

friends, now threw them into an ecstasy of joy; I am the younger brother of Ravana. I have been insulted and disgraced by him. (This announced his pitiable plight). Since you have declared that even Ravana merits your grace, you are indeed the Saviour of all beings. You are the living embodiment of knowledge, power and every other divine excellence. Hence I have sought refuge in you. I have renounced Lanka, my home, my friends and all the wealth I got through them. To serve you is for me the height of sovereignty, the enjoyment of all desires and bliss supreme in this world and the next. I pray for nothing but service to you”.

Having thus renounced all desires and placed all his burdens on Sri Rama, he prayed for nothing but service to the Lord - the service which he counted as the highest bliss. And to this servant, his Lord and master said, “My friend, the moment you said, ‘surrender!’ it was my duty to have welcomed you. Forgive me for this long delay.” Thus Sri Rama brought peace to the heart of Vibhishana and joyously beheld him for a long while with unwinking eyes. Then Vibhishana said to Rama, “Lord, tell me what service I can do for you with my body?” Rama answered, Let us think of it later. Now serve me through your speech. “Let me have a true account of the strength and weakness of the *rakshasas*.” (The word ‘*rakshasa*’ and the avoidance of ‘your clan’ is significant. Rama means, ‘This is no *rakshasa*, but a member, like myself, of the Ikshvaku race. The butterfly transforms the grub into its own likeness. Even so, the Lord forthwith raises his devotee to equality with himself).

Then Vibhishana spoke out, “Lord, king of kings! Ravana has secured from Brahma the boon that he need have no fear of death from *gandharvas*, *uragas*, *rakshasas* and other created beings. Kumbhakarna my elder and Ravana’s younger brother, is endowed with boundless might and potency; a hero like Indra in battle. Prahasta, the Commander of Ravana’s forces, is famous as a warrior. he worsted Manibhadra, the General of Kubera, in the terrible fight that took place on Mount Kailasa between Ravana and Kubera. Indrajit, the son of Ravana, can keep up a ceaseless shower of arrows. And none can pierce his armour. He has won the favour of Agni by oblations. And in consequence, when he

arrays his forces and stands at their head with bent bow, he is invisible, while his arrows deal death to his foes. Mahodara, Mahaparsva, Akampana and the other leaders are the peers of the World-Guardians in prowess. There are fourteen crores of *rakshasas* in Lanka, whose diet is flesh and blood and who can assume what forms they will. With these at his back, Ravana opposed the World-Guardians and put them to rout. The hosts of heaven who came to help them fled in terror before Ravana."

Rama, of unshaken fortitude, listened to the words of Vibhishana and considered calmly the steps to be taken. Then he said, "I have noted carefully what you say of the valour, might and daring deeds of the *rakshasas*. I shall slay in battle Ravana, his counsellors, kinsmen and armies, and I shall instal you on the throne of Lanka. Take my words as the truth. Ravana may hide himself in Rasatala, Patala or the other under-worlds; he may take refuge with Brahma, who granted him his boons; he cannot escape death, wherever he may be. I shall not go back to Ayodhya without first destroying Ravana and his sons, his kith and kin, his friends and armies. I swear it in the names of my brothers, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna."

Vibhishana was troubled greatly that Rama swore to give him the lordship over Lanka which he knew to be worthless and had rejected in disgust. All that longed for as the highest good was service to Rama. Hence, he saluted Rama with the utmost reverence, knowing that Rama was the bringer of happiness to all beings, and knowing too the infinite value of self-surrender and service to Him. So he said, "Lord, I shall serve you, as long as life lasts, in destroying the *rakshasas* and capturing Lanka. Permit me to join your army and fight for you."

Rama clasped him to his breast with love and made him all his own, for he knew that Vibhishana desired no other reward than service to himself. So he replied, "You should enjoy the fruit that comes to you unsought and by the way. Do not cross my wish." Then he turned to Lakshmana and exclaimed, "Boy, bring me water from the sea. This friend of ours is mighty knower who knows himself through service to me. He never desired power or kingship.

But because he has my grace, the love I bear him should yield golden fruit; and you should see that he enjoys it. Lose no time in crowning him lord of Lanka and ruler of the *rakshasas*."

THE INSTALLATION OF VIBHISHANA

Forthwith Lakshmana, as bidden by Rama, fetched water from the sea and surrounded by the monkey-heroes and in the presence of the monkey-hosts, installed Vibhishana, the supreme devotee, as the Lord of Lanka. The monkey-hosts witnessed the boundless compassion and yearning of Rama towards his devotees and rent the air with shouts of joy, "Good! Good!""

(The crowning took place in the presence of the monkey-lords, so that Vibhishana might not disclaim it later on and Rama bound himself publicly to carry out his promise without fail. And this was done *at the bidding of Rama*. This makes it clear that Vibhishana accepted the crown only because he could not disobey the command of his chosen Master).

Later, Hanuman and Sugriva took Vibhishana aside and said, "Friend, now are we to cross this waste of waters, the realm of Varuna? It is not only ourselves, but these countless monkeys that we have to take over to the other side."

Vibhishana replied, "Let Raghuvira throw himself at the mercy of the Lord of the Ocean, who will then be moved to suggest a suitable plan. This vast and unplumbed watery waste was dug by the sons of Sagara of the Ikshvaku line. The Lord of the Ocean is a kinsman, at it were of Rama, and will assuredly help him at need. The Ocean-king is not one who forgets a favour."

Vibhishana, of ready resource, gave this advice and Sugriva and Hanuman took it to Rama. He in turn was much pleased with it, since virtue was his very nature. Though he could accomplish unaided whatever he willed, he wished to pay due respect to the timely advice of Vibhishana. He turned to Sugriva with a smile and said, "Sugriva! Lakshmana! I like this suggestion of Vibhishana. Sugriva is famed for his intelligence; and you are past masters in


planning. Let me know what seems to you expedient, after mutual consultation.”

They clasped their hands in reverence and said, “We have no other resource left to us. What Vibhishana suggests is easy and conducive to our welfare. Hence, we both approve of it. Neither gods nor demons can approach Lanka without building a causeway across this terrible ocean. The words of Vibhishana, expert in counsel, are true and acceptable. Therefore, let us make no delay. Pray to the Ocean-king. There is no other means for us and our armies to reach Lanka, the island ruled by Ravana.”

Then Sri Rama laid himself on a bed of holy grass. And he shone like the blazing fire in the sacrificial pit.

CHAPTER 20

RAVANA SEEKS TO WIN OVER SUGRIVA

 WHEN Sardula, the *rakshasa*, came to the sea-shore and beheld the forces of Sugriva. He was the secret emissary of the wicked Ravana. (The ruler of Lanka was wicked because he broke the rules of kingly polity to send his emissaries at the wrong time). Sardula observed the army carefully from all sides and, going quickly to Ravana, cried, “Your Majesty, a huge army of monkeys is marching towards our Lanka. Encamped on the sea-shore, it covers a space of ten *yojanas* and looks like another ocean. Rama and Lakshmana, the sons of Dasaratha, armed with noble weapons, have come in quest of Sita. I had only a general view. It is for Your Majesty to find out the whole truth. Send out messengers to bring you news as soon as possible. Force cannot avail against Rama. Let us try, in suitable ways, the other means of alliance, gifts and dissension”. Ravana listened, considered all that he had heard, decided what he should do and, sending for Suka, a master of clever speech, said, “Suka, go at once to Sugriva and deliver him this message of mine, correctly, sweetly and courageously : ‘Your Majesty, you are the son of the Lord of Day. Mighty beyond compare, you were begotten

on earth by the *vanara*-hero, Riksharajas, the grandson of Brahma. Thus you are my kinsman. You have nothing to gain by depending on Rama; you have nothing to lose by giving him up; nor again do you gain anything by making me your enemy. Moreover, Vali is one of my dear friends; and so you stand to me as a younger brother, and it is just and proper that you should join me. If I carry away the wife of Rama, how does it concern you? What do you lose thereby? You are no fool; think deeply over what I have said and take your way back to Kishkindha. You may not like giving up an action once begun. But remember, neither gods nor demons can raise their eyes and look at Lanka. Do you think mere men and monkeys can set foot in it?"

Forthwith Suka took the form of a bird, crossed the ocean and, standing in the sky above the monkey-army, delivered to Sugriva the message of Ravana without missing a word. Meanwhile, the monkeys sprang up into the sky, caught Suka, hit him hard, and began tearing his flesh and breaking his bones. Unable to bear this assault, Suka fell down from the sky. Even then the monkeys tortured him and he cried, "Alas, Rama, call these back. Is a messenger to be slain? He who speaks his own mind, not the messenger of his master, he is no true messenger and he alone deserves such punishment." Hearing these piteous words, Rama said to the monkeys. "Slay him not." At once the *rakshasa* rose into the sky and disregarding the torments he had suffered at the hands of the monkeys who broke his wings, he cried, "Sugriva, mightier than the mightiest! What is there for me to tell you? Consider deeply your own strength and the prowess of Ravana, the terror of the worlds. If I take no answer back from you, Ravana will surely slay me."

Hearing this, Sugriva, of matchless might and courage, sent this reply to Ravana : "Oh! Rakshasa! you are no friend of mine. How dare you call yourself my brother? There is no reason why I should pity you. I have received no benefit at your hands nor do I love you. Being the foe of Rama my friend, you are my enemy as well. Further, as the friend of Vali, my enemy, you are my enemy as well. Hence, even though you have not offended me directly, this is reason enough for slaying you as Vali was slain. I shall slay you and your

sons, your cousins and kinsfolk and have your capital reduced to ashes with my myriad of monkeys. Fool! For your offences your followers too will be destroyed. The gods and heavenly rulers may guard with the utmost care; yet, Rama will not let you escape, you may think that Rama can do nothing to you if you flee from Lanka. But whether you hide yourself in the orbit of the Sun or seek shelter in the worlds beneath, wherever you may go, you cannot escape him. You being the foe of Rama, none in all the worlds, no *rakshasa*, *pisacha*, *gandharva*, *asura* or *deva*, none dare offer protection to you. Am I to be frightened by the threat that you will kill me, as you killed Jatayu, for taking the side of Rama? Are you proud of dealing a death-blow to the vulture, old in years, infirm in every limb? All this won't pass current with me.


"You may say, Rama could do nothing when I carried away his wife. And what can he do now? Well, if you had attempted the deed when he was there to protect her, then you would have known what he was capable of, why so much? It would have been enough if Lakshmana was there. You are yet to realise the offence you have done to Rama by stealing his beloved wife. You are yet to know the might of his wrath. What a world of harm have you brought upon yourself by taking Sita away from her home and keeping her a prisoner! Immensely mighty, highly intelligent, immovable even by the Gods, the finest flower of the Ikshvaku race, such is Rama, but you are unaware of his real nature. His arrows will soon drink up your life."

Then Angada, the son of Vali, cried fiercely, "Your Majesty! this is no messenger, but a spy sent by the enemy to discover our secrets. There is no sin in slaying him. Staying here, he must have noted everything worth knowing about us. He should not be allowed to go back to Lanka. Seize him quick. Sugriva agreed and the monkeys sprang up into the sky, caught hold of Suka, heedless of his cries of agony, bound him tight and tortured him cruelly. Unable to bear this, he cried to Rama, "Son of Dasaratha, the monkeys have broken my wings and pierced my eyes. If I die at their hands, the burden of all my sins from the time of my birth to this moment will have to be borne by you." At those piteous words of Suka,

Rama said to the monkeys, "Let him go in peace." They drove him to the southern shore of the ocean and left him there.

CHAPTER 21

RAMA'S WRATH WITH THE OCEAN-KING

HEN Rama spread sacred grass on the sands and laid himself on it. Though born of a line that offered refuge to all beings, yet he clasped hands of prayer to the Ocean-king. With eyes turned to the east and head resting on his right as a pillow, he lay facing the waters like one vast ocean beside another. No one dare approach him. Brought up in luxury by King Dasaratha, his delicate body lay stretched on rough stones. Alas! he the refuge of all the worlds, he was now reduced to seek refuge with the Ocean-king. When Rama was in his seat on high, as Mahavishnu in Vaikuntha, and when he came down to Ayodhya as a man among men, this arm was brilliant with curiously wrought ornaments of gold and precious gems. The arm was smeared of old sandal, aloe, saffron and other aromatic stuff, in various patterns, during bath and decoration by the fingers of noble ladies richly be-jewelled. Thus adorned, it used to shine like the morning sun. Like the huge serpent Takshaka disporting itself on the flooded Ganga, it used to rest on the fine bed filled with swan's feathers. It was the arm on which Sita used to rest her head as on a pillow. Like the bolt across a fortress-gate, it barred the approach of enemies in the battle-field. It poured oblations into the fire of their grief and spread boundless joy among his friends. Long and round like the trunk of an elephant, it was the stay and support of all the world. It bore a scar caused by constant contact with the bow-string. It was hard and strong like the revolving pillar of an oil-press. It was the arm that had given away countless cows.

With this right arm as a pillow, Rama lay down and sought the favour of the Ocean-king. He who offered refuge to all created beings, Ramachandra, said to himself, "This day I will either cross the sea or meet my death. Controlling mind, speech and body in the prescribed manner, he propitiated and prayed to the Ocean-king."

(The women referred to above were noble ladies customarily employed in such work in olden days).

For three days and three nights did Rama lie on the sacred grass in the prescribed manner. (Though he was omnipotent, yet sought the help of the Ocean-king because he wanted to set an example of propitiation and prayer. He proved by his own practice his faith in the doctrine of self-surrender. As the Lord's devotees seek refuge in him, through the intercession of Mahalakshmi, so Raghava sought refuge in the Lord of the Ocean taking the rivers as intercessors. He could, if he chose, destroy all creation by moving his little finger; yet he wanted to show to the world that a king should try and exhaust friendly methods before resorting to force. He knew that he should not punish one who was not guilty). Even though with restrained mind and senses Sri Rama offered due worship to the Lord of the sea, the latter, blinded by ignorance, made no response. (Why did Rama's surrender to the Lord of the Ocean prove fruitless? A *brahmana* conducting the Rajasuya and such like rites not meant for him gains nothing. Even so, he seeks refuge in another must himself be helpless and unable to save himself. But Rama was omnipotent. Why should he seek another's help? As he was not qualified, he failed in his attempt).

Then Rama grew wroth with the ruler of the waters; his eyes were blood-shot. He was aware of the anger in his heart and, turning to Lakshmana with a smile, said, "This Ocean-king is mighty proud, is he not? He has not yet chosen to come out and meet us. Foolish people mistake a noble forbearance for mere weakness. If a man does not give way to wrath, or if he suffers in patience some offence, if he is open-hearted and soft-spoken, he is put down as lacking strength and skill. On the contrary, the boastful and cunning man, the man who is cruel and terrible and punishes indiscriminately the good and bad, this man is held in awe and respect. Conciliatory means cannot secure for us the fame won by valour or victory on the battle-field. This day shall my fiery shafts slay the monsters of the deep and cover its surface with their floating carcasses and the maimed and mangled bodies of huge serpents and sea-elephants. I shall dry up with my fiery arrows the sea which is the home of conch and pearl, of fish and crocodile.

You may say, "This does not become you, who bears patience as a precious jewel; but even after resolving to dry up the waters, I humbly prayed to this Ocean-king and clasped his feet. This king looks on me as a helpless creature, me who can cross unaided his watery waste. Patience and forbearance are entirely out of place with such as these. He is but the watchman of a piece of water, the dwelling place of fish, crocodiles and serpents. Yet he clean forgets his smallness and think he is my equal and the king of Ayodhya and Kosala.

You may say, "This is not the time to lose patience." But this fellow deserves no kindness. *Rakshasas* abide in his bosom and, through long association with them, his mind has been warped.

