verbal detail. Modern students of the poem, rather more so than their counterpart in the medieval tradition of *Rāmāyaṇa* exegesis, seem all too often prone to allow these obscurities to remain such. But however minor each individual uncertainty may be, the ambiguity will of course be cumulative, and as a consequence our comprehension and appreciation of the Indian epic tends to a greater imprecision than scholarship in comparable Indo-European epic traditions has tolerated. To a large extent this is a result of the critical deficiency in our scholarly tools. We have no complete grammar of the epic dialect, no adequate dictionary (let alone specialized lexica, as of particles), and worst of all no concordances. Until all the evidence is fully and sensitively assembled, the philological study of the epic will not progress much beyond the work of the 12th century pioneers, and a tentative and provisional character will unavoidably still attach to it.

Under such a proviso, I wish to examine here, as a modest contribution in honour of Dr. Saksena, a few minor lexical problems of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These include both items which, correctly explained by the medieval scholiastic tradition, have been ignored by modern scholarship, as well as a few, which, I believe, have been imperfectly understood both in the Indian tradition and the West. My objects of study here are principally questions of nuance, slight in their isolated impact, but cumulatively significant. The arguments

to be summoned can sometimes, and by necessity, rest on nothing more secure than likelihood¹.

SATYAPARĀKRAMA— Stock epithets constitute one major area of ambiguity, and the primary cause of this is precisely the fact that they are so often used formulaically: It is the frequent absence of context-sensitivity, or apparent absence, that makes it difficult for us to distinguish their exact semantic content.

SATYAPARĀKRAMA—Presents us with an example of this kind of vagueness in our comprehension, and the most recent translator of the *Mahābhārata* demonstrates the problems one faces in gauging the right shade of meaning: “mighty in truth” (I.70.24); “gallant in his truth” (III.61.46); “whose powers is his truth” (V.86.23); “whose valor is the truth” (V.134.21)².

As the above translations show, it is the martial sense of *parā + kram* (“to stride out”, sc., to battle; cf. *yuddhāya . . . parākrāntu*³; thence, “to be brave, bold”) that is foremost in the translator’s mind, and understandably so, since it is the one we most frequently encounter in the epics. What I take to be the more general signification, “to strive for”, “to make a zealous effort towards”, seems rarely to be found in the epics. It is, however, the primary one in the Pāli canon⁴ and the Aśokan Inscriptions. The latter offer one particularly instructive example in Rock Edict VI (Shahbazgarhi), line 16 (Hultzsch) :

*yaṃ ca kiñci parakramami kiti bhūtānaṃ anañiyaṃ vraceyaṃ
tathā ca me putra naptaro parakramantaṃ sarvalokahitaye
dukara tu kho imaṃ añatra agrena parākramaṇa*

“And any effort that I am making is so that I may discharge the debt I owe to living creatures. . . . Likewise, that my sons

1. Much of this material is drawn from my annotated translation of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (forthcoming). All references to the *Rāmāyaṇa* are to the critical edition, Baroda, 1960-75.
2. J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata* (Chicago, 1973-78).
3. *MBh.* V.179.17.
4. Cf. for example *Dhammapada* 383, *chindo solaṃ parakkama*, and the common collocation *ārambha, nikkama, parakkama* (as, e.g., in *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, V.66, 104ff.).

and grand sons may strive for the welfare of all the world. But this indeed is a difficult thing to accomplish without intense effort¹.”

The evidence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* tends to suggest that in certain contexts and compounds it is this signification which is in fact operative.

Although it is not frequent that the substantive is used independently in this more neutral sense, instances can be found. After learning of his father’s “order” to go into banishment, Rāma takes leave of his mother, begging her permission to be allowed to depart for the forest. We read,

*prasādyaṃ naraḥ sabhaḥ sa mātaram
parākramāṃ jīgamiṣur eva daṇḍakān* ²

The Śīromaṇi commentary, seeking to preserve something of the usual sense, explains, “[He wanted to go] ‘in order to attack [ākrama-] the enemies [para-], sc., of the sages”. The more cogent explanation, and the only one fully authorized by the narrative itself—Rāma after all has been pleading with Kausalyā for much of the chapter—is that suggested by the Aśokan parallel :

“The bull among men strenuously entreated his mother—he wanted only to go to the Daṇḍakas . . .”

