The phraseology of verse 3 is curious: the āśi became an anthill (valmika) and was not simply built into one. Can Cyavana be the Valmika from whom Vālmīki is derived? It is an intriguing thought but it seems impossible that both epics could then be ignorant of this relationship.

The similarity between the two episodes incorporating this strange motif is so striking that Citrav Śāstri was led to conclude that it gave rise to the maze of the Vālmīki-Bhairava issue. It probably contains a grain of truth in that it is far from unlikely that the late story of Vālmīki’s anthill was borrowed from the Cyavana episode in an effort to provide a convincing etymology for at least one of the ādi kavi’s three names. But, as the epics do not themselves apply the anthill motif to Vālmīki, the argument as a whole is not convincing.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears little short of extraordinary that the Sanskrit epics which revel in the accounts of the deeds, origins and antecedents of even the most trivial characters, should offer such scanty and muddled evidence concerning a figure of the stature of Vālmīki. The Mahābhārata, used again in the case of Cyavana who it is said remained immobile underwater at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, became intimate with the fish and was covered with water weeds, shells, etc., Mbh. XIII. 50.9-19. 34 Prāctina Caritra Kośa, s. v. Vālmīki.

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34 Prāctina Caritra Kośa, s. v. Vālmīki.

On the basis of this evidence one may hazard several interesting conclusions. For one it would appear that the Uttarakāṇḍa is, at least in part, later than the Bālakāṇḍa but, unless we can find another source for Asvaghosha’s line, earlier than the Buddhacarita. For another it may be asserted that if at all the process of Bhṛguisation can be said to have affected the Rāmāyaṇa, it has touched only the two latest kāṇḍas, the Bāla and the Uttara. In the former it has operated, in the same way as in the Mahābhārata, although to a much less pronounced degree, by the inclusion or insertion of a number of Bhṛguva references and episodes. In the latter it would seem that the Bhṛguisation has affected not so much the poem as the poet.

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On the Name Devanāgari

The name “Devanāgari” as applied to the Indian script and the possible derivation of the word.

The name “Devanāgari” has long been something of a puzzle to scholars.1 Some regard it as a derivative of devanagara “city of the gods” and hence interpret it as “[script] of the city of the gods” or by some equivalent phrase.2 Yet others, and it is hard to say which form the

1 That the name is obscure in meaning and origin has been asserted in various Sanskrit grammars, e.g., those of Whitney, Macdonell, Thumb-Hauschild; cf. also Hans Jensen, Sign, Symbol, and Script: an Account of Man’s Efforts to Write, 3rd ed., transl. from German by George Unwin (New York, 1969), p. 375, n. 1: “The name cannot be accounted for very clearly (‘[script] of the divine city’?).”

majority, view it as a compound, consisting of *deva* and \(nāgari\), meaning either "city [-script] of the gods" or "city [-script] of the Brahmans" or "city [-script] of the kings," the word \(deva\) being capable of any of these renderings.³

But "Devanāgari" is also known more simply as "Nāgari," a name that is probably even more prevalent in India than the longer name, which appears to be more popular among scholars outside of India. "Nāgari," as the name of a particular script, is fairly old, being mentioned along with several other scripts by Al-Bīrūnī, c. 1030 A.D., who refers to an alphabet called Nāgara (sic!); he says was current in the Mālava country.* This statement is particularly interesting, as the earliest example of a text written entirely in Nāgara characters, an inscription of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa King Dantidurga, stems from 754 A.D.⁵ The earliest mention of the word "Nāgari"


As a secondary derivative from *devanāgara*, the form *Devanāgari* (i.e., with vowel strengthening of the initial syllable instead of the second member of the compound) ought normally to be expected, but Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), §1204e, gives many examples of this interchange of vowel modification. For discussion of this point, v. Thumb-Hauschild, p. 188, n. 11. On the curious variant Daivanāgari (!) with double \(vṛddhi\), used by the early German scholar Othmar Frank, v. note 9 below.


