

JAGADANANDAKARAKA – TYAGARAJA'S RAMAYANA

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Saint Tyagaraja's Pancharatna kritis contain a compelling glorification of Sri Rama and provide an elevating insight into selected episodes of the great epic Ramayana of Rishi Valmiki.

In Jagadanandakaraka, the first Pancharatna, Tyagaraja talks about the glories of Rama through anecdotes from the Ramayana, the great epic of Valmiki. In the second Pancharatna, Dudukugala, the saint expresses concerns about his hasty actions in life due to his inadequate understanding of the true essence of Bhakti or Moksha. In the third Pancharatna, Sadinchene, the Saint is disappointed with Rama for not appearing before him and calls Him an opportunist who puts His devotees in trouble, ultimately blessing them with great compassion. In the fourth Pancharatna, Kakananaruchira, he praises the beauty of Rama, his ornaments and how He is also praised by other deities. In the final Pancharatna, Endaro Mahanubhavulu, the Saint bows to all the deities, saints, great souls, musicians, elders, youngsters, immortals et al, that walked the earth singing the praise of Rama.

In Jagadanandakaraka, the Saint focuses on episodes from the Ramayana. While describing the beauty, grandeur and valor of Rama, the Saint precisely packs each anecdote in just a phrase. The following are some phrases Tyagaraja uses in this Kriti, and the incidents that he takes from Bala Kanda, Kishkinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, and Yuddha Kanda.

Bala Kanda:

Gaganadhipa sat kulaja – (Anupallavi): *Born in the noble dynasty of the lord of the sky.*

Gagana (the sky), Adhipa (the lord) Sat kulaja (born of a noble dynasty) – Lord of the sky is the Sun– his dynasty is Suryavamsa. Rama is born in the Surya dynasty.

Sava paripala – (Charanam 4): *He who protected the Yagnas (penances performed by the saints.) Sage Visvamitra takes Rama and Lakshmana with him to his ashram to protect the sages and Yagnas, because the demons continuously disrupt the Yagnas. Rama and Lakshmana battle and destroy the demons and protect the Yagnas.*

Paada vijitha mouni shapa – (Charanam 4): *By the touch of your feet she was released from the curse of the sage – Here the Saint refers to Ahalya who was turned to stone because of a curse from her husband sage Gautama. Indra was infatuated with Ahalya and came to her ashram in the guise of Gautama. When the real Gautama arrived and saw his wife with another man, he was outraged cursed her thus:*

*तथा शस्वा च वै शक्रम् भार्याम् अपि च शमवान् | इह वर्ष सहस्राणि बहूनि निवषिस्यसि || १-४८-२९
वायु भक्षा निराहारा तप्यन्ती भस्म शायिनी | अदृश्या सर्व भूतानाम् आश्रमे अस्मिन् वषिस्यसि || १-४८-३०*

(Bala Kanda, Sarga 48)

Translation: On cursing Indra thus the sage cursed even his wife saying, 'you shall tarry here for many thousands of years to come, without food and consuming air alone, and unseen by all beings you shall live on in this hermitage while contritely recumbent in dust'.

Ahalya sat in penance for years and turned to stone. When Rama with Lakshmana and sage Visvamitra arrived at the abandoned ashram, Rama asked Visvamitra, as to who lived at that ashram. Visvamitra related the story of Ahalya and Gautama. Rama's feet touched the stone and Ahalya was released from her curse and came back to life. Gautama accepted her back.

Janaka-ja-adhipa – (Charanam 4): – Husband (lord) of the daughter of Janaka – Sita.

Kishkinda Kanda:

Sala vidalana – (Charanam 10): Sugriva, the monkey king, is uncertain about the strength of Rama compared to that of his brother Vali. He shows Rama, the hole made by Vali in a sala tree. With just one arrow Rama perforates seven sala trees standing in a row and along with that pulverizes a rock.

स विसृष्टो बलवता बाणः स्वर्णं परिष्कृतः | भित्त्वा सालान् गिरि प्रस्थम् सप्त भूमिम् विवेश ह || ४-१२-३

The golden arrow released by the mighty Rama perforated all the seven sala trees, and even the levelled areas of mountain, and then entered the earth. (Kishkinda Kanda Sarga 12) [4-12-3]

Aganitha vanaradhipa natha anghriyuga – (Charanam 2): *Your feet are worshipped by the lord of innumerable monkeys – Lord of the monkeys is Sugriva.*

Sundara Kanda:

Surasa ripu karabja lalitha charana – (Charanam 6): *You are worshipped by the lotus hands of the enemy of Surasa – Surasa is the daughter of the king of snakes and lives in the ocean. She stops Hanuman on his flight across the ocean to Lanka. Hanuman politely requests her to grant permission to go across the ocean as he is on a mission to bring Sita back to Rama. Surasa says, whoever crosses the ocean must enter her mouth, according to a boon given by Brahma. She opens her mouth wide for Hanuman to enter. Hanuman increases in size to ten yojanas (One yojana is about 8-10 miles) and Surasa grows to 20 yojanas, and as they keep growing larger than each other, Hanuman grows to 90 yojanas, and then suddenly shrinks to the size of a thumb, enters her mouth and exits. He bows to Surasa saying, 'I have entered your mouth and fulfilled your wish. Please let me go.' Surasa is pleased and blesses him saying he should return with Sita (Sundara Kanda, Sarga 1).*

Yuddha Kanda:

Abdhi mada harana – (Charanam 5): *Destroys the pride of the ocean god. Rama sits on the seashore, seeking the help of the ocean god to yield a passage for his army to pass through and*

reach Lanka. Rama is furious that even after requesting and praying patiently, the ocean god does not relent. When Rama is about to release from his bow a missile presided over by Brahma, the ocean god appears in person with joined palms and advises Rama to get the bridge built by Nala. (*Sarga* 19, 21, 22).

Kusuma Vimana – (Charanam 6): *The floral air borne carriage* – The flower decked airborne coach that Rama used for travel over the sky.

Bilaja mouni krita chaitra: *The epic that was written by the saint who emerged from an anthill* - The epic (Charitra) written by (Krita) the saint (Mouni) who emerged from an anthill (Bilaja). This refers the author of the Ramayana, Valmiki, who was born as Agni Sharma. He performed penance for several years and huge ant hills formed around him. When he finally came out of the ant hill, he was called Vālmiki.

Next we see a couple of phrases where Tyagaraja refers to Brahma as being the offspring of Vishnu (Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu).

Vageendra Janaka – (Charanam 3): Vaak (Knowledge) Indra (lord or husband) Vageendra is the husband of the goddess of learning, Sarasvati, namely Brahma. Vishnu is referred to as father of Brahma. In the Shanti parva of Mahabharata, it is mentioned that, while engaged in thinking of creation, Vishnu recollects his own attributes. From this springs the four-faced Brahma representing the consciousness of Vishnu. Brahma takes birth within the lotus that springs from the navel of Vishnu.

Sarojabhava Varada – (Charanam 4): He who granted a boon to Brahma (Sarojabhava – emerged out of lotus which is Brahma). Here the Saint may be referring to the four Vedas that Vishnu rescues for Brahma. In Shanti Parva of Mahabharata it is mentioned that the demons Madhu and Kaitabha steal the Vedas from Brahma, who then prays to Vishnu. Pleased by his prayers, Vishnu takes the form of Hayagriva, defeats the demons and restores the Vedas back to Brahma.

Thus Tyagaraja comprehensively captures select episodes from the great epic Ramayana even while glorifying Rama.