After having answered the Lokāyata arguments expressed by the minister Jābāli, Rāma sets forth his own understanding of what constitutes proper conduct, summarizing in this way :

*satyaṃ ca dharmāṃ ca parākramāṃ ca
bhūtānukampāṃ priyavādītāṃ ca |
dviḥjātidevātithipūjanāṃ ca
panthānam āhuḥ tridivasya santaḥ* ³

The commentators, those at least who are willing to address the problem (Maheśvaratīrtha and Govindarāja are not), find themselves at something of

1. See also *Buddhacarita* 13.59 (concerning Śākyamuni during his quest for *saṃyaksambodhi*) :
*yo nīśāyo hy asya parākramaś ca
tejas ca yad yā ca dayā prajānu |
apṛāpya notkāśyati tattvam eṣa . . . ||*
 (“Such is his resolve, his zealous effort, his [spiritual] power and compassion for creatures, that he will not stand up until he discovers the truth . . .”).
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.18.40.
3. *Ibid.*, II.101.30.

a loss here. Taking *parākrama-* in its more usual epic sense, 'bravery, valour', they are consequently forced to restrict Rāma's prescription to the *kṣatriyavarṇa* only (thus Kataka and Tryambaka), quite out of keeping with the drift of the passage, which aims at a generalized characterization of moral behaviour. Tilaka on the other hand glosses "ascetic acts", in a rather desperate attempt to preserve the wider application of the ethics. The neutral sense of the term eliminates the problem :

"Truthfulness, righteousness and strenuous effort, compassion for creatures and kindly words, reverence for brahmins, gods and guests is the path, the wise say, to the highest heaven".

That "strenuous effort", i.e., with regard to truthful and righteous conduct, is the correct analysis here is, I think, shown by the collocation of the items in the (vocative) compound, *satyadharmaparākrama*¹.

In the light of these independent usages we can more confidently address the signification of the compound, *satyaparākrama-*. Rāma describes his father as follows :

satyaḥ satyābhisamdhaś ca nityaṃ satyaparākramaḥ |²

The context of the verse will help us here. Any reference to warrior prowess would not only be utterly irrelevant to the argument, but quite contradictory as well, since Rāma has just discountenanced it³. What is essential is that he emphasizes the righteousness underlying all his father's behaviour, and this we grasp if we translate.

"[My father is] truthful, true to his word and ever striving for truth"⁴.

In this way, too, we can perceive the intended function of the three qualifications. They are meant to comprehend the tripartite division of the psychophysical personality, *vāk, kāya, manaḥ*, "words, deeds and thoughts", which we find so often referred to in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (cf., for example, *manovākkāya-saṃyatān*).⁵ Daśaratha is not only truthful in his thoughts and words, he also strives to be truthful in his actions.

1. *Ibid.*, II.103.7. The Northern Recension (NR) may be glossing this with *satyadharmaparāyana-*. (On the glossarial function of the NR, cf. my brief remarks in *Festschrift Sternbach*, Lucknow, 1981, pp. 317 ff.)

2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.19.7.

3. *Ibid.*, II.18.36.

4. A type of *bhūcrīhī*, with *viśaya-* or *nimittasaptamī* in the *pūrvepada* : *satye viśaye [nimitte vā] parākrāmo yasyo-*.

5. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.86.18.

No doubt analogous to *satyaparākrama-* is *satyavikrama-*¹ and related to it *dharmavikrama-*. The latter appears in an interesting environment in *dharmajñāu dharmavikramau*² (which is paralleled by *dharmajñāṃ rāmaṃ satyaparākramam*³). The juxtaposition of the compounds clearly indicates that we are to see a complementarity : "who know and strive (to follow) the ways of righteousness". Here then would be a bipartite formulation, "knowing and doing" (in contrast to what has been cited above)⁴, one which we are to encounter again below⁵.

