

## Art historical overviews of the Mewar *Rāmāyaṇa* books

### *Bālakāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa*

By Roda Ahluwalia with J.P. Losty

**CSMVS Museum, Mumbai, 23 folios, Acc. No. 54.1/1-20 and Acc. No. 2009.303-305; 49 folios belonging to a private collector; and 1 folio in the Baroda Museum & Picture Gallery (formerly 2), PG.5A.64 B.**

*Pothī* manuscript on large sheets of Indian paper, thick, slightly burnished, light beige in colour. 112 folios (originally). 23 by 39.5 cm. 2-15 lines of Nāgarī, with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red. The text is arranged between three red vertical lines on each side. From folio 74 onwards, in the centre of the text-side is a blank diamond five lines high, empty but for four isolated *akṣaras*. The text area average is 15 by 33 cm. 73 out of 78 numbered paintings originally (all full-page but for folios 1 and 5) within broad red and yellow borders, two of each at the top and at the sides, one of each at the bottom.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; whereabouts then unknown; purchased in Mumbai for the CSMVS Museum, Baroda Museum & Picture Gallery and two private collections in the early 1950s.

The *Bālakāṇḍa* of the Jagat Siṅgh *Rāmāyaṇa* was commissioned by Ācārya Jasvant for Rāṇā Jagat Siṅgh and completed on 2 December 1649. The scribe, Mahātmā Hīrāṇḍa, inscribed the text and Manohar, a master artist of Rāṇā Jagat Siṅgh's atelier was responsible for all the illustrations.

The colophon on folio 112v reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe maharṣivālmīkiviracite daśarathapramodo nāma bālakāṇḍa  
samāptam iti sarggaḥ || 47 || || saṃvat 1706 samaye mārg<r>aśirṣamāse  
kṛṣṇapakṣe trayodaśyām tithau guruvāsare | medapāṭadeśe śrī udaipurānagare ||  
mahārājādhirāja mahārāṇā<ṃ> śrīśrī5 jagatasyaṃghajī vijairājye | citāro  
manohara | ācāryaśrī jasavaṃtajī liṣāye | mahātmāhīrāṇḍa pustaka liṣataṃ ||*

So in the venerable *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by the great sage (*rṣi*) Vālmīki [with] *sarga* 47, named “Daśaratha's joy”, the *Bālakāṇḍa* was completed; in the *saṃvat* year 1706, on Thursday the 13th *tithi*<sup>1</sup> in the dark half of the month Mārgaśrīṣa; in the city of Udaipur in the Mewar region; in the victorious reign of the six

<sup>1</sup> A *tithi* is a thirtieth of a lunar month, so slightly shorter than a calendar day but corresponding to it for most purposes.

times honourable overlord Mahārāṇā Jagat Singh. The painter was Manohar. The book was written by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda on the instructions of Ācārya Jasvant.<sup>2</sup>

The first book of the *Rāmāyana*, the *Bālakāṇḍa*, opens with Vālmīki, the author, being asked by the deity Brahmā to compose an epic poem on Rāma's life. Vālmīki teaches the *Rāmāyana* in verse form to Lava and Kuśa, Rāma's sons, who in turn sing it in front of Rāma himself. This they do in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, the last book of the *Rāmāyana*; and so the story of the *Rāmāyana* runs a full circle. In the *Bālakāṇḍa*, four sons are born to King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā and the sage Viśvāmitra requests him to send the eldest, Rāma, to his ashram in order to vanquish demons disrupting the successful completion of a sacrifice. The purpose of Rāma accompanying Viśvāmitra into the forest becomes clear as the story proceeds. Firstly, Rāma proves his superhuman strength by vanquishing the demoness Tāḍakā; secondly, he acquires celestial weapons from Viśvāmitra and the means to use them. These prove useful later on for slaying the mighty Rāvaṇa, the main purpose of Rāma's incarnation on earth. Lastly, whilst accompanying Viśvāmitra to Mithilā, Rāma bends the great bow of Śiva and wins the hand of Sītā in marriage. The *Bālakāṇḍa* ends on a happy note with the marriage of Rāma to Sītā.

There are 73 known illustrated folios in the *Bālakāṇḍa*, 20 belonging to the CSMVS Museum, three in the Karl Khandalavala collection (now in the CSMVS), 49 belonging to a private collector, and one in the Baroda Museum & Picture Gallery. The folios number 1 to 112 (numbered in a haphazard hand on the right bottom margin), with text and painting on recto and verso respectively; and illustration numbers on the left upper margin numbering from 1 to 78, with five missing illustrations. All the unillustrated folios, 34 in all, are also missing.

The numbering of folios and illustrations in the *Bālakāṇḍa* as presented by the scribe can at times be problematic. The illustration numbers on the upper left corner are inscribed haphazardly and probably after the folios on the right bottom corner were inscribed, and at times pose problems. For example, folio 43v has text appropriate to the narrative on its reverse, hence the folio number is correct; however, the painting depicting Lava and Kuśa reciting the *Rāmāyana* should appear at the beginning of the narrative between folios 5 and 11. Similarly, the text on the reverse of folio 89v is appropriate to the narrative, but the painting appears too early; it should appear after folio 91v. The illustration of Daśaratha honouring ascetics (folio 44v) is puzzling as there is no reference to this in the text. One can attribute these problems to the fact that this was the first volume to be undertaken in the manuscript, when librarian, scribe and artists were experimenting, which may have led to

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<sup>2</sup> Translation by J.L. Brockington.

inconsistencies. The *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, *Aranyakāṇḍa* and *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, inscribed subsequently, are perfectly numbered and the illustrations are all in the correct places.

Manohar is an artist whose work first appears in some of the last pages in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* manuscript, dated 1648 and now in Pune which, like Sāhib Dīn, he used to try out working on such big horizontal pages. He began his work in the *Bālakāṇḍa* with two paintings occupying only three-quarters of the page, with text occupying the remainder, the only instance where this is found in the entire *Rāmāyaṇa*. Manohar painted in an early Mewar style, similar to the early Rajput style of painting, (eg., the dispersed *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), but with certain characteristics possibly imbibed from Sāhib Dīn, the other master of Jagat Singh's studio. Sāhib Dīn's style was a mixture of elements characteristic of early Rajput painting as well as Popular Mughal painting; he painted the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (completed in 1652) and parts of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (completed 1650). The *Uttarakāṇḍa* and *Aranyakāṇḍa* together with the *Bālakāṇḍa* were painted in the style of Manohar and in his studio, and this presupposes that some apprentices helped both masters, as the known illustrations of the five volumes in question number 362, a vast number of illustrations to have been undertaken by only two artists. For his work on the *Rāmāyaṇa* Manohar adopted the elements of Sāhib Dīn's style, the same landscape and architectural conventions (with the addition of domes, largely absent from Sāhib Dīn's architecture in the *Rāmāyaṇa*). His figural types, however, are instantly discernible as different from Sāhib Dīn's, being much more angular; his colouring is more vivid and less harmonious resulting in compositions that lack Sāhib Dīn's conceptions of poetry or drama.

As mentioned earlier, Manohar undoubtedly had some assistants who helped with the colouring and the drawing of parts of paintings, but most probably was the innovator of the layout and design of all the illustrations. He uses the archaic 'simultaneous narration' style of illustration that had been reinvented in Mewar at the time, that of drawing the chief protagonists of the narrative several times in each painting, playing out several episodes in the story, thus facilitating a dense style of imagery that transcends space and time. This technique was used by Sāhib Dīn in a previous manuscript painted at Mewar, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1648) in which Manohar painted a few illustrations. Some examples of continuous narration from the Jagat Singh *Bālakāṇḍa* are mentioned below.

In folio 5v, C3, Brahmā and Vālmīki appear twice, once when Brahmā is shown descending from the heavens with Vālmīki bowing low; and then the pair are shown again seated in conversation. In folio 50v, CSMVS Acc. No. 54.1/11, Viśvāmitra is depicted seated in conversation with King Daśaratha; Rāma and his brothers are depicted twice, once entering the court and then again seated in a row in front of their father. Sometimes protagonists are shown continuously in an illustration with different coloured backgrounds indicating a temporal difference. For example folio 59v, C31 depicts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa fighting demons against a black background in the distance. The brothers are shown again in the same illustration against an orange/ochre background bowing before the sages announcing their

victory. Usually, however, Manohar uses the archaic device of dividing the page into sections with characters playing out their part at different locations and different times in the narrative. For example in folio 21v, CSMVS Acc. No. 54.1/4, there are two sections with a dividing vertical line. In the left section R̥śyaśṛṅga accompanies the courtesans to Aṅga and in the section on the right, R̥śyaśṛṅga arrives at Aṅga and is welcomed by King Romapāda.

