

The Intellectual Hero's Journey: An Analysis of Vibhishana and Mandodari through Campbell's Monomyth in Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas

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Abstract

This research examines the intellectual hero's journey of Vibhishana and Mandodari in Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas through Joseph Campbell's monomythological framework. Unlike traditional heroes who emphasize armed struggle, these two characters exemplify the hero's journey through moral reasoning, ethical courage, and spiritual wisdom. This comparative analysis demonstrates how Tulsidas reinvents the character of Valmiki, positioning intellectual and moral conviction as a form of heroism comparable to physical heroism. Through textual analysis of the Sundarakanth and Lankakanth, this study reveals that both characters undergo archetypal stages of separation, initiation, and return, ultimately achieving liberation through viveka (discerning wisdom) and dhammā (righteousness).

Keywords: Journey, intellectual heroism, Campbell's monomyth, Vibhishana and Mandodari, Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas

Introduction

Joseph Campbell's concept of the *monomyth*, articulated in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), provides a universal framework for interpreting heroic narratives across cultures. Campbell posits that the hero's journey unfolds through a tripartite structure: *separation*, *initiation*, and *return* (Campbell, 1949). Although originally applied to the

paradigmatic warrior-hero, this framework also proves illuminating when analyzing intellectual and moral forms of heroism in epic literature.

Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (1574–1576 CE), a devotional retelling of Valmiki's *Ramayana* in Awadhi, offers distinctive reinterpretations of supporting characters that warrant close scholarly examination. Lutgendorf (1991) observes that Tulsidas “democratizes the epic’s spiritual teachings while deepening its philosophical dimensions”. Within this reimagined cosmology, Vibhishana and Mandodari emerge as exemplars of what may be termed *intellectual heroism*, the courage to uphold *dharma* through reasoned judgment and moral conviction rather than through physical or martial valor.

Recent developments in comparative mythology have expanded Campbell’s framework to encompass diverse expressions of heroism. Pearson and Pope (1981) identify multiple archetypal modalities beyond the warrior-hero, such as the sage and the rebel, which are particularly pertinent to interpreting Vibhishana’s moral defection. Likewise, feminist reinterpretations of Campbell’s model, most notably Murdock’s (1990) *The Heroine’s Journey*, offer critical tools for understanding Mandodari’s distinct path of moral and emotional heroism within patriarchal constraints.

This study seeks to address a significant gap in existing scholarship by systematically applying Campbell’s monomyth to the intellectual heroes of the *Ramcharitmanas*. While previous scholars have examined Vibhishana’s defection (Pollock, 1986; Goldman, 1984) and Mandodari’s lamentations (Richman, 1991), few have analyzed these episodes through the structural and psychological lens of the hero’s journey. To date, no comparative study has foregrounded their intellectual heroism as an essential dimension of Tulsidas’s epic universe.

Research Objectives

To analyze the concept of intellectual heroism as exemplified by Vibhishana and Mandodari in Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, utilizing Joseph Campbell's monomyth framework to interpret their heroic journeys, which are driven by moral reasoning and ethical conviction.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual analysis, conducted in four stages: (1) selecting the *Sundara Kanda* and *Lanka Kanda* from the Gita Press edition (Poddar, 1938) as the primary corpus, with Growse (1978) and Hill (1952) as secondary references; (2) mapping

narrative episodes onto Campbell's (1949) monomyth framework; (3) extracting and translating relevant *chaupai* and *doha* verses for thematic analysis; and (4) conducting comparative analysis with Valmiki's *Ramayana* and contextualizing findings within medieval *bhakti* literary traditions.