KṚTAJÑA— PW knows no signification for the compound other than the standard classical one, "grateful", "thankful", and in the main this is indeed the sense it bears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But there are instances where we cannot admit this sense without dulling or obscuring altogether the meaning of a verse, and where consequently we must be prepared to discover some other nuance.

Sītā is waiting for Rāma to return after his coronation :

devakāryaṃ sma sāvā kṛtvā kṛtajñā hr̥ṣṭacetanā |
(abhijñā rājadharmāṇāṃ rājaputraṃ pratikṣate) ||⁶

Tilaka strives to find an application for the common signification : " 'grateful' : She worships the gods in gratitude for their beneficence in granting (Rāma) the kingship". Besides the fact that Rāma has not yet received the kingship, I do not know that gratitude to the gods ever finds ritual expression in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Ritual is employed only either to avert evil⁷ or to secure good fortune⁸. It is far likelier that the compound stands in apposition to the gerundial clause :

"She performed the rites for the gods in deep delight, knowing the proper things to do (and was waiting for the prince, aware of the kingly attributes to expect)".

1. *Ibid.*, II.66.28.

2. *Ibid.*, II.104.3.

3. *Ibid.*, II.58.50.

4. *Ibid.*, II.19.7.

5. Thus Śiromaṇi and Satyatirtha correctly gloss *dharmavikramau* as *dharmapravartakau*.

That, incidentally, both a bipartite and a tripartite analysis of human action may co-exist in one culture is shown for example by the Homeric tradition. See C. Barck, *Wort und Tat bei Homer* (Hildesheim—New York, 1976), pp. 8-13.

6. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.23.4.

7. See the commentators on *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.3.32.

8. Cf. e.g. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.17.6.

This is in fact how Śiromaṇi understands¹, and the probability of such an interpretation is strengthened by the following passage, in which Rāma addresses Kaikeyī :

*hitena gurunā pitrā kṛtājñena nṛpeṇa ca |
niryujyamāno viśrabdham kim na kuryām aham priyam ||*²

Even more noticeably than in the previous case, "gratitude", "thankfulness" has no semantic propriety in the verse, for it has nothing at all to do with the authority Daśaratha exercises over Rāma. What does count, again, is Daśaratha's truthfulness and righteousness, and the never questioned assumption that whatever he might ask is the correct thing to do³ :

"If enjoined by my benefactor, guru, father, a man who knows what is right to do and who is my king, what would I hesitate to do in order to please him?"

Widening the semantic range of the compound also aids us in explaining an otherwise peculiar juxtaposition in the list of Rāma's virtues at the beginning of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* :

*śāstrajñāś ca kṛtājñāś ca*⁴

The copulative particles (*ca . . . ca*) demand a close relationship between the two terms, which no other translation allows us to establish but the following :

"[Rāma was] learned in the sciences and skilled in practice, too"⁵.

I would additionally suggest that here again (as in *dharmajñāu dharmavikramau* above), but more explicitly, the text is drawing the distinction between "theory" and "practice" that was to become so significant a topic in Indian thinking of classical period (normally under the opposition *śāstra-prayoga*).

1. Maheśvaravīrtha and Govindarāja similarly, "knowing the appropriate rituals", though they understand prospectively (the rituals that she was going to do when Rāma returned). Note also the reading *dharmajñā* in two D MSS.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.16.31.
3. Note once again the NR's variant, *dharmajñāsya* (376*). The commentators here seek too much specificity : Kataka, Tilaka, "cognizant of Kaikeyī's deed, i.e., how she had saved him"; Tīrtha and Govinda, "cognizant of his own deed, i.e., his having granted the boons".
4. II.1.20.
5. See also III.14.27, 31.19 for further examples. I now notice that Böthlingk's abridged dictionary does record "knowing what is right", citing *MBh.* XII.104.6 vulg. (in the critical edition replaced by *kṛtaprajñāh*, XII.105.6).