Manohar is never entirely happy with the ‘bird’s eye’ view and simultaneous narrative used so successfully by Sāhib Dīn. He prefers instead to use registers, sometimes disguised as features in a landscape, or to divide up the composition into compartments in order to distinguish different episodes. It is noticeable how, in these big horizontal pages, Manohar often finds somewhere for his characters to place their feet and likes to arrange them in rows in order to avoid the effect of having them appear unanchored and floating in space. Such traits are a throwback to mediaeval painting conventions with their convention of a horizontal viewpoint before the widespread adoption of the ‘bird’s eye’ viewpoint in which characters could be dispersed over the whole surface of the painting. Manohar does sometimes distribute his characters over space for showing battles and processions in the *Bālakāṇḍa*, but the result is never very easy to read and it is clear that he was not at home with it.

Though the setting of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the ancient township of Ayodhyā, described in detail by Vālmīki, Manohar and Sāhib Dīn choose to portray the architecture as that of seventeenth-century Udaipur, and the dress as the contemporary dress of the time in which the manuscript was painted. So the men wear transparent Mughal style *jāmās* over *paijāmās* and *paṭkas*, the women *ghāghrās* and *colīs* with *oḍhnīs*. No characterisation is attempted, though Rāma is distinguished from all others with the blue skin colour of Viṣṇu, and Daśaratha can be distinguished by his grey beard and moustache as he was 60,000 years old! All other characters conform to types.

Architecture is a simplified version of Rajput/Mughal styles with domes, turrets, balconies and eaves adorned with decorative features in the Popular Mughal style. The architectural settings are drawn in an open box-like format with figures depicted within to portray scenes from the narrative. Landscape settings are symbolic and suggestive, for example a few trees indicate a forest setting. Scenery is, however, more advanced than earlier Rajput painting prototypes. Trees with washes of green, their leaves individually delineated, palms, cypresses and flowering shrubs, simplistic Popular Mughal style rocks in place of hills or mountains can all be seen.

Though Manohar may not measure up to Sāhib Dīn’s standard of illustrating pages in this manuscript, he is a competent artist and perhaps just needed the subject to fire his imagination. His paintings are often charmingly executed and do not fail to delight the viewer.

***Ayodhyākāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

**British Library Add. MS 15296(1)**

*Pothī* manuscript on large sheets of Indian paper, thick, slightly burnished, light beige in colour; laid lines visible but not continuous. 129 folios. 21.2 by 38.4 cm. 9-22 lines of Nāgarī, with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red. The text is arranged in panels formed by a framework of three red vertical lines on each side and two above and below the text. In the centre of most folios, recto and verso, is a blank diamond five lines high, empty but for four isolated *akṣaras* (there are five of these in the last two folios). In the opening folios, this blank is outlined in red to form a Greek cross, while there are also traditional Jaina red spots on the versos. The text area measures 14-16 by 26-32 cm. 68 full-page paintings within broad red and yellow borders, approximately 17-18 by 34 cms.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; given by Mahārāṇa Bhīm Singh (1778–1828) to James Tod (1782–1835), from 1818 the first Political Agent to the Rajput courts, and by him to the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843) after his return to England in 1823. Purchased at the sale of Sussex library 1844.

The colophon on folio 129v reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe ayodhyākāṇḍe maharṣivālmīkaviracite naṁdigrāmanivāso  
nāma sarggaḥ samāptaḥ || || saṁvat 1707 varṣe mārg<r>aśirṣamāse  
śuklapakṣe dviṭīyaṁ titho || bhṛguvāsare || || mahārājādhirāja mahārā<ṁ>ṇā  
śrījagatasyaṁghajī avalokanārthaṁ | ācāryaśrījasavaṁtajī liṣāvataṁ |  
māhatmāhīraṇaṁda liṣataṁ ||*

So in the venerable *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* composed by the great sage (*ṛṣi*) Vālmīki the *sarga* named “residing at Nandigrāma” was completed; in the *saṁvat* year 1707, on Friday the 2nd *tithi* in the bright half of the month Mārgaśirṣa,<sup>3</sup> for the inspection of the overlord Mahārāṇa Jagat Singh, (this book) was written by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda on the instructions of Ācārya Jasvant.<sup>4</sup>

**Sāhib Dīn’s Narrative Techniques in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa***

At some stage in the development of the groundwork for the great *Rāmāyaṇa* project, it was decided that all the elements of the story should be included, that there were to be no omissions

<sup>3</sup> The date corresponds to 25th November 1650.

<sup>4</sup> Colophon translation by J.L. Brockington.

of any action, and that therefore there would need to be an enormous number of paintings. This is the way manuscripts had been prepared in Rajasthan and elsewhere in northern India in previous centuries. It is indeed a very Indian idea of illustrating books, that every detail of the story should have pictorial realisation, thereby ensuring that every folio should have one side with a painting. This concept in a way makes the text superfluous. This would seem a natural development in a land of many languages and scripts, but it is very different from the Persian-Mughal idea of book illustration. Normally in the Persian tradition there is only a relatively small number of illustrated pages. Although Akbar's historical manuscripts include a larger number of paintings, this is still far less than those planned for Jagat Singh's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Whether Persian or Mughal, the paintings concentrate on illustrating one episode. Sāhib Dīn, on the contrary, tries to include every episode of interest in the text. The only way he can do this is to revert to the ancient Indian convention of simultaneous narration. In sculpted panels such as those of the Sanchi gateways (first century B.C.) or on the painted walls of the Ajanta caves (fifth/sixth century A.D.), the same character or characters can appear several times within a single frame to indicate either spatial or temporal progression in the story.

The use of simultaneous narration alone makes possible the ambitious scale of Sāhib Dīn's compositions, which far exceed in their complexity anything that was being produced in other Rajput studios at the time. The method was not needed in Sāhib Dīn's earlier manuscripts created for Jagat Singh. It appears fleetingly in the sixteenth-century dispersed manuscript of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, but those artists generally choose to divide up the page into separate registers for more complex subjects. No other early manuscripts exhibit this narrative method, which had disappeared in Indian painting and narrative sculpture by the end of the first millennium AD. As in those earlier periods, Sāhib Dīn realised that it was only possible to make use of this method if he raised the spectator's viewing point to the 'bird's eye view,' for otherwise if he continued with the mediaeval horizontal viewpoint of his earlier work for Jagat Singh, the result would be like a narrative frieze with all the action taking place at the same level, thus making it impossible for the viewer to sort out temporal or spatial sequences. It was presumably Sāhib Dīn's exposure to Popular Mughal painting, and to its use of 'bird's eye view' perspective, that enabled him to realise that he could fulfil his brief for the complete realisation of all the events in the *Rāmāyaṇa* only by making use of simultaneous narration.

An examination of Sāhib Dīn's paintings in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* will show many ways in which he can be seen to be learning to exploit the device. Folio 2r, in which Bharata and Śatrughna take leave of their parents, is a simple example showing separate locations within the palace and the two princes going between them, so involving both spatial and temporal progression. When Kaikeyī asks Daśaratha to exile Rāma, folio 24r, the artist shows three different stages of the drama that all happen in the same place, even though the same architectural setting is rendered three times, while the figure of Sumantra who has come to fetch the king is in a later temporal sequence. Folio 89r also, in which Bharata and Śatrughna return to Ayodhyā, shows their successive meetings with Kaikeyī and with her maid Mantharā, who first poisoned her

mind against Rāma, and somewhat simplistically shows unnecessary replication of the architectural settings. Most paintings show one or other of these types of simultaneous narration, although Sāhib Dīn himself soon realised that he did not need to repeat his architectural setting so many times, as in folios 50r-52r set within the palace where the figures, but not the setting, are repeated. He also varies the pace by sometimes concentrating on key episodes as single narrative points, as in Kaikeyī putting robes of bark on Sītā (folio 51r) and in the exiles leaving Ayodhyā (folios 56r and 57r), a way of emphasising the singularly pathetic or dramatic importance of the event. Within the landscape settings later on in the book he can show both temporal and spatial progression in a highly sophisticated manner as his characters move around his designated framework. In folio 114r, for example, when Rāma is told of Daśaratha's death, the four brothers and Sītā are shown seven times (or rather six in the case of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa) as they first meet each other (top middle), and then the action proceeds in an anti-clockwise direction chronicling their reactions, their trip down to the river to perform the required funeral rites, and their return to the hut where they sit in mournful contemplation. All this is as detailed in Vālmīki's text. Yet here, in the same painting, Sāhib Dīn also overrules the author for the sake of greater expressiveness. He disregards the correct order of procession for Hindu funeral rites as given in Vālmīki's text (females youngest to eldest, then males likewise, *i.e.* Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma) so that he can depict Bharata and Śatrughna supporting their eldest brother on their way down to the river, followed by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. He also omits the role of the minister Sumantra, who is supposed to lead them down to the river, in order to emphasise the pathos of the isolation of these children in the forest — the boys are still only fifteen years old.