⁵ G. Bühler, *Indische Palaeographie*, in *Grundriss der indoarischen Philologie und Altertumskunde* (Strassburg, 1896), p. 51: "Die älteste Inschrift aber, welche ganz in diesem Alphabete geschrieben ist, findet sich auf den by a European is apparently to be found in the letters of the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, who in 1622, while in Persia on his way to India, became acquainted with an Indian Brahm (Damodel Sami) who at Della Valle’s request wrote down his own name in characters which he learned from him were called "Naqher" (i.e., Nāgari).⁶

Kupferplatten des Rāṣṭrakūṭakönigs Dantidurga von 754 Chr., aus Sāmangaḍh im südlichen Marathenlande (Kolapur).”


Another European, the French traveller Jean Chardin, who went to Persia and India not long after Della Valle, but whose account was not published in full until 1711, actually brought back with him a fairly complete chart of the Nāgari alphabet, which, however, he does not call by name and erroneously imputes to the ancient Zoroastrians of Persia (“J’ai inseré dans cet ouvrage, pour la satisfaction des Curieux, un Alphabet de ces anciens Perses, ou Guebres, en grandes et petites Lettres”); v. Zachariae, “Das Nāgari-Alphabet bei Jean Chardin,” in his *Kleine Schriften*, pp. 12-14, also in *WZKM*, XIX (1905), p. 235ff. A reproduction of Chardin’s alphabet-table may be found on p. 519 of the article by Hauschild referred to farther on in this note.

Curiously, neither the names “Nāgari” nor “Devanāgari” occur in the tables of the Nāgari script prepared in 1664 by Pater Heinrich Roth, the Bavarian missionary to India, for inclusion in Athanasius Kircher’s *China Illustrata* (Amsterdam, i.e., Amsterdam, 1667). On the one table, which gives a transcription of the Lord’s Prayer into Nāgari letters, they are referred to as “Indian letters” (Pro Exercitio huius Linguae ponam hic Pater noster Literis Indicis scriptum). Nor does Kircher himself anywhere in this work nor in any of his other voluminous writings use the word “Nāgari”; on this and many other particulars, including reproductions of Roth’s tables, v. Richard Hauschild, “Die erste Publikation der indischen Nāgari-Schriftzeichen in Europa durch Athanasius Kircher und Heinrich Roth” in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena*, Jahrg. 5, 1955/56, gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe, Heft 4/5, pp. 499-520; cf. also Zachariae “Das Devanāgari-Alphabet bei Athanasius Kircher” in his *Kleine Schriften*, pp. 1-7, also in *WZKM*, XV (1901), pp. 313-320.

That the name “Nāgari” does not occur in Roth’s tables does not, of course, exclude the possibility of its
On the other hand, Devanāgarī does not appear to be an old name,7 the earliest attestation possibly being that found in the introduction to Halhed’s Code of Gentoo Laws, 1776: “The Shanscrit Character, used in Upper Hindostan, is said to be the same original Letter that was first delivered to the People by Brīhmā, and is now called Dīwṇāgūr, or the Language of Angels ...”8 In fact, the use of the adverb “now” in this statement, if it is not just a turn of phrase (which seems unlikely), even implies that in Halhed’s view the longer name had by the time of writing come to replace an older name, which we can reasonably presume to have been “Nāgārī.”

It is not difficult to account for the expansion of Nāgārī into Devanāgāri: from the beginning writing in India has been looked upon as divine in origin, as shown by the name Brāhmī “[script] of Brahmā,” applied to the oldest of India’s scripts, and accordingly “Devā” was prefixed to the name “Nāgārī” to invest the script with a divine provenance. Incidentally, this same tendency toward the sanctification of the written character is also to be seen in the alternative explanation of Devanāgāri, alluded to earlier, which makes of it a derivative from devanagāra occurrence in his Sanskrit grammar, the first to be written by a European, which has unfortunately never been published, the ms last having been seen in 1800 by the Spanish scholar Lorenzo Hervás. On the vicissitudes of this ms, v. Bruno Zimmel’s interesting article “Die erste Sanskrit-Grammatik: die merkwürdigen Schicksale eines verschollenen Manuskripts” in Biblos, Jahrg. 5, Heft 2 (1956), pp. 48-63; an enlarged version of this article, published separately, Vienna, 1957, referred to in Thumb-Hauschild, p. 172, n. 126, is unavailable to me.

7 So Macdonell, p. 2: “a term of late but obscure origin”; Müller, p. 1: “No authority has yet been adduced from any ancient author for the employment of the word Devanāgāri”; Renou and Filliozat, p. 678: “... cette désignation ne se rencontre pas dans les textes et paraît n’avoir été répandue que par des pandits et surtout des Européens depuis le xviiie siècle.” There is no reason to suppose any connection between the name “Devanāgāri” and “Devalipī” which is given in the Lalitaviśtara in a list of 64 scripts, where it occurs along with such names as “Nāgalipi, Yakṣālipi, Gandharvalipi, Kinnaralipi, Mahoragalipi, Asuralipi and Garudalipi,” all of which, if they are not entirely fanciful names, are but examples of the old tendency in India to enshroud the written symbol with a divine aura; v. S. Lefmann’s ed. (Halle, 1. Teil, 1902), pp. 125-126.

8 Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, A Code of Gentoo Laws, or, Ordinations of the Pundits, from a Persian Translation, Made from the Original, Written in the Shanscrid Language (London, 1776), p. xxiv. "city of the gods," this being doubtless a periphrasis for "heaven."9

If, then, as seems probable from the scanty evidence available, the original name of the script was simply “Nāgārī,” and “Devanāgāri” but a later extension of it, the question next to be considered is the explanation of the name “Nāgārī.”

According to the etymology that most readily presents itself—indeed that usually followed by those who treat “Devanāgāri” as a tapatūra or karmadhāraya compound —“Nāgārī,” as the feminine of the adjective nāgara (modifying lipī “script” understood), is a secondary derivative of nāgara “city, town.” But in view of the wide range of meanings that can be implied in an adjective of appurtenance, the specific meaning involved here is obscure. It seems unlikely that by “Nāgārī” was meant the mode of writing that was current in the city as opposed to the country, as this implies the existence of a “country-script” which can scarcely be imagined in any circumstances that prevailed in ancient or medieval India.

Possible, though not provable, is the explanation that the name “Nāgārī” meant the script that originated in the city, i.e., as a product of the refinement and culture of the city. Perhaps a particular city, from which its use spread, was meant, a view suggested in the St. Petersburg lexicon. It is remarkable that Della Valle hazards the guess that “Nāgārī” is derived from the name of a small village called “Naghra,” a few miles from Cambay, where he visited a temple dedicated to Brahmā. But he hesitates in this conjecture because he feels that in —

9 But Othmar Frank in Grammatica Sanscrita nune primum in Germania (Wircburgi, i.e., Würzburg, 1823), pp. 1-2, a work not available to me, but cited from Thumb-Hauschild, p. 188, n. 11, calling the script “Daivanāgarica” (i.e., Daivanagari), makes the curious assertion that it is so named because “it was employed in Daevanzgara (i.e., Daivanagāra), a city of the gods which is said to have once flourished near Kābul”! (Praceipua vero ea est, quae Daevanāgarica nominatur, i.e., Daivanāgarae, in urbe deorum usitata, quae olim prope Cabulem floruisse fertur). This statement is remarkable not only because nowhere else, so far as I know, is a city of this name found, but especially because he calls the script “Daivanagāri” instead of “Devae.” Perhaps this peculiar form of the name, which seems to be an artificial overcorrection of the usual name (v. pendant to note 2 above) as well as the explanation derive ultimately from the English scholar Alexander Hamilton, under whom Frank studied (v. Rosane Rocher’s monograph Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824), a Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology (New Haven, 1968), pp. 109-110.
explaining names, especially place names, resemblances to ordinary words cannot be trusted. The history of the Nāgarī script set forth by Bühler does not seem to favor the view of a particular city as responsible for its invention. The earlier inscriptions, prior to that of Dantidurga, are in fact often characterized by a mixture of Nāgarī letters with letters of the Siddhamātṛkā type whose vertical strokes are capped by wedges instead of horizontal lines. This implies a gradual development of Nāgarī, in the course of which the wedges were extended on either side of the vertical strokes so as to become lines. Since these inscriptions are found in scattered localities in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra, it may be that the types of letters with flared serifs or headlines were styled “nāgarī” in the sense that they were a product of a development common to various cities throughout the whole area.