PRIYA— Besides the common meanings of the adjective I think we may discern a signification which has been recorded only in *kośa*-s¹. Daśaratha for the first time learns that the conjunction of the constellation Puṣya with the moon, the date set for Rāma's consecration, is to occur the following day². He sends for Rāma and upon his arrival :

*praveśayām āsa gṛham vivakṣuḥ priyam uttamam ||*³

"[King Daśaratha] had him shown into his chamber, anxious to pass on the important news".

When Kaikeyī first learns of Rāma's consecration she tells Mantharā :

*idaṃ tu manthare mahyam ākhyāsi paramam priyam ||*⁴

"What you have reported to me, Mantharā, is the very best news".

Daśaratha similarly in Chapter 10,

*priyārham priyam ākhyātum viveśāntahpuram . . . ||*⁵

" . . . entered into the inner chamber to tell his beloved wife the good news".

To cite one last example from among many : Rāma's friends, as soon as they hear the announcement concerning the prince's consecration,

*. . . priyakāriṇaḥ |
tvaritāḥ śighram abhyetya kausalyāyai nyavedayan ||
sā hiraṇyam . . .*

*vyādideśa priyākhyebhyaḥ . . . ||*⁶

" . . . they hurried off bearing⁷ the good news and at once informed Kausalyā. She directed that gold . . . be given to those who announced the good news"⁸.

Such passages enable us to interpret with greater precision verses where the use of *priya*- is more ambiguous. When, on the day of the consecration, Daśaratha's trusted adviser Sumantra comes to Rāma.

1. Cf. PW s.v., 3b "Nachricht [vartā], Dha. im SkDr.":.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.4.1-2.
3. II.4.9.
4. II.7.29.
5. II.10.1.
6. II.3.29,30
7. Cf. the gloss of the NR, *priyanivedanāh*.
8. Rewarding the bearer of good news appears again in II.7.31 and frequently in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (VI.1.11, 101.15-17, 113.40).

tatraivānāyāmāsa rāghavaḥ priyakāmyayā ||¹

Tilaka explains, "Desiring to do a kindness, that is, to his father"—the sort of comment that obscures rather more than it clarifies. More probably,

"Rāghava had them straightaway fetch [the charioteer],
for he was anxious for the news".

After the death of Daśaratha, envoys are despatched to the land of the Kekayas, in order to bring back the new king-to-be, Bharata :

*bhartuḥ priyārtham kularakṣaṇārtham
bhartuḥ ca vamsasya parigrahārtham |
ahedamānās tvarayā sma dūtāḥ . . .²*

bhartu- here refers to Bharata (as *pāda* b indicates), whom the envoys like the people of Ayodhyā already consider to be their king³. The commentators mistakenly understand *daśarathasya*, and this error along with the uncertainty about *priya-*, leads them astray: Tīrtha and Govinda, "It is a 'kindness to their master' [i.e., Daśaratha] insofar as his reaching the other world depends on Bharata's being quickly brought and his performing the funeral rites". The passages already adduced permit us, I think, to explain instead,

"To bring their master the news (i.e., the message that he is to return at once), to ensure the safety to their master's House and his succession in the dynasty, the messengers wasted no time but hurried on . . ."

PARALOKA— A verse cited above, in which Rāma describes his father, continues as follows :

*paralokabhayād bhīto nirbhayo' stu pitā mama ||
(tasyāpi hi bhavet asmin karmāny apratisamḥṛte |
satyaṃ neti manastāpas tasya tāpas tāpe ca mām ||⁴*

Here lies one of those crucial details that must colour much of our understanding of the psychological motivations underlying the action of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. What precisely conditions Daśaratha's behaviour? Is it the "fear of the other world", solicitude about his fate after death, or is it rather "fear of people", of what they would say were he to break his promise to

1. II.14.5.
2. II.62.15.
3. Cf. II.64.2, 65.22, 75.1.
4. II.19.7-8.

Kaikeyī? A similar problem confronts us in the case of Rāma. Soon after leaving Ayodhyā he says to Lakṣmaṇa,

*adharmabhayabhītaḥ ca paralokasya cānagha |
tena lakṣmaṇa nādyāham ātmānam abhiśecaye ||⁵*

Though not absolutely conclusive the evidence weighs in favour of the second interpretation, a sense unrecorded in the lexica.