As in his series painted in the 1630s, Sāhib Dīn makes use of parts of the landscape to divide up the separate scenes and thereby indicate both spatial and temporal progression. A screen of rocks, for instance, in folio 118r divides the separate meetings of the exiles with their mothers and that with the ministers and Brahmins. Scenes within the palace, however, folios 50r, 51r and 53r, have no architectural divisions, and we infer the progressions both temporal and spatial against a stark ground. Here Sāhib Dīn has moved the viewpoint closer in so that there is no horizon, as if the walls were closing in on the aged king, whose increasing desperation amid the hysteria of the court is admirably caught by this device. When in folios 56r and 57r the action shifts outside as the exiles leave, it is like a breath of fresh air. Sāhib Dīn also uses this very high viewpoint without a horizon when he wants to show large numbers of people as in folio 61r with the people of Ayodhyā asleep round the exiles. Again he uses it in several river scenes such as folios 69r and 103r showing first the exiles and then Bharata's army crossing the Gaṅgā, depicted flowing across the page from top to bottom. Here he used models from earlier scenes of Kṛṣṇa sporting with the cowgirls in the river Yamunā, as depicted in his earlier *Rasikapriyā* series, which in turn depends on the device as used in the sixteenth-century dispersed *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

All the above presupposes that Sāhib Dīn is the presiding intelligence behind the composition of the paintings in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* of 1650, but he is nowhere credited with the work. Nonetheless someone is controlling the compositions so that everything is consistent within the large number of paintings. There is, for instance, a consistent use of spatial references. Where characters depart from Ayodhyā for local purposes, such as Bharata and Śatrughna's visit to their uncle, they leave on the right, progress in that direction and come back from the right. For the exile, however, Rāma and his companions leave Ayodhyā heading left and consistently make their way to Citrakūṭa proceeding leftwards, so that their visitors from Ayodhyā come in from and return to the right.

It is clear from Sāhib Dīn's work in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of 1652, where he is credited in the colophon, that he must have been working almost exclusively on the incredibly complex paintings in that book, while undoubtedly supervising the compositions of the earlier book. Some of the work in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* may be studio work, but certainly not the key episodes involving the most dramatic or pathetic moments. These include the dramatic sequences leading from Kaikeyī's demanding Rāma's exile right up to the departure itself, which form a series of brilliantly detailed portrayals matching the mounting hysteria in the text itself and culminating in two dramatic paintings that concentrate on just a single moment in the narrative. The landscape paintings detailing the life of the exiles in the forest, with their detailed and lavishly coloured trees set in front of a screen of purple rocks, are among the most beautiful creations of seventeenth-century Rajput art and certainly attributable to Sāhib Dīn himself.

***Araṇyakāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

**Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur; 72 folios, no. 1667.**

*Pothī* manuscript on large sheets of Indian paper, thick, slightly burnished, light beige in colour. 72 folios. 23 by 39.5 cm. 12-20 lines of Nāgarī, with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red. The text is arranged between three red vertical lines on each side with two horizontal lines at top and bottom. Most pages of text have one or more blank diamonds five lines high, empty but for four isolated *akṣaras* (syllables). 36 full page paintings within broad yellow and red borders.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; Saraswati Bhandar, Udaipur (recorded in the 1943 catalogue); Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, 1962, subsequently transferred to Jodhpur.

The colophon on folio 72 reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe daṇḍakāraṇye rāmonmādo nāma sargaḥ || || śubhaṃ  
bhavatu<ḥ> || || saṃvat 1708 varṣe kārṭtikamāse kṛṣṇapakṣe | navamyām  
tithau ravivāsareḥ || || medapāṭadese cittodaḡaḡhe || || mahārājādhirāja  
mahārā<ṃ>nā śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī jagatasyaṃghajī vijairājyeh || śrī ekaliṅgajī  
prasādāt || || yādṛśaṃ pustake drṣṭaṃ | tādrṣāṃ liṣataṃ mayā | yadi  
śuddha<ṃ>m aśuddhaṃ vā | mama doṣo na dīyate || 1 maṅgalaṃ leśakānām  
ca | pāṭhakānām ca maṅgalaṃ | maṅgalaṃ sarvalokānām | bhūmibhūpati  
maṅgalaṃ ||2|| māhātmāhīrāṇaṃda liṣataṃ || ||*

So in the venerable *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Daṇḍaka forest<sup>5</sup> the *sarga* named “*Rāma’s frenzy*” (was completed). Let it be auspicious. In the *saṃvat* year 1708, on Sunday the 9th *tithi* in the dark half of the month Kārṭtika;<sup>6</sup> in Chitorgarh<sup>7</sup> in the Mewar region; in the victorious reign of the 5 times honourable overlord Mahārāṇā Jagat Singh by the favour of Ekaliṅgajī.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the book was seen, so was it written by me;

whether it is correct or incorrect, the blame should not be laid on me.<sup>9</sup> 1

Blessings on writers and blessings on readers,

<sup>5</sup> “In the Daṇḍaka forest (*araṇya*)” has replaced the *kāṇḍa* name.

<sup>6</sup> The date corresponds to 8th October 1651.

<sup>7</sup> Chitor was the ancient capital of Mewar, ruined in 1568, which the Mewar ruler was not allowed by the Mughals to occupy. It is mentioned here for its historic associations. The manuscript was prepared in Udaipur, as the similar colophon of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* makes clear.

<sup>8</sup> Ekaliṅgajī, a form of Śiva, is the tutelary deity of the Mewar ruling dynasty and his principal shrine is located about 22 km north of Udaipur.

<sup>9</sup> The first of the two verses is one commonly added by the scribe at the end of a manuscript that he has copied but the second is less frequent.

blessings on the whole world, blessings on the earth and the lord of the earth.<sup>10</sup> 2

(This book) was written by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda.<sup>11</sup>

The style of the 36 paintings is similar to that of Manohar, the artist of Book I, but they appear to be by a different artist from his studio. There are none of the ambitious compositions of Book I, the set pieces with the repetition of the chief characters without divisions; instead the artist is content to use standard divisions of architecture or landscape features to divide up the separate sections of the composition, a river bank or a line of stones to divide his upper register from his lower one. These simple devices are remarkably successful. The palette is slightly more restricted than Manohar's. The paintings are at a consistently good level for this style, remarkably even in quality.

A brief description of the paintings contained in the *Aranyakāṇḍa* follows:

f.2. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā are welcomed by the sages of the Daṇḍaka forest.

f.5. Sītā is describing her birth to the female sage Anasūyā. King Janaka is ploughing and finding the baby Sītā, while heavenly beings shower flowers.

f.7. Sītā takes her leave of the female anchorite and all three then take their leave of the principal sage.

f.8. The three take their leave of the rest of the sages and head for the forest.

f.9. The demon Virādha appears with numerous dead animals impaled upon the prongs of his trident and then, wielding it, rushes up to the three exiles as they stand by a lotus pool.

f.10. Virādha grabs Sītā to snatch her away but is felled by the arrows of the brothers. As he falls dying, his real self, the *gandharva* Tumburu, emerges from his body.

f.11. The three exiles approach the sage Śarabhaṅga and as they do so Rāma sees the god Indra departing in his chariot, accompanied by celestials. Indra had come to accompany Śarabhaṅga to his heaven but the sage delays his departure as he wants to enjoy Rāma's company. Śarabhaṅga advises Rāma to seek out the sage Sutīkṣṇa. He then enters fire and ascends to heaven.

f.12. The sages in Śarabhaṅga's hermitage tell Rāma how they are persecuted by the demons

<sup>10</sup> The second line of the second verse is translated on the basis of the reading being *bhūmi bhūpati* (for *bhūmau bhūpatiṃ*).

