



ISAS

Institute for South Asia Studies
University of California at Berkeley

South
Asia
Research
Notes

Fall 2013

A Berkeley Translation Project

॥ the vālmīki rāmāyaṇa ॥

Robert P. Goldman

General Editor & Principal Translator

Professor of Sanskrit, South & Southeast Asian Studies
University of California at Berkeley

SUMMARY

Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, one of the most popular and influential works of poetic and religious literature ever composed, has been the subject of a four-decade-long translation project at UC Berkeley. The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Translation Project was started at Berkeley in the mid-1970s and is being carried out by an international consortium of Sanskrit scholars under the direction of Professors Robert and Sally Goldman. The Project has as its goal the production of a complete, accurate, and readable English translation of the critical edition of the monumental epic poem. The critical edition, prepared over a period of fifteen years by scholars at the Oriental Institute of Baroda, represents a scientifically reconstructed text of the great epic based on dozens of manuscripts in various scripts and from many regions of the Indian subcontinent. It has thus been a major contribution to scholarship in all fields concerned with

early Indian literature, art, religion, and society.

The Project took as its mission an accurate and readable translation of the critically reconstructed text of the epic along with a copious scholarly introduction and a dense annotation for each of the

Contd. overleaf

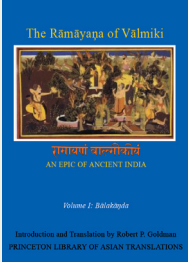


Rāma Sends Lakṣmaṇa to Remind Sugrīva of his Vow to Search for Sītā

South Asia Research Notes is published by the Institute for South Asia Studies at UC Berkeley to promote dialogue and exchange between scholars who work in inter-disciplinary fields related to South Asia, as well as to convey to the wider public the variety of exciting projects going on at Berkeley. South Asia Research Notes is published annually every Spring and is available at southasia.berkeley.edu/publications.

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India Published Volumes

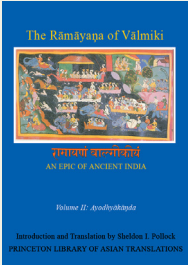
Volume I: Bālakāṇḍa



This book tells of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the birth of the hero, Rāma, and his three brothers, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, and Satrugna, as partial incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu has agreed to take human form on behalf of the worlds that are being oppressed by the demonic lord of the *rākṣasas*, Rāvaṇa. The young prince is taken on a journey by the great sage Viśvāmītra,

during which he learns much traditional lore, slays demons, and finally breaks the great bow of Lord Śiva, thus winning the hand of the beautiful princess Sītā of Videha.

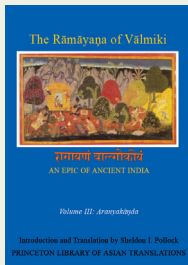
Volume II: Ayodhyākāṇḍa



The Ayodhyākāṇḍa tells of how the planned consecration of Rāma as prince regent of Kosala is interrupted through a harem intrigue that forces the aged King Daśaratha to banish his eldest son, Rāma, to the wilderness for fourteen years. He is followed into exile by his beloved wife, Sītā, and his faithful brother Lakṣmaṇa. The exiles dwell in a peaceful mountain hermitage until Rāma's

brother Bharata tries to induce him to return and rule. Rāma refuses to violate his father's word and, with his wife and brother, plunges deeper into the dangerous wilderness.

Volume III: Aranyakāṇḍa



While dwelling peacefully in the forest, Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa encounter Śūrpaṅakhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa, the evil king of the *rākṣasas*. She attempts to seduce the brothers, and upon failing, she threatens to kill Sītā. She is prevented from doing so by Lakṣmaṇa, who mutilates her. She runs shrieking to her brother, the demon Khara, who with his *rākṣasa* troops then attacks the

two brothers. With little effort Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa annihilate the *rākṣasa* forces. When Rāvaṇa comes to know all that has transpired, he resolves to destroy Rāma by carrying off Sītā. Enlisting the aid of a *rākṣasa* named Mārīca who assumes the form of a golden deer in order to lure Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa into the forest, Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā. Rāma, discovering that his beloved wife has been abducted, laments the loss of his beloved and searches for her.

poem's seven large books. One innovation concerning the annotation is that it is informed by a close reading of the extensive and highly influential medieval body of Sanskrit language commentary on the text produced from the 12th to the 19th century. No previous translation has so fully brought forth the indigenous scholarship on the poem, which has been both a major source for and influence on the theological and literary reception of the work. In addition, the annotation, while dealing with the narrative, textual, and interpretive problems presented by the critically established text, also provides a translation and annotation of the numerous passages in the so-called "vulgate" versions of the poem, which are widely known and important to its traditional audiences, as well as a running commentary on more than half a dozen earlier translations of the various recensions of the work in European languages.

The design of the Project called for the serial publication of the translation as each of the seven *kāṇḍas*, or books, of the poem was completed. The Project was taken up by the Princeton University Press as the flagship work in its series, the Princeton Library of Asian Translations. The first volume, the *Bālakāṇḍa* (translated by Robert Goldman and annotated by Robert Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland [Goldman]) appeared in print in 1984 and was followed in 1986 by the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (Sheldon Pollock), in 1999 by the *Aranyakāṇḍa* (Sheldon Pollock), in 1994 by the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (Rosalind Lefebvre), and in 1996 by the *Sundarakāṇḍa* (Robert and Sally Goldman). The sixth and by far the largest book of the epic, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, (translated and annotated by Robert and Sally Goldman and B.A. van Nooten) appeared in 2008. The translation and annotation of the epic's seventh and final book, the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (Robert and Sally Goldman) is nearly complete and scheduled to appear in 2014.

The series has received a very cordial reception on the part of scholarly and general audiences alike. In addition, the *Sundarakāṇḍa* was named as one of the one hundred best books of the year by the Los Angeles Times Book Review in 1997. Volumes 1–5 were reprinted in the Clay Sanskrit Library (New York University Press) and Messrs. Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, has reprinted the first six volumes. The translation has also been published in a richly illustrated edition by Éditions Diane de Selliers (Paris).

Sunday, September 14, 1997, Los Angeles Times
[excerpted and edited]

The Curse of Valmiki

By Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

On a bright sunny morning about 3,000 years ago, an Indian holy man who went by the unusual name of Valmiki, “Son of the Termite Mound,” set out through the woodlands for his morning bath on the banks of the Tamasa River in North Central India. As he approached the water, his attention was caught by the sight of a pair of Sarus cranes in the rapture of their mating dance. But as the sage observed this charming scene, a tribal hunter, taking advantage of the birds’ absorption in the joy of lovemaking, felled the male with his arrow.

Seeing the wounded creature writhing in its blood and hearing the piteous wailing of its bereaved mate, Valmiki, normally a paragon of emotional and sensual control, was suddenly swept away by a flood of emotions, by his rage at the hunter and, above all, his grief and compassion for the victims.

In the grip of these unfamiliar feelings, he cursed the hunter, crying: “Hunter! For killing the male of this pair of mating cranes while he was distracted at the height of sexual passion you will soon die!”

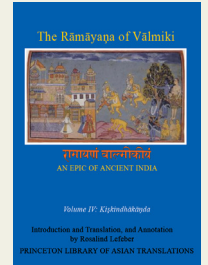
Curses of this kind, invoked by spiritual adepts against those who have annoyed them, are a commonplace of traditional Indian literature. But the curse of Valmiki was different. It differed not in substance but in form.

As the wonder-struck sage himself observed: “Fixed in metrical quarters, each with a like number of syllables, and fit for the accompaniment of stringed and percussion instruments, the utterance that I produced in this access of grief [Sanskrit shoka], shall be called poetry [Sanskrit shloka], and nothing else.”

Returning to his ashram, still lost *Contd. on next page*

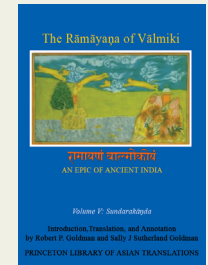
Volume IV: Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa reach the outskirts of Kiṣkindhā, the forest kingdom of the *vānaras*, “monkeys,” where they are approached by the monkey Hanumān, who takes the two brothers to meet Sugrīva, the exiled younger brother of Vālin, the king of the monkeys. Rāma and Sugrīva make an agreement to aid one another—Rāma will help Sugrīva regain the kingship of the monkeys, and Sugrīva will aid Rāma in his search for Sītā. Sugrīva summons Vālin to battle, and Rāma kills him. Sugrīva is consecrated as king of the monkeys and dispatches his monkey troops in all directions to search for Sītā. The southern search party reaches the shore of the ocean and discovers that Sītā has been taken to Rāvaṇa’s island fortress of Laṅkā. Only Hanumān is capable of leaping the ocean to reach the shores of Laṅkā.



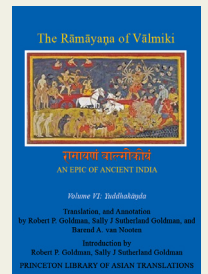
Volume V: Sundarakāṇḍa

Hanumān makes an astonishing leap across the ocean and begins to search Laṅkā for the abducted princess. During his search, he spies the opulent court of the demon king Rāvaṇa, the beauty of his harem, and the hideous deformity of Sītā’s wardresses. After witnessing Sītā’s stern rejection of Rāvaṇa’s blandishments, Hanumān reveals himself to the princess and restores her hope of rescue. The monkey then wreaks havoc on the royal park and fights a series of hair-raising battles with Rāvaṇa’s generals. Permitting himself to be captured by the warrior Indrajit, Hanumān is led into the presence of Rāvaṇa, whom he admonishes for his lechery. His tail is set ablaze, but he escapes his bonds and, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, sets fire to the city. Taking leave of Sītā, Hanumān once more leaps the ocean to rejoin his monkey companions.



Volume VI: Yuddhakāṇḍa

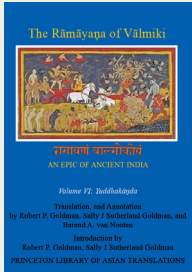
The Yuddhakāṇḍa recounts the final dramatic war between the forces of good, led by the exiled prince Rāma, and the forces of evil, commanded by the *rākṣasa* king Rāvaṇa. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, and Aṅgada lead the monkey forces to southern shore, where they build a bridge to Laṅkā. Once there, the monkey troops engage the *rākṣasas* in numerous skirmishes and battles, culminating in the epic duel between the Rāma and Rāvaṇa. After an intense and lengthy battle, Rāma finally slays Rāvaṇa. But rather than immediately accepting his beloved wife, he publically rebukes her because she has resided in the harem of another man. The ever-faithful Sītā then chooses to enter the fire rather than live with such shame. The fire, however, refuses to burn her, thus testifying to her purity. Only when Sītā is proved innocent by her ordeal by fire does Rāma accept her back. At last, travelling in the flying palace Puṣpaka, Rāma and his party return to Ayodhyā, where his long-awaited coronation is performed.



The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki: An Epic of Ancient India

Newest Publication

Volume VII: Uttarakāṇḍa



Once consecrated in Ayodhyā, Rāma questions the sage Agastya about Rāvaṇa's history. Agastya then undertakes a lengthy narrative of the origin and genealogies

of the *rākṣasa* race, ending with the birth of Rāvaṇa and his subsequent conquest of the worlds. Agastya then narrates the childhood adventures of Hanumān and how he was cursed not know his own powers until he should meet Rāma. After these tales, the sages leave, and Rāma undertakes the duties of the kingship of Ayodhyā. It comes to Rāma's attention that, despite the fire ordeal of Sītā in Laṅkā, ugly rumors of her sexual infidelity with Rāvaṇa are spreading among the populace of Ayodhyā. In grim conformity to what he sees as the duty of a sovereign, Rāma banishes the queen although she is pregnant and he knows the rumors to be false. After some years, Rāma performs an *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice), during which two handsome young bards, Kuśa and Lava, appear and begin to recite the Rāmāyaṇa. These two are, in fact, the twin sons of Rāma and Sītā, who have been sheltered with their mother in the ashram of the sage Vālmiki, author of the poem. Rāma attempts reconciliation with Sītā, but rather than return to her husband in their earthly guise, she calls upon the earth, her mother, to take her back. Consumed by an inconsolable grief, Rāma divides the kingdom among his sons, and, along with the inhabitants of Ayodhyā, enters the Sarayū River, and ascends to his heavenly world as Lord Viṣṇu.

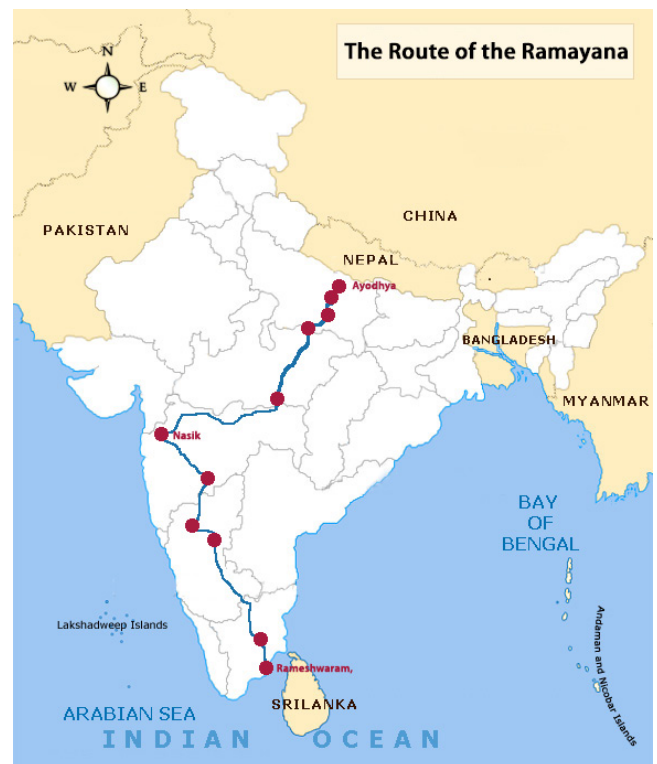
Contd. from previous page in grief and amazement over these events, Valmiki is visited by the great creator, Lord Brahma, for whom he sings once more his musical curse. The god tells him that it was through his divine inspiration that Valmiki has been able to create this poetry, and Brahma explains his purpose in granting it.

Brahma reminds Valmiki that earlier that morning, the holy man had heard from the lips of another sage a brief and dry narration of the tragic life and extraordinary virtues of Rama, ruler of the kingdom of Kosala, who is revered to this day by hundreds of millions as the ideal man and an earthly incarnation of the supreme divinity. The god then commissions the sage to compose a great epic poem to celebrate and popularize the history of Rama and his long-suffering wife, Sita.

The result, the monumental epic the "Ramayana" ("The History of Rama"), revered for millennia in India as the "first poem" though unfamiliar to most Westerners, remains one of the oldest and most influential works the world has seen, forming the foundation of aesthetic, social, ethical and spiritual life in innumerable versions throughout the vast sweep of Southern Asia, from Afghanistan to Bali.

The story of Brahma and Valmiki, which constitutes the framing narrative of this vast composition that is four times the length of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" combined, is not merely a charming and thematically syntonic preamble to this tale of love, struggle and loss. For it, and the "Ramayana" itself, together form the opening argument in an extraordinary theoretical conversation about the relationship between emotion and aesthetic experience, a conversation about what literature is and how and why it moves us as it does that engaged the best minds in pre-modern India for at least the first 15 centuries of the Common Era.

It is in the story of Valmiki and how he came to compose his great oral epic that we find one of the earliest displays of the notion that the artistic process can refine and sublimate raw human emotions so that experiencing a sorrowful



The Route of the Ramayana

poem like the "Ramayana" (or, for that matter, a sad novel or film) produces a kind of aesthetic rapture uniquely linked to, yet utterly different from, the experience of real loss.

It is, in fact, in the opening chapters of this poem that we first find reference to the specific emotive-aesthetic states, or rasas, that were the most sophisticated discourse on the experience of art in any pre-modern culture, dating from the time of the ancient treatise on dramaturgy by the legendary sage, Bharata, to the complex theories of medieval Kashmiri aestheticians such as Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.

...

The [Valmiki Ramayana] was first translated into a European language (English) by William Carey and Joshua Marshman between 1806 and 1810 and then into Latin by August Wilhelm von Schlegel between 1829 and 1838. Then it was translated into Italian by Gaspare Gorresio between 1843 and 1858 and into French by Alfred Roussel between 1903 and 1909. Ralph Griffith prepared a translation in Longfellowesque English rhymed verse between 1870 and 1874, and M.N. Dutt supervised the production of an archaic English translation between 1891 and 1894. More recent complete English translations of the poem were prepared by Hari Prasad Shastri in 1957 and N. Raghunathan in 1982. Most recently a French translation and annotation of the poem was completed by a consortium of scholars under the directorship of the late Madelaine Biardeau. The problem with these older translations is that many are inaccessible and virtually unreadable. All are based on one or another of the printed versions of the two major regional recensions of the poem and are subject to the same textual problems as their originals. Finally, the existing translations have at best only a sketchy annotation and introduction, hopelessly inadequate to a work of such encyclopedic scope and cultural significance as the "Ramayana." Virtually none of the earlier translators, for example, has made a serious attempt to read and weigh the learned opinions of more than, at most, one of the numerous and copious Sanskrit commentaries the poem has inspired.

An assessment of the significance of the "Ramayana," offered in 1919 by the literary historian A.A. Macdonell, is hardly an overstatement of the case: "Probably no work of world literature, secular in origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the 'Ramayana.'" It has inspired painting, film, sculpture, puppet shows, shadow plays, novels, poems, TV serials and plays.

Although Valmiki's poem, like many later works based on its narrative, is a major text of the Vaishnava tradition of Hinduism, its tale and its characters are not cherished just by the Hindus either. There are influential Buddhist retellings found in Pali and in various languages of the Buddhist nations of Southeast Asia.

For example, all Thai kings, down to the present day, include Rama as one of their titles, and the ancient capital of the old Thai kings is Ayutthaya, which is named after the capital city of the Kosalan state, Ayodhya, *Contd. on next page*

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BERKELEY PROJECT:

- **IT IS THE FIRST AND ONLY TRANSLATION OF THE VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAṆA TO BE BASED ON THE CRITICALLY EDITED TEXT OF THE POEM PRODUCED BY THE SCHOLARS OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA DEPARTMENT OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF BARODA**
- **IT IS THE ONLY TRANSLATION OF THIS GREAT WORK TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOLARLY ANNOTATION IN WHICH TEXTUAL, CULTURAL, AND THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS AS WELL AS THE INSIGHTS, ARGUMENTS, AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SANSKRIT COMMENTARIAL TRADITION ARE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF SCHOLARS**



Hanumān Kills a Rākṣasa Warrior

The Translators

Robert P. Goldman: General Editor: *Bālakāṇḍa, Sundarakāṇḍa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, Uttarakāṇḍa,*

Robert P. Goldman, Professor of Sanskrit and the Catherine and William L. Magistretti Distinguished Professor in South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, is the Director, General Editor, and a principal translator of the Project. He has been elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has been awarded a Certificate of Honour for International Sanskrit Studies by the President of India (2013).

Rosalind Lefebber, *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*

Prior to her retirement, Rosalind Lefebber taught Sanskrit and Indian literature in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University, Toronto. In addition to her work on the Rāmāyaṇa Translation Project, she has translated a number of other works into English.

Sheldon I. Pollock, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Araṇyakāṇḍa*

Sheldon Pollock is the Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Asian Studies at the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. He was general editor of the Clay Sanskrit Library and is founding editor of the Murty Classical Library of India. He is a recipient of a Padma Sri, awarded by the Government of India

Sally J. Sutherland Goldman: Associate Editor: *Balakāṇḍa (annotation), Sundarakāṇḍa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, Uttarakāṇḍa*

Sally J. Sutherland Goldman is a Senior Lecturer of Sanskrit in the Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley and the Associate Editor of the Project. In addition to her work on the Project, she teaches and publishes on Sanskrit and related subjects and is a recipient of the University of California's Distinguished Teaching Award.

Barend A. van Nooten, *Yuddhakāṇḍa*

Barend A. van Nooten is Professor Emeritus of Sanskrit in the Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. In addition to his work on the Project, he is the co-author of "The Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with Introduction and Notes" (Harvard Oriental Series 50).

where the poem is set. Then, too, the epic hero Rāma and his story form the basis of many Jain versions of the poem and even of popular poems and puppet theatre presentations in the Islamic countries of Southeast Asia. Even in East Asia, its impact, if somewhat more attenuated, is seen in a variety of texts ranging from Tibetan versions and a Chinese



Sugrīva Challenges Vālin to Battle

novel of the poem to a Japanese noh drama. Millions of people in India bear the names of the principal characters of the epic: Ram, Sita and Laksman among others. Indian legend says there are ten million versions of the "Ramayana."

The Valmiki "Ramayana" is at once a remarkable adventure story, a tale of love and war, a meditation on the conflict of emotion and duty, a mirror for kings, a model for traditional society, and for hundreds of millions of Hindus in South Asia and the worldwide South Asian diaspora it is a sacred history of God made flesh. Beyond that, it is, if not literally the world's first poem, undoubtedly the first poem to speak seriously about the nature of poetry and the still unfathomed link between art and emotion. To work through this massive and haunting poem is to undertake a serious journey into another world. The translators and editors of Princeton's Library of Asian Translations are to be congratulated for opening the door for us.

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson is the author of "When Elephants Weep" and "Dogs Never Lie About Love." He is a former Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Toronto and UC Berkeley.

Sundarakāṇḍa: Sarga 13

|| 18 Then Hanumān saw a woman clad in a soiled garment and surrounded by rākṣasa women. She was gaunt with fasting. She was dejected and she sighed repeatedly. She looked like the shining sliver of the waxing moon. || 19 Her radiance was lovely; but with her beauty now only faintly discernible, she resembled a flame of fire occluded by thick smoke. || 20 She was clad in a single, fine yellow garment, now much worn. Covered with dirt and lacking ornaments, she resembled a pond without lotuses. || 21 Ashamed, tormented by grief, disconsolate, and suffering, she looked like the constellation Rohiṇī occluded by the planet Mars. || 22 She was dejected, her face covered with tears. She was emaciated through fasting. She was depressed, given over to sorrow. Brooding constantly, she was consumed with her grief. || 23 No longer seeing the people dear to her but only the hosts of rākṣasa women, she was like a doe cut off from her herd and surrounded by a pack of hounds. || 24 She had a single braid—like a black serpent—falling down her back. Deserving only happiness and unaccustomed to calamity, she was consumed with sorrow.

|| 25 Closely examining that wide-eyed woman—so dirty and emaciated—he reasoned from these indicative signs, “She must be Sītā! || 26 “This woman looks exactly like the one I saw earlier being carried off by that rākṣasa, who can take on any form at will.” || 27 Sītā’s face was like the full moon; her eyebrows were beautiful; her breasts were lovely and full. With her radiance that lady banished the darkness from all directions. || 28 Her hair was jet black; her lips like bimba fruit. Her waist was lovely, and her posture was perfect. Her eyes were like lotus petals, and she looked like Rati, wife of Manmatha, god of love. || 29 That lovely woman—as cherished by all living things as the radiance of the full moon—was seated on the ground like an ascetic woman practicing austerity. || 30–31 Sighing constantly, that timorous woman resembled a daughter-in-law of a serpent lord. By virtue of the vast net of sorrow spread over her, her radiance was dimmed like that of a flame of fire obscured by a shroud of smoke. She was like a blurred memory or a fortune lost. || 32 She was like faith lost or hope dashed, like success undermined by catastrophe or intellect dulled.

|| 33 She was like a reputation lost through false rumors. She was distraught at being prevented from rejoining Rāma and anguished by her abduction by the rākṣasa. || 34 That delicate, fawn-eyed woman was looking about here and there. Her sorrowful face with its black-tipped eyelashes was covered with a flood of tears. She sighed again and again. || 35 Dejected, covered with dirt and grime, and devoid of ornaments—though she was worthy of them—she resembled the light of the moon, the king of stars, obscured by a black storm cloud. || 36 As he examined Sītā closely, Hanumān’s mind was once more afflicted with uncertainty; for she seemed barely discernible, like some vedic text once learned by heart but now nearly lost through lack of recitation. || 37 It was only with great difficulty that Hanumān was able to recognize Sītā without her ornaments, just as one might make out the sense of a word whose meaning had been changed through want of proper usage.

The Institute for South Asia Studies (ISAS) at the University of California, Berkeley is one of the world's foremost centers for research and programs on South Asia. ISAS works with faculty members, graduate students, community members, private institutions, and non-profit organizations to deepen understanding of the region and to create new generations of scholars of South Asia. One key area of focus at ISAS is research about and programmatic activities on contemporary South Asia, examining closely issues like democracy and democratic reform, reduction of inequality, and social development.

— to view additional images and further information resources and articles on UC Berkeley's

Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa Translation Project

please go to

ramayanasyposium.wordpress.com



Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Rescue Sītā from the Rākṣasa Virādhā

ISAS

Institute for South Asia Studies

University of California at Berkeley

10 Stephens Hall
Berkeley, CA 94270
southasia.berkeley.edu
510 642 3608

South
Asia
Research
Notes