Both Śīromaṇi⁶ and Satyatīrtha⁷ agree in giving the compound *paraloka-* the sense of "other people", "public opinion". More important is the Northern Recension's interpretative reading in 47.26, *lokavāda-*, "public talk" (for *paraloka-*). When the sense "other world" is required in *Rāmāyaṇa*⁸ the uncompounded form is preferred⁹, or far more frequently replaced by *param* alone⁶, *svargam*, *tridivam*, etc. I can locate only one instance in the critical edition where *paraloka-* indubitably bears the meaning "other world"⁷ (note that it is picked up in vs. 8 by the uncompounded form), though there is a second case I will examine below.

The context⁸ to my mind clearly urges the second analysis. The charge of dishonesty, "*satyaṃ na*", requires some reference to public censure, while the king's emotional response, *manastāpaḥ*, would hardly seem to be one commensurate with eschatological terror. In 20.5-6, moreover, Lakṣmaṇa is doubtless answering Rāma's argument here when he says,

*asthāne sambhramo yasya jāto vai sumahānayaḥ ||⁹
dharmadoṣaprasaṅgena lokasyānatiśaṅkhayā . . .*

"This is no place for panic—that has given rise to such imprudence—from worry about the people's respect¹⁰ if there should happen to be a lapse from righteousness . . ."

It is perfectly obvious in Daśaratha's interview with Kaikeyī what kind of fears are preying on his mind :

1. II.47.26.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.19.7.
3. *Ibid.*, II.47.26.
4. II.VI.
5. Cf. *Ibid.*, III.59.8.
6. Cf. *Ibid.*, II.100.16; similarly *paratra*, *Ibid.*, II.37.8, etc.
7. *Ibid.*, III.59.6.
8. *Ibid.*, II.19.7.
9. So I read for the critical edition's *sumahān ayaṃ*.
10. Divide *ānati-śaṅkhayā*, with Govinda's second interpretation and the NR gloss, *lokavāda-bhayaṇa*.

*akirtir atulā loke dhruvaḥ paribhavaś ca me*¹

“My infamy in the eyes of the people will be unequalled, and my disgrace inevitable”.

Elsewhere, in the northern tradition, Daśaratha states explicitly,

*kiṃ mām vakṣyati loko' yam*²

“What are people going to say about me”?

The arguments to be brought against this interpretation are not particularly cogent. The principal one is the opinion of the other commentaries: “what causes fear in the world to come, i.e., falsehood” (Tīrtha, Tilaka); “fear relating to the loss of the world to come” (Govinda, Kataka). The propensity to see eschatological reference here may be thought to find support in passages where the metaphysical implications of conduct are openly voiced.³ But it is quite an easy matter to assemble witnesses against all such examples, passages that reflect a deep concern about one's duties and one's fame in this world⁴. I, therefore, feel compelled to render the two passages as follows:

“Let (my father) be freed from the fear he has, of what other people might say. (For if this rite were not called off, he too would suffer mental torment, to hear his truthfulness impugned, and his torment would torment me”)⁵.

“I fear the danger unrighteousness poses, blameless Lakṣmaṇa, and I fear what other people might say. That is why I do not have myself consecrated this very day”⁶.

The testimony of one further passage must still be considered, for it is significant thought not, I feel, unequivocal.

After Rāma's departure Sumantra attempts to comfort Kausalyā, citing first Rāma's equanimity in the face of his misfortune⁷, and then Lakṣmaṇa's devotion to him :

1. *Ibid.*, II.11.6.
2. App. II.3, line 39.
3. Cf. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.101.8,11,15,30.
4. *Ibid.*, II.18.39, 101.7.9,10. If further evidence is required of how strong the power of public opinion was felt to be, one needs only point to the events in *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (VI.103 ff.), where Rāma allows the ordeal of Sitā because he fears the reproach of people (VI.106.12), and in *Uttarakāṇḍa* (VII.42 ff.), where Rāma drives Sitā from the kingdom because of what the people are saying.
5. *Ibid.*, II.19.7-8.
6. *Ibid.*, II.47.26.
7. *Ibid.*, II.54.5.

lakṣmaṇaś cāpi rāmasya pādaḥ paricaran vane |
*ārādhayati dharmajñāḥ paralokaṃ jīvendriyaḥ ||*¹

Besides the fact already noted that the compound form *paraloka-* rarely occurs in the poem in the sense “other world”, the use here of *ā+* the verbal root *rādh* is particularly problematic. The form of the verb always appears to construe with a personal object in the *Rāmāyaṇa*², and in fact I am unable to locate a single example in Sanskrit literature of its being employed with an impersonal object, as it would be here if we understood *paraloka-* in its usual sense (PW s.v. can adduce only one citation, the present verse). The very important group of D MSS, D_{4,5,7} clearly found the usage impossible, offering instead,

ārādhayīyan dharmeṇa kākutstham abhivṛtyati || (1302*)

“[Lakṣmaṇa] will be dwelling [in the forest] winning the regard of Kākutstha by his righteousness”.

All the rest of the Northern Recension similarly felt the need to recast the line :

vasatitaḥ paraṃ lokam arjayan dharmanirjītam || (1301*)

The variant is interesting on two counts. It demonstrates both the tradition's discomfort with the use of *arādhi* with an impersonal object, and the difficulty it found with the compound form *paraloka-* in its metaphysical signification³. Finally, let us observe how frequently elsewhere in the book reference is made to the esteem Lakṣmaṇa has won in the eyes of the people for his selfless sacrifice⁴.

One would, therefore, be inclined to render II.54.6 as follows :

“Lakṣmaṇa, too, by serving Rāma in the forest, by his self-restraint and sense of duty, is winning the regard of other men”.

On this verse, however, the commentators are unanimous in their explanation: “is gaining the higher world”. And they find strong support in an Aśokan inscription :

*hidalogam ca paralogam ca alādhayeyū*⁵

“That they might gain both this world and the world to come”.

1. *Ibid.*, 54.6.
2. Cf. *Ibid.*, II.4.40, 23.32, 99.4; III.10.86, etc.
3. Here I think it far likelier that we have not, as usual, an interpretation of the original *ārādhayan paralokam*, as D_{4,5,7} offers, but a revision.
4. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.35.22, 42.7, 80.1 etc.
5. Separate Rock Edict II (Jaugada), line 7.

The Aśokan parallel may be just enough to tip the scale in the case of the following verse¹:

“Lakṣmaṇa, too, (by serving Rāma in the forest, by his self-restraint and sense of duty), is gaining the higher world”.

It appears to me, however, that it is insufficient to impugn the arguments adduced for the other two passages, and that we must instead posit a bivalence in the term for the *Rāmāyaṇa*².

ŚATRU— Lakṣmaṇa urges Rāma to resist his unjust banishment, and asserts that he himself is able to defeat anyone who might stand in the way. Moreover,

na cāham kāmaya' tyartham yaḥ syāc chatruṃ mato mana ||
asinā . . .
*pragṛhitena vai śatruṃ vajriṇam vā na kalpaye ||*³

“enemy”, “opponent”, “foe”, the standard significations of the word, are not applicable here. The sense “conqueror”, or better, “match” is what is required :

“ . . . nor am I very eager that anyone⁴ be thought my match :
With my sword . . . held ready I count one my match, be he Indra himself, God of the thunderbolt”.

“Match” is the sense I think we must give the word also in such passages as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.6.3.8, the famous mispronunciation of *indrśatruḥ* (Tvaṣṭṛ wants a son to c o n q u e r Indra, who has enemies enough already), and for the name Ajātaśatru, which should signify “whose match has not been born”.