<sup>11</sup> Colophon translation by J.L. Brockington.

and beg him for protection, which he promises. The three exiles then leave for Sūtīkṣṇa's hermitage.

f.13. The three exiles reach the hermitage of Sūtīkṣṇa on the banks of a river beneath a mountain. Rāma tells the sage that he wishes to visit all the sages living in the Daṇḍaka forest and offer them protection from the demons.

f.16. Having journeyed through the forest for ten years and visited all the sages in turn, offering them his protection, Rāma and his companions return to the hermitage of Sūtīkṣṇa.

f.17. Rāma desired to visit the sage Agastya, and Sūtīkṣṇa told him how to find first of all the hermitage of the brother of Agastya. On the way, Rāma narrated the tale of the demon brothers Vaṭāpi and Ilvala. Ilvala had assumed the shape of a sage and invited the sages, including Agastya, to partake of a feast. He slew his brother Vaṭāpi disguised as a ram and cooked him. Having offered the dish to the sages, he then called out for his brother to come forth, which he did from their stomachs, thereby killing the sages. But the great sage Agastya through his powers resisted Vaṭāpi, who was indeed dead and eaten, and then through the same powers slew Ilvala. The picture shows Ilvala killing and cooking the ram and approaching the sage Agastya.

f.19. The three exiles reverently approach the hermitage of Agastya and then pay homage to the great sage.

f.20. Other sages conduct the three exiles into the presence of Agastya [this seems misplaced and perhaps should precede f.19].

f.21. Agastya has bestowed the divine weapons of Viṣṇu on Rāma and advised him to seek out the nearby Pañcāvātī forest, where the three of them should make their home for the remainder of their exile. Now the three exiles approach him to take their leave and then on their way to Pañcāvātī meet the vulture king Jaṭāyu, who promises to keep watch for Sītā's safety, before flying away.

f.24. The three exiles reach Pañcāvātī and there Lakṣmaṇa builds their hut. The two brothers bathe in the Godāvarī river and have gathered flowers and fruit to make the offerings proper for the peace of their dwelling, while Sītā fills her water pot.

f.25. Śūrpaṇakhā, Rāvaṇa's sister, chances upon the three exiles in their hut and desires Rāma for herself. The two brothers taunt her.

f.27. Śūrpaṇakhā has attempted to kill Sītā but is grabbed by Lakṣmaṇa, who cuts off her nose and ears. She runs off to another part of the forest, where dwells her brother the demon

Khara, and demands vengeance. Khara promises to send out fourteen of his best demon warriors to destroy the three exiles.

f.28. Rāma emerges from his hut to kill the fourteen demons sent by Khara, watched by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. Śūrpaṇakhā looks over the heaps of dead bodies.

f.29. Śūrpaṇakhā urges Khara himself to fight Rāma and he orders his troops to prepare themselves.

f.30. Khara, in his chariot, marches to war accompanied by his fourteen thousand demons.

f.31. The demons arrive at the hermitage in Pañcāvātī and Rāma dons his armour.

f.32. Rāma stands alone outside his hut firing arrows at the demons, who mill about in confusion as dozens of them die.

f.33. Rāma slays the demon leader Duṣaṇa, as the demons mill around.

f.34. Rāma slays the demon leader Triśiras, as the demons mill around.

f.37. Rāma is attacked by Khara himself and kills him. He receives the congratulations of his brother and wife and they retire to their hut.

f.38. Śūrpaṇakhā reaches Laṅkā and appeals to her brother Rāvaṇa for vengeance; she inflames his desire for the beautiful Sītā.

f.40. Rāvaṇa comes in his chariot to the shores of the ocean and sees on the other side the hermitage with the banyan tree, where previously Garuḍa had brought an elephant and a tortoise in his claws, wishing to devour them. They are all visible on the tree. The bough on which the huge bird had perched had broken and threatened the sages beneath, but Garuḍa had transported elephant, tortoise and bough elsewhere. Rāvaṇa had previously used the bough to destroy the Niṣādas. In the hermitage now dwells the demon sage Mārīca, and Rāvaṇa crosses the ocean to consult him.

f.44. Mārīca has advised Rāvaṇa against his project, but failed to dissuade him. Rāvaṇa, with Mārīca at his side, comes in his chariot to the hermitage in Pañcāvātī. Mārīca has disguised himself as a golden deer which Sītā sees and covets. She persuades Rāma to hunt the deer for her, despite Lakṣmaṇa's warnings.

f.45. Rāma shoots the golden deer, out of which escapes the demon Mārīca. As he dies, he calls out in distress, imitating Rāma's voice. Sītā persuades Lakṣmaṇa to go to his aid, against

his better judgement, and then Rāvaṇa, disguised as an ascetic, comes to the hut. Assuming his true form, he carries Sītā off in his chariot.

f.51. Jaṭāyu the vulture king sees Sītā's abduction and comes to her assistance. He and Rāvaṇa fight vigorously, but Rāvaṇa severs Jaṭāyu's wings and he falls dying to the ground, where Sītā laments over him. Rāvaṇa resumes his flight to Laṅkā and places Sītā in his palace.

f.56. Rāvaṇa fails to persuade Sītā to become his wife and places her in the *aśoka* grove guarded by *rākṣasīs*, threatening her with death if she does not relent.

f.57. Back in Pañcāvati, Rāma reproaches Lakṣmaṇa for leaving Sītā alone and, fearing the worst, returns to the hut to find it empty. The two brothers begin to search for her.

f.63. As they search they come across first the mangled remains of Rāvaṇa's chariot and then the dying Jaṭāyu, who tells them Rāvaṇa has taken Sītā and headed south.

f.64. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa cremate the dead Jaṭāyu and perform the necessary funeral rites bathing in the Godāvarī and making *piṇḍas* (funeral offerings) of the flesh of the deer that they have slain. They then resume their search.

f.66. They encounter the demon Kabandha, whose head and mouth are in his belly, and they sever his huge arms. He tells them his story — that he was changed into this shape by Indra, and that once they cremate his corpse he will resume his original celestial form. He advises them also to seek out the monkey king Sugrīva and ask for his assistance.

f.69. Kabandha had advised them to seek out Lake Pampā. Here they would find the monkeys, and on the way they would also find the female ascetic Śabarī and the sage Mataṅga. The two begin their journey to the Pampā lake and find first of all Śabarī, who has prepared fruits and water for them.

***Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

**British Library Add. MS 15296(2)**

*Pothī* manuscript, some alternation between thicker beige paper and thinner creamier paper. 88 folios (1-86, with 2 extra folios, unnumbered, now folios 58 *bis* and 64 *bis*, with paintings on rectos, one with a blank verso and the other a duplicate text). 21-23 by 37-39 cm. Various numbers of lines per page. Text in black Nāgarī with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red, except that these have been omitted from large parts of the text. Text is mostly arranged between three red vertical lines, for the most part without the horizontal lines seen in the *Ayodhyakāṇḍa*. Likewise, only some of the pages bear the central diamond pattern. Varied text area sizes. 34 full-page paintings within red borders (mostly, some yellow with other colours) with white and black inner rules, approximately 21-22 by 37-38 cm. The folios with pictures tend to be slightly larger than those without.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; given by Mahārāṇa Bhīm Singh (1778–1828) to James Tod (1782–1835), from 1818 the first Political Agent to the Rajput courts, and by him to the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843) after his return to England in 1823. Purchased at the sale of Sussex library 1844.

The colophon on folio 88r reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe kiṣkindhāparvvaṇi samāpta<ṃ>ḥ || || śubhaṃ  
bhavatu<ḥ> || || saṃvat 1710 varṣe bhādrapadamāse śuklapakṣe |  
ekādaśyāṃ tithau budhavāsare || medapāṭadese citrakotagadheḥ ||  
mahārājādhirāja mahārā<ṃ>ṇā śrīśrī rājīsyamghajī vijaichatreḥ || ||  
vyāsajayadevajī liṣāvataṃ || mahātmāhīrāṇaṃda liṣataṃ udaipuramadhyeḥ  
|| || śrīr astu<ḥ> || || kalyāṇam astu<ḥ> ||  
|| śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī || || śrī ||*

So in the venerable *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Kiṣkindhā parvan*<sup>12</sup> (the book) was completed. May it be well. In the *saṃvat* year 1710, on Wednesday the 11th *tithi* in the bright half of the month Bhādrapada;<sup>13</sup> in Chitorgarh<sup>14</sup> in the Mewar region; under the victorious parasol<sup>15</sup> of the overlord Mahārāṇā Rāj

<sup>12</sup> The term *parvan* is the usual one for the 18 books of the *Mahābhārata*, whereas the 7 books of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are normally called *kāṇḍa*.

<sup>13</sup> The date corresponds to 3rd September 1653.