Agrawala is of the opinion that the name “Devanāgarī” derives from the eastern city of Pāṭaliputra which was famed simply as Nāgara, “the city, the metropolis,” so that anything connected with it, whether a style of architecture or writing, etc., was termed “Nāgarī” (feminine “Nāgari”) “[the such-and-such] of The City (i.e., Pāṭaliputra).” To the name “Nāgarī” thus formed was prefixed “Deva,” which he states is found in Gupta inscriptions as the personal name of King Candragupta II Vikramāditya. But this view seems entirely unsupportable, since, among other reasons, the writing on the Gupta coins, which would accordingly have to be Devanāgarī par excellence, is not Devanāgarī, lacking as it does the horizontal headline, its chief characteristic. Moreover, the Nāgarī script was, as we have noted, not developed in the eastern part of India, but in the west, where all the earliest inscriptions in it have been found.

The adjective nāgara can also be derived from the proper name “Nāgara,” a particular caste of Gujarātī Brahman, who according to Diringer claim to have given the Nāgarī script its name. In the absence of any evidence, however, it is very difficult to appraise this tradition, as it is wholly possible that it arose from the fortuitous similarity between the name of this caste and that of the script. But it is certainly conceivable that the Nāgarī Brahman, while not the inventors of the Nāgarī script, which, as we have seen, was the result of the gradual development of the tendency to spread out the serifs atop the perpendicular strokes of the letters, were somehow connected with its dissemination and popularization. One small point which may perhaps lend some support to the derivation of the name from the Nāgarī Brahman is that Al-Bīrūnī calls the script “Nāgara,” not “Nāgarī,” though in the same passage he speaks of another script which he calls “Ardhanāgarī,” “Half-Nāgarī,” as being an amalgamation of “Nāgara” and the Siddhamātṛkā character. The fact that he uses the feminine form in “Ardhanāgarī” makes it unlikely that he failed to understand the simpler term “Nāgarī” correctly. Can it be that the script was in those days called “Nāgara [lipli]” as well as “Nāgarī”? This possibility is perhaps strengthened by the recurrence of the double forms “Nāgara” and “Nāgarī” in the italianized transcriptions “Nagher” and “Nagheri” in the writings of Pietro della Valle centuries later.

Though “Devanāgarī” is but an extension of the much older name “Nāgara” and is therefore synonymous with it, the two are not interchangeable. Thus, what is Devanāgarī may be called “Nāgarī,” but not all that is Nāgarī may be termed “Devanāgarī.” The reason for this is partly implicit in what was said earlier: Nāgarī developed gradually over a large area, and in the course of this development there arose varieties, some of which at least have come to bear names of their own, e.g., “Bālabodḥ” and “Moḍī,” which are variants used in writing Marāṭhī, and “Nandināgarī” (“Nāgarī of Nandi,” i.e., “Śiva or Viṣṇu,” thus virtually equivalent in meaning to “Devanāgarī”), formerly widely employed in southern India to transcribe Sanskrit mss. None of these variants can be called “Devanāgarī,” but they may all be designated “Nāgarī.” The expanded name “Devanāgarī” may indeed have arisen as a means of distinguishing the basic Nāgari style of writing from some of the less important varieties, or, what is perhaps more plausible, it may have come into use first under the impulse, already explained, of sanctifying the terrestrial name “Nāgarī” and was in the course of time followed by “Nandināgarī” and the others.

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10 The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, from the Old English Translation of 1664 by G. Havens, ed. by Edward Grey (Hakluyt Society, no. 84, London, 1892), pp. 112-113.


14 V. Note 6 above; the ‘h’ in these spellings is simply a device regularly employed in Italian to prevent a ‘g’ followed by ‘e’ or ‘i’ from being pronounced like the ‘j’ in English ‘jump’.