VAŚIN— In a verse already cited Daśaratha goes off to tell Kaikeyi the news of Rāma's coronation :

*priyārtham priyam ākhyātum viceśāntaḥpuroṃ vaśi*⁵

The commentators Kataka and Tilaka remark on the epithet, “self-controlled”, in all things except what concerns his wife”, while Govinda explains,

1. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.54.6.
2. Are we to explain this as reflecting a period of ethical transvaluation, where a shift is taking place from a “heroic” concern for communal approbation to a more personal pre-occupation with heavenly rewards?
3. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.20.26-27.
4. *yaḥ* is reduced from *yat* [or, *yadi*] *kaścit*, as often (cf. Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax* [Leyden, 1886], p. 356).
5. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.10.1.

“everything is under his own control”, that is, he is independent and would tell Kaikeyi himself”. Neither explanation allows us to grasp the true implication; “of one's own accord” (here, “willingly”, even, “gladly”), a rare sense attested it seems only in *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*¹, does permit us to catch the important suggestion, that the king believes Kaikeyi will be as pleased as he is himself to learn of Rāma's consecration (as in fact she would have been but for the “poisonous counsel” of Mantharā). Again, later in the book Rāma says to Bharata, who is pleading with him to return,

sa svastho bhava mā śoco yātvā cāvasa tām purīm |
*tathā pitrā nijukto' si vaśinā . . . ||*²

“Compose yourself and do not grieve. Go back and take up your residence in the town, as father of his own accord directed you to do . . .”

Here, as Govinda's previous gloss helps us to perceive, Rāma's crucial purpose is to re-affirm in Bharata's eyes the validity of their father's command by emphasizing the fact that the king, in the final analysis at least, is absolutely autonomous,

KĀNCĪ— After slaying Jaṭāyuḥ, Rāvaṇa takes hold of Sītā and flies up into the sky³. The golden Sītā shines like lightning within the arms of Rāvaṇa, blueblack as a storm-cloud (vs. 13, 22), or like the moon peeping out through a dark cloud (vs. 18). Then comes the following simile :

sā hemavarṇā nilāṅgam maithilī rākṣasādhipam |
*sūsubhe kāñcanī kāñci nīlam maṇim ivāśritā ||*⁴

kāñci-, to my knowledge, is nowhere found in any sense but “belt, girdle”, which here makes obvious difficulties. Several commentators, Tilaka and Śiromaṇi for example, without any manuscript support alter the lection of *pāda* d, reading *gajam* for *maṇim*, “[like a golden girth] around a [dark] elephant”. But the *upamā* is still asked, for Sītā is not embracing Rāvaṇa, she is being held within his embrace, as the other similes serve to indicate. Those commentators who read with the critical edition are driven to rather desperate explanations, as Govinda: “‘like a girdle (*mekhalā*, or, ‘band’?) on [in conjunction with?] a sapphire’. Every one knows it is silver that is used to lighten the beauty of a sapphire. Gold by contrast dulls it, and thus the

1. 3.4.2.2.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.98.37.
3. *Ibid.*, III.50.1-12.
4. *Ibid.*, III.50.21.

verb actually expresses the opposite, '(she was as little beautiful, i.e.,) she was not beautiful (in Rāvaṇa's embrace)'. The word *kāñci-*, I have little doubt, is here being used in an unattested sense, 'lustrous streak', which is also suggested by the D₁ variant *lekhā*, and the *Dhātupāṭha* gloss of *kaci*, *kāci*, "*diptibandhanayoḥ*"¹. I would, therefore, render as follows:

"Maithilī was golden-skinned, the rākṣasa was deep blueblack, and in his arms she looked just like the star that glitters within a sapphire".

It is interesting to note that a principal source of star-sapphires is Ceylon itself: "Ceylon has for ages been famous for sapphires Some of the slightly cloudy Ceylon sapphires, usually of greyish-blue colour, display when cut with a convex face a chatoyant luminosity, sometimes forming a luminous star of six rays, whence they are called 'star-sapphires'."²

1. Ed. Böhtlingk, I.182-3.

2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, s.v. sapphire.