<sup>14</sup> Chitor was the ancient capital of Mewar, ruined in 1568, which the Mewar ruler was not allowed by the Mughals to occupy. It is mentioned here for its historic associations; the manuscript itself was completed in Udaipur as the rest of the colophon makes clear.

<sup>15</sup> A white parasol (*chatra*) is a standard mark of royalty in India, as seen for example in the name of the Mumbai museum, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, which incorporates the name of the Marāṭhā ruler, Śivājī.

Singh (this book) was written by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda on the instructions of Vyāsadeva in the middle of Udaipur. Let there be good fortune; let there be prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

The actual paintings are larger than those in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, as the latter have a double margin of yellow and red, and a blank surround. In this *kāṇḍa* there is only one margin, normally red, which is carried out to the edge of the paper. The text proper, while complete, lacks a lot of the red colophons, *daṇḍas* and marginal lines found in the other *kāṇḍas* and suggests that the manuscript was taken into the Royal Library without being properly completed. The evidence from the paintings reinforces this conclusion, but before discussing the internal collation of the manuscript we have to discuss its style.

### **The Artists of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa***

The other style of Mewar painting represented in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* and *Sundarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyana* is somewhat startling in comparison, as is it totally different to those of Sāhib Dīn and Manohar. The palette is much wider, favouring rich mixtures of various purples, greens, yellows and browns. The characters with strongly marked curving profiles and eyebrows are larger than those of the other Mewar styles and are modelled, which is also the case with such landscape features as tree trunks. Unlike the so-called flat fish- or almond-shaped eyes of Sāhib Dīn, here the large eyes have eyelids and creases around them, while the pupils are realistically positioned towards the front of the eye. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are now of course adults and Rāma wears a moustache, although not the beard of Manohar's imagination. They are dressed in an ascetic's costume throughout, with skirts of leaves or skins, so that costume details are difficult to find comparisons for, but often both are shown flamboyantly wearing a scarf of rich textiles wound round the body over one shoulder or draped around the arms.

Practically all the features of the palette and style reviewed above are found in paintings associated with the northern Deccan and the so-called Aurangabad style. Aurangabad was the chief city of the northern Deccan in the seventeenth century and the centre of the Mughal armies' assaults on the independent Deccan sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda. Many of the Rajput princes who served in the Mughal armies collected books and paintings from the Deccan and took them back to Rajasthan. Our *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* is thus the first fruit of a Deccani school transplanted to Udaipur. It seems to have been born of necessity rather than choice, as there cannot have been enough artists in Mewar to fulfil the task of completing the illustrations in the traditional style. Jagat Singh himself may have found the artists when he was able to leave Mewar to go on pilgrimage to the shrine at Omkareshwar on the river Narmadā (the boundary between Malwa and the Deccan) in 1647. This mixed style did not

<sup>16</sup> Colophon translation by J.L. Brockington.

survive long. It is found only in a few series of *Rāgamālās* and *Gītagovindas* and similar texts up to the 1660s when it became assimilated into the Mewar style of the later seventeenth century.

The artists of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* are perhaps thinking of the Udaipur palace in their depiction of the palace of Kiṣkindhā, which shows a similar tripartite elevation (folios 14r, 18r, 24r). In painting terms it betrays stylistic influence from various quarters, most noticeably in its elevation of the so-called Malwa or central Indian Rajput style. Note also the scrollwork or floral panels at its base in folio 14r, a feature found in paintings of architecture from Malwa and of earlier paintings from Mewar. All the artists are using a single *charba* or tracing for its depiction, even though it can get turned around as can be seen here. In folio 24r the palace has moved to the right of the picture: the artists here did not feel the need for so strong a directional sense as in Sāhib Dīn's books. Sāhib Dīn also depicts the Kiṣkindhā palace (Add. MS 15296(1), folio 190r) when the exiles fly over it on their return and shows it to be very similar to its depiction in this book, although more logically arranged.

It is more obvious in this book that different artists are involved even in the creation of the paintings in the major style and we suspect the hands of three or four different artists when the major figures are compared. For instance, folios 3r and 9r seem to be by one artist, and folios 5r and 12r by two further artists; each, of course, may have had assistants. In traditional Mewar manuscript illustration as defined by Sāhib Dīn, the interesting features of the narrative can be spread unevenly over the whole painting. The *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* artists on the other hand generally favour a concentration on a single point in both place and time. We can see this most clearly in folios 14r, 24r, 33r, 43r, 44r and 49r. Nonetheless, with such a wide expanse to fill on the sheets of paper, the artists often forego the dramatic treatment of individual incidents and instead make use of some of the easier elements of simultaneous narration. They depict a character first doing one thing and then the immediately succeeding thing, as can be seen in many of the painting. Only in a few paintings is a more elaborate version of simultaneous narrative undertaken, as can be seen in folio 5r, where Rāma and Sugrīva first clasp hands as a token of friendship, then walk round the fire kindled by Hanumān with the same intention, and finally converse with each other on Mount Malaya. All these incidents take place in just one chapter. In folio 12r the story that Sugrīva tells Rāma about his brother Bāli's prowess is intertwined beautifully with his telling of it and its aftermath when Rāma shoots an arrow through the seven trees. These incidents fill three chapters of the text.

Whatever the stylistic variations of detail between the various hands, there is — as in the Sāhib Dīn books — one controlling intelligence that has dictated the general layout of the individual paintings as well as the viewpoint. Whereas Sāhib Dīn's books favour a high 'bird's eye' view, thereby achieving a considerable depth within the picture that allows him to spread out the various elements in a simultaneous narrative, the controller of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* artists generally prefers the more traditionally Indian horizontal viewpoint that is found in various

*Rāgamālā* paintings from the northern Deccan from the late sixteenth century on. The backgrounds serve generally as screens behind the characters, who tend to keep their feet firmly on the frame of the painting or on some rocks or on some other feature depicted there solely for that purpose.

However, four of the paintings, folios 57r and 58r, and folios 64r and 65r, are not in this style. The first two are in the style associated with the artist Manohar, who painted the first book, the *Bālakāṇḍa*, in 1649. These are both in a sense superfluous, since one is a duplicate, in compositional terms, of the previous folio 56r in the main style of the book, while folio 58r has no text on its verso and was painted on an obviously blank piece of paper. Both of these paintings in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* show Sugrīva seated with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on Mount Prasavaṇa surrounded first by gambolling monkeys and then by the monkey armies returning from north, east and west. It is perhaps a comment on his lack of imagination that he illustrated two separate episodes with very similar compositions, but the results are charming, particularly in the depiction of the playful multicoloured monkeys. Sāhib Dīn in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* and the other artists of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* treat the monkeys very much more seriously. Here Manohar has invented a more adult format for Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with beards and moustaches. Ten years have passed since the events of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* during which the exiles have penetrated deeper and deeper into the forests and they are no longer children. Folio 64r is also superfluous. It is an obviously later picture, of about 1700-10, painted on the reverse of a page of text which is a duplicate of folio 57v, even though the picture refers to a later episode and is bound in the correct position. This picture and folio 65r, the last of these extraneous pictures, both bear the same subject, the latter painted in a weak version of the Manohar style, but probably contemporary.

The main sequence of paintings bears numbers up to 27 (folio 86r), the penultimate picture. The last picture, which ought to be numbered 28, is not, but had long been misbound as folio 59r, while the picture that ought to have been there, no. 25, had been misbound as folio 87r. The pictures were somehow in this order before being inset and bound up in their former bindings, because the green grass on no. 25 has offset on to the colophon page, which it must originally have faced, before being turned round to face the preceding page when all the British Library volumes were encased in bindings in 1844. This misfoliation is now corrected here. If the sequence of paintings is to be taken literally up to 28, then apart from the three extraneous paintings already identified, another two must have been afterthoughts and not originally planned (no. 24 is also missing, but since no text is missing, it is probably that the clerk here miscounted). However, since two of the earlier paintings have one number on the recto and the next one up on the verso, it is possible that here too the clerk made mistakes.

The evidence of the paintings supports the evidence of the text, indicating that work on the manuscript was brought to an abrupt and speedy conclusion. Many of the later paintings have been hastily finished with washes of background paint covering up details which were

originally intended to be painted more carefully. The muddled collation suggests haste and confusion. Since in fact work on the manuscript, originally commissioned by Jagat Singh, was not actually finished until a year into the reign of Rāj Singh who lacked his predecessor's interest in manuscript production, this need not surprise us. We also note that change of court librarian, from Ācārya Jasvant to Vyāsa Jayadeva, who doubtless was told to speed the whole process up.