Research Findings

Vibhishana's Intellectual Hero's Journey

1. Vibhishana's Departure: The Call to Moral Adventure

1.1 The Moral Awakening as a Call to Adventure

Vibhishana's heroic journey originates from an internal moral awakening rather than an external summons. Campbell (1949) defines this as “the awakening of the self.” In Sundara Kanda, witnessing Ravana's treatment of Sita triggers Vibhishana's moral crisis. Tulsidas depicts this pivotal moment: तात चरन गहि मागउँ राखहु मोर दुलारा सीता देहु राम कहूँ अहित न होइ तुम्हारा। बुध पुरान श्रुति संमत बानी। कहि बिभीषन नीति बखानी। सुनत दसानन उठा रिसाई। खल तोहि निकट मृत्यु अब आई। “Clasping your feet, dear father, I beg of you, and cherish my love: restore Sītā to Rāma; no harm shall come to you thereby. Vibhīṣaṇa spoke wisdom and that too in words that had the approval of the wise, as well as of the Purāṇas and Vedas. Rāvaṇa, however, rose in a fury as soon as he heard them. 'O wretch, your death is imminent now.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) Goldman (1984) notes that Tulsidas amplifies dramatic tension by portraying Vibhishana's repeated moral interventions, each of which is increasingly rebuffed. This crystallizes the reversal of the call through Ravana's rejection of righteous counsel rather than Vibhishana's own refusal.

1.2 Supernatural Aid through Buddhi

Vibhishana's supernatural aid manifests not through divine weapons but through *buddhi* (intellect) illuminated by devotion. His assistance is epistemological, the insight to discern dharma. Tulsidas emphasizes: रामु सत्यसंकल्प प्रभु सभा कालबस तोरि। मैं रघुबीर सरन अब जाउँ देहु जनि खोरि। अस कहि चला बिभीषनु जबहीं। आयूहीन भए सब तबहीं। साधु अवग्या तुरत भवानी। कर कल्यान अखिल कै हानी। “Rāma is one whose resolve is ever true (*satya-saṅkalpa*). O Lord, your assembly has fallen under the dominion of Kāla (Death/Fate). I shall now proceed to take refuge with Raghuvīra; pray, impute no fault unto me. Having thus spoken, the very moment Vibhīṣaṇa departed, all those [remaining in the court] became bereft of their life-span (*āyūṁīna*). [Śiva addresses Pārvatī:] O Bhavānī, the contemptuous disregard (*avajñā*) of a saintly person (*sādhu*) instantaneously brings about the destruction of all welfare and auspiciousness.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024)

1.3 Crossing the Threshold: Geographical and Existential Transition

Vibhishana's physical departure from Lanka represents what Campbell (1949) characterizes as the moment when “the hero moves beyond the known into the unknown.” This transition is simultaneously geographical, political, and existential: चलेउ हरषि रघुनायक पाहीं। करत मनोरथ बहु मन माहीं। देखिहउँ जाइ चरन जलजाता। अरुन मृदुल सेवक सुखदाता। जे पद परसि तरी रिषिनारी। दंडक कानन पावनकारी। “ He proceeded towards the Lord of the Raghu lineage with profound exultation, entertaining a multitude of spiritual aspirations within his consciousness. [He contemplated]: 'I shall attain the beatific vision of those lotus-feet, ruddy, tender, and the bestowers of bliss upon the devotee. The very feet whose contact effectuated the redemption of the Sage's consort [Ahalya] and conferred sanctification upon the Dandaka forest.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) This passage illustrates Campbell's (1949) concept of “the belly of the whale”, complete separation from known world and former identity. Vibhishana's mental recitation of Rama's divine attributes during his aerial journey represents psychological transformation: he reconstitutes himself from Ravana's brother to Rama's devotee. The imagery is significant: Vibhishana recalls the *pada* (feet) that liberated Ahalya and sanctified Dandaka forest, conceptualizing his crossing as participation in dharmic restoration. Lutgendorf (1991) observes, “In Tulsidas's rendering, Vibhishana's defection is not political opportunism but spiritual homecoming.”

Doha 42 reinforces this devotional framework: जिन्ह पायन्ह के पादुकन्हि भरतु रहे मन लाइ। ते पद आजु बिलोकिहउँ इन्ह नयनन्हि अब जाइ। “Those feet whose sandals Bharata worshipped with a devoted mind, those very feet I shall behold today with these eyes.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) By invoking Bharata's devotion to Rama's *pādukā*, Vibhishana positions himself within the paradigm of ideal *bhakti*. This intertextual reference to Ayodhya Kanda establishes his journey as an entry into a community of exemplary devotees, transcending mere geographical movement.