"Lakshmana, I waited till now in the hope that, perhaps frightened by my angry words, he would make his appearance here. But still he does not come. So bring me my bow fitted with *guna*, so that I may bring to his senses this fellow without *guna*. (Here there is a pun upon the word *guna*. It means bowstring and also excellence). Bring me my bow with the three graceful bends, so that I might make this fellow bend and bow. (The sea offers a resting place to Adi-Sesha. Lakshmana, the incarnation of Sesha, was filled with pity for the sea and delayed so long to hand the bow to Rama. He noted it and said) "Son of Sumitra! Do you think proper to obey the words of your mother and not my words. Even so, what were the words of your mother when she parted from you at Ayodhya? 'Rama is hereafter Dasaratha for you; be not slack in the service of Rama, when you are with him in the woods.' (Now Lakshmana brought him the bow. Rama noticed it and said). Bring me my arrows too. (Lakshmana brought some arrows used in sport, but Rama exclaimed). Bring me arrows that are deadly and cruel even like those serpents that kill at sight. (Lakshmana asked him, "What use are these shafts to one who could cross the waters?" And Rama replied), This Ocean-king has not appeared before me and given me leave to build a causeway. Now it is too late, for I will dry up the waters to the last drop. (The arrows of Rama could reduce to ashes anything they are sent against. But if Rama can do so with a single arrow why should he call for more than one?

It might be that he desired to blot out the ocean from existence, or he spoke in wrath, unconscious of his real might).

This ocean was dug by the sons of my ancestor, King Sagara, and he behaves with me as an envious cousin. I will give him back the same treatment. What took sixty thousand men to dig I shall dry up single-handed. My monkeys shall trample under-foot the head of him who stands between me and my purpose. (He means that there is no need for a bridge across the sea. The monkeys can easily walk across it, if it is dry ground). This thing called unshakable till now, will quake and tremble before my wrath. This thing contained within its boundaries till now, I shall drive it to break all bounds and overflow the earth. Well, the *danavas* and Varuna himself cannot save it from this fate, do what they might." He grasped his bow, rolled his eyes in wrath and, blazing like the fire on the day of dissolution, bent his bow and drew the string to his ear. He placed keen shafts on it and, even as Indra the unapproachable shoots his *vajra*, he discharged his keen shafts at the ocean till the universe trembled in fear.

The shafts, swift and radiant, entered the waters and filled with fear the huge serpents therein. The waves, rising mountain high, dashed against the shore, roaring aloud and scattering on it crocodiles and other monsters of the deep. A dreadful storm began to blow. The rushing waters strewed the sands with conches, pearls, corals and gems. The water boiled and swirled, as the arrows emitted flames and smoke. The ocean overflowed on all sides. Huge serpents emitted sparks on fire from their eyes and mouths, unable to bear the arrowy conflagration. The *asuras* and the *danavas* in the nether world, were sorely afflicted. Their strength could not prevail against Rama's arrows. Waves, huge like Vindhya, Mandara and Meru, chased one another with a mighty roar and dashed against the shore the creatures of the deep. The waves swirled round, *rakshasas* and *nagas* were dazed, the corpses of terrible sea-monsters floated; it was a fearful sight. Rama of boundless prowess hissed in wrath; he bent his bow, with the intent to discharge irresistible weapons and drew the bow-string taut, when Lakshmana cried out in entreaty, "Brother, this fury becomes you not. Forbear,

Forbear". Rama paid no heed, when Lakshmana held firmly with his hand the bow Kodanda.

CHAPTER 22

BUILDING THE CAUSEWAY

RAMA sought refuge with the Ocean-king and prayed for his help to enable the monkey-troops to cross the sea. When the Lord of the Ocean failed to appear, he said to Lakshmana, "Bring me my bow." Even then the Ocean-king did not make his appearance. Then Rama troubled the water with his arrows. Even then there was no response. Rama, to frighten him still further, put on a vile of uncontrollable anger: "This very moment I shall dry you up to the nether most depth. The very name of ocean will cease to be. My arrows will parch the whole earth with not a touch of moisture anywhere. Dust, fine dust alone will remain, even if all the clouds of Indra join together and pour down rain for untold aeons. You may say, "when the waters are dried up, the underworld *patala* will be exposed to view, which none can enter. Then it is through the sky that you must take your way to Lanka. Why not do so even now? Why, waste your rage on me?" I answer, "The arrows from my Kodanda are enough to transport the *vanaras* to Lanka. But you have no idea of my strength and prowess. By association with the *danavas*, to whom you have offered a resting place, you have come to share their ignorance. You have no idea of what you suffer at the hands of the Brahmastra that I shall employ against you." So saying, he took an arrow that was never known to fail, even like the rod of Brahma (Brahmadanda), and placed it on the string after infusing it with the *astra* of Brahma, and sped it from the noble Kodanda. (Brahmadanda means the curse launched by Brahma or a comet with three colours and a head, unspeakably malignant, as the *Narada Samhita* would have it).

(Tirtha is of opinion that the Ocean-king was entirely unconscious of the great danger that threatened him. Rama could, if he chose, throw a bridge of arrows over the sea; or he could freeze the water thereof or dry it up, and make his troops walk over it.

He prayed to the Ocean-king only because he wanted to observe the traditional doctrine of surrender. Omnipotent though he was, yet he wanted to set an example to the world and hence sought the help of the Lord of the waters. But if the latter failed to respond, he has to pay for it).

Then the sky and the earth seemed to explode; huge mountains quaked to their foundations. Darkness descended on the earth; the quarters were hidden from view; lakes and rivers were troubled; the Sun and Moon were perversely mixed with the stars; the sky was filled with gloom. The Sun's rays were dull and feeble. Countless meteors glimmered here and there. Terrible thunderclaps, of the nature of *Nirghata*, fell from the sky with a mighty roar. (The *Brihat samhita* of Varahamihira describes the meteor as having a short tail and broad expanding head. *Nirghata* is the clashing of two winds in the sky and their falling to the earth).

Avaha, *Pravaha* and the other winds were displaced from their courses and wandered adrift. Frightful storms crashed down mighty trees, scattered cloud-banks to the winds, tore away mountain-tops and ground them to dust. Huge cloud-banks hid the sky and, dashing against one another with a mighty roar, gave rise to terrible thunder and lightning. All visible beings and likewise spirits that are unseen quaked in terror, roared like thunder and fell on the earth in deadly faint. The arrows of Rama caused the billows of the ocean to rise and swell with terrible speed. When the Brahmastra was shot at the waters, the waves surged up and it was frightful to see the *nagas*, *rakshasas* and other creatures dashed about on all sides. The ocean that was never known to cross its frontiers rushed over the earth one *yojana* all round and hid it from view. Rama would not punish further the waters that ran away from him in afright. He whose arrows drank up the life-breaths of his foes felt a twinge of pity for the haughty Ocean-king.

Then, like the Sun emerging from behind Mount Meru, the guardian deity of the ocean rose from its depths. Huge serpents with flaming mouths surrounded him. His body shone like an emerald mountain. He was adorned with curiously fashioned jewels made of gold known as Jambunada and Jatarupa and also with the



Drumakutya is famous even as you are. Some robbers make it their home. They come of the clan of Abhiras or Mahasubhas and are frightful like in looks and behaviour. Their very touch sends pangs of agony through me. Pray, direct at them and satisfy the desire."

noble gems produced in the ocean depths. He resembled the Himalayas shining with many veins of ore. His eyes were lovely like the petals of the lotus. A garland of red flowers was thrown about his shoulders. He wore red garments and there was on his head a chaplet of flowers of many kinds and colours. A rope of pearls with a pendent of red lay on his broad chest, like the gem Kaustubha on the breast of Mahavishnu. Huge billows swirled round him. The ocean was disturbed by cloud-banks and fierce storms. Huge monsters of the deep came out of their homes above. The *uragas* and *rakshasas* were panic-stricken.

Then the Lord of the Ocean came towards Rama quickly, proclaiming his friendly intent by calling out to him with his palms joined over his head. He spoke to Raghava as he leaned gracefully on his mighty bow. "Earth, water, air, fire and ether, the five elements, observe for ever the laws of their existence. Omnipotent as you are, you need no help from me. What would you have? Should the Ocean know no depth at all? Or should the waters cease to flow and harden? Or should the things you spread on them to build a bridge be prevented from sinking? It is my nature to be deep and impassable. I cannot go against this and exist. I cannot deprive myself of the quality of depth. Nor, from desire for power or unwillingness to part from a possession or out of fear of punishment, can I keep the waters still and cause pain and harm to the creatures dwelling in them. King of kings, it is you who establish and sustain the law of every order of existence. I shall serve you within the limits of my power. Until the *vanara*-army has crossed over, no monkey shall fall into the sea or suffer harm from the creatures of the deep. I shall see to it that the causeway that you build is firm like the very earth and no part of it is swallowed up by the waters."

And to him replied Rama, "But the Brahmastra that I have shot at you can never fail. Where would you have me divert it?" The king of the waters listened, cast eye on the dreadful Brahmastra itself and said, "Lord! to the north of this place there is a lovely spot. Its name Drumakulya is famous even as you are. Some robbers make it their home. They come of the clan of Abhiras or Mahasudras and are frightful alike in looks and behaviour. Their very touch sends pangs of agony through me. Pray, direct at them and satisfy the *astra*."

Rama did so and, turned the *astra* towards the place indicated. The spot where it fell like a huge bright thunderbolt became famous as Marukantara. Pierced by the arrow, the earth roared in pain, and through the cleft there sprang, from the nether world Rasatala, a stream of water. Vranakupa is the name given to it. There is difference between it and the salt water of the sea. The earth burst with a dreadful noise where the arrow touched it; and the water there was dried up to the last drop. Rama thus removed the curse that hung over the place, and gave it name and fame as Marukantara and precious boon besides. (A doubt may arise whether Rama who was now a man among men could grant boons. But Valmiki's considered opinion is that Rama brings the countless worlds under his sway through the power or truth, hence his wisdom and prowess).

At the touch of Rama's arrow, the place was transformed into a meadow of tender grass dear to cows. The trees were heavily laden with leaves, flowers and fruits. Honey roots and bulbs, milk, oil, perfumes, and potent medicinal plants, were to be had in plenty there. Through the power of Rama's boon, the spot became salubrious and blessed with countless beauties.

Then the Ocean-king addressed Raghuvira, the master of all arts and sciences and said, "There is in your troop a *vanara* named Nala. He is the son of Visvakarma, the architect of the heaven-world. He granted a boon to his wife — "You will have of me a son like unto myself in every way." Nala is thus the equal of his father. Let him construct a causeway across the waters. I shall honour him even as I would honour Visvakarma. And I shall see that any substance placed by him is not drowned or washed away." He circumambulated Rama, bowed low before him and went back to his own home. (The Ocean-king did right in getting his enemies punished through Ramachandra. Yet he was mortally afraid of Ravana and wanted to assure himself that Rama was mighty enough to bring him to his death. This explains his otherwise unaccountable delay — Govindaraja).

Then Nala stood forth and said to Rama, "I will throw a causeway over the boundless waters. The Ocean-king has spoken the truth. I have the same skill as my father. Verily nothing in the

world is as effective as the use of force. Other policies like conciliation, gifts and sowing discord fail utterly when directed against one who knows no gratitude at all. This Ocean-king, of dreadful prowess, has made our path safe and shallow, because he is curious to see you build the causeway and because he is afraid of your heavy hand”.

“Once upon a time, when my father dwelt on the mountain Mandara with my mother, he said to her, “You will have of me a son like myself in form and prowess.” The Ocean-king has reminded me of it. What he says is true. I knew this secret before. But I thought that no one would believe me if I began this great task after proclaiming my ability myself. Hence I waited until some one else should speak of it. I can build a causeway across the ocean. Let the monkey-heroes bring me the requisite materials.” Rama ordered accordingly. Thousands of monkeys ranged over mountain and forest. They uprooted trees of mountainous bulk and dragged them to the shore. Teak, *bilva*, *saptaparna*, mango and other trees were brought there, some with roots, some without, and some heavy with fruits, flowers, leaves and shoots. The lofty trees lay by the sea-shore, like the flag-staffs of Indra set up for a festival. Mighty monkeys tore up huge boulders like elephants and transported them to the sea shore. The Ocean, which was naturally rough there, rose to the skies when the trees, rocks and boulders were thrown on it. The monkeys stirred the waters to their depth. Some took with them long ropes to see that a causeway a hundred *yojanas* in length was laid straight across the sea.

Thus, while Nala built a pathway over the sea, the monkeys brought him huge rocks and wrought feats impossible for others in their desire to render him help. Some busied themselves with rods to measure the work done. Staff in hand, some monkeys supervised the work of the others. Some examined the causeway to make sure that it was smooth and even. Some searched out monkeys taking rest in the shade of trees and set them again to work. In pursuance of the orders of Sri Rama, countless monkeys helped to build the causeway with mountain peaks huge as cloud-banks and with logs and grass and flowering trees. (The flowers and grass were laid on the causeway to make the road smooth and pleasant). Many



you swiftly through the sky to the other shore. Kama and Laksh-
mana, fully-armed, together with Sugriva, led the monkey-troops,
their faces lit up by the Ganges of Victory. The other monkeys
came over, some along the middle and some along the sides of the

monkeys, resembling elephants in rut, carried with speed of wind huge boulders and mountain peaks. The roar of the waves was drowned by the splash of falling blocks and the crashing down of mountain peaks. Monkeys of terrible strength and bulk joyously laid a length of fourteen *yojanas* on the first day, of twenty *yojanas* on the second day, of twenty-one on the third day, of twenty-two on the fourth day, and of twenty-three on the fifth day, keeping before them mount Suvela as the point to be reached on the other shore. Nala, the mighty son of Visvakarma, built the causeway with all the skill of his father, and it shone in the sea like Svati in the sky. (The Sun has three paths before him — Dakshina, Uttara and Madhyama. The Rishabha path extends over the constellations Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni and Magha; the Madhya path covers Hasta, Chitra and Svati. The Aja path extends over Jyeshtha, Visakha and Anuradha. These three are called the middle paths — *Vayu Purana*).

Then hosts of *devas*, *gandharvas*, *siddhas* and *maharshis* gathered in the sky above to have a look at that wonder. The causeway was one hundred *yojanas* in length and ten in breadth. No one else could have built it. They were delighted when they saw it lie on the waters, as an emblem of the mighty intellect of Nala.

The monkeys were overjoyed to see that the road was laid without a hitch. Some ran, some leaped, some danced, some roared and some stood still, stunned by the construction which was unthinkable and impossible for anyone else. Monkeys, millions of them, even as they rendered help to the workmen, reached the other shore. Like the parting in the hair of a lovely lady, it lay on the waters broad and firm, fair and flawless. There were no ups and downs, no cracks, or holes in it; so skilfully had Nala constructed it. On the southern shore of the sea, Vibhishana, club in hand, surrounded by his ministers, kept watch against foes. Then Sugriva said to Rama, "May it please you, lead the way. Let Hanuman carry you on his shoulders and Angada carry Lakshmana. They will take you swiftly through the sky to the other shore. Rama and Lakshmana, fully-armed, together with Sugriva, led the monkey-troops, their faces lit up by the Goddess of Victory. The other monkeys came over, some along the middle and some along the sides of the

road, while others waited till there was room on the causeway but some threw themselves into the sea and swam across. Others flew through the sky like Garuda. To the roar of the ocean was added the terrible noise they made. The monkey-troops crossed that dreadful sea with ease and safety, along the path laid by Nala. They reached the other shore and, under the orders of Sugriva, encamped in a place abounding in fruits, roots, bulbs and water. The gods, the *siddhas*, the *charanas*, and the *maharshis* gazed upon the work accomplished by Rama, impossible for others to dream of, praised him highly, for building the causeway skilfully over the waters. This causeway was an auspicious sign that the heads of Ravana, the terror of the worlds, were about to fall. They wished to hide their boundless joy until Ravana was destroyed. But, unable to suppress it, they crowded round Raghava, whom men and gods alike adorned, and offered him their worship and praise in the prescribed manner; "Rama! Lord of the universe. You have come down among men to save them! Destroy all your foes and rule for long ages, the broad earth girdled by the oceans."

CHAPTER 23

GOOD OMENS

RAMA, who was an expert in the science of signs and portents, was glad that the long-expected war was drawing near. He turned to Lakshmana, who was equally versed in the signs and their meaning and said, "My dear boy, station our forces in forests rich in water and fruits and array them in the form of Garuda. We now approach the great terror that will wipe away ordinary people. Heroes will perish. Bears, monkeys and *rakshasas* will be slain. The winds blow confusedly; the earth quakes; mountain-peaks tremble; huge trees crash down suddenly. Cloud-banks, of the hue of wolves bearing frightful shapes, and covered by vultures, pour down ghastly rain mixed with blood. (Varahamihira tells us that the ruin of kingdoms is foretold by earth-quakes at twilight, meteors falling and stars seen during the day, thunderbolts and rain mixed with wood, grass, and blood). The twilight sky is covered by cloud-banks of scarlet hue. Fiery blocks break off from the sun and fall on

the earth. Cruel beasts and birds howl and cry helplessly in piteous tones, raising their heads to the sun. They speak of impending danger to the worlds. The moon at night is lustreless, yet burns the earth. Around the setting sun are seen rings, fiery red in the centre, of light red in the middle, and utter black without. Such terrible things unknown before are visible during the time of dissolution.

(If there are two rings round the sun, troops and armies meet with destruction; if three, kings die; if a ring is seen round the sun in the first quarter of the day, it bodes evil to all beings; if in the second, it means storm, rain and battle; if in the third it indicates good and happiness; if in the fourth it is sure to end in universal destruction — Kasyapa). Dark spots appear on the face of the sun, till now pure and flawless. (Except during the full and the new moons, Rahu should not attack the sun and the moon; again there should be no spots or cracks visible in the two spheres; if they are, it means utter ruin of kingdoms — Varahamihira). Stars are very dim; it seems as if the day of dissolution is at hand. Crows, vultures, and eagles are worsted by puny birds. Jackals howl fearfully. When the *rakshasas* and the monkeys engage in the battle armed with stones, spears and swords, the earth will be a miry mass of blood and flesh. Let us make our entry from all sides into this city of Lanka till now defended by Ravana from the approach of any one."

He was the embodiment of *dharma*; the hero of heroes; the extremely skilful and intelligent. His face bright with the thought of the coming battle, his splendour illuminating the space around, he set out towards Vibhishana and Sugriva and the monkey-heroes were confident that they would destroy their enemies. Roaring with joy, they set out to find a likely place for their forces to camp. Rama had half a doubt whether, with all their strength and valour, the monkey-forces would not be frightened and dispirited at the sight of the dreadful ocean and the fortification of Lanka. But he was now free from anxiety and filled with joy when he saw that they were eagerly looking forward to the battle. Intent on fulfilling his wishes, they jumped and roared, brandished their tails and lashed the earth with them in sheer joy.

CHAPTER 24

RAVANA INFORMED OF RAMA'S ARRIVAL

Like the full moon of the autumn, conjoined to an auspicious constellation, the monkey-host camped in a comfortable spot at the orders of Rama and enjoyed a spell of rest. The troops of Sugriva, boundless like the ocean, spread over the earth which trembled under the weight. There came to them from Lanka the sounds of drums, kettle-drums, and other instruments of martial music. Mixed with the roar of the *rakshasa*-forces, these dreadful sounds caused one's hair to stand on end. Filled with joy, the monkeys could not stand this and roared loud enough to drown the shouts of the *rakshasas*. Like huge cloud-banks roaring in the sky during the rains, the monkey-hosts could be heard all over Lanka.

At the sight of Lanka, brilliant with curious banners and flags, Rama's thought turned towards Sita with sadness "Alas, like the star Rohini in the cruel grip of Mars, my Janaki, with the eyes of a frightened deer, is held in prison here by the *rakshasas*." He heaved a deep sigh. But reminding himself that this was inexpedient on the eve of battle, he restrained his grief, turned to Lakshmana, standing by, and trying to change his thoughts by descanting on the beauties of Lanka, said, "Boy, behold how beautifully Visvakarma has fashioned the city of Lanka on Trikuta hill! Like a thing of pure imagination, it touches the sky. With its towers and palaces this town looks like the sky covered with white fleecy clouds. Surrounded by forests and groves, rich in fruits and flowers, it shines like Chaitraratha, the garden of Kubera. Birds of many kinds sing sweetly here. Bees, drunk with honey, and cuckoos rest on clusters of flowers. I think that all flowers and fruits could be had in every season in this place. The breeze blows soft and pleasant." Thus did he praise the city of Ravana.

Then he arrayed his army according to the rules laid down in the art of war and said, "Let Angada and Nila take their places

at the heart of this array. Rishabha on the right and Gandhamadana like an elephant in rut, on the left, will guard the flanks. Myself and Lakshmana will be at the head. Jambavan, Sushena and Vegadarsi will be in its stomach. Even as the Lord Varuna protects the western quarter of the world, Sugriva will guard the tail." (This shows that the army was arrayed in the shape of the bird Garuda). The hosts that shone like huge clouds in the sky, were thus protected by mighty heroes. Armed with peaks and huge trees, the monkeys were ready at any moment to destroy Lanka. They said to themselves, "We shall grind this city into dust by the huge boulders or by our bare fists."

Then Rama turned to Sugriva and said, we have arrayed our troops; now let Suka be set free."

Tortured by the monkeys and quaking in fear, Suka, like one half-dead, ran to Ravana and fell at his feet. The Lord of Lanka, noting his dismal state laughed and cried, "Did you fall into the hands of the wayward monkeys? It seems that you were in their power for a while. Why are your wings broken? What is the reply of Sugriva?" But Suka was dazed and could hardly think. Yet his fear of Ravana's wrath made him blurt out, "Lord, at your orders I went to the northern shore of the sea and delivered your message to Sugriva. Though my speech was sweet and mild, those monkeys, catching sight of me, sprang at me and trampled me under foot; in their mad fury began to break my wings. By nature they are fierce, malignant, cruel; it is impossible to have speech with them; much less to get a reply to any message. Raghunatha has come here seeking Sita; he is surrounded by hordes of monkeys who own the sway of Sugriva. Rama is a mighty hero who has already despatched Viradha, Kabandha, Khara and other foes. Throwing a road over the sea, he has crossed it as if it were a little puddle caused by the hoof of a cow. This wonder has never been heard of or seen till now. All our *rakshasas*, what are they before him? He stands there roaring like a lion, leaning upon Kodanda, his mighty bow. If such are his anger and prowess on merely hearing of yourself and your forces, I know not what will become of us when he meets us face to face. Monkeys and bears hide the earth from view, huge like mountains or cloud-banks. You may say, 'Go back in some other


shape and have speech with them.' But it is utterly impossible to bring about reconciliation between the *rakshasa* and the monkey-forces any more than between the gods and *danavas*. Restore Sita to Rama before the army enters our city; or else be prepared to fight."

As he heard these words of Suka, sparks of fire flashed forth from the eyes of Ravana, as if they would burn Suka to ashes. "You wicked wretch! What did you say? I am to restore Sita, can I? Gods, *gandharvas*, *danavas* may face me in battle; all created beings may join together and try to frighten me; yet I will not give back Sita." When will my arrows cover the body of Rama like bees drowsily crowding on a tree heavy with flowers and foliage in spring? When will I discharge in a ceaseless shower the deadly arrows in my quiver, and drive him before me with the flames of my shafts as hunters of elephants chase them with lighted torches? As the rising sun swallows up the lustre of the other planets, even so I shall devour this monkey-host and the valour of this Rama whom you praise so highly. I am mighty like the ocean and swift like the wind. Rama, son of Dasaratha, is not yet fully aware of my prowess. Else, he would not have thought of facing me in battle. Well, the time has come for him to learn. He does not know that in my quiver lie my terrible arrows, all idle and hissing fiercely like venomous serpents. Else, he would never dream of standing against me in battle. Rama has never witnessed my prowess on the battle-field. The armies of the enemy are specious dancing-floor; my bow is a *vina*; my arrows are the plectrum playing on the wires. I make my appearance on the battle-field, bend my bow, draw it to the ear, twang it with a mighty noise; my foes quake in terror and cry piteously at my frightful form and the speck of my arrowy shower. Those whom my shafts torture howl in pain and agony. These dreadful sounds resemble the skilful execution of master of the *vina* when he rings upon the wires in the three octaves. Rama will have time to behold my feats of wonderful variety, impossible for others."

Indra who boasts of his thousand eyes, Varuna whose sons I have worsted in battle, Yama, the lord of departed ancestors, Kubera my elder brother, can they ever employ their weapons against me and hope to win? Why speak of this Rama, this mere man, the son of Dasaratha, who trembled and fled at the sight of me?

CHAPTER 25

RAVANA SENDS SUKA AND SARANA

 **MAKING** human form, Rama came down into the world as the son of Dasaratha; he crossed the sea with his monkey-hosts and camped before Lanka like a spirited lion. But Ravana was nearing his end; and proud of his strength, he turned to his ministers, Suka and Sarana, and said, "How wonderful! the monkeys, millions in number, have really crossed this sea that was impassable till now. Rama has laid a road over the waters. Have such things been seen or heard of anywhere? Those in whom I place the utmost confidence may assure me all this is true; but unless I see it directly with my own eyes, I shall not believe it. Again, I must have a correct idea of the strength of the monkey-forces. Go and enter the enemy's ranks unknown to any. Who are the ministers in whom Rama and Sugriva place trust? Who stand in front on every occasion and in every mission? Who are the heroes there? How was his causeway thrown across the sea? Where is the enemy's army encamped? What is the strength and what are the weapons of Rama and Lakshmana? What steps are we to take? Who is the general that leads these mighty monkeys? Mark these things carefully and minutely and bring me true news with speed." (This Suka is not the *rakshasa* spoken of before).

So they entered the enemy forces in the shape of monkeys. They found it boundless, fearful, beyond count and enough to make one's hair stand on end. It was encamped on mountain peaks, dark caves, beautiful valleys, sea-shore, forests and groves. Some of them had crossed the sea, some were crossing it; some were about to do so; some had already selected comfortable quarters; some were asleep. Like another ocean, it was noisy, unapproachable, and dreadful.

In spite of their disguise Suka and Sarana were found out by Vibhishana, who took them to Rama. "Lord, Suka and Sarana, these two before us, are the ministers of Ravana. They have come here from Lanka with intent to know and report everything about us." The *rakshasas* were sore afraid and despaired of going back

alive. They clasped hand in prayer and cried to Rama, "Lord! Soul of mercy! We were sent by Ravana to discover and report to him all about your armies. Best and bravest of the line of Raghu! Saviour of those that seek refuge in you! Do with us as you please." Rama smiled at the stupidity of Ravana and calmed their fears. Compassion came naturally to the son of Dasaratha, adorned with every noble quality; he was ever intent upon doing the highest good to all beings. He was especially kind towards those who opposed him out of ignorance. Make any inquiries you like about me. Do the business you have come upon, obey the orders of Ravana and go back in peace. If there is anything left for you to see, take a second look at your leisure. Or shall I ask Vibhishana to show you everything clearly? Have no fear for your life, because you are in the hands of enemies. Captives in battle, those that have cast away their weapons and messengers should never be killed. Vibhishana! These have come to sow dissension among our forces by overtures of peace and bribery. But they pray to us for protection. Do not trouble them. Let them go in peace (Rama was not impelled to show the same kindness to the other Suka). *Rakshasas!* go back to Lanka and deliver correctly to Ravana these words of mine!

'It is up to you, your kith and kin and troops, to employ the strength that you relied upon when you carried away Sita, my beloved wife. At dawn of day you shall behold Lanka, its palaces and courts, its fortifications and *Rakshasa*-armies, being destroyed by my arrows. Even as Indra hurls his thunderbolt at the *danavas*, my dreadful wrath will hurl itself at sunrise against yourself and your forces.' "Go and convey this message to your master."

Suka and Sarana bowed before Rama, cried, "Victory to thee!" and went back to Lanka and reported to Ravana all that had happened. "Lord, Vibhishana found us out. Death would have been our just reward. But Rama, the radiant soul of righteousness, took pity on us, and let us go; Rama has followed the rule of polity that messengers ought not to be harmed. (This is a hint that Ravana's conduct was improper when he ordered Maruti to be put to a cruel death). Rama's valour is boundless. Let it not be supposed that he let us go out of fear of you. Rama, Lakshmana, Vibhishana and

Sugriva are like the regents of the world; mighty heroes of unshaken valour; past masters of every kind of weapon. And among them, Rama is the son of Dasaratha who helped the gods to defeat the *asuras*. Raghava is like a light lit in a lamp. He is endowed with the eight varieties of auspiciousness (Lakshmi). Lakshmana is his right arm. Sugriva, the brother of Vali of matchless valour, is his equal in every respect; he resembles his father Indra in prowess. The valour and brilliance of Vibhishana are not unknown to you. These four lords of men have now joined together in one place and are of one mind. It is nothing to them to tear up Lanka by the roots and fling it and all it holds where they choose. What need have they of help from other monkeys? Looking at Rama and his weapons, one would conclude that he by himself can destroy utterly this Lanka of ours. Why then should he trouble the other three for help?

“You may say, ‘Rama may be a self-sufficient hero who needs no aid; but if I managed to destroy his forces, it would damp his enthusiasm.’ Now the monkey-hosts, guarded by Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva, are beyond the reach of the gods, *asuras* and Indras, all joined together. The anticipation of battle with the *rakshasas* has filled them with joy and they are ready to fight this moment. They are unshakable in their determination. We pray you seek not their enmity. Put away your wrath, call patience and forbearance to your aid and take Sita back to Rama.”

CHAPTER 26

THE VANARA ARMY

THUS Suka and Sarana tender salutary counsel to Ravana, fearless of consequences. But the king of the *rakshasas* laughed in rage and cried, “Wretched fellows, I had no idea that you were such cowards. *Devas*, *gandharvas*, and *danavas* together may oppose me, all creatures may threaten me, yet I shall not restore Sita. You have been in the hands of the monkeys and, frightened out of your wits, you offer me this counsel as salutary. Is there any one who can face me in battle and hope to win?”

He spoke harshly and got up to the lofty terrace of his palace, with the height of many tall palm trees and white like fleecy clouds. With bloodshot eyes, he saw the sea, the mountains and the forests. The base of mount Trikuta was entirely hidden by the monkeys. Finding that the army was boundless and past count, Ravana exclaimed, "Sarana! Who are the heroes among these monkey-lords? Who are the mighty ones? Who are those that stand in front and lead the rest? Who are gifted with enthusiasm? Whose words does Sugriva follow? Who are the generals? Tell me the truth."

Sarana, who had carefully noted every detail about the army, replied readily, "Your Majesty! the monkey there, that never takes his eye off Lanka, but roars frightfully, he is Nila, the General. He is surrounded by many thousands of monkey-captains. With his war-cries reverberate Lanka, its palaces and mansions, and the hills and woods around.

There again, look at that other monkey that walks on his hind legs, with hands raised aloft. Often, he turns to Lanka and yawns. Huge as a mountain peak, golden-hued like the filaments of a lotus, he lashes the earth again and again with his tail and sets the quarters trembling. He has been installed as prince regent by Sugriva; he is Angada, the son of Vali and equal to his father in every respect. Sugriva loves him dearly. Even as Varuna is ever concerned with the welfare of Indra, this Angada has set his heart on the welfare of Rama. Maruti, following the counsel of Angada, discovered Sita. Maruti devoted to the interests of Rama, follows the orders of this youth. It is hard to defeat him, surrounded as he is by countless armies led by mighty heroes. Behold him challenging you to mortal fight even now.

Behind Angada stands another monkey-hero. He is the death of his foes; and this is Nala that threw the causeway across the seas. He leaps fury; he yawns dreadfully and stretches his limbs. Round him surge countless monkeys roaring like lions, a thousand crores and eight lakhs of valiant monkeys, dwellers in the sandalwood forests, follow Nala. He is resolved, with his own forces, to destroy Lanka.

And there walks a monkey of terrible prowess, white like mount Kailasa and moving about restlessly. He is Svetana, famed through

the worlds for his intelligence. Most earnestly he prays to Sugriva for permission to pull down Lanka, this very moment. His master counsels patience, calms him and promises to grant his request a little later. And he returns sullen and wrathful. He marshalls his troops and keeps up their enthusiasm by skilful speech.

There stands another hero with a very long tail covered with hair red, white, black and yellow mixed together, and of the length of many *vyamas* (A *vyama* is the space of one's arms stretched out on either side). This is Kumuda the General. He is uncontrollable, easily offended. Eager to meet you in the battle. He too has resolved to destroy Lanka with the help of his troops. His kingdom extends along the banks of the river Gomati with its dense and lovely woods, as also over the mountain Sankochana and the forests around. He has come here at the orders of Sugriva. He is the lord of countless millions of valiant monkeys.

Look there, at that monkey, bushy like a lion, with his eyes intently fixed on our capital as if he would consume it to ashes. Yellow in hue and with eyes long and wide, he is the master of thirty crores of monkeys. He rules over the Vindhya, Krishnagiri, Sakya, and Sudarsana mountains. The forces of this Rambha of dreadful prowess are ready to reduce Lanka to dust.

And there is another monkey who yawns often, pricks up his ears and shakes with wrath. He views things with the corner of his eye; now and then he glances at his tail and roars like a lion. He is Sarabha, king of the mountain Salveya. Mighty in strength and energy, he knows no fear. Death has no terror for him. He never turns his back on the battle-field and his swiftness is great. Forty lakhs of captains of the name of Viharas follow him.

There, in the midst of the monkey-hewes stands Panasa like a huge cloud-bank that hides the sky from view or like Indra surrounded by his gods. His roar is like the noise of mighty war drums. Of all the monkeys there that thirst for the moment of battle, he is the most terrible. The mountain Pariyatra is his kingdom. It is hard to face him in a fight. Fifty lakhs of captains obey him. There in the midst of the ardent monkey-army, big like another

ocean beside the mighty ocean, Vinata moves about, huge in bulk like the mountain Dardara. The river Parnata is his abode; the sixty lakhs of troops are at his call.

Behold yonder the general Krodhana who defies you to fight right now. Every one among his troops is a mighty hero. With his body like a vein of red ore on the mountain side, Gavaya makes little of his brother monkeys but roams apart. He waits for you in furious wrath. Seventy lakhs at his back, he has sworn to destroy Lanka all by himself. Cast your eyes yonder over Sugriva, Angada and the other leaders and the forces at their command. Strong beyond imagination, they can assume what forms they will. No one can stand against them on the battle-field.

CHAPTER 27

THE VANARA ARMY *(Continued)*

BEHOLD the monkey-leaders who make light of their lives and use their strength, prowess and every other gift in the service of Raghava. That is Hara, who stands there with his immensely long tail. It is covered with hair many *vyamas* long and coloured curiously red, yellow, white and black. Note the radiance that emanates from him on all sides like the rays of the sun. Now, he tosses his tail aloft. Now, he drags it along the ground. He is terrible on the battle-field. He is followed by crores of captains, who drag lofty trees behind them in order to lay Lanka low. There again behold the bands of innumerable bears on mountains, valleys and river banks. One cannot count them, describe them one by one. Like a huge ocean, they are boundless; their bodies are dark like rain-clouds or mountains of black collyrium. Their prowess is irresistible. Cruel and fierce, they eagerly wait for the time when they will be let loose on you. And among them there shines of dreadful shape and dreadful eyes, like the god Parjanya in the midst of his clouds, he stands there, Dhumra, king of the bears. The mountain Rikshavan is his domain and he roams along the banks of the river Narmada.

Terrible like in form and more terrible than he in prowess, there stands his younger brother, like a huge mountain in bulk. Know him as Jambavan, the general, of matchless might, reverent towards his elders, jealous in battle. This wise one rendered special help to Indra in the fight of the gods against the *asuras* and secured rare boons; the bears that follow him fling huge boulders in a ceaseless shower on the foe. The very god of death cannot frighten them. Thickly covered with hair all over, they make light of *rakshasas* and *pisachas* and put them to rout. In radiance they resemble Agni, the God of Fire.

And there stands Dambha, the general, ever about to take a tremendous leap, as if he cannot control his wrath. All the monkey-hosts gaze at him in wonder. His valour has been praised by Indra himself.

Sannadana there is rightly acknowledged as peerless among the four-footed creation; he is the oldest among the monkeys and their ancestor. At one stride he reaches the mountain one *yojana* away from him; he himself is a *yojana* in height. In the battle between the gods and the *asuras*, the latter tried their best to foil him and failed; as a general, he had achieved matchless fame. Again, the god of fair, begot him on a Gandharva maid, since the Gods wanted one like Indra in prowess to help them in the war against the *asuras*.

The general there, round whom millions of monkeys crowd, is Krodhana, who never boasts on the battle-field, but is strong and radiant. He is resolved to destroy Lanka with the help of his army. The mountain where he dwells abounds in Jambu trees. It is one of the favourite haunts of your brother Kubera; and this monkey-chief is its king.

Like a huge cloud-bank, tossed by a storm, stands Pramathi, the general whom none dare face in battle. He keeps in mind the ancient enmity between the elephants and the monkeys and drives away the elephants on the banks of the Ganges. (Once upon a time Sambasadana, the *asura* took the form of an elephant and troubled sorely the *rishis* and hermits. They entreated Kesari the monkey-hero to come to their help. And he fought the *asura* and killed him.

From that time there began a deadly feud between the elephants and the monkeys). He dwells in mountain caves. His enemies are ground to dust even as he walks. He takes delight in dashing and destroying trees with elephants and elephants with trees. Even as Indra reigns in Svarga, he holds royal sway over the mountain Usirabija on the banks of the Ganges. Lakhs of monkeys, proud of their valour and prowess, follow him. Look at the cloud of red dust raised by troops as they leap wildly in their uncontrollable wrath.

There behold Gavaksha, the general who is famed for his swiftness. When Nala threw a causeway over the sea, the millions of monkeys under Gavaksha surrounded him and pleaded for permission to demolish Lanka at once. Again, behold Kesari, the renowned monkey-leader. He rules over the mountain Kanchana. The trees on it are ever covered with flowers and fruits. The bees, drunken with honey, hum sweetly. The sun rejoices as he passes over it daily. *Maharshis* abide there ever in bliss. Under the sun's rays the mountain and the beasts and birds thereon shine with golden lustre.

And look there at Satabali, the monkey-leader. A hero among heroes, most intelligent, mighty in prowess, valiant beyond measure, he daily offers worship to the sun so that he may defeat you in battle. He counts his life as dust and is ready to lay it down in carrying out the wishes of Rama. Even as the *rakshasas* surround you, sixty thousand mountains of gold surround their Lord, mount Meru west of the sunset Mountain. And there, on that hill of gold, roam at will the monkeys that follow this leader. Red, white, yellow and brown are they in hue; sharp nails and teeth are their only weapons like lions they have strong teeth; they are unapproachable like fierce tigers; like huge serpents, they blaze in their wrath; their tails are immensely long; they are huge in bulk like elephants in rut and hard in body like lordly mountains they roar like the thunder of huge clouds; their eyes are red, and round and yellow, while their voices are terrible. Setting eyes on Lanka, they are eager to grind it to dust.

Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Nala, every one of them is the leader of crores of monkeys. There are too many brave monkeys that live

on the Vindhya mountains. It is impossible to count them. "Every one of them is of boundless skill and prowess. In a moment they can reduce to dust the mountains on the earth. And one might mistake them for mountains."

CHAPTER 28

THE VANARA ARMY (Continued)

NOW Suka, thinking that Sarana's description was incomplete, began to supplement it. "Your Majesty! do you see those monkeys that tower aloft like elephants in rut or the tall banians on the banks of the Ganges or the lofty *sala* trees on the Himalayas? None can meet them in battle. Immeasurably strong, they take forms at will and resemble like *daityas* and *danavas* in might and the gods in valour. These number 21 thousand crores, many thousands of Sankhas and many hundreds of Brindas. They serve Sugriva and dwell in Kishkindha. They change their shapes at will and are born of gods and *gandharvas*.

Behold those two youths, like gods in beauty; they are the famous Mainda and Dvidida. The very gods are not equal to them on the battle-field. Brahma allowed them to drink of the waters of immortality. They too are resolved to destroy Lanka by themselves.

I pray you behold that monkey-lord that stands there like a lordly elephant in rut. When enraged, he troubles the very oceans to their depths. It is he that came here searching for Sita and entered your well-guarded capital. Once before you have seen him. And now, here he is again. He is the eldest son of Kesari and born of Vayu, the Wind God. He is famed on earth as Hanuman. He crossed the sea on a former occasion. He can assume what form he wills. The foremost of the *vanaras*, his strength and appearance are alike wonderful. Even like Vayu his father, he can go unhindered everywhere. One day while yet an infant in arms, he felt the pangs of hunger and, seeing the rising sun, he said, "I shall catch and eat this bright thing," and proud of his boundless strength he flew through the sky a distance of three thousand *yojanas*. But the

scorching rays of Surya, whom gods, *maharshis* and *danavas* could not approach, were too much for him and he fell down in a faint on the mountain of sunrise. His jaw struck a rock and broke in consequence. That gave him the name Hanuman. I heard this tale from my elders. (Kesari dwelt on Kanakachala, the mountain. Its peaks are said to be three thousand *yojanas* from the solar orbit. The *Puranas* tell us that one lakh of *yojanas* lie between the sun and the earth. So this three thousand *yojanas* should be taken to stand for many. Further we read in the Uttarakanda of the *Ramayana* that Maruti fell, struck down by the *vajra* of Indra). It is impossible to describe his form, strength or prowess. He has resolved all by himself to lay your capital in ruins.

Behold the hero who sits so gracefully on his shoulders. Like a black rain-bearing cloud resting lightly on the peak of a golden mountain, he is endowed with the most lovely and auspicious form. He is Sri Rama. His eyes are like the petals of the red lotus, opening to the sun in a lovely pool. He is not like Anaranya and the others who fell before you in battle. Of the kings of the Ikshvaku line, he is the one whom his enemies dare not approach. All this the whole world knows. And to this Khara, Dushana, Trisiras, your enemy Vali, Kabandha, Viradha, Subahu, Maricha, Tataka and the others bear witness. Not only manliness, but the noblest *dharma* dwells in him. Nothing and no one can shake it; such is its firmness. (In the *Ayodhyakanda*, Jabali's atheistic arguments made no impression on him). He never transgresses the bounds of *dharma*. (Despite Bharata's pleas and protests, he did not break his pledge to keep the word of his father. Again, despite Sita's objection, he fulfilled the promise of protection to the *rishis* of the Dandaka forest. If during his fight with Khara, he drew back a little, it was simply because he had no space to draw the bow and shoot his arrows. Nor did he violate *dharma* when he slew Vali by craft. He had given his word to Sugriva and had to carry it out at any cost). Not only his manliness and virtue, but his mastery of every weapon, human and divine, is beyond measure. He knows well the use of *astra* of Brahma and the mystic literature thereon. He is the best of those who know the inner import of the *Vedas*. (He stands above Vasishtha and the others who claim to be the spiritual preceptors of the world). His arrows can tear to pieces the firmament; they can pierce

mountains. Enraged, he is like the god of death. In prowess he equals the king of the gods. Since you carried away his beloved wife, Sita, while they dwelt in Janasthana, he is filled with uncontrollable anger against you. He has come here seeking you to give you terrible battle.

On his right side, there stands one who is of the hue of that pure gold, by name Jambunada. Broad of chest, his eyes aflame with wrath against you with dark clustering curls of hair on his head, stands Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama. Nay, he is the very life and soul of Rama, extremely dear to him. A past master is he in the arts of war and government and in every accomplishment. In prowess he tolerates no equal; he has never known defeat; boundless is his manliness. Intelligent and strong, he is the right arm of Rama, his life-breaths coursing outside his body. When it comes to serving Rama, his life is nothing to him. He is resolved all by himself, to annihilate the whole *rakshasa*-race.

To the right of Rama there stands one surrounded by some of our *rakshasas*. He is Vibhishana, who has been declared as king over realms that you rule now. Sri Rama has no design on your kingdom, for all his wishes have been fulfilled and he has nothing to desire. Hence he has crowned Vibhishana as king of Lanka. He has come here to fight with you, moved by uncontrollable anger against you.

Between Rama and Vibhishana there stands one who is immovable like a mighty mountain. He is the ruler of the monkey-world, and has never known defeat. As the Himalaya soars above all the mountains upon earth, even so he stands high above the monkeys in his radiance, fame, innate wisdom, and learning, as also by his noble ancestry. Sugriva who rules his subjects from Kishkindha, adorned with caves and woods dwells with his chief ministers and generals in a mountain fortress curiously wrought and altogether unapproachable. There on his shoulders hangs a garland of gold adorned with countless golden lotuses. It is the envy of gods and men; it is the abode of the goddess of victory. (One who wears this garland can never be vanquished by a foe. Hence Rama was obliged to slay Vali from behind the trees). Slaying Vali, Rama

gave to Sugriva this garland, Tara, that gem among women, and stable sovereignty over the monkey-world.

A hundred thousands make a lakh. A hundred lakhs make a *koti*. A lakh of *kotis* make a *sankha*. A lakh of *sankhas* make a *mahasankha*. A lakh of these make a *brinda*; A lakh of these make a *mahabrinda*. A lakh of these make a *padma*. A lakh of these make a *mahapadma*. A lakh of these make a *kharva*. A lakh of these make a *mahakharva*. A lakh of these make a *samudra*. A lakh of these make a *ogha* and lakh of *oghas* make a *maha-ogha*.

Now a *koti* of *maha-oghas*, a hundred *samudras*, a hundred *kharvas*, a thousand *mahapadmas*, a hundred *padmas*, one thousand *mahabrindas*, one hundred *brindas*, one thousand *mahasankhas*, one hundred *sankhas*, and one thousand *kotis* — this is the count, the ocean-like vastness of the monkey-army that stands round Sugriva. He has secured the help of Vibhishana, another vast ocean, with his four ministers. And this Sugriva challenges you to mortal fight. Boundless in strength and prowess and with boundless forces, he stands in splendour. Observe the monkey-army approaching us, blazing like a malicious planet. We should not suffer defeat at the hands of our foes; on the other hand, we should achieve victory. For this, I pray you to take the proper measures and that quickly.”

CHAPTER 29

RAVANA DESPATCHES SPIES

RAVANA was a little taken back by what Suka and Sarana pointed out. The redoubtable monkey-heroes; Vibhishana, his brother; Lakshmana, the right arm of Rama and a hero of heroes; and Sugriva the ruler of the monkey-world endowed with terrible strength and valour — these stood round their lord and master Sri Rama. Then furious to hear his foes praised to his face he looked at Suka and Sarana as they stood before him with clasped hands and bowed head, and said, his words faltering with wrath, “What audacity! Here am I your lord and master able to make and to mar. You depend on him for everything; and yet you dare to speak words

that are hateful to him. What is the rule of polity you follow, I wonder. Our foes have resolved to destroy us, and are here already to give us battle. And you praise them to the sky without reason. I ask you again, what is the rule of polity you follow? Would it not damp the spirits of our troops to hear praises of the foe on the very eve of battle? The essence of the science of polity consists in the way in which counsellors should behave to their king. And it is plain you do not know it. You have gained nothing from your contact with the teachers and practitioners of the science of government, with great men old in years, ripe in wisdom and righteous in conduct. Or else you have forgotten what you learnt. Or, instead of putting your learning into practice, you only carry it as a beast its burden. Only thus can I account for the name you have had till now as men of knowledge. I must thank my own accumulated merit that I rule this kingdom or even that I am alive, seeing that my counsellors are thus innocent of the science of government. Are you not afraid of losing your lives for speaking so harshly to me? Your welfare and your ruin tremble at the tip of your ruler's tongue. The trees in the forest can catch fire and survive; but never a wretch who has incurred the wrath of a king."

Then he said to himself, "To slay them out of hand is the proper regard for these wretches that praise my enemy. But when I think of the service that they have rendered to me, my anger subsides."

Then he said to them, "Wretches! this moment I dismiss you from my service. Go away somewhere. Let me not set eyes on you again. I have not forgotten the services you have rendered to me so far. Hence I refrain from slaying you. Your own ingratitude and the loss of my friendship will be for you a punishment crueller than death." Hanging down their heads in shame and giving the royal salute, "Victory, victory to thee!" they departed hence.

Then Ravana turned to Mahodara who stood by and said, "Send here at once some experts in the art of espionage and the science of polity." They came to him accordingly, bowed low, saluted him with "Victory, victory to thee!" and stood with folded palms, awaiting his orders. Knowing them to be faithful, valiant and devoted to him and at the same time entirely unafraid of any foe,

he said to them, "Go and find entry into the enemy's camp. Bring me news of Rama's plans. If there is any defect in them, let us conquer him by threats. Who are his confidential ministers? Who are his friends? If opportunity offers, we shall alienate them from him. Does he sleep with guards around him or alone? If the latter, we shall fight him at night. How does he spend his time when awake? Is he free from care or beset by it? If the latter, I shall kill him by deceit. Is he about to lay siege to Lanka now or later on? If the latter, we shall deceive him in course of time. Be hidden and somehow gather and bring me full information on all these points. Wise rulers, through good spies, learn everything about the enemies and easily defeat them in battle."

The spies, under the lead of Sardula, circumambulated the ruler of Lanka, bowed low at his feet, and took leave of him. They proceeded joyfully to where Rama and Lakshmana were. When they neared mount Suvela, they disguised themselves and observed minutely Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishana and others. Fear came upon them more and more and their hearts sank, as they had a closer look at the monkey-army. Meanwhile Vibhishana, the soul of *dharma* found them out, took them to Rama, and said, "Lord, this is Sardula, the head of the spies sent by Ravana." The monkeys cried, "This wicked wretch shall not be allowed to go alive" and they attempted to torture and kill him. Then Rama ordered them to desist and let him go. Then they drove him out with blows and curses and began to torture the other spies, whom also Sri Rama saved from their hands. With their minds dazed and their senses confused they went back to Lanka heaving sighs of pain. Since it was their function to visit other countries in disguise and bring information about them, they came and said to Ravana, 'your Majesty, Rama and Lakshmana, with an immeasurable force, have encamped on mount Suvela.'

CHAPTER 30

VANARA ARMY

SOMEWHAT excited, Ravana said to Sardula, "You seem to have been roughly handled by some one. Your face has changed colour! Did you fall into the hands of fierce foes?"

Then Sardula managed to reply, trembling with fear and in a weak voice, 'Your Majesty! It is impossible to learn in secret the facts about those monkey-heroes. They are strong and valiant and are under the protection of Rama. Why, we could not gain speech with them; How could we enquire and know their hearts? Monkeys, mountainous in bulk, guard each path most carefully. The moment I made my way into the monkey-forces, which none of our spies could do, they found me out. The ministers of Vibhishana caught us, threw us down and rolled us on the earth. Meanwhile the monkeys, gathered round us, pounded us with their fists and hands, kneaded us with their knees and tore us to pieces with their teeth and nails. Those impetuous monkeys dragged us along everywhere crying, "Here are the spies that have come to discover our secrets. Then drenched in blood, and bereft of our senses, we fainted away. When we regained consciousness, they began to torture us again. At last they took us to Rama. We cried "This is too much for us. Save us from death." At our earnest entreaty, he took pity on us and ordered our release. We owe our life to his compassion and have come to you in this plight. With rocks and mountains, Rama has built a causeway across the sea; and having led his monkey-hosts over it, he stands at the gates of Lanka armed to the teeth. He has arrayed his army in the form of Garuda, and having sent me away, he is marching towards Lanka blazing in his lustre. Take Sita back to him before he enters the city; or else be prepared to fight him.'

Ravana thought a little and said, "*Devas, gandharvas, danavas*, and the rest may band themselves against me, all created beings may try to frighten me, yet Sita shall not go back. I will fight the enemy as you said. So give me all the information that I ought to know and that you have been able to collect. Who are the renowned

warriors, in the monkey-army? What forms do they take? Who are irresistible on the battle-field? Whose grandsons speak the truth? Let me know their strength and weakness and take appropriate steps. We must have an idea of the numbers, the strength and weakness of those that would fight with us.

Then Sardula ventured to reply, 'Your Majesty! Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, is the son of Riksharajas. He is unconquerable in battle. Gadgada had two sons, Dhumra and Jambavan by name. Jambavan emerged from the mouth of Brahma, as he yawned. He was brought up later on by Gadgada. Kesari was begotten by Brihaspati. His son Hanuman, slew Aksha and other *rakshasa* heroes. Sushena is the son of god, Dharma. (It is said in the *Balakānda*, that the god Varuna begot Sushena. But Sardula might have mixed up things in his terror). Dadhimukha is the son of Soma. Sumukha, Durmukha and Vegadarsi might verily be called death walking in the shape of monkeys. Brahma created them for this very purpose. Nila, the Generalissimo, was begotten by the god Agni. Hanuman is the son of the god Vayu, while Angada is the grandson of Indra and equal to him in youthful strength and pride. Mainda and Dvividā were begotten by the twin gods Asvins. Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sarabha, Gandhamadana were begotten by the god Yama and are equal to him in all respects. There are ten crores of monkey-heroes of matchless radiance, all begotten by the gods. And no one can say what the origin or abode of the others may be. The mighty Being that protects them all is the son of Dasaratha. Handsome in every limb like a lordly lion, he is in the prime of youth. He is the slayer of Khara, Dushana, Trisiras, Maricha, Subahu and Tataka. In all the worlds there is none like in valour and prowess. Has he not killed Viradha and Kabandha who were themselves like the god of death? None can describe the excellences and perfections of Rama. Of all the *rakshasas* who opposed him at Janasthana, does one survive? His brother Lakshmana is the soul of righteousness and like unto a lordly elephant in rut the very ruler of the gods cannot escape with his life once he becomes the mark of Lakshmana's arrow. Sveta and Jyotirmukha, are the sons of Surya. Hemakuta is the son born to Varuna. Nala that redoubtable hero is the son of Visvakarman. Durdhara, the valiant monkey is the son of the Vasu gods. Your brother Vibhishana has received

from Rama this kingdom of Lanka and works and prays for Rama's welfare. Thus far, have I reported the facts that I gathered during my visit, what is expedient now it is for you to decide and do.

CHAPTER 31

RAVANA THROWS AN ILLUSION OVER SITA

WHEN the spies told Ravana of the monkey-hosts, unapproachable to foes, and Rama encamped on mount Suvela, the ruler of Lanka was a little upset thereby and said to the ministers standing by him, "*Rakshasas*, now is the time for us to take counsel together. Fetch here all my ministers, who are experts in the science of polity." Soon they came there accordingly and he took counsel with them at great length about the steps to be taken. Then he gave them leave to depart and himself retired into his palace.

There he sent for the *rakshasa* Vidyujjihva (lightning-tongue), "Friend, you are the master of illusion. There is nothing of magic that you do not know; you are strong, courageous and valiant. Let us throw an illusion over Sita. Fashion by your art a likeness of the head of Rama and of Kodanda, his bow." The *rakshasa* said humbly 'Your orders shall be obeyed'. Ravana was pleased and rewarded him amply with coin and ornaments. Then, moved by a strong desire to behold Sita once more, the mighty king went to the Asoka grove and found Sita bowed down with grief, still seated on the bare earth. Ill-fitted to endure suffering, she sat there helpless in the midst of terrible *rakshasis*, and meditating all the time on her Lord. Ravana drew near her and, as if he brought her some joyful news, he cried audaciously, "Sita, despite my best efforts to win you over, you trusted Rama for help and you put me to shame with cruel words, did you not? That warrior, who by a stroke of luck killed my generals Khara and Dushana, he himself has been slain in battle by my troops. The thing upon which you depended for support has now been uprooted. I have brought your pride to the dust, have I not? This calamity will of itself bring you to me as my wife without any word of request from me. Cast away from

you this foolish obstinacy. Rama is dead. What use can he be to you now? You shall be the queen and mistress of all my wives. Oh! you have gathered little merit in the past! You have gone without wealth and the pleasures of love, the supreme ends of life. Fool that you are, you are proud of your fancied wisdom. Let me tell you how Rama met his death, even as Vritra, the *asura*, met his death at the hands of Indra.

Intending to kill me, he had come to the northern shores of the ocean and was encamped there with the army of Sugriva. At the night, when they were deep asleep, after their long and weary travel, my spies visited the camp secretly and discovered every detail that I wanted. My *rakshasa* — forces led by Prahasta, has annihilated from the face of the earth the army of Rama and Lakshmana with broad swords, iron wheels, clubs, bolts, sticks, loaded with molton metals, with cudgels and pestles and other weapons, my *rakshasas* worked havoc among the monkeys. Then Prahasta, the terror of his foes came upon Rama where he lay sound asleep and deftly cut off with his sword the head of your husband. Vibhishana was caught as he was trying to escape. Lakshmana and the monkey-troops have been scattered to the various quarters of the earth. Sugriva lies there with his neck broken, Hanuman with his jaw shattered, Jambavan, with his legs cut off, is stretched on the ground like a tree uprooted. Mainda and Dvidida are swimming in a pool of blood, heaving deep sighs and dismal groans. They are severely cut at the loins and can hardly survive. Panasa lies on the ground, pierced like a jack fruit by my *rakshasas*. Dadhimukha too lies there, cloven to pieces by many *narachas*. Kumuda of mighty lustre lies silenced by arrows. Like the cloud-banks being shattered by a storm, some monkeys were trampled to death by elephants and chariots. Some were caught as they fled; some ran here and there in terror; some were hit from behind and taken prisoners. Like a herd of elephants chased by mighty lions, the monkey-army was thrown into confusion in a moment. Some fell into the sea; some sprang into the sky; bears clambered up the trees like monkeys and so escaped. The monkeys could not make out friends from foes in the darkness of the night and so they fought one another to death on mountains and sea-shore and in the woods. Thus your husband and his army have been utterly destroyed by my forces. And now you shall see the head

of Rama, covered with dust and blood.” He called a *rakshasi* and said to her, loud enough for Sita to hear, “Fetch Vidyujjihva. He has brought the head of Rama from the field of battle.”

Forthwith Vidyujjihva brought the head and bow of Rama, bowed before his lord and stood there awaiting orders. Then Ravana said to him, “Place in front of Sita the head of her husband. Let her see with her own eyes and know that Rama is dead. Then that *rakshasa* placed before her the lovely head of Sri Rama. Ravana took the bow of Rama from the hands of Vidyujjihva and said to Sita, ‘Lo! the bow of your husband. Prahasta my General slew him at midnight and brought this to me.’” He pointed to the head and the bow and cried to Sita, “Now at least will you yield to me and do my will?” (The geneology of the monkeys given in this chapter differs from that given in the *Balakanda*. Chapters 31, 32 and 33 are held by some to be not Valmiki’s since the story runs smooth without them).

CHAPTER 32

THE LAMENT OF SITA

SITANAKI gazed on the head and the noble bow. She called to mind the alliance established between Rama and Sugriva of which Hanuman had told her. The eyes, the complexion of the face, the hair, the forehead, the crest-jewel, all of them, she saw, were Rama’s. She concluded that it was the head of Rama and that Rama was now dead. Like a Krauncha bird that had lost her mate, she gave way to her grief and cried aloud, “Mother Kaikeyi! Are you happy now at last? Have your wishes been fulfilled? You have cut off the root of the Ikshvaku race, have you not, you who delight in sowing discord. When you banished to the woods Ramachandra, the brightest jewel of the Ikshvaku line, your intention was that he should not return to Ayodhya to claim the kingdom; but should perish in some misadventure. Raghunatha is dead. Rama, who was the living root of the Ikshvaku tree, is now no more. Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna, whose lives are planted in Rama, will give up their bodies. And all this sin you did for the sake of Bharata,

your son, did you not? And if he dies, what becomes of your plans? What have you gained? Nothing but mischief. What harm did Rama do to you, Rama who crowned with magnanimity? You have earned for yourself the heinous sin of driving Rama and me into the forest, clad in the bark of trees." Like an uprooted plantain tree she fell upon the earth and fainted. When she came back to herself, tears blinded her eyes; she laid the head of Rama on her lap, kissed it and cried, "Alas, I am lost." Noble one! Is it thus you have fulfilled your vow not to return to Ayodhya without destroying the foe? What sin have I committed that I should see you dead? I am branded with the name of a widow. Some say that the sin of the wife kills her husband, but you were ever virtuous in conduct, and I too have tried my best to be a true and loyal wife. How then is it right that you should die before me? First, I was driven to the forest from the kingdom; then Ravana carried me away. While mounting misfortunes came thick upon me, this terrible fate has overtaken you who took pity on me, and tried to save me. Now I sink into an unfavourable ocean of grief. I have no hope of coming out or reaching the shore again.

Why, this sorrow is not mine alone. The lady Kausalya, so innocent, so good, why should she suffer this misfortune? She would cry like a cow parted from her calf. She has no other son but you. The best of *brahmanas*, reading your stars fore-told a long life for you. Their words have proved false. Or did they give this assurance seeing only your mighty strength and valour? If they knew and studied the books, and spoken the truth, they should have predicted for you this early death, should they not? And yet they could never speak an untruth?

"Well, could it be that their fortune was changing for the worse and this confused their intellects? Or it may be that the Supreme Being, in whom all creatures have their origin, manifests himself as time brings about the results of action. But he may have cast a veil of confusion over the intellects of the seers, who know the past, present and future as one eternal vow, and made them read your wrong. (This is an indirect hint that the intellect of Sita was confused). You are an expert in polity; you are a master of the art of war, you know the shape of every peril and the way of

meeting it. Then, how did you come to be killed unawares in sleep? Did the cruel woman, the Night of dissolution clasp you tight in her arms and carry you away? Yes, charmed by the loveliness of your lotus eyes, she has carried you away? Ghastly sins I must have committed to be thus widowed in my youth. And you met an untimely death because you chanced to marry this most sinful wretch.

It ill - becomes you, the noblest of men, to behave like a mean-natured husband. Here am I, suffering unspeakable agony; my sorrow melts the hearts of all that behold me. Forsaking me in this condition, you fall in love with the woman Earth and clasp her in your arms. I ask you, is it fair and just, is it *dharma*? Alas that I should live to see this mighty bow, decked curiously with gold and gems, lovingly worshipped by both of us with rare perfumes and garlands, now lying masterless, like me, in the hands of enemies! You lack nothing. My dear father-in-law, your father, the great king Dasaratha, and all your noble ancestors, you see them all in heaven and enjoy their company. Yes, you are a star in the firmament. But this Ikshvaku line in which the most meritorious souls desire to be born, this line you have now left without a lord. Lord, will you not open your eyes once and look at me? I cry and sob like this and yet you will not utter a word of solace to me. I am but a girl; I am not old. What do I know of the pleasure of this world? I became your wife when I was very young. And do I not deserve your protection at all times? Have I not shared your joys and sorrows? Have I left your side any more than your shadow? Have I not followed your foot-steps most faithfully on the path of virtue. And what greater calamity could befall me than this? When you clasped my hand in marriage, you said that you would never part from me till breath was in this body. How could you forget the promise you so solemnly made? Wherever you go, take me with you. While I am here longing for you and sorely stricken by grief, how is it just to leave me behind and go all by yourself to the worlds on high and revel in joy? I used to adorn your lovely body with auspicious articles, rare perfumes and bright jewels. I would allow no one else to do this service and I feasted my eyes with the bliss of it. Now it has come to this that dogs, vultures and eagles make a feast on that lovely body.

To go back to Ayodhya after the term of exile, to perform with pomp and splendour many *yagas* like *agnishtoma*; to offer worship to the gods; to have your funeral pyre kindled by fire sanctified by use in all these vedic rights — this would have been right and proper. But why die this unworthy death and pass out without a single religious rite performed over you? Did you die in the battlefield at the hands of your enemies and after having destroyed many of them? Why were you denied the end that awaits every *kshatriya*-hero? (We learn from this that Rama had not performed any *yaga* or *yajna* before this). We came to the forest, the three of us, and now you have gone away from me and in a moment I shall join you where you are. If Lakshmana alone returns to Ayodhya what reply would he give to the lady Kausalya that eats out her heart in sorrow after sending you to the pathless woods? He should tell her that your enemies fell upon you, when you and your armies were fast asleep, and slew you. And the lady Kausalya would die of a broken heart when he hears of your violent death and my being a prisoner in the hands of the *rakshasas*. You went to un-heard-of trouble, all on account of my wicked and sinful self. You crossed the fearful waste of waters for my sake. You slew as if in play Khara, Dushana, Trisiras, Viradha, Kabandha, Vali, Maricha, Subahu, and Tataka. And yet you, who did all this you were killed by pitiful wretch Prahasta. How wonderful. Nay, it is as if one who crossed the mighty ocean were to drown to death in the puddle crossed by a cow's hoof.

I am a sinful wretch who has come to defile the house I was born in and the house I married into. And Raghava took me to wife without knowing this. Was it ordained by fate that I, the beloved wife of Rama, should prove his death? Did I, in some past birth, prevent the gift of a girl in marriage? Why should I, having the saviour of the worlds for my husband, suffer the fate of a helpless destitute? Ravana, slay me too and cast my body on that of Rama. You will earn the high merit of joining wife and husband. Put my head by his head, my body by his body and I will share the noble destiny of my great-souled master."

Thus did Janaki wail out of a grief-laden heart, looking again and again at the head and bow of Rama, like an ordinary woman.

(One may wonder how Sita continued to live, even after she heard of her husband's death. Rama and Sita were the eternal father and mother. Neither Rama nor Sita can cease to live).

Then there rushed into the presence of Ravana a warden of the gate. "Victory, ever Victory to thee" he said with hands clasped over his heads. "Prahasta the general is at the gate, and Majesty! He and all the ministers are here. They pray for an audience. I must be excused for troubling you at this inopportune moment. You have given them leave to conduct the affairs of state at their discretion. Yet his respect for you demands that he should place the facts before you and take your orders. Endowed with all auspicious excellences, it behoves you to grant them an interview. Something serious seems to have happened."


Ravana came out of the *asoka* grove, listened to an account of the valour and warlike arrangements of Rama and took his way to the council hall. Thereafter taking the advice of his ministers, he decided on the arrangements to be made. No sooner did he leave the place than the false head and bow of Rama vanished from sight.

Then the lord of Lanka addressed the generals standing about him who had his welfare in heart, "Order that all our forces are brought here. Call them up with beat of drums. Give no reasons." If the reasons were made public, it might reach Sita too and she might discover that his claims to have killed Rama and the armies were false. The generals gathered their troops and came back to Ravana with the news. "Your majesty, all your forces are here as you ordered."

(It does not become the character of Sita to speak of Kaikeyi as she did. In the presence of Sita, Rama has rebuked Lakshmana for blaming Kaikeyi. Further, she knew the real reason why Dasaratha granted the boons to Kaikeyi; she was present during the talk between Rama and Bharata. Dasaratha was to blame; then why make Kaikeyi the scape goat? We can only explain that Sita behaved as most women in the world behave on such occasions. Like Rama, she too has taken mortal shape and was descended. As Mahalakshmi there was nothing for her to know).

CHAPTER 33

SARAMA CONSOLES SITA

 HUS misled by the illusion cast upon her by Ravana, Sita lamented over Sri Rama. Then her dear friend Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, came over and consoled Sita with soft and sweet words. She was placed there by Ravana to keep watch over Sita and look after her comforts. She was by nature merciful; and so she moved with Sita on friendly terms and loved her dearly. Firm of mind she was constant in friendship. She saw Sita distracted in mind and writhing like a mare, in the dust. She ran forward, raised her gently, wiped away the tears from her eyes and said "My child Janaki, do not mind. I overheard everything that Ravana said to you and also your lament. My heart melted with pity, for I love you dearly. Lying hidden in the hollow of a tree, heard everything that passed between you and Ravana. I am not in the least afraid of Ravana; I count my life as but a straw, where your interests are concerned. This is no wonder. Who can see the beauty of your eyes and remain unenchanted? How can I to stand by and witness your grief?

I went out to know the reason why Ravana left this place in such a hurry. Even without inquiry, it was clear to me that every word he said to you was false. Is it possible for any one to slay Rama awake or asleep? Let that be. Is it possible to deceive an all-knowing seer? Further, can Rama, the Supreme person, ever meet with such a death? And the monkeys, are they ordinary folk? Besides, Raghava protects them, even as Indra protects the gods. And their foes, can they even stand to windward of them.

Again, think for a while on the manly excellence of Rama. Could such a fate befall him? He is gifted with long and powerful arms. His splendour is immeasurable. His limbs are fashioned most auspiciously; his chest is broad and strong; the bow in his hands, Kodanda, is a formidable weapon; he is the embodiment of *dharma*; his fame is incomparable; his prowess is unequalled. With Lakshmana he watches over those that belong to him and the

enemies that have surrendered to him, even as the eyelids guard the eyes. In the science and art of government, he is a past master; he is a veteran in all warlike affairs. Skilful and of infinite resource, he destroys his foes as if in play. His strength and manliness are beyond thought. He is the terror of the race of his enemies. In him the Goddess of victory has her home. And to such a one, this untimely and unnatural death can never come. Ravana is an adept in the arts of illusion. Cruel by nature, he is the foe of all created beings. He practised this deceit upon you, simply because his heart is drawn towards mean and unworthy deeds.

You have come to the end of your sorrows. All happiness will be yours hereafter. Wealth, joy and victory are waiting to join you. I shall tell you something to increase your joy. Listen, Rama has crossed the ocean with his monkey-forces and along with Lakshmana is now encamped along the southern shore of the ocean; he is surrounded by myriads of valiant monkeys. All his plans have succeeded; I speak from direct knowledge. The spies sent by Ravana have brought news that Rama and Lakshmana and the monkey-forces are here. And he is taking counsel with all his ministers as to what to do.

Then there fell upon their ears the terrible noise like that of lions roaring caused by *rakshasa*-forces starting towards the battle-field. The huge war drums beaten by big rods of gold, reverberated like black cloud-banks. Then, Sarama said to Sita "Child this dreadful beat of the war drums tells us that the *rakshasa*-forces are getting ready for battle. Elephants in rut are covered with ornaments and howdahs. Noble steeds are being yoked to the chariots. Countless cavalymen riding on horses of noble breed rejoice at the thought of approaching battle. Foot-soldiers fully armed, assemble in companies. Like swift rivers flowing into the ocean, the chariots, elephants, horses and foot-soldiers, all curiously decked gather together and move along the high roads. The many-coloured splendour of weapons, shields and armour carried by the four divisions of the army spine like the flame of a forest-fire in summer. The hollow sounds of the elephants' bells, the clash of chariot-wheels, the neighing horses — fall upon our ears like the music of many instruments. The preparation for war of *rakshasa*-heroes that

follow the ruler of Lanka is a grand sight that makes the beholders' hair stand on end.

The goddess of victory, who ends all grief is now waiting upon you. The time has come for the destruction of the *rakshasas*. The goddess of victory never leaves the side of even an ordinary man, if the corner of his eye is red. And she abides for ever with Sri Rama who is lotus-eyed. His prowess is unimaginable. He has not seen Ravana before him on the battle-field; hence, he keeps back his wrath. As the *asuras* fared at the hands of Indra, so will Ravana and his *rakshasa*-troops fare at the hands of Rama; and then he will take you with him. As in the far past, Mahavishnu and Indra destroyed the *daityas*, your lord and Lakshmana use against the *rakshasas* their strength and valour. All your enemies fallen, all your wishes fulfilled, you will sit on the lap of Rama.

My eyes will behold your happy face, you jewel of wifely virtue and purity : they will behold the happy face of Rama re-united to you after long parting and mighty efforts. And the joy of this sight shall be for all that I now do for your sake. Soon I shall see you with your husband; you will embrace him and shed tears of joy on his broad bosom. He will loosen your hair that has all these months gathered in a single plait, unadorned and covered with dust. Beholding his noble face, like unto the full moon at its rising, you will wash away your grief and tears as a noble serpent casts off its slough. Annihilating Ravana, Rama will soon fulfil all the wishes of his friends. Formed to enjoy everything that life can offer, the son of Dasaratha will enjoy with you all happiness. Even as the earth filled with standing crops rejoices when the showers descend, you will soon join Rama, the great soul; and will rejoice to behold his prowess. Offer your salutations to Surya who like a noble steed runs in thirty *muhurtas*, his course round Meru, the mountain of gold. Grief and trouble will fall away from you. He is the dispenser of light and life to all living beings. Is he not their only source?

CHAPTER 34

SARAMA FINDS THE INTENTION OF RAVANA

EVEN as the clouds in the sky gladden the earth with welcome showers, Sarama by her soft and gentle speech, consoled Sita whose mind had been confused by the words of Ravana. Then she thought of doing something more to comfort Sita. Being very intelligent, she waited for a good occasion and said with a smile, "Lady, it is easy for me to go unseen from here to Rama, give him good news of you and come back safe. When I course freely, through the sky I defy Garuda, or Vayu to follow me. Have I your leave to go?"

Sita, her voice no longer faint with sorrow — but in accent glad and sweet, prevented Sarama. It might harm the friendship existing between them if she objected to the voluntary offer of help by the *rakshasa*-lady when she said, "I shall go and give news of you to Rama". Sita knew that the only proper thing was for Rama to slay Ravana and the *rakshasas* in battle and take her back in the presence of all. So it was not proper for her to send news of herself meanwhile. (Rama knew well enough how miserable she was in Lanka; he would bend all his energies to deliver her from her prison. Thus, there was no need for her to send him news). Therefore she stopped Sarama skilfully from her purpose by giving her another reason. "Lady, I know full well that you can course freely through the sky and the underworld and elsewhere. I also know full well that you are capable of giving me such a help, as none else can even dream. But, if you would do to please me, go and bring me news of what Ravana is doing now. He is mighty in the arts of illusion; cruel and malignant by nature, he takes delight in wringing the hearts of his foes. Wicked beyond compare, he causes confusion in my mind even as the drug *Varuni*. The *rakshasis* that are placed round me by his orders touch their nose-tips with their fingers, roll their eyes about and glare at me, grin horribly, and frighten me with other monstrous contortions. They cry to me, "He will kill you. He will

eat you. He will burn you” I tremble at the sight of him. I am filled with grave doubts because he has placed me here all alone in the *asoka* grove. It will be a great help if you can bring me news of his doings and of his real intent.”

Hearing this, Sarama of sweet speech wiped the tears of Sita and said, “Child! if you would have it so, I shall be back in no time with the news of the secret intent of Ravana.” She went accordingly to where Ravana was, overheard his talk with his ministers and the final decisions reached and came back to the *asoka* grove; There she found Sita like Lakshmi deprived of her lotus-throne with grief and anxiety. Sita clasped Sarama fondly to her heart, gave her a seat and said, “Lady! be seated comfortably and tell the truth about the plans and decisions of that cruel *rakshasa*.” Then fearing that Sarama had brought some terrible news, she sat shivering.

“Then Sarama said to her “Child Janaki! Kaikasi, the mother of Ravana, and Aviddha his old and venerable minister, counselled him many times to take you back to Rama. They said ‘Render unto him due reverence and respect and take Sita and give her back to him. The very fact that in Janasthana, in the space of one *muhurta*, Khara and Dushana and their countless followers were slain by him as if in play is quite enough to show what is in store for the *rakshasas*. Leave alone Rama. A monkey, a puny messenger of his crossed the sea, entered your capital, passed unknown to any through your guards and had speech in secret with Sita. He made short work of our *rakshasa*-warriors and brought disgrace upon us all. Which man can do such things? He is by himself quite enough to destroy all the *rakshasas*. Is he not? And Rama who caused all these things to be done through a servant of his, can he be called a mere man? They tried in various ways to turn him from his purpose and they failed. Like an avaricious man who would sooner part with his life than his wealth he would never agree to restore you back to Rama. He who has come to this final decision after taking counsel with his ministers, cannot be turned from his purpose as long as there is breath in his body. The thread of his life is about to snap; death has laid his hands upon him; that is why he is resolved on his course. It is not fear that will make him restore you to Rama,

but only the death in battle of himself and all his *rakshasas*. But Rama will despatch Ravana with his sharp arrows and take you back to Ayodhya. Dark-eyed Janaki, all this flows from your boundless grace.

At that moment, as if the voice of heaven confirmed her words, there fell upon their ears the sounds of war drums being struck from the monkey-camps, heightened by the blare of conches that made the earth tremble in affright. The *rakshasas* in Lanka heard it too and grew dispirited, confused and sad as they thought of how they and their kinsfolk stood to lose their happiness, wealth, fame and lives for the sin of their king.

CHAPTER 35

MALYAVAN COUNSELS RAVANA

RAGHUVIRA, the terror of his foes, marched to battle to the sound of war drums, conches, and other warlike instruments. Hearing this noise, Ravana the king of the *rakshasas*, thought deeply for a *muhurta* as to what he should do. Then he looked intently at the ministers around him, roared in anger till the hall of audience shook to its foundations and hurled insults at them. The mighty king of all the *rakshasas*, cruel by nature, he used to make all cry in terror. Thus it was only natural that he should speak thus; "Dust, and chaff of the *rakshasa*-clan! I have heard your descriptions of the crossing of the sea by Rama and his besieging Lanka with his huge army; I have listened to your praises of his prowess and valour. I know also that you are veterans in war and that your valour never goes to waste. The accounts you have heard of Rama's heroism have depressed you and you gaze at one another helplessly, and dispiritedly."

Then Malyavan, the grandfather of Ravana, being supremely wise, decided within himself "Rama is endowed with boundless strength; it is good that Ravana should make friends with him". He addressed his grandson and said "Child! the king who has mastered the four sciences of *Anvikshiki*, *Trayi*, *Varta* and *Dandaniti*

and puts in practice the rules laid down therein, he alone lives long, rules over all the earth and brings his foes under his sway. (Sumali, Mali and Malyavan were three brothers. Kaikasi the mother of Ravana was the daughter of Sumali. Hence Malyavan stands as grandfather to Ravana).

(The science of self-knowledge is *Anvikshiki*. The *Trayi* explains the secrets of *dharma* and *adharma*. *Varta* tells us about what are the right ends of life and what are not. *Dandaniti* treats of the science of government. These four sciences are the sure means to one's realising all one's wishes and preserving what one has acquired. No trouble befalls the king who is a master of these sciences - KAMANDAKINITI)

A king should know when his strength wanes, and then he must seek the alliance of his foes. But when his strength waxes, he must fight his foes. Thus he can attain to undisputed and boundless power and bring all good to those that depend on him. If his foe is equal or superior to him in strength, then the best thing to do is to make peace. The enemy who is less mighty than oneself should not be disregarded, but should be defeated in battle. Now your strength is on the wane; Raghava waxes in strength. It is expedient to make peace with him. But when you seek the alliance of one which is stronger, it is proper to offer him a tribute. And to Rama the most fitting tribute you could offer is that Sita who is the cause of estrangement between him and you.

The *rishis* in heavenly world, the *gandharvas* and all others pray for Rama's victory. So his strength waxes more and more. Let him no longer be your foe. Make friends with him. Brahma, the omniscient, created in the beginning the *devas* and the *asuras* and ordained that the *devas* should hold to *dharma*, and *asuras* and the *rakshasas* to *adharma*. The highsouled *devas* being thus naturally inclined to *dharma*, they stand by Rama, the embodiment of *dharma*, and pray for his success. During the *kritayuga*, *dharma* prevails over *adharma*. It is only during the *kaliyuga* that *adharma* prevails over *dharma*. During your tour of world-conquest, you carried off by force the women of others; you violated *dharma* and adopted *adharma*. *Dharma* the god of *kritayuga*, abides with Rama;

Adharma, the god of the *kaliyuga*, abides with you. The *krita-yuga*, god is more powerful than *kali*; Raghunatha is more powerful than you. If the sin that a man has committed exceeds the merit he has laid up, evil befalls him. Because you chose to follow the path of evil, defeat shall be your portion. Because Rama has chosen the path of righteousness, victory shall be his. The *adharma* that you practise increases daily through ignorance and cuts at the root of the *rakshasa*-clan, and adds to the strength and splendour of our enemies, the *devas*. You may say, "How can any sin of mine add to the strength of my enemies?" "But I answer, 'absorbed in the pleasures of the senses and failing to distinguish between right and wrong, you carried away by force the wives of others and thus enraged the hearts of *maharshis*, resplendant like fire. Like tongues of flame, their greatness is irresistible. Their hearts are pure because of their *tapas*, they are ever intent of promoting *dharma*'.

They perform daily in the prescribed manner, the *agnihotra* and other sacrifices; they make offerings in the fire as laid down. Disregarding the *rakshasas*, they chant with loud pitch and correct intonation. Hence the *rakshasas* are scattered in all directions like clouds chased by the strong winds of summer. The smoke arising from the sacrificial fires, fed by the *maharshis* of fierce radiance spreads in all directions and robs the *rakshasas* of their splendour. The strict austerities performed by the *rishis* in holy places, their steadfast penances and observance, sap the *rakshasas*' energy. Brahma granted you the boon of immunity from gods, *danavas*, *yakshas* and *gandharvas*. But those not included in this category, men, monkeys, bears and ape, have found their way to your capital and roar frightfully in strength and pride.

Further observing the evil omens and portents one can conclude that the time has come for the destruction of the *rakshasa*-race. Mules wail frightfully, clouds of fearful shapes shower hot blood all over Lanka. Elephants and horses shed tears. Flags are covered with dust, and have lost their former lustre. Wild beasts, jackals and vultures have entered the city in crowds and with their noises strike terror into the hearts of those that listen. In our dreams are seen dark women grinning and displaying their white teeth; brow-

beating men, stealing the articles in our houses, and laughing in tones of thunder.

(This is a reference to Puthana and the other elementals of the middle world that haunt places, like Lanka, where wrong prevails over right). The offerings to the gods are eaten by dogs. Mules are born of cows, mice of mangooses, cats of wolves, dogs of pigs and *kinnaras* and men of *rakshasas*. Doves with snow-white bodies and blood-red feet are found within Lanka by pure accident. The parrots and linnets kept in houses, shriek and scream. Crows and beasts gather in crowds all over Lanka and cry most woefully against the sun; and come back again and again as often as they are driven away. A certain figure like the god of death walks through Lanka. His complexion is a mixture of black and yellow. Morning and evening he thrusts his hairless head into every house and stares most frightfully at everything he meets. Looking at these and other evil omens knowing that the time is against us at present, seek counsel and find out how we can secure our welfare. Thus spoke Malyavan in the highest interest of Ravana. But the best and the wisest of his ministers observed the looks and gestures of the ruler of Lanka and guessed that he did not like and would not accept such good advice.

CHAPTER 36

RAVANA SETS GUARDS OVER LANKA

RAVANA, approaching the hour of his destruction, could not stand the well-meant counsel of Malyavan. But seized with a fit of mad fury, he knit his brows frightfully, rolled his eyes all around and cried. The words you utter as most conducive to my good fall unpleasantly upon my ears. They will never do me good. They pierce my ears like sharp arrows. It seems that your heart inclines towards the enemy. It is unworthy of you. Rama is but a man; strength is things unknown to that class of beings. Further he is weak by nature, single and unaided; he depends help on puny monkeys and bears. Driven away from the kingdom by his father, he has made the forest his only home, and this fellow seems to you a hero when none can stand against. I am the lord and master of

all the *rakshasas*; the very *devas* tremble at my sight. I am endowed with all the noble excellences of a great warrior; and I am in your eyes weak and puny. It is not expedient for you to speak to me such harsh words. Perhaps you envy me, born as your kith and kin, and pure and peerless as a warrior. Or is your heart partial towards Rama, my enemy? Do you speak thus harshly to me at the very bidding of my foe? How otherwise can one of high intellect and erudition dare to speak to me thus rudely and offensively?

What you say may be true, it may be conducive to my highest interests. Even so is Sita an object to be easily secured. Sita who is like the goddess Lakshmi come down from her lotus throne how shall I bring myself to take her back to Rama simply out of fear that he might harm me? A few days more; and you will see that I destroy Rama and Lakshmana together with them, Sugriva and his army that trusted in their might. Yes, none of them shall leave a trace behind. Indra and his *devas* dare not face me, on the battle-field. And I, am I to be afraid of meeting your Rama in battle? You are old and grey; you are my grandfather; you wish me well. It is painful for me to speak to you thus harshly. You advise me to restore Sita to Rama, simply because you stand in fear of him.

Let that be; any kind of harm may befall me; I may be cut in twain; yet it is not in my nature to bow to another, whether it is Rama or any one infinitely more powerful than he.

You said, 'The present is not favourable to you. You are weak; and so I advise you to befriend your foe'. Never shall I do so. It may be against the science of polity. Still I cannot do it. It is a fault that is born with me. How can a man put away his nature? Can the leaves of the neem tree turn into honey?

Amazement and fear fill your heart when you see the cause-way built by Rama across the sea. It is a matter of chance, a mere coincidence like the crow sitting on a palm tree and the fruit falling therefrom. This is nothing special! Would any one be frightened at this? Rama has crossed this little span of water and has come here with his forces. And this suits me nicely. It saves me the trouble of going in search of all these foes in order to kill them. Massed

together they have come where I am, so that I may destroy them easily and all at once. But one of them will go back alive. I swear it."

Malyavan saw that the ruler of Lanka was angry with him; he was ashamed that his well-meant counsel had proved fruitless; he answered not a word. He saluted the king with "Victory, ever victory to thee", and taking leave of Ravana went back to his palace.

Then Ravana took deep counsel with his ministers; he gave careful thought by himself to their advice and took the necessary measures to guard his capital. Prahasta was posted at the eastern gate; Mahaparsva and Mahodara at the southern gate; Indrajit, master of illusions was placed in charge of the western gate; Suka and Sarana were stationed at the northern gate. Ravana stayed in his palace. Virupaksha one of the bravest and best of the *rakshasa*-warriors, was placed in command over the forces at the centre of the city. Having thus stationed guards all round Lanka, he rejoiced to think that there was nothing more left for him to do. This view was entirely consonant to his changed fortunes. Then he gave leave for his ministers and counsellors to depart and with the salute of "Victory, and ever victory to thee", ringing in his ears, he entered into the inner apartments.

CHAPTER 37

RAMA ARRAYS HIS TROOPS

RAMA, Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan, Dhumra, Vibhishana, Angada, Lakshmana, Sarabha, Sushena and his kin, Mainda, Dvidida, Gaja, Gavaksha, Kumuda, Anala, Panasa and others entered the region of the enemies and held consultations about the further action they had to take.

"This is the capital of the *rakshasas* impregnable to *asuras*, *uragas*, *gandharvas*, and *devas*. Bearing in mind very carefully the details reported by Hanuman we should take necessary measures to achieve our ends. Ravana, the ruler of the *rakshasas* makes this place his permanent abode".

Then Vibhishana spoke clearly in the presence of all and his words were pregnant with meaning. Anala, Sarabha, Praghosa, and Sampati, my four ministers, went in the form of birds to Lanka, entered the camp of the enemies and have come back with news of the warlike preparations of Ravana. Prahasta guards the eastern gate, Mahodara and Mahaparsva stand at the southern gate, the western gate is in charge of Indrajit; and Ravana, to whom fear is unknown guards the northern gate. Everywhere there are stationed countless *rakshasa*-warriors of wide renown, all armed to the teeth. Virupaksha is at the head of the forces stationed in the centre of the capital. The contingent is most devoted to Ravana and it consists of one thousand elephant warriors, ten thousand chariots, twenty thousand cavalry and a crore of infantry. They enjoy the boundless confidence of Ravana. Every one of these has at his back ten lakhs of followers trained and ready for war. These *rakshasa*-warriors are valiant, strong, cruel and never turn back in battle". And he asked his ministers to speak upon the subject in more detail. "Raghuvira! Sixty lakhs of heroes, each like Ravana himself in valour, prowess, splendour, strength and pride, followed him when he marched to battle against his brother Kubera. And the forces that are now mustered against us are larger. My Lord, it is not meet that I should describe at length of the strength of the foe in your presence. I speak not to bring fear to your heart. I speak thus to rouse your indignation. You can annihilate in an instant all the *devas* and *asuras*. I request you to array your monkey-forces four-square even as Ravana has arrayed his; and utterly destroy the *rakshasas*".

Raghuvira heard this and said, "Let Nila our generalissimo, encounter Prahasta at the eastern gate, Angada will meet and vanquish Mahodara and Mahaparsva at the southern gate. Maruti, the son of the Lord Vayu, of boundless valour, he alone is worthy to stand upto Indrajit, the master of illusions, at the western gate. I myself with Lakshmana by my side shall meet and destroy Ravana at the northern gate. He is a constant trouble to *daityas*, *danavas*, *maharshis* and great souls; mean-minded, he is proud of the rare boons he has secured and he ranges through the world bringing misery to all beings; I shall slay him and enter Lanka. Sugriva, Jambavan, and Vibhishana will stay between myself and Hanuman

with countless monkey-troops. In the coming battle only myself, Lakshmana, Vibhishana and his four ministers will wear human shape.

Let the monkeys retain their original shape and fight with the enemies. This shall be the sign that they belong to our army. The *rakshasas* can take any form at will and they might take human shapes. The monkeys too can take any forms they choose. If they assume human shapes, this would cause confusion between the two forces. The followers of Ravana would think it beneath themselves to assume the forms of monkeys. Even if they do we shall kill out of hand any one that fights against us — in the form of a monkey. Except the seven persons mentioned above any one that takes the form of a man and comes against us shall meet with instant death.” He took these measures to achieve his ends. And then finding that the summit of Suvela was inaccessible and pleasant withal, he decided to camp there for the night. Sri Rama having thus covered the earth with his forces, applied his mind on the destruction of his enemies and marched towards Lanka glad in the certainty of success.

CHAPTER 38

RAMA CAMPS ON MOUNT SUVELA

NEXT running to Sugriva and Vibhishana who were utterly devoted to him, loved *dharma*, wise in council and did the right actions at the right time and said “Friends, behold the mount Suvela, shining with the various herbs. Tonight, we shall camp here and feast our eyes on its beauty. We shall see from here the city of Lanka where abides that wicked one who carried away my wife and called down death upon himself. When we consider the rules of conduct laid down by the great ones and the traditions and nobility of his race, his conduct is inexplicable. Owing to his mean *rakshasa* nature, he has brought upon himself this dreadful sin that is condemned by all. At the mere mention of his name, I am beside myself with rage. The sin of this wretch has brought ruin and destruction to all the *rakshasas*. One single person commits a sin through the

mighty power of Time and this sin brings death and destruction upon his entire clan". So saying he went up mount Suvela with wrath at his heart against Ravana. Lakshmana followed him fully armed and guarding him carefully. Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sarabha, Gandhamadana, Panasa, Kumuda, Hara, Rambha, Jambavan, Sushena, Rishabha, Durmukha, Satabali, Mainda, Dvidida, Nila, Angada, Hanuman, Sugriva and his ministers and Vibhishana and others — all followed Rama. These monkey-heroes, swift like Vayu, reached the mountain top quickly and beheld Lanka built on the summit Trikuta and hanging as it were, from the sky. Looking at the city with its beautiful fortress gates and corridors, filled with auspicious crowds of *rakshasas*, they were struck by wonder. The *rakshasa*-warriors that guarded the fortress walls were beyond count and dark of hue; they appeared as if they were another corridor. The monkeys, eager for battle, were filled with enthusiasm and warlike spirit. Catching sight of the *rakshasas*, they roared like wild lions. Meanwhile, twilight came on and the sun descended, the moon lovely in radiance took his place in the sky. Thus Rama spent that night on mount Suvela, waited upon by Vibhishana and guarded by Lakshmana and the monkey-generals.

CHAPTER 39

THE MONKEYS BEHOLD LANKA


THE next morning, Rama, Lakshmana and the monkeys had a good view of Lanka from the top of mount Suvela. (This took place on the day when they crossed the ocean. What has been described in brief is now given fuller treatment. It was full moon that day and battle began the very next day, the first of the dark fortnight). They were struck with wonder when they saw the groves and gardens, broad, smooth and even and free from wild beasts. *Champaka*, *asoka*, *ingudi*, teak, palm, *tamala*, jack, *nipa*, *saptaparna* and other curious trees abounded there heavy with lovely flowers, fruits, shoots and creeper. The place resembled Nandana, the grove of Indra, or the Chaitraratha of Kubera. All fruits and flowers were found there in every season. Peacocks, cuckoos and other birds cooed sweetly; swan, duck, *chakravaka* and other water fowl, sailed

over the lakes, tanks and wells covered with lotus, lily and menuphar. The bees, drunk with honey, filled the groves with their music. The monkeys marched forward, glad and curious feasting their eyes on those wonderful sights. The breeze blew soft and pleasant, wafting the fragrance of fruit and flower. Some warriors got permission from Sugriva to walk towards Lanka; the birds and beasts that beheld them trembled with fear. The capital shook to its very base as they roared like lions, the broad earth quaked at their speed; the dust that they raised hid the sky from view. The bears and lions, boars and elephants, oxen and deer heard them in their forest haunts and fled in fear in all directions. (Suvela, the first of the three peaks of mount Trikuta, has been described so far. The second peak is now described). The middle peak of mount Trikuta was loftier than the other too; it touched the sky and shone like silver, with its trees draped gaily with flowers. It was lovely to behold; one hundred *yojanas* in extent, it was not accessible even to birds. No human being would climb it even in thought. Visvakarma built Lanka, the capital of Ravana, on the top of this resplendant mountain. It was thirty *yojanas* in length and a hundred *yojanas* in extent. Lofty towers like white cloud-banks, walls of gold, and palaces and castles adorned it. The houses shone like clouds that fill the autumn sky. And like Kailasa among the Himalayas, a building stood out among those houses. It was a lofty mansion erected in the centre of the capital, where the four high roads met. Adorned with countless pillars, it shone like an ornament to the city and seemed to touch the sky. Countless *rakshasa*-warriors kept ceaseless watch over it. (The monkeys that went in advance saw Lanka thus. What follows is how Rama himself saw it). Raghuvira and the monkey-warriors saw Lanka, made of artificial mountains covered with various veins of ore and beasts and birds of infinite variety gaily sporting themselves, and filled with wealth of every kind. Their amazement grew apace as they beheld lofty mansions, priceless gems, pearls, coral and other objects of value, skilfully fashioned palaces, guard houses, huge machines, fortress gates and rows of castles. Raghuvira, the master of all wealth and the god of gods, beheld with wonder Lanka endowed with everything auspicious and good. (The monkeys were struck with wonder because they had never beheld till now such wealth and magnificence. But the surprise of Rama was due to another cause. Ravana had won for himself,

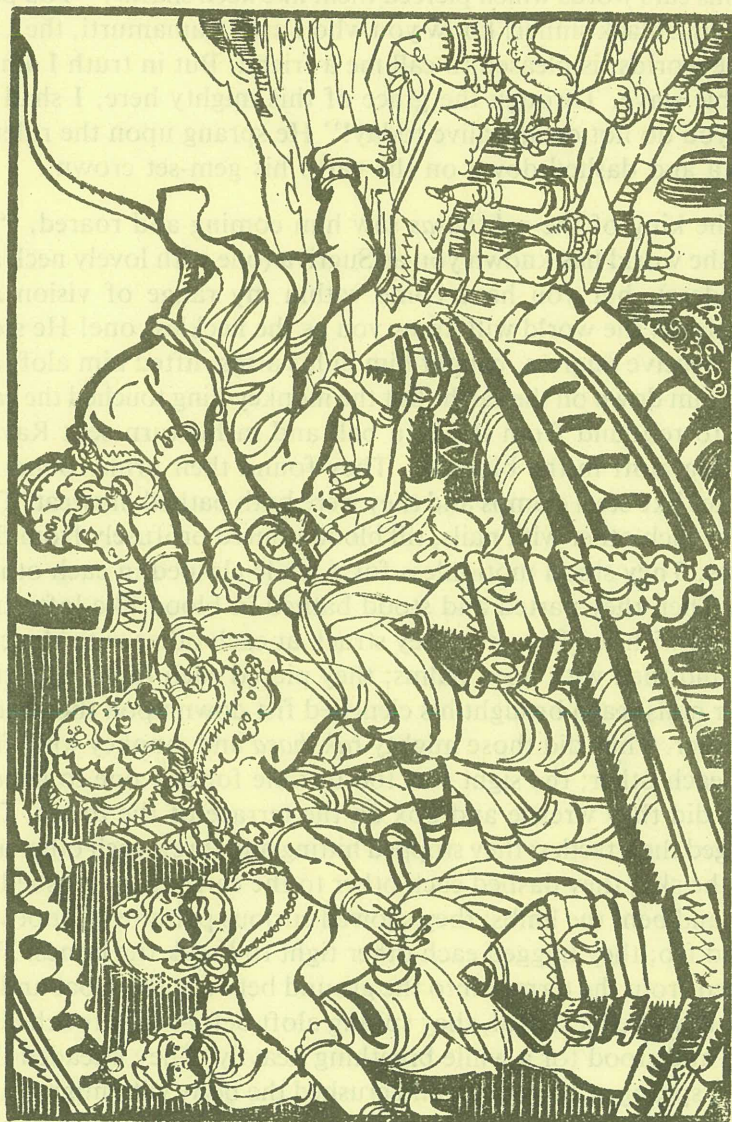
through the merit laid up in the past, this high status, happiness and power, but he yielded to sin and was about to lose his all. Rama marvelled at the course of *karma*).

CHAPTER 40

WRESTLING BETWEEN RAVANA AND SUGRIVA

HEN Raghunatha went up to crest of Mount Suvela which was two *yojanas* in circumference, stayed there for the space of a *muhurta* with Sugriva and the other generals, and took a good view of the country around. On the middle peak of mount Trikuta, Lanka had been built more skilfully by Visvakarma, the divine architect. Lovely woods compassed it all round. A closer view revealed a lofty tower on top of which sat Ravana, the terror of the worlds, surrounded by his ministers and retinue. A white umbrella, like the full moon, was held over his head by a few *rakshasas*. Others waved over him, from either side, chowries with golden shafts. He was adorned with precious jewels set with gems and covered with ruddy sandal paste; he was clad in silk garments of spotless white curiously worked with gold. On his spacious chest, dark like a surcharged cloud, there shone like reflected moons the scar of the tusks of the elephant Iravata, where it hit him and broke off. (Ravana chose to retain the broken ends on his chest, and planed off the stumps and had them encased in gold and set with gems). His upper garment was red like the blood of a hare; and he himself had the appearance of a scarlet cloud-bank during twilight.

At the sight of him, Sugriva was beside himself with fury, could not brook to see the sinful wretch seated in all the splendour of royalty in the very presence of his Lord Rama. Hence, with mighty strength of mind he sprang into the sky and, alighting on the tower where Ravana sat and faced him straight. He had sworn before Rama, "That wretch of a *rakshasa* has but to come within the range of my eyes and he will be no more. Take it from me as true!" He had been eagerly awaiting the moment when his promise could be fulfilled. He gazed at Ravana intently for a while and without the



least fear, for he regarded him as a wisp of straw, and he bellowed into his ears words which pierced them like keen shafts : “You puny *rakshasa*! black sinner! know you who I am? Ramamurti, the Lord of the worlds, is pleased to call me a friend. But in truth I am his humble slave. Through the grace of this mighty here, I shall see that you do not escape alive today!” He sprang upon the ruler of Lanka and dashed down on the earth his gem-set crown.

The king of the *rakshasas* saw him coming and roared, “Till now the world has known you as Sugriva (one with lovely neck and shoulders); but you have come within my range of vision and henceforth the world will know you as the neckless one! He stood up to receive Sugriva, caught him in his arms, lifted him aloft and flung him down on the earth. But the monkey-king touched the earth only to rebound from it like a ball and in his turn sent Ravana whirling aloft in the blue sky. They found their arms round one another like steel clamps and they were both bathed in sweat. They tore at each other with nails, till blood poured profusely from their bodies. They stood motionless for a while clasped in each other’s arm. Then they parted and stood bathed in blood like lofty trees covered with red flowers. They struck at each other with clenched fists and then with open palms; they pieced each other with their finger nails; each brought his clenched fist down upon the head of the other. Thus did those mighty *rakshasa* and monkey-king fight with each other; the sight was too terrible for any one to behold. Long did they wrestle and box on the terrace of the tower. They changed their tactics; they stopped hitting and threw each other aloft into the sky; they dashed each other to the earth; they crushed the neck and bent the limbs; they showed curious patterns of footwork to and fro; they hugged each other tight to break the bones. They slipped from the terrace into the ground between the moat and the wall. Both being skilful, they sprang aloft before they touched the earth and stood for a while breathing heavily. They kneaded their limbs, sprang at each other and crushed the body with mighty arms like the noose of Yama himself. Like a lion and a tiger in their strength, like two elephants in the prime, they tried to lay each other low. Natural strength and trained skill made them display every device, every twist and turn known on earth. Their chests collided and they fell down together. They sprang up, crashed down again,

and used all their skill and cunning. They knew no weariness and no weakness, thanks to their military training and strength acquired by practising the art of archery. Like majestic elephants in rut, they barred the progress of each other, with their arms, hard and stout like the pillows to which the elephants are tethered. Long did they fight in this wise, displaying all the known points of wrestling and boxing. Resolved to fight to death, like two wild cats intent upon taking a dainty, they often stood motionless. Circles, curious stances, holds, hugs, catches, advance, retreat, side hits, cross cuts, and other devices like *Parimoksha*, *Vajra*, *Paridhavana*, *Adhidravana*, were brought into use; it was a rare fight to see. Then Ravana decided that it was utterly impossible for him to defeat Sugriva by fair means, so he employed his arts of magic and illusions; he was seen in many places at once. Then Sugriva concluded that it was not expedient to continue the fight. His face shone with the success he had won. Though he wrestled long and hard with Ravana of mighty strength, he was not tired at all, but sprang aloft in the sky and came back to Rama.

When Ravana least expected, Sugriva sprang to where he was, defeated him after a hard fight, eluded him skilfully and returned to his place. The monkey-monarch had forces that could slay Ravana in a moment. Yet through devotion to Rama he would not use them; but without the permission of his master, he himself went and fought with the king of the *rakshasas* and gave to Sri Rama the glory he had won. There were many among the *rakshasas* who were equal to Ravana; but disregarding them all, he set his eye upon the king of Lanka; and vanquished him. He did not use unfair means like Ravana, but observing the rules of war he fought straight and clean and yet gave Ravana a tougher time than he had ever known before. That was what the *rakshasa* got out of the encounter. But boundless good was the mead of Sugriva. A child of the Sun-god he went swift like his father, through the pathway of the sky, brought wonderful deeds and came back safe and victorious. He came and stood, a humble monkey among the other monkeys. He said to himself, "Alas! I have not brought the head of Ravana to lay at the feet of my master. Now shall I stand in his presence"? He came and stood by the side of Rama, as if shame overpowered him. Raghava had vowed that he himself would slay Ravana; and Sugriva had

refrained from killing the *rakshasa* simply because he did not want the word of his master to be falsified. It was not as if Sugriva was ignorant of the arts of illusion. He came away without employing them because he knew that Rama would be angry with him if he, like Ravana, used such tricks. Thus, Sugriva, son of Surya after achieving this wonderful feat, came back with the speed of wind to his monkey-hosts with boundless joy in his heart. And boundless too were the joy and warlike enthusiasm of Raghunatha. And the monkey-lords praised their master mightily. (*Chari* is the name given to the movement when the fighter with one foot firmly fixed moves about the other. Moving with both feet is *charana*. A number of these *charanas* taken together is a *kanda* and three or four such make a *mandala*. They may be towards right or left, or both, or partly one and partly the other. *Sthana* is the name given to the movement of the feet, forward, backward and sideways they are of six kinds, *Vaishnava*, *Samapada*, *Visakha*, *Mandala*, *Pratyali*, and *Alidha* (*Bharata*). Resting one's weight on the left leg advanced is *Pratilidha*; and *Alidha* is when the right leg is used. *Samapada* is when both feet bear the weight equally. *Visakha* is when there is a span of ground between the feet. *Mandala* is when one stands with the feet placed in a circle — *Dhanurveda*). The stance includes such movements as when one takes a leap or springs like a tiger or a lion. *Gomutra* is the name given, to the movement when one walks, as a cow passing urine while walking. *Parimoksha* is foiling the enemy by changing one's place. To meet and escape similar movements of the enemy is *Pariharana*. *Paridhavana* is circling round the enemy who stands still. Very quick movements in front of the foe is *Abhidravana*. *Aplava* is when one takes leaps like a frog. *Vigrahassthana* is when one springs at the enemy without preliminary couching. Marching away from the enemy with one's back turned to him is *Paravrita*. The same movement taken facing the enemy is *Apavrita*. Contracting one's limbs and moving with the idea of taking the enemy captive is *Avadruta*. When one springs upon the enemy with head hung low, intending to strike at him with the feet, it is *Avapluta*. Stretching one's arms to catch hold of the enemy's arms is *Upanyasta*. Suddenly lowering one's arms to foil the enemy's grip is *Apanyasta* (*Govindaraja*).

Apavrita is movement to the right and the left. Hugging one's arms to the breast so that the enemy might not get hold thereon

is known as *Upanyasta*. Shooting one's arms to get a grip of the enemy is *Apanyasta* (Tilaka).

CHAPTER 41

THE SIEGE OF LANKA

RAGHUVIRA noticed on the body of Sugriva the marks of his terrible fight with Ravana. He was glad to see that his friend had come back safe. He clasped him to his breast and said, 'Friend, without taking counsel with me, how could you set out on this foolhardy adventure? Kings as a rule depute persons who like to do such jobs, but they do not themselves undertake them. You should not do such things, so long as we are here with. You are fond of such daring feats. But is it right for you to place in a state of ignorance and anxiety myself, Vibhishana and this monkey-army? Pray do not do such things without first consulting us. If you suffer harm, what can I hope for from Sita or Bharata, Lakshmana or Satrughna, or even from my own self? (A cow pours out all her love on the youngest calf, disregarding those born before. Sri Rama disregards Mahalakshmi who is ever with him, but places above her a monkey that joined him only the other day. Is there any limit to the parental love of Raghava? The *Vedas* lay down that the wife is the half of one's self and yet Rama places a devotee higher than his consort, such is the greatness. Brothers and his own body, Sri Rama was prepared to give up for the sake of his *bhaktas*. One sacrifices wife, child and wealth where one's life is at stake. But Rama counts his own life as but a straw in the interests of his devotees). During your absence I came to certain resolutions. Though I know your strength and courage, yet my heart was filled with care because of my great love for you. I resolved to kill in battle Ravana and all his kindred, to instal Vibhishana as the Lord of Lanka and so may make fruitful his surrender to me; to place Bharata in charge of the Kosala Kingdom (else the family tradition would be ruined) and then to quit my hold upon this body.'" And Sugriva hastened to reply "The moment I set my eyes on that sinful wretch that carried away your beloved wife, I was clean beside myself with rage. I am your slave; this is my duty, no foolhardy adventure."

Raghava applauded the sentiment and said to Lakshmana, "Child, Let us camp on a spot abounding with fruits, roots and cool water and array our forces. Behold the omens that indicate the impending ruin of creatures, monkeys and *rakshasa*-heroes, both will perish. The wind blows fierce; the earth quakes; the mountain peaks stir; huge trees crash down. Clouds form the abode of eagles, vultures and other cruel creatures, and with frightful roar and ghastly shapes shower down blood. This foretells the ruin of beings. The evening sky is fearful to look at, as if smeared with red sandal paste. Blocks of fire fall flaming from the solar orb. Mean beasts and birds look up at the sun and cry with piteous howls; and this strikes terror into the heart of all. The moon shines not at nights; on the other hand, it burns fiercely with hot rays; as happens at the time of dissolution, it is surrounded by rings red at the centre and black at the edges. The circle narrows, an unfailing sign portending dreadful dangers and disasters. Black spots appear on the face of the sun. Constellations shine not as before. The sight of these evil omens makes one think that *yugas* have come to an end and the last day is at hand. Crows, eagles and vultures are worsted by puny birds. Jackals howl dreadfully. Let us, with our armies, enter this very moment into Lanka guarded so carefully by Ravana." He came down from mount Suvela, gazed intently at his forces that no enemy dare approach. Himself and Sugriva put cheer and spirit into the hearts of the monkeys and encouraged them to face the battle with heroic ardour.

Then at an auspicious hour, Raghuvira, bow in hand, led the monkey-forces towards Lanka. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan, Nala, Dhumra, Nila, Lakshmana and others followed him. The monkey-hosts came behind, like a mighty ocean covering the earth. The *vanara*-heroes, like huge elephants in rut, the death of their foes, carried with them mountain peaks and lofty trees. Thus Rama and Lakshmana, drew near Lanka. It was a splendid sight, with flags and banners. Countless gardens of rare beauty were laid out on all sides. Fortress walls of curious design touched the sky; no enemy dare approach the corridors and gates of the city.

Following the orders of Raghava, the monkeys took up their places and laid siege to Lanka that the very gods dare not approach.

Rama and Lakshmana stood fully armed before the northern gate, lofty as a mountain peak. Even as the lord Varuna guards the ocean, Ravana, kept watch over the place himself. How could any one except Rama stand here and command the situation? Jealously guarded on all sides by dreadful *rakshasas* armed from head to foot, it was full of peril. Like Patala, the nether world, where the *vanaras* have their abode, it struck terror into ordinary creatures. On platforms erected by the side of it, the weapons, armours and flags of the *rakshasa*-warriors were neatly piled.

Nila, the commander-in-chief of the monkey-forces, camped at the eastern gate with Mainda and Dvidida to aid him. Rishaba, Gavaksha, Gaja, and Gavaya helped Angada who besieged the southern gate. Hanuman stood before the western gate, assisted by Prahasa. Sugriva, surrounded by other heroes, ever hissing like the lord Garuda, camped between the north gate in charge of Ravana and Indrajit and the west gate to render necessary help to Rama and Hanuman. Thirty-six crores of renowned warriors stood round Sugriva. Under the orders of Rama, one crore of monkeys were stationed by Lakshmana and Vibhishana at each gate. Sugriva and Jambavan stood to the west of Rama. Endowed with the strength of tigers, these monkeys carried trees and boulders; they took frightful leaps; their nails and teeth were their weapons; with cheerful hearts they awaited the moment of battle. Some had the strength of ten elephants, some of a hundred, some of a thousand, some of an *ogha*, some of a *mahaugha*, while others were of infinite strength. Monkeys, baboons, bears, of various hues, of various features, of various cries, encompassed Lanka. It was a wonderful and curious sight, as if it were an endless swarm of locusts or like a cloud-bank hiding the earth and sky from view. The earth was hid by the monkeys camped there; while the sky was hid by the monkeys that jumped up. Several crores of monkeys laid siege to the fortress of Lanka, while others stood ready for battle. On the slopes of mount Trikuta and all round Lanka, countless monkeys, armed with boulders and trees, barred the way so that not even a whiff of air could enter. Of vast bulk like serried cloud-banks and mighty like Devendra himself, the monkey-heroes surrounded Lanka all on a sudden; the *rakshasas* were filled with wonder. Like the sea that has broken its bounds, the monkey-forces raised a huge

roar. Mount Trikuta, with its woods and groves, and the City of Lanka with its houses and fortress walls, shook with the noise. Not even gods and *asuras* and Indra dare oppose that monkey-host protected by Rama, Lakshmana, and Sugriva.

Then Rama arrayed his forces following the principles laid down in the books, took counsel with his ministers about the means of destroying the *rakshasas*, carefully examined the advice of others in his own mind, and came to a conclusion. He was a master of the arts of negotiation, he knew the nature and effects of every policy. Hence he followed the rule that, when one lays siege to the city of a foe, one should send through a messenger the call to battle. With the approval of Vibhishana, he said to Angada :-

“Boy, leap lightly over the courts and make your way into Lanka. Give this message of mine to Ravana, manfully and without fear: ‘You, who have lost the grace of Mahalakshmi! You, who have lost your power! You, whose end draws near! You of clouded mind! Proