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Numerical Expressions in Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa

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Abstract:

Valmiki Rāmāyaṇais a great source of various disciplines. Descriptions are seen expressed in different forms. Objective of this article is to present few details, given through numerical expressions, important information listed with number for the purpose of easy retention and show the extensive use of numbers in those time. Referring the foot notes and going through the commentaries, the content is presented. As it is well known that ValmikiRāmāyaṇais always a source of awestruck wonder even for many millenniums to come. It remains to be a deep ocean of knowledge.

Introduction:

ValmikiRāmāyaṇa is a treasure-house for various knowledge-sources. Through the life of Śrī Rāma, various values, various disciplines like statecraft, arts, political administration, social structure, economics, warfare, psychology, details about Varṇāśrama, Puruṣārthaand much more are elaborated. Also, descriptions are seen expressed in different forms through the beauty of poetry, meter, and grammar. In such a context, it is also seen that in ValmikiRāmāyaṇa, many



details are given through numerical expressions and extensive use of numbers. Few such numerical expressions are presented here in this article since all the usages from the entire ValmikiRāmāyaṇa cannot be presented in the paper, Explanation of those numerical expressions are taken from ValmikiRāmāyaṇa and other sources too.

Two types of Brahmacharyas:

नान्यंजानातिविप्रेन्द्रो नित्यं पित्रनुवर्तनात्।

द्वैविध्यं ब्रह्मचर्यस्य भविष्यति महात्मनः ॥

– बा.का.९.५

In a dialogue between Emperor Daśaratha and Sumantra, hearing the intention of Emperor Daśaratha to undertake an aśvamedhayāga, for being blessed with a son, Sumantra reiterated the narration told by Sanatkumāra previously. The reiteration itself is in past tense. It was told that 'Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, constantly brought up in the woods and ever moving about in the wood, will know nothing beyond constant service to his father. Both the types of Brahmacharya, well-known in the worlds and ever extolled by the Brahmanas will be observed by this high-souled sage'. These two types of Brahmacharyas are given by sage Yājñavalkya thus –

The primary type of Brahmacharya is the one characterized by the wearing of a girdle of Muñja grass and deerskin and living singly in the house of a teacher; while the secondary type of Brahmacharya consists in marrying a girl of one's own varṇa, after undergoing a course of training in his teacher's house and living with discipline enjoined by the scriptures.



Three-fold duties of a king:

त्रयाणांपञ्चधायोगं कर्मणांयः प्रपद्यते।

सचिवैः समयंकृत्वाससम्यग्वर्ततेपथि॥

- यु.का.६३.७

In Yuddha Kāṇḍa, where Kumbhakarna twits Rāvaṇa for all his misdeeds and reassuring him, shows his determination for a conflict, Kumbhakarna points out the mistakes committed by Rāvaṇa without listening to the advice from his well-wishers. In this context he mentions about the consideration the five-aspects of the threefold duties moves along the right path,

The threefold duties of a king with reference to his enemies are – 1) conclusion of peace through conciliation (sāma), 2) acceptance of allegiance (samāśrayaṇa) through gift (dāna), and 3) invasion (yāna) as a method of coercion (daṇḍa).

(The five-aspects of the threefold duties are given in the respective title).

It can be noted that these threefold duties along with the fourth 'bheda' is also popularly known. A verse in Rāmāyaṇa gives the four-fold strength too as follows.

Four-fold strength:

Losing hope to find Sītā, a monkey named Tāra suggested other monkeysto re-enter Svayamprabhā's cave, as SUGRĪVA will not come there and so there will be no more fear. While Tārawas speaking as above, Aṅgada not opposing it, Hanumān accounted the well-known



sovereignty as wrested in no time by Aṅgada. Hanuman looked upon Aṅgadaas actually endowed with intelligence distinguished by eight virtues, equipped with the fourfold strength and possessed of fourteen excellences.

बुद्ध्याहयष्टाङ्गयायुक्तंचतुर्बलसमन्वितम्।

चतुर्दशगुणंमेनेहनूमान्वालिनिःसुतम्॥

- कि.का. ५४.२

The fourfold strength consists in the capacity to employ four expedients viz., 1) persuasion or conciliation (sāma), 2) gift or gratification (dāna), 3) sowing seeds of dissension among the enemy's ranks (bheda), and 4) use of violence or force (daṇḍa).

Five aspects:

With reference to the verse from Yuddha Kāṇḍa mentioned above, the five aspects of threefold duties are – 1) The method of initiating an action, 2) Personality and material to be worked upon, 3) The time and place of action, 4) Provision against mischance, and 5) The chances of success.

Six Prajāpatis:

प्रजापतीनांषण्णांतुचतुर्थोऽयंप्रजापतिः।

मानसोब्रह्मणःपुत्रःपुलस्त्यइतिविश्रुतः॥

- सु.का. २३.६



Ekajaṭā and other ogresses extol Rāvaṇa, in the aśoka grove to coax Sita to accept Rāvaṇa's proposal. When narrating about the vaiśā of Rāvaṇa, one ogress mentions thus - 'There is a mind-born son of brahma widely known by the name of Pulastya. Of the six Prajāpatis, he is indeed the fourth Prajāpatis'.

मरीचिरत्र्यङ्गिरसौपुलस्त्यःपुलहःऋतुः।

The names of the Prajāpatis, in the order of seniority are: - Marīci, Atri, Aṅgira, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu

Sevenfold addiction:

In the context, where Vibhīṣaṇa exhorts Rāvaṇa to restore Sīta to Śrī Rām before the latter's arrows pierced the heads of the ogres, Vibhīṣaṇa, being a well-wisher of the king, made the following speech, condemning those who give wrong advise to Rāvaṇa thus -

अयंचराजाव्यसनाभिभूतोमित्रैरमित्रप्रतिमैर्भवद्भिः।

अन्वास्यतेराक्षसनाशनार्थंतीक्ष्णःप्रकृत्याहयसमीक्षकारी॥

- यु.का. १४.१७

Nay, this king (Rāvaṇa), who is overpowered by evil addictions is violent in nature and acts inconsiderately-is waited upon by friends in you, who are no better than foes, to the destruction of ogres. The seven evil addictions are given by Kāmandaka as follows-



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वाग्दण्डयोस्तुपारुष्यमर्थदूषणमेवच।

पानंस्त्रीमृगयाद्यूतंव्यसनंसप्तधाप्रभो॥

‘Harshness of speech and severity of punishment, extravagance, drinking, love of women, hunting and gambling constitute the sevenfold evil addiction, O Lord!’

Eight excellences:

In the conversation between Hanumān and Sītā, Sītā said the following complimenting words to Hanumān -

अतिलक्षणसम्पन्नंमाधुर्यगुणभूषणम्।

बुद्ध्याहयष्टाण्ड्गयायुक्तंत्वमेवार्हसिभाषितुम्॥

- यु.का. ११३.२६

‘You, alone, can actually utter words which are endowed with rare characteristics of good speech, adorned with the quality of mellifluous and dictated by an intellect which is characterized by eight excellences’.

These eight excellences of an intellect are enumerated in the following verse of the Nītisāra of Kāmandaka.



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शुश्रूषाश्रवणंचैवग्रहणंधारणंतथा।

ऊहोऽपोहोऽर्थविज्ञानंतत्त्वज्ञानंचधीगुणाः ॥

These are the eight characteristics of a sound and ripe intellect - 1) Keeness to hear discourses on the Ātmā, 2) Readiness to hear such discourses, 3) receptivity, 4) Retentive power, 5& 6) Reasoning for and against proposition, 7) The faculty of comprehension, and 8) Realization of truth.

Eighteen functionaries:

In the context, where Śrī Rāmagave instruction in judicature to Bharata, there is the following verse -

कच्चिदष्टादशान्येषुस्वपक्षेदशपञ्चच।

त्रिभिस्त्रिभिरविजातैर्वेत्सितीर्थानिचारकैः ॥

- अयो.का. १००.३६

‘Do you keep an eye on the eighteen functionaries of the enemies and the fifteen functionaries of your own side through three unknown spies told off for each?’



They are 1)The chief minister(मन्त्री), 2)The king's family priest (पुरोहितः), 3)The crown prince (युवराजा), 4)The generalissimo (सेनापतिः),5)The chief warder(दौवारिकः), 6)The chamberlain (अन्तःपुराध्यक्ष), 7)The superintendent of jails (कारागाराध्यक्ष), 8)The chancellor of the exchequer (धनाध्यक्ष), 9)The herald (राजराजाज्ञयाआज्ञाप्येषुवक्ता), 10) The governemnt advocate (प्राड्विवाकसंज्ञोव्यवहारप्रष्टा), 11) The judge (धर्मासनाधिकृतः), 12) The assessor (व्यवहारनिर्णैतासभ्याख्यः), 13) The officer disbursing salaries to army men (सेनायाजीवनभृतिदानाध्यक्षः), 14) The officer drawing money from the state exchequer to disburse the workmen's wages (कर्मान्तेवेतनग्राही), 15) The protector of the city (नगररक्षकः), 16) The protector of the borders of a kingdom, who also performed the duties of a forester (राष्ट्रान्तःपालकःअयमेवाटविकः), 17) The magistrate (दुष्टानांदण्डनाभिकारी) and 18) The officer entrusted with the conservation of waters, hills, forests and tracts difficult of access (जलगिरिवनदुर्गस्थलपालः).

The fifteen functionaries of one's own side are the last fifteen, omitting the first three, viz., the chief minister, the family priest and the crown prince.



The vast use of numbers–Akṣauhiṇī:

Simple mentioned as one word, Akṣauhiṇī is heard commonly in both the epics giving the great volume engaged in the war. Daśarath declined to part with Śrī Rāma thereby enraging Visvāmitra.

Hearing the request of Visvāmitra, Daśaratha remained senseless as it were for an hour or so and, regaining his consciousness spoke to Visvāmitra saying that since Rāma is less than sixteen years old, the king does not perceive Rāma's capacity to contend with the rakṣasas'.

इयमक्षौहिणीसेनायस्याहंपतिरीश्वरः।

अनयासहितोगत्वायोद्धाहंतैर्निशाचरैः॥

– बा.का.२०.३

'Here is my army, one Akṣauhiṇī strong, whose maintainer and controller I am, marching with it, I shall wage war with those rakṣasas'.

An Akṣauhiṇī consists of 21,870 chariots, an equal number of elephants, 65,610 horses and 109,350 soldiers.

Range of numbers used:

Sugrīva, expressing his indebtedness to Śrī Rāma for the unique favor done by him and giving to him an account of the efforts made by him, Sugrīva gratified Śrī Rāma by apprising him of the arrival of numberless monkeys from all the parts of globe.



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शतैःशतसहस्रैश्चवर्तन्तेकोटिभिस्तथा।

अयुतैश्चावृतावीरशङ्कुभिश्चपरंतप।

अर्बुदैर्बुदशतैर्मध्यैश्चान्त्यैश्चवानराः।

समुद्राश्चपरार्धाश्चहरयोहरियूथपा॥

– कि.का. ३८.३०,३१

‘The monkeys are followed by hundreds and tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands and crores, Arbudas (ten crores), and Kharvas (one hundred Arbudas), Śaṅkus(one thousand Kharvas) and Antyas (one hundred Kharvas) and Madhyas (one thousand Śaṅkus). Some monkeys and their troop-commanders number many Samudras (or ten Śaṅkus) and Parārdhas (or ten Madhyas). O scourge of your enemies!’

The following text from *Trimśatikā* (also found in *Āryabhaṭṭīya* with a slighter change), will give an idea of these numbers, each of which is ten times as much as the one immediately preceding it-

एकं दशशतमस्मात्सहस्रमयुतंततः परं लक्षम्।

प्रयुतं कोटिमथार्बुदवृन्दे खर्वनिखर्वच॥

तस्मान्महासरोजं शङ्कुसरितां पतित्वन्तम्।

मध्यं परार्धमाहुर्यथोत्तरं दशगुणं तथा ज्ञेयम्॥



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Conclusion:

The Ādi kāvya is a great repository of various knowledge. By the nyāya sthālīpulāka, testing few grains for the full, few verses are presented here thus which are great and interesting numerical expressions.

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