2. Vibhishana's Initiation: Trials of Trust and Identity

2.1 Road of Trials: Epistemic Crisis and Divine Refuge

Vibhishana's initiation centers on ethical verification rather than physical combat, confronting Campbell's (1949) “dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms.” The critical trial emerges when Sugriva articulates collective distrust, questioning the *rākṣasa*'s true intentions: कह प्रभु सखा बूझिए काहा। कहइ कपीस सुनहु नरनाहा। जानि न जाइ निसाचर माया। कामरूप केहि कारन आवा। भेद हमार लेन सठ आवा। राखिअ बाँधि मोहि अस भावा। सखा नीति तुम्ह नीकि बिचारी। मम पन सरनागत भयहारी। “The Lord asked, “Friend, what is your opinion?” The monkey-king replied, “Listen, O King of men: the *māyā* of these night-

wanderers is unknowable; who knows why this shape-shifter has come? This fool has obviously come to spy our secrets; I think he should be bound.” [Rama replied:] “Friend, you have considered policy well, but my vow is to remove the fear of those who seek refuge.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) Sugriva's suspicion represents epistemic impossibility; inner intention cannot be proven through external evidence. Vibhishana's *rākṣasa* form signifies danger, yet his *bhakti* signifies purity. Rama's response, “*mama pana saranāgata bhayahārī*” (*my vow is to remove the fear of refuge-seekers*), transforms interrogation into a theological proclamation.

2.2 Meeting with the Goddess: Śaraṇāgati as Feminine Divine Principle

The goddess-figure manifests as *Śaraṇāgati* itself, the receptive, grace-bestowing dimension of divinity. Vibhishana's appeal employs absolute surrender: श्रवन सुजसु सुनि आयउँ प्रभु भंजन भव भीरा त्राहि त्राहि आरति हरन सरन सुखद रघुबीरा। “Having heard Your auspicious fame, I have come, O Lord, destroyer of the terrors of worldly existence. “Save me, save me!” O Raghuvira, remover of affliction and bestower of bliss upon those who take refuge.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The repetition *trāhi trāhi* enacts complete ego-dissolution, while *bhañjana bhava bhīra* reveals theological sophistication approaching Rama as a transcendent liberator from *samsāra*, not a political ally. Rama's embrace constitutes the transformative sacrament: अस कहि करत दंडवत देखा। तुरत उठे प्रभु हरष बिसेषा। दीन बचन सुनि प्रभु मन भावा। भुज बिसाल गहि हृदयँ लगावा। “Seeing him prostrate himself thus, the Lord rose immediately with exceeding joy. Hearing his humble words, the Lord was pleased at heart; He seized him with His mighty arms and clasped him to His bosom.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The *hṛdayam lagāvā* (clasped to His bosom) represents physical incorporation into the divine body. The *hṛdaya* as the seat of *ātman* signifies not emotional embrace but ontological incorporation. Lutgendorf (1991) identifies this as sacramental union, while Campbell's mastery of two worlds becomes Vibhishana's dual identity: demonic birth (*rākṣasa*) and devotional rebirth (*bhakta*).

2.3 Atonement with the Father: Unconditional Acceptance as Divine Nature

Atonement occurs through Rama's *upadeśa*, revealing cosmic law (*dharma*) and divine nature (*svabhāva*). The foundational soteriological principle: तब लागि कुसल न जीव कहँ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम। जब लागि भजत न राम कहँ सोक धाम तजि काम। “So long as the soul does not worship Rama, renouncing desire, the abode of sorrow, there can be no welfare, nor peace of mind even in dreams.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) This Vedāntic teaching echoes Bhagavad Gītā's identification of *kāma* as suffering's root. However, Rama transcends archetypal “father” through self-revelation: सुनहु सखा निज कहउँ सुभाऊ। जान भुसुंदि संभु गिरिजाऊ। जौं नर होइ चराचर द्रोही। आवै सभय सरन तकि मोही। तजि मद मोह कपट छल नाना। करउँ सद्य तेहि

साधु समाना॥ “Listen, friend, I tell you My own nature known to Bhushundi, Shambhu, and Girijā: Even if a man be an enemy of all creation, mobile and immobile, if he comes to Me in fear seeking refuge, abandoning pride, delusion, deceit, and trickery, I make him instantly equal to a saint.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024, p.757) This passage establishes three crucial theological principles: First, invoking Kākabhuṣuṇḍi, Śiva, and Pārvatī as witnesses validates *svabhāva* as an eternal principle. Second, *carācara drohī* (enemy of all creation) represents the extreme case where acceptance extends even to universal antagonists. Third, *sadya tehi sādhu samānā* (instantly made equal to a saint) abolishes gradualist spiritual development, representing *prapatti* (the fast path) over *krama-mukti*. This ontological reconstitution reveals that *rākṣasa* identity constitutes phenomenal appearance, instantly dissolved through surrender.