## ***Sundarakāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

### **British Library IO San 3621**

Fragmentary *pothī* manuscript, consisting of 18 folios with paintings on rectos, and text on versos. 24 by 37-39 cm. 13-17 lines per page. Text in black Nāgarī with chapter colophons in red, *danḍas* included in red only on folios 1v and 2v, the remainder omitted. Text arranged between three red vertical lines, with further red lines at the extreme edges of the page, folios 1v and 2v with double horizontal red lines at the top and bottom of the text panel. The paper is generally thicker and a darker beige than the other volumes in this set. It is also about 1 cm taller in height. Formerly mounted on guards and bound up in a green album. 18 full-page paintings within gold (or yellow) and red (or orange) borders, the gold border sometimes with red rosettes, with blank outer surrounds.

Provenance: Purchased by the India Office Library in 1912.

The text would appear to have been completed, since folio 141r contains the end of the *Sundarakāṇḍa* in the northern recension, indeed a single initial ‘i’ (of *iti*) would appear to have begun the colophon before the scribe broke off. If the book was all but finished, it would appear to have contained 39 paintings, as the last four paintings bear the numbers 36-39 in the bottom right corner of the versos, under the original foliation.

Although there is no direct evidence that this fragmentary *Sundarakāṇḍa* is part of Jagat Singh’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, the circumstantial evidence of style and the absence of any other corresponding book suggests that it is. Likewise, the evidence of the hurried conclusion of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* in the early days of Raj Singh’s reign indicates that this book, probably even less finished, met a similar fate.

The same kind of style and of composition as the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* can be found in the eighteen surviving paintings of the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, although these are very mixed in style and quality. Some paintings are closely linked to those in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (folio 14r), while others are more obviously in the standard so-called Aurangabad style (folio 3r). If we compare the most dramatic paintings in both books, folio 49r in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* showing the monkeys springing forth to the four quarters to search for Sītā with folio 14r in the *Sundarakāṇḍa* showing the monkey army on the march south to the sea, it is clear that the styles are linked both in composition and in details. The same dramatic spirit infuses the two pictures, while both concentrate on a single moment in time that has been chosen for its dramatic possibilities. Only a few of the paintings show any elements of simultaneous narration, e.g. folio 3r where Rāvaṇa fails to win over Sītā and then makes off with one of his wives, folio 10r where Hanumān is seen several times as he leaps back across the ocean from Laṅkā and folio 16r where Lakṣmaṇa is shown twice as he fetches water for the consecration of Vibhīṣaṇa as King

of Lañkā. Only the first of these is indicative of two separate but consecutive episodes. The whole volume is probably the last to have been commenced, perhaps with the idea of assimilating the Deccani style into the main Mewar style. Folio 9r illustrates the closest such assimilation. The male figures are depicted against an architectural background (here that of Lañkā), obviously more civilised than the barbaric structure erected in the forest of Kiṣkindhā, yet stylistically derived from the architectural backgrounds of earlier Mewar painting such as Sāhib Dīn's *Rāgamālā* of 1628.

***Yuddhakāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

**British Library Add. MS 15297(1)**

*Pothī* manuscript, some alternation between thicker beige paper and thinner creamier paper. 206 folios. 22.5 by 38.5 cm. Various numbers of lines per page usually 13-14. Text in black Nāgarī with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red (apart from towards the end, from folio 161 where red and black colophons alternate haphazardly). Text is arranged between triple red lines, mostly with the two horizontal lines above and below the text. Traces of further red lines at the outer edges of folios. None of the pages bear the central diamond pattern or red spots of earlier books. Text area 18 by 32 cm. 90 full-page paintings within red and yellow borders painted right up to the edge of the folios with black inner rules, approximately 19.5 by 35.5 cm.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; given by Mahārāṇa Bhīm Singh (1778–1828) to James Tod (1782–1835), from 1818 the first Political Agent to the Rajput courts, and by him to the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843) after his return to England in 1823. Purchased at the sale of Sussex library 1844.

The colophon on folio 206r reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe ābhyudayike vālmīkiye laṅkākaṇḍe kṛtaphalastutiḥ  
samāptaṃ yuddhakāṇḍam itiḥ || samvat 1709 varṣe bhādrapadamāse  
kṛṣṇapakṣe ṣaṣṭyāṃ titho śanivāsare<ḥ> || || mahārājādhirāja mahārā<ṃ>ṇā  
śrīśrījagatsyaṃghajī vijairājye<ḥ> || || yādrśaṃ pustakaṃ drṣṭvā | tādrśaṃ  
liśataṃ mayā | yadi surddhimama suddhaṃ vā | mama doṣo na dīyate ||1|| || śrī  
śubhaṃ bhavatu<ḥ> || || kalyāṇam astu<ḥ> || || śrīr astu<ḥ> ||  
dharmmaghoṣagache || mahātmāhīrāṇaṃda likhataṃ<ḥ> ||  
udaipuramadhye<ḥ> || sāhībādī citrakṛtaṃ ||*

So in the venerable and uplifting *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki in the *Laṅkākaṇḍa*<sup>17</sup> the praise of its reward has been made; the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* is completed. In the *samvat* year 1709, on Saturday the 6th *tithi* in the dark half of the month *Bhādrapada*;<sup>18</sup> in the victorious kingdom of the doubly honourable overlord Mahārāṇa Jagat Singh.

Just as the book was seen, so was it written by me;

whether it is correct or incorrect, the blame should not be laid on me. 1

Let it be auspicious; let there be prosperity; let there be good fortune. At the

<sup>17</sup> *Laṅkākaṇḍa* is a common alternative name for the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* but it is less common to find both used together.

<sup>18</sup> The date corresponds to 25th August 1652, a Sunday.

Dharmaghoṣa *gaccha*<sup>19</sup> in the centre of Udaipur, (this book) was written by Mahātmā Hīrānanda<sup>20</sup> (and) the painting was done by Sāhib Dīn.<sup>21</sup>

### Sāhib Dīn's Crowning Achievement

With the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* we revert to the traditional Mewar style and reach the summit of Sāhib Dīn's achievement. Sāhib Dīn was concerned principally with two objectives in this book. The first was to convey through his 90 full-page paintings all the details of this highly complex story, illustrating the successive battles and the individual deeds of heroism on both sides, in which his Rajput audience must have gloried. The bardic chronicles of Rajasthan, the recitation of which formed the staple amusement of the courts, are very similar in spirit. There could have been no more critical audience for this aspect of his work. But in addition there had to be conveyed the full tragic grandeur of the epic. Rāvaṇa is a flawed tragic hero. Originally beloved by the gods, his moral flaw is his lust for another man's wife. Still he goes to his end doing his duty as a warrior. It is repeatedly emphasised in the text that he knows his side is doomed, yet he sends his generals, his brothers, his sons and finally himself out to battle with forces that he knows have the moral superiority. Yet they and he do their duty as warriors and meet inevitable death unflinchingly. It is scarcely surprising that such a text would have particular appeal to the Rajputs of Mewar, whose own moral code was hardly different from that of the warriors of Vālmīki's epic.

The sheer number of paintings — 90 out of 205 folios, nearly one in every two folios — allows Sāhib Dīn a freedom of narrative control that makes his paintings even more independent of the text than in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*. He makes full use of all the available narrative techniques to vary the pace of his paintings, sometimes concentrating several chapters into one painting (folio 34r for example), at other times allowing himself to spread out an episode such as the initial awakening and feeding of Kumbhakarṇa over several paintings (folios 64r-66r), thereby building up a cumulative pictorial tension that carries the story along without need of the text. Nothing of moment in the story has been omitted. As he had done in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, Sāhib Dīn with his highly organised sense of directional geography sets up two principal spatial references. Rāma's camp is on the left and Rāvaṇa and the city of Laṅkā are on the right. Rāma and his allies therefore always advance on Laṅkā from the left of each picture and Rāvaṇa and his cohorts always come out to meet him from the right. These same directions persist until the summoning of the aerial *Puṣpaka* chariot to take Rāma home to Ayodhyā. This, being already in Laṅkā, comes out from the right of the picture (folio 189r). The sense of direction is now reversed and culminates in a triumphant return to Ayodhyā and the meeting with Kausalyā and the other widows of Daśaratha (folio 202r).

<sup>19</sup> The term *gaccha* normally denotes a particular lineage of Jain monks but here and in the Uttarakāṇḍa colophon is evidently used to denote the residence in Udaipur of a group of monks from such a lineage.

<sup>20</sup> No commissioner or overseer for the work is mentioned.

