Chapter: - I

INTRODUCTION

ज्ञानानन्दस्य देवं निर्मल स्पर्शिकातिम्।
आधारं सर्वविद्यानां हृदयींगुप्तसमेह॥

“I bow down to तर्क who is full of wisdom, who is of clarity mind, who is like a white crystal without any dirt and who is the basis for learning all the sastras.

The great Sanskrit epic Rāmāyaṇa composed by the sage Vālmīki describes the journey of life course of Rāma. All the nine poetic sentiments (Rasas) are vividly found in this great epic. It contains elaborate narrations, stories, sub-stories, description of - nature, travel, wars, happenings of events in the royal families, lives of so many people, animals’ life in the forest, etc. The epic has been celebrated for its style, and many other poetic qualities. In fact it has become the foremost poetry (Ādikāvya) and Vālmīki has been considered as first and foremost of poets (Ādikavi).

The epic Rāmāyaṇa has influenced the Indian literature on a large scale. It has set an ideal example of literary work for generations of poets to come. The great Sanskrit poets like Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, etc. have no doubt taken inspiration from Rāmāyaṇa. It became a standard guideline for writing poetry. All such poets have followed the story of Rāmāyaṇa while composing their poetry or writing “Prabandhās.” The singers like Tyagaraja, MuttuswamiDeekshitar, PurandaraDās who were called saints composed and sang many “kirtanas” based on the Rāmāyaṇa. Poets like Kambar, Molla, etc. and some other critics wrote the Rāmāyaṇa in different languages, indifferent styles, in different times, in prose and poetry, in ballad form, in
dramatic style, in Yaksha Gana type, in musical form, in cartoons form, in Dwipada form, and in Puppet show form (*Katputli form*) also. Some modern artists like R.K.Lakshman in Karnataka, Bapu in Andhra Pradesh have shown the *Rāmāyaṇa* through pictures and cartoons. Each one had his own thought wave and culled his or her ideas from the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. We find the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* sculpted on the walls of temples not only in India but also found in other countries like Burma, Kambodia, Ceylon and other Asian countries where art and iconography is widely developed.

However, the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* written by Vālmīki can be understood by them who have knowledge of Sanskrit and cannot be understood by common man. After thousands of years, Tulsi – the great saint from the north India- has extended the work of Vālmīki in a lucid way by writing *Rāmāyaṇa* in the “Avadhi “language and popularised it through length and breadth of the country to spread devotion (*bhakti* movement) in India. Entire devotion is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* written by him. Tulsi *Rāmāyaṇa* is understood clearly by common folk in the rural areas of north India and they are able to remember by heart and sing the whole of the Tulsi *Rāmāyaṇa* (TR).

**Significance of the study**

The origin of *bhakti* is already there from time immemorial in India. The Vedic mantras are expressions of deep devotion towards the natural deities. The great sages like Narada and Sandilya have authored the *bhakti* sutras. To study the reflections of devotion in the VR and TR has particular significance towards understanding the *bhakti* cult in India.
Aims and Objectives

In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (VR), we find that the element of devotion (bhakti) is widely spread throughout the epic. It can be revealed through the dialogues uttered by each character. In VR, the sentiments of veera (Heroic), śānta(Peace), hāsyā (Laughter), krodha (Anger) etc. are explicit in the narrations. But the sentiment of devotion (bhakti) is implicit in the epic. The vocatives like - tāta, vatsa, svāmi, ārya, mahodaya, etc. – very frequently used in the dialogues- express the devotional feelings. This element of devotion (bhakti), implicit in the epic, comes to light when one studies each character deeply by analysing the dialogues. The VR has many facets of devotion like 1) Devotion towards God, 2) Devotion towards Guru 3) Devotion towards father 4) Devotion towards mother 5) Devotion towards husband 6) Devotion towards brother 7) Devotion towards master (svāmi). In fact, the deep sense of devotion has led to major happenings and events in the Rāmāyaṇa, e.g. Rāma’s abandoning the throne and going to the forest is nothing but his expression of devotion towards father. Similarly, Sita’ following of Rāma to the forest, Lakshmana’s following of Rāma, Bharatās coming to the forest and requesting Rāma to come back to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom mark various reflections of devotion.

Tulsi, great saint of the early 16th.century, wanted to spread bhakti and to popularise it among the common people. To achieve this end, Tulsi chose the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. It is suggestive of the fact that the epic Rāmāyaṇa contains profuse element of bhakti. He wrote the Rāmāyaṇ in the “Avadhi” language highlighting the devotional (bhakti) element. No doubt he followed the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa in to, but his work is an extension of that of Vālmīki, highlighting the devotional aspect (bhakti element).
It seems that the devotional aspect in the Rāmāyaṇa has not been dealt sufficiently by scholars so far. The objective of this Dissertation is to highlight the devotion aspect in the VR. As it is revealed through the dialogues between different characters in both the VR and TR.

**Scope and limitations**

The present study pertains to the select dialogues from the VR and TR and it analyses different reflections of devotion. As a background to that it takes the general survey of the origin development and spread of the bhakti cult in the country. Several proponents of bhakti and their contribution is duly considered in the Dissertation.

The Rāmāyaṇa has been written in many Indian languages by different authors, at different times at different parts of our country like Kamba Rāmāyaṇa, Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, Molla Rāmāyaṇa etc. However I have restricted myself to the TR being as a representative of all of them.

Consideration of the VR and TR in entirety and other versions of Rāmāyaṇa written in other regional languages would constitute the further scope of the study.