2.4 Apotheosis: Darśana and Cosmic Vision

Apotheosis occurs through *darśana* (transformative vision), not ascetic practice. Vibhishana's exclamation crystallizes the moment: अहोभाग्य मम अमित अति राम कृपा सुख पुंज। देखेउँ नयन बिरचि सिव सेब्य जुगल पद कंज॥ “O, my boundless fortune! O Rama, mass of compassion and bliss! I have beheld with my own eyes Your twin lotus feet, which even Brahmā and Śiva worship.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) *Ahobhāgya mama amita* signals *pratyabhijñā*, sudden recognition of ever-present truth. Vibhishana perceives the anthropomorphic prince as the supreme godhead whom Brahmā and Śiva worship, achieving *sākṣātkāra* (direct liberating vision). The *pada kamja* (lotus feet) represent “the accessible aspect of the transcendent” (Hawley, 1984), surpassing Bharata's symbolic *pādukā* worship through unmediated access. This epistemological transformation expands consciousness from political refugee to devotee beholding cosmic reality, not a change in Rama's divinity, but a transformation of Vibhishana's perceptive capacity.

2.5 Ultimate Boon: Jñāna-Bhakti as Governing Template

Unlike Western monomyth's material objects, Vibhishana's boon fuses *jñāna* (knowledge) with *bhakti* (devotion) as ethical-devotional teaching: सगुन उपासक परहित निरत नीति दृढ़ नेमा ते नर प्रान समान मम जिन्ह के द्विज पद प्रेमा॥ “Those who worship the Lord with form, who are devoted to others' welfare, who are steadfast in righteousness and firm in religious observance, who love the feet of the twice-born, such men are dear to Me as My own life-breath.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) This verse presents four criteria for righteous existence: (1) *saguna upāsaka* (worship of manifest deity), (2) *parahita nirata* (devotion to others' welfare/*lokasaṅgraha*), (3)

nīti dṛḍha nema (steadfastness in political and ritual *dharma*), (4) *dvija pada prema* (reverence for Brahmanical tradition). The phrase *prāna samāna mama* (dear as My life-breath) elevates practitioners to an indispensable status. This boon becomes Vibhishana's governing template for Lanka, reflecting Indic understanding that *rājadharmā* (kingly duty) flows from *ātmadharma* (self-discipline). Unlike Prometheus's fire, Vibhishana's boon operates through interiority, transforming external reality by first transforming consciousness; the outer kingdom mirrors the sovereign's inner state.

3. Return: Master of Two Worlds

Campbell's (1949) Return stage involves the hero re-emerging with transformative wisdom. Vibhishana's Return constitutes an ontological transformation of Lanka itself—from *adharma* to *dharma*. The Crossing of the Return Threshold: Campbell (1949) defines this as realizing “the two worlds, the divine and the human... are actually one.” For Vibhishana, this manifests in his coronation: सब मिलि जाहु बिभीषन साथ। सारेहु तिलक कहेउ रघुनाथा॥ “Go all together with Vibhīṣaṇa and perform [his] consecration rite (*tilaka*), thus commanded Raghunātha” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The *tilaka* administered by Rama fuses divine sanction with political authority. Vibhishana does not inherit through conquest or succession; sovereignty is divinely conferred. This transforms Lankan kingship ontologically: *āśura* (demonic) authority becomes *daivī* (divine) mandate. The threshold crossed is constitutional, not spatial. Lanka reconstitutes from a fortress of *adharma* to a domain of *dharma*. Vibhishana emerges as Master of Two Worlds, synthesizing *rakshasa* identity with divine governance.

Mandodari's Intellectual Hero's Journey

1. Departure: The Wisdom-Keeper's Burden

1.1 Within Campbell's (1949) monomyth, the “Call to Adventure” signifies the moment when “destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity”. For Mandodari, this call manifests not as an external summons but as a moral awakening, an epistemological recognition of Ravana's catastrophic trajectory. Her heroism is fundamentally constrained: unlike Vibhishana's geographical departure, Mandodari's journey remains interior, operating within what Murdock (1990) terms the patriarchal structures of *strī-dharma*. Her courage is therefore discursive, the articulation of truth within systems designed to silence it. Tulsidas renders her intervention in Sundara Kanda: सजल नयन कह जुग कर जोरी। सुनहु प्रानपति बिनती मोरी॥ कंत राम बिरोध परिह्रहू। जानि मनुज जनि हठ लग धरहू ॥ “With tear-laden eyes, joining both hands, she spoke: 'Hear, O Lord of my life, this supplication of mine. O my beloved husband, abandon enmity with Rāma; considering Him a mere

mortal, do not persist in this obstinacy.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024, p.785) and बिस्वरूप रघुवंस मनि करहु बचन बिस्वासु। लोक कल्पना बेद कर अंग अंग प्रति जासु ॥ “He is the Cosmic Form (Viśvarūpa), the Jewel of Raghu's lineage, place faith in my words; the entire cosmos imagined by the Vedas exists in each limb of His.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024, p.785) Her diagnostic framework, identifying māna (pride), moha (delusion), mada (intoxication), and pāna (drinking), constitutes systematic spiritual pathology. The phrase parināma sabhītā (“fearful consequences”) reveals her prophetic function: her ability to perceive causal chains that Ravana's pride obscures. As Richman (1991) observes, this represents “epistemological heroism: the courage to speak truth to power despite inevitable rejection”.

1.2 Supernatural Aid: Campbell (1949) notes that supernatural aid often appears as “a protective figure... who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces”. For Mandodari, this aid manifests not as external talismans but as prajñā, transcendent wisdom that penetrates phenomenal appearance to perceive ultimate reality. Her subsequent counsel demonstrates this illuminated intellect: नाथ बयरु कीजे ताही सों बुधि बल सकिअ जीति जाही सों। तुम्हहि रघुपतिहि अंतर कैसा। खलु खद्योत दिनकरहि जैसा ॥ “My lord, one should only be enemies with someone who can be defeated by wisdom and strength. What is the difference between you and Raghupati? It is like that between a firefly and the sun.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024,) The metaphor khadyota dinakarahi (“firefly and sun”) demonstrates a sophisticated rhetorical strategy: she employs cosmic imagery to expose the absurdity of Ravana's presumption. This is not emotional pleading but logical argumentation grounded in tattva-jñāna (knowledge of reality). Goldman (1984) observes that Tulsidas elevates Mandodari's counsel “beyond wifely concern to philosophical discourse”.

2. Initiation: The Trials of Loyal Dissent

2.1 The Road of Trials: Campbell (1949) characterizes the road of trials as a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where [the hero] must survive a succession of trials. For Mandodari, this landscape is the court of Lanka itself, a space where truth meets systematic rejection. Her trials escalate through five distinct rhetorical registers:

2.1.1 Historical Argumentation: Mandodari invokes Viṣṇu's avatāric history to position Rama beyond human categorization अति बल मधु कैटभ जेहिं मारो महाबीर दितिसुत संघारो। जेहि बलि बाँधि सहस भुज मारा। सोइ अवतरेउ हन महिभारा ॥ “He who disposed of Madhu and Kaiṭabha, destroyed Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa, bound Bali, and slew Sahasrabhuja, it is He who has descended to relieve earth's burden” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024)

2.1.2 Cosmological Warning: तसु बिरोध न कीजिअ नाथा। काल करम जिव जाके हाथा। “My lord, oppose not Him in whose hands lie Kāla [Time], Karma [Fate], and Jīva [Soul].” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024,) The triad kāla-karma-jīva encompasses the entire machinery of saṃsāric existence. Mandodari argues that Ravana opposes cosmic causation itself.

2.1.3 Practical Solution: “रामहि सौपि जानकी नाइ कमल पद माथा सुत कहूँ राज समर्पि बन जाइ भजिअ रघुनाथा। “Restore Jānakī to Rāma, bowing at His lotus feet; hand the kingdom to your son; retire to the forest to worship Raghunātha.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) This verse offers a complete exit strategy: restitution, succession, and spiritual pursuit, transforming political catastrophe into soteriological opportunity.

2.1.4 Ethical Persuasion: नाथ दीनदयाल रघुराई बाघउ सनमुख गएँ न खाई। संत कहहिं असि नीति दसानना चौथेपन जाइहि नृप कानन। “Raghurāi is compassionate to the humble; even a tiger spares one who approaches submissively. Holy men declare: a monarch should retire to the forest in the fourth life-stage.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024)

2.1.5 Physical Supplication: अस कहि नयन नीर भरि गहि पद कंपित गाता नाथ भजहु रघुनाथहि अचल होइ अहिवाता। “So saying, eyes brimming with tears, clasping his feet, body trembling: My lord, worship Raghunātha that my married status remain secure.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The progression from verbal argument to physical supplication to somatic manifestation (kāmpita gāta) enacts what Clooney (1996) terms “the rhetoric of escalating desperation”.

2.2 The Divine Omen: After Rama's arrow strikes Ravana's crown and Mandodari's earrings, she renews her plea: सजल नयन कह जुग कर जोरी। सुनहु प्रानपति बिनती मोरी। कंत राम बिरोध परिहरहू। जानि मनुज जनि हठ मन धरहू। “With tearful eyes and joined palms: O lord of my life, hear my prayer. Cease hostility with Rāma; do not stubbornly regard Him as a mere mortal.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The phrase jāni manuja jani haṭha reveals her perception of Rama's avatāra-tattva; she comprehends what Ravana's phenomenal perception cannot grasp.

2.3 Theological Revelation: Mandodari's most sophisticated argument presents Rama as the Cosmic Form: बिस्वरूप रघुबंस मनि करहु बचन बिस्वासु। लोक कल्पना बेद कर अंग अंग प्रति जासु। “Believe my word: Rāma, Jewel of Raghu's race, is the Viśvarūpa the Vedas conceive every sphere as His limb.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) She elaborates: पद पाताल सीस अज धामा। अपर लोक अंग अंग विश्रामा। भृकुटि बिलास भयंकर काला। नयन दिवाकर कच घन माला। “Pātāla is His feet, Brahmā's abode His head; other spheres rest in His limbs. Death is His eyebrow's contraction, the sun His eye, clouds His locks.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024, p.785) This parallels the Bhagavad Gītā's Viśvarūpa-darśana, positioning Mandodari as a philosopher-queen. Her synthesis concludes: अस बिचारि सुनु प्रानपति प्रभु

सन बयरु बिहाइ। प्रीति करहु रघुबीर पद मम अहिवात न जाइ। “Pondering thus, hear me: cease hostility, cultivate devotion to Raghubīra's feet, that my good fortune not depart.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024)

2.4 Apotheosis: Campbell (1949) defines apotheosis as “the divine state to which the hero either attains or which is recalled to memory”. Mandodari's apotheosis is not mystical union but tragic gnos̄is, salvific knowledge born of witnessing dharma's inexorable operation. Ravana's dismissive response reveals spiritual blindness: बिहँसा नारि बचन सुनि काना। अहो मोह महिमा बलवाना। “Rāvaṇa laughed: “Oh, how mighty is infatuation's power!” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) Her apotheosis crystallizes in silent recognition: मंदोदरि मन महुँ अस ठयऊ। पियहि काल बस मति भ्रम भयउ। “Mandodarī was convinced: her husband's impending death had deluded him.” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024) The phrase kāla basa mati bhrama (“death-controlled delusion”) constitutes her apotheosis, the terrible wisdom that Kāla already claims Ravana. This transforms grief into comprehension: she perceives cosmic machinery operating through her husband's obstinacy.

2.5 The Ultimate Boon: Campbell (1949) describes the ultimate boon as “the elixir of imperishable life”. Unlike Vibhishana's external coronation, Mandodari's boon is internal perfected wisdom itself. Rama acknowledges this attainment: सुनत बिभीषन के प्रिय बैना। मंदोदरि मन ग्यान प्रबीना। “Mandodarī, whose mind was expert in knowledge [gyāna prabānā]” (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024). The epithet gyāna prabānā constitutes divine recognition of philosophical attainment, not praise for feminine virtue (pativrata) but acknowledgment of jñāna, traditionally a masculine-coded spiritual path. Campbell (1949) notes that the boon must be “scaled to the stature and dominant desire” of the hero. Mandodari's dominant desire was Ravana's transformation; her boon, perfected wisdom, enables her to comprehend why this transformation could not occur.

3. Return: Teaching Through Tragedy

3.1 Lamentation as Pedagogical Transformation: Mandodari's lamentation transcends personal grief to become a universal instruction. Hess (2001) identifies this as her ultimate contribution: “tragic wisdom, the salvific knowledge born of witnessing dharma's unyielding justice.” Her rejected counsel, preserved textually, demonstrates integrity maintained within impossible constraints. Following Campbell's (1949) concept of Return, her words serve as “runes of wisdom” bearing testimony to truth.

3.2 Epistemological Mastery of Dual Dharmic Frameworks: Mandodari achieves Campbell's (1949) “master of two worlds” epistemologically, navigating strī-dharma (wifely duty) and sanātana-dharma (eternal truth) simultaneously. Nussbaum (2001) argues that Tulsidas “transforms Mandodari from passive mourner to active sage whose suffering generates

salvific knowledge.” Her mastery lies in this transformation: grief becomes pedagogy, loss becomes wisdom, tragedy becomes instruction.

Comparative Analysis: Parallel and Divergent Heroisms

The following schematization delineates their convergent trajectories:

Monomythic Stage	Vibhishana	Mandodari	Functional Convergence
Call to Adventure	Dharma-glāni (moral revulsion) as existential rupture	Prajñā-darśana (prophetic cognition) of inevitable catastrophe	Internal epistemic crisis rather than external summons
Supernatural Aid	Buddhi illuminated by bhakti	Prajñā fortified by satītvā	Cognitive enhancement as divine instrumentality
Threshold Crossing	Literal departure effectuating ontological severance	Moral departure constitutes internal exile	Transition from avidyā to vidyā
Road of Trials	Epistemic verification against suspicion of māyā	Rhetorical escalation against systematic rejection	Trials of credibility in articulating an inconvenient truth
Ultimate Boon	Rājya-dharma: template for righteous sovereignty	Gyāna prabīnā: divine recognition of philosophical attainment	Jñāna as boon externalized versus internalized
Return	Constitutional transformation of Lanka	Textual preservation as a śāstra for posterity	Lokasaṅgraha through differentiated modalities

1. The Dialectic of Mobility and Constraint

The fundamental distinction between Vibhishana and Mandodari emerges through their differential access to spatial mobility, producing two distinct heroic paradigms. Vibhishana's centrifugal heroism operates through territorial transgression and physical departure from the adharmic system; his aerial flight from Lanka to Kishkindha literalizes Campbell's (1949) hero's journey into supernatural realms. His heroism necessitates complete extraction as the precondition for dharmic agency. Conversely, Mandodari's centripetal heroism, constrained by strī-dharma and pāativratya norms, cannot enact physical departure. Her heroism operates through intensification rather than extension, the deepening of moral consciousness within spatial fixity. Following Murdock's (1990) feminine heroic archetype of “descent rather than ascent, integration rather than separation,” her trajectory manifests through tragic knowledge while maintaining loyalty. Significantly, Tulsidas grants Mandodari equivalent epistemic authority to Vibhishana: her viśvarūpa discourse demonstrates philosophical sophistication commensurate with any male interlocutor in the text, subverting the patriarchal spatial economy that circumscribes feminine agency.

2. Typological Differentiation: Prophet and Witness

Weber's (1922) sociology of religious authority illuminates two distinct intellectual heroic types: Vibhishana as Prophetic Hero: His counsel functions as a prophetic critique a divine judgment upon existing power structures. His declaration “Rāvaṇo vinaśisyati nītiḥno'dhārmikaḥ” constitutes a prophetic

speech-act legitimizing defection, with subsequent coronation confirming prophetic vision as politically efficacious. Mandodari as Witnessing Hero: Her counsel functions as testimony truth articulated to preserve the moral record irrespective of the outcome. Her vilāpa transforms from conventional lamentation into what Ricoeur (1984) terms “narrative testimony”: the inscription of moral truth into collective memory. Unable to alter Rāvaṇa's trajectory, she ensures its correct interpretation for posterity.

3. Complementarity of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti

Vibhishana and Mandodari instantiate complementary poles constituting a complete dharmic response to adharma. Vibhishana embodies **pravṛtti-dharma** intellectual heroism, transforming external reality through righteous governance. Mandodari embodies **nivṛtti-dharma** intellectual heroism, transforming consciousness through wisdom and witness. The Ramcharitmanas posits neither as superior; both remain soteriologically necessary. Dharmic restoration requires simultaneously the sage who departs to construct new structures and the witness who remains to testify against corrupt ones.

Discussion

This study adapts Campbell's monomyth to analyze intellectual heroism in the Ramcharitmanas, reframing physical quest as an epistemic journey and combat as a dialectical confrontation with falsehood. Key contributions: First, it repositions Vibhishana and Mandodari as intellectual heroes. Second, these characters embody dharmic consciousness within adharmic structures, complicating binary interpretations. Third, Mandodari's viśvarūpa discourse establishes her as jñānin, challenging patriarchal readings of bhakti literature. The analysis demonstrates Tulsidas's synthesis of trimārga (jñāna, karma, bhakti) by positioning viveka alongside vīrya as heroic virtue. Both characters function as dharmic whistleblowers who appeal to transcendent ethics against institutional wrongdoing.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Vibhishana and Mandodari in Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas exemplify intellectual heroism through moral reasoning, epistemic courage, and devotional wisdom as heroic virtues equivalent to martial valor. Vibhishana's trajectory from dharma-glāni through defection, epistemic trials, and mystical embrace to apothotic darśana and coronation as dharmic sovereign establishes that political defection grounded in viveka and bhakti constitutes heroic action. Mandodari's journey from prophetic cognition through internal exile, rhetorical resistance, and tragic gnosis to recognition as jñāna-prabīnā and preservation as moral witness demonstrates that contemplative resistance within patriarchal constraint constitutes equally significant heroic action.

This analysis offers three theoretical contributions: first, extending Campbell's monomyth to intellectual heroism, wherein the sword becomes *viveka*, the dragon *avidyā*, and the boon *jñāna*; second, recovering Vibhishana and Mandodari as fully realized intellectual heroes within Tulsidas's axiological framework; third, demonstrating complex gender dynamics wherein Mandodari's intellectual agency problematizes reductive characterizations of bhakti literature as uniformly patriarchal.

These narratives articulate a distinctively Indic paradigm grounded in three principles: *viveka* (discriminative wisdom perceiving dharma amidst adharma), *śaura* (moral courage articulating truth despite personal cost), and *bhakti* (devotional orientation integrating *jñāna* and *karma* within soteriological frameworks). In contemporary contexts marked by institutional corruption and epistemological crisis, Vibhishana models principled defection grounded in dharma, while Mandodari models contemplative resistance within constraining structures. Both demonstrate that *jñāna* without *karma* remains incomplete.

Tulsidas's invocation “*bala budhi vidyā dehu mohi*” positions intellect and knowledge as virtues coordinated with strength. Vibhishana and Mandodari exemplify that heroism transcends the martial domain; the truest victories occur within moral consciousness through courage to perceive and articulate truth. As Rama declares, those combining devotion, altruism, and moral steadfastness are *prāṇa samāna* equal to the divine life-breath itself (Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, 2024, p. 758). Through their intellectual heroism, Vibhishana and Mandodari attain this supreme status, offering all who follow their example the possibility of equivalent attainment.

Recommendation

Future research should extend comparative analysis to other Rāmāyaṇa traditions, apply feminist and postcolonial frameworks to Mandodari's gendered agency, and further investigate the interplay of *viveka*, *bhakti*, and *dharma* in conceptualizing intellectual heroism.

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