<sup>21</sup> Colophon translation by J.L. Brockington.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are now depicted as ascetics with matted hair and wearing clothes of skin. Rāma, now 25 or so years old sports a moustache, but Sāhib Dīn gives Lakṣmaṇa a thin beard along his jawline as well. Rāma is a constant presence in all of these paintings of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, regardless of whether he is actually involved in any activity, for Sāhib Dīn is telling us that he is the axis around which the whole story revolves. His presence is unregistered only when the action temporarily leaves the battlefield, as when Kumbhakarṇa is awakened (folios 64r-66r) or when Hanumān flies off to the Himalayas to fetch magical herbs (folios 100r and 150r). The ocean too is always there at the bottom of the pictures in the scenes outside the city, reminding us that Laṅkā is an island and that Rāma and his allies have had to cross the ocean to get to it.

Faced with the twin problems of visualising the golden city of Laṅkā with its towering palaces as well as showing activity within it, Sāhib Dīn reverted to the mediaeval idea of a conceptual view. This typically took a plan view of a circular city with just its gateways shown in elevation. Such views had occurred in earlier Jain manuscript painting, and indeed Manohar, the artist of the *Bālakāṇḍa*, used this device when showing Sītā's rejected suitors, distraught at their loss, besieging her father's city of Mithila (*Bālakāṇḍa*, folio 96v). Sāhib Dīn, however, gives us something new and has created an octagonal fortress whose golden walls we can view in both plan and elevation combined with views in elevation of the gateways and buildings within. He changes the latter around depending on the demands of the story. We get a partial view of the city in folios 5r and 6r where Sāhib Dīn changes the background colours within the city when he wants to indicate some particular action happening, as when Rāvaṇa goes to the *aśoka* grove to try to deceive Sītā with a false head of Rāma. But Sāhib Dīn saves his first complete view of the city until Rāma — like us — has his first full sighting of it after he and his allies have ascended Mount Suvēla and 'observed that splendid city with its marvellous gates enclosed in magnificent ramparts as if suspended in the sky' (folio 7r). He even has it protrude into the upper margin thereby suggesting its otherworldliness, for it was built by Viśvakarma the architect of the gods for Kubera. This high 'bird's eye' viewpoint comes into its own when Sāhib Dīn depicts the first general assault on the city by the allies in folios 25r, 27r and 29r, in which the golden walls have almost vanished beneath a tumultuous mass of struggling monkeys and demons.

Sāhib Dīn's use of simultaneous narrative is now even more assured and sophisticated than in the earlier book. Folio 34r is a good example of a complex painting covering the material of five chapters dealing with the first sortie into battle of Indrajit, Rāvaṇa's chief son, and a redoubtable magician, whom Sāhib Dīn depicts in human guise. In the centre of Laṅkā he tells his father he is going out to fight, and he is then seen attacking Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from the other side of the horizon — his magic has made him invisible. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lie prostrate entwined in Indrajit's serpents' coils and surrounded by their grieving friends. Back in the city Indrajit returns in triumph, greets his father and is congratulated by him. Finally the

demoness Trijaṭā is seen talking to Sītā, whom she then takes in the *Puṣpaka* chariot over the battlefield to see her husband apparently lying slain. Despite the complex compositions occasioned by this narrative technique, Sāhib Dīn's pictures are always wonderfully clear. Here he has broken up Laṅkā into different compartments with different background colours to show that adjacent scenes are not contemporaneous. While it is obvious in the earlier folios of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* that Sāhib Dīn is feeling his way into the complexities of simultaneous narration, in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* he has completely mastered them.

The awakening of Rāvaṇa's giant brother Kumbhakarna and his going into battle have always been some of the favourite parts of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sāhib Dīn devotes no less than seventeen paintings to these episodes and makes them the most heavily illustrated section of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (from folios 64r to 87r). In contrast to the Indrajit episode, Sāhib Dīn decides to devote individual paintings to each different episode in the story. The very first of these chapters, Kumbhakarna's awakening, has no less than four paintings to itself, one of Rāvaṇa sending off his servants to awaken the sleeping giant, the others showing first their efforts to awaken him and then his gorging himself (from folios 62r to 66r). In folio 64r, in one of his greatest inventions, Sāhib Dīn depicts the sleeping giant Kumbhakarna stretched out along the horizontal axis of the painting and surrounded by Lilliputian figures who make various attempts to awaken him. At the end of the great fight with Rāma (folio 87r), with his arms severed by Rāma's arrows, then his legs and finally his head, the giant crashes to the ground. To accommodate the textual reference that Kumbhakarna's head crushes part of the city of Laṅkā in its fall, Sāhib Dīn moves a building from Laṅkā, so as not to destroy the symmetrical inevitability of his composition. The monkeys' exaltation and Vibhīṣaṇa's grief for his brother are well contrasted.

Sāhib Dīn faithfully interprets Vālmīki in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* by humanising the demons and conveying their feelings of exaltation or of despair, as we can see in folio 89r, where Rāvaṇa is told the news of Kumbhakarna's death. Seated in his palace bowed down by grief and surrounded by his remaining brothers and sons, Sāhib Dīn conveys Rāvaṇa's grieving by depicting all his faces in profile in contrast to his normal appearance. The battle may ultimately be between good and evil, but to treat evil as always demonical would have been to oversimplify. By affording the demons natural feelings unleashed by the events going on around them, both Vālmīki and Sāhib Dīn make the struggle the more believable and the final victory all the more noble. We see the same thing again in folio 128r, where Rāvaṇa similarly mourns the death of his son Indrajit.

Indrajit returns to the fray after the death of Kumbhakarna and his machinations and flirtations with magical powers must again have been more favourite episodes in Mewar, judging by the density of illustration (folios 97r to 128r). Sāhib Dīn follows Vālmīki in putting a great emphasis on Indrajit's magical preparations in the banyan grove, several times showing Indrajit's sacred fire with a black buck or young goat which is part of his sacrifice to the fire

god Agni to achieve invisibility (folios 97r, 113r, 115r, 116r, 123r, 125r). With another long sequence of fifteen paintings, the substance of every two chapters can be compressed into one painting, or again with favourite episodes there can be two paintings per chapter. In folio 98r the invisible Indrajit so showers the allies' army with arrows that all including Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are overwhelmed. Hanumān thereafter assumes his true enormous shape and springs to the Himalayas for the life-giving herbs. In folio 100r Hanumān has reached the Himalayas, but not knowing which herbs he needs he wrenches off the entire mountain peak and returns with it. This magical landscape is one of Sāhib Dīn's loveliest paintings. As so often one is impressed by Sāhib Dīn's grasp of the way to link his paintings together without the need for text, which he does by selection of the key elements in the story. Having shown Hanumān grow enormous in the previous painting (folio 98r), his size compared with the mountain peaks now comes as no surprise.

The climax of the book is the cosmic battle between Rāvaṇa and Rāma, to which Sāhib Dīn devotes seventeen paintings, again allowing an illustrative mode of more or less one painting per chapter (folios 131r to 166r). Folio 138r shows us, the morning after the destruction of most of his remaining army, Rāvaṇa taking a bath within red *qanāts* (tent screens) and then emerging resplendent in golden armour to mount his chariot with the full panoply of regal and Brahminical ceremonial. In folio 155r we see Rāvaṇa appearing at the window of his palace, while the demons below salute him. Neither of these have any justification in Vālmīki's text: Rāvaṇa does not take a ceremonial bath nor go back to his palace but stays in the field for the whole of this final confrontation. Sāhib Dīn now clears away the myriad struggling figures of earlier battle scenes into simplified, almost hieratic, combats between the chief protagonists. The inevitability of the result in the Rāma-Rāvaṇa struggle renders this theatrical style ideal for the depiction of such an epic but unequal contest. In folio 166r, for this final confrontation, Sāhib Dīn favours a powerfully simple construction with Rāma and the forces of goodness on the left and Rāvaṇa and those of evil on the right. After Rāvaṇa's inevitable death, the final sequences of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* include some of Sāhib Dīn's most moving paintings. Folio 173r shows us the preparations for Rāvaṇa's funeral, while Rāvaṇa's wives are grouped in mourning around his corpse. Their hand and body movements and the unbinding of the tresses of the chief queen Mandodarī, shown with her back to us, fully express the grief which they feel. The directional impulses from either side have now ceased for the first time in the book and Sāhib Dīn shows this by compartmentalising the three separate scenes of the picture.

Folio 182r, which shows the vindication by the gods of Sītā who has entered fire to prove her chastity, is another triumph of organisation, giving in a single painting the contents of five chapters. The gods come down from their heaven to vindicate Sītā and the fire god Agni restores her to Rāma. Daśaratha returns and takes Rāma on his lap and, at Rāma's request, Indra restores the dead monkeys to life — they rise wildly exultant from the earth and a shower of nectar falls on them from Indra as he returns to the heavens with the other gods. The *Puṣpaka* chariot is now brought out to convey the exiles back to Ayodhyā and from now on the

directional tendency of Rāma and his friends is from right to left (from folios 189r to 202r). In pictorial terms the ending is a triumph. Sāhib Dīn picks his elements from a series of rather confused chapters in the epic text in order to heighten visually the dramatic impact of the story. In particular, he has the exiles meet the widows of Daśaratha, not in the grove outside Ayodhyā, where Vālmīki tells us this meeting first occurred, but not until the last possible moment, just before the consecration of Rāma as king as he and his brothers drive triumphantly through the streets of Ayodhyā. This picture is the culmination of the directional imperative from right to left which has been operative for the previous seven pictures (folio 202r).

Sāhib Dīn has heightened the dignity of Rāma's consecration by taking advantage of the references in the text that the chief monkeys, being divine, are able to change their form at will. He first of all shows them as monkeys, but dressed in contemporary costume (folio 189r), and then all in human form as Rajput princes from the time the *Puṣpaka* has reached the hermitage of Bharadvāja (folio 192r). Thus Rāma and his brothers are accompanied by none but princes on their way to the palace. In preparing for this final journey, he and his brothers are depicted being bathed and shaved and robed with much tying of cummerbunds and turbans, while the monkeys in human guise likewise prepare themselves (folio 200r). For this and for Rāma's consecration (folio 203r), Sāhib Dīn has reverted to compartmentalising his subjects, as he had done in some of his earlier work around 1630. Perhaps it is his way of returning to the real world and signalling the end of the journey, for he used it once before in folio 173r, signalling the end of the constant progression from left to right. He has brought the pictorial narrative from the heights of the heroic and wonderful feats which resonate through the previous folios down to scenes of fairly normal occurrences in a Rajput palace. These final moments of the story thus much resemble the events surrounding a normal change of rule in Udaipur, linking Rāma ever more firmly with the royal house of Mewar.

## ***Uttarakāṇḍa* from the *Rāmāyaṇa***

By J.P. Losty

### **British Library Add. MS 15297(2)**

*Pothī* manuscript, thicker beige paper for the painted folios and thinner creamier paper for the plain text folios. 114 folios (numbered 1-38, unnumbered, 39-57, unnumbered, 58-112). 21.5 by 38.5 cm (severely trimmed at margins). Various numbers of lines per page from 7 to 22. Text in black Nāgarī with colophons, *daṇḍas*, etc., in red. Text is arranged between three red vertical lines at the sides, with no horizontal lines above and below the text as in the other volumes. None of the pages bear the central diamond pattern or red spots. Text area usually about 20 by 32.5 cm. 94 full-page paintings within red and yellow borders normally painted right up to the edge of the folios with black inner rules, approximately 21.5 by 35.5 cm but with considerable variations. Traces of the original numbering of the pages in black visible in the lower right corner, but often trimmed. Many paintings have inscriptions identifying the subjects, often painted over.

Provenance: Mewar Royal Library; given by Mahārāṇa Bhīm Singh (1778–1828) to James Tod (1782–1835), from 1818 the first Political Agent to the Rajput courts, and by him to the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843) after his return to England in 1823. Purchased at the sale of Sussex library 1844.

The colophon on folio 114r reads:

*ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe maharṣivālmīkiye uttarakāṇḍe ādikāvyaṃ samāptam || ||  
saṃvat 1710 vārṣe jeṣṭhamāse śuklapakṣe | pratipadām tithau ravivāsare || ||  
jāmlagapavanapāmnīmerameṣalādharaṭī āyāsatāṃlaga śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī  
mahārājādhiraṇja mahārā<ṃ>ṇā śrī rājīsyamghajī vijairājyai || || yādṛśam  
pustakaṃ dṛṣṭam | tādṛśam likhitaṃ mayā | yadi śuddham aśuddham vā mama  
doṣo na dīyate ||1|| tailāḍ rakṣej jalāḍ rakṣed rakṣechithilabaṃdhanāt ||  
parahastagatā rakṣed evaṃ vadati pustikā ||2|| sūrāṇāgachai ||  
mahātmāhīrāṇaṃdalikhataṃ udaipuramadhye<ḥ> || || vyāsaśrījayadevajī agre  
likhāvitaṃ<ḥ> || || śubhaṃ bhavatu<ḥ> || || kalyāṇam astu<ḥ> || || śrī*

So in the venerable *Rāmāyaṇa*<sup>22</sup> of the great sage (*rṣi*) Vālmīki in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* the first poem is completed. In the *saṃvat* year 1710, on Sunday the 1st *tithi* in the bright half of the month Jeṣṭha;<sup>23</sup> (unintelligible passage); in the victorious kingdom of the seven times honourable overlord Mahārāṇa Rāj Singh,

<sup>22</sup> The *Rāmāyaṇa* is regarded as the first true poem in Sanskrit and so *ādikāvya*, “the first poem”, functions almost as an alternative title for it.

<sup>23</sup> The date corresponds to 28th May 1653, in fact a Wednesday.

Just as the book was seen, so was it written by me;  
 whether it is correct or incorrect, the blame should not be laid on me. 1  
 “Let (the owner) guard me from oil, let him guard me from water, let him  
 guard me from loose wrapping,  
 let him guard me from falling into someone else’s hands,” so says the  
 book.<sup>24</sup> 2

At the *Sūrāṇā* *gaccha* (this book) was written by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda on the instructions first of Vyāsa Jayadeva. Let it be auspicious; let there be prosperity.<sup>25</sup>

The *Uttarakāṇḍa* brings to a close the story of Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sītā is banished, she gives birth to the twins Lava and Kuśa and is finally vindicated and descends into the earth; Rāma ascends to heaven and assumes his original form as Viṣṇu. Before the ending of the epic, however, a series of flashbacks describing the lineage and exploits of some of the major characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāvaṇa, Indrajit and Hanumān are featured. Important religious and cultural insights are spelt out. For example a *śūdra* may not practise penance in the *Dvāpāra Yuga* (the epoch in which the *Rāmāyaṇa* took place); the important theory of *karma* where people suffer the consequences of their actions in this and future lives; Rāma’s brothers and the people of Ayodhyā wishing to give up their lives in order to ascend to heaven with him — an indication of the *bhakti* movement that swept India in waves during the mediaeval period. Perhaps Jagat Singh laid importance on these religious and cultural norms and tried to implement them in order to increase harmony in his kingdom. Certainly the *Uttarakāṇḍa* is given its proper place as an important part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in this manuscript — no details have been eliminated or short cuts taken in its illustration and presentation to Jagat Singh. The *Uttarakāṇḍa* had very possibly never been illustrated before in any depth. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many of the paintings are less than clear in their narrative content. Preceding Mughal ones were not illustrated in detail and very few leaves have been published from the Malwa *Rāmāyaṇa* (c. 1635-40).

Manohar’s palette can be sometimes a little garish, and this is especially true for the work in his style found in Book 3, the *Aranyakāṇḍa*, and in Book 6, the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. While the third book is possibly the work of an assistant originally trained in his style, this last book is much closer to Manohar’s work in the *Bālakāṇḍa* and may be attributed in part to this master himself. He is less well able to cope with the confusion of the narrative of the early history of the titans, but when he is able to concentrate on Rāvaṇa and his exploits he comes into his own with a sequence of interesting and well organised paintings — Rāvaṇa’s assault on heaven is particularly memorable (folio 57r).

<sup>24</sup> Both verses are ones commonly added by the scribe at the end of a manuscript that he has copied. The separate leaves of a manuscript are commonly tied round with string and wrapped in cloth; if this is too slack the leaves can easily become disarranged or damaged.

<sup>25</sup> Colophon translation by J.L. Brockington.

Manohar, however, if it is indeed he who is the artist, sweeps away the confusion when he returns to the story of Rāma and Sītā and shows them in a lyrical and colourful painting in their garden in the palace at Ayodhyā in their last untroubled moments together (folio 70r). In another expressive painting we can see the general astonishment engendered in Śatrughna and his followers by the recitation of the story of Rāma by Lava and Kuśa (folio 88r). The final painting in the entire sequence is a charmingly naïve attempt to show the entire population of Ayodhyā headed by Rāma and his brothers and by their monkey and bear helpers (all of them of divine origin) bathing in the river Sarayū and thereby returning to heaven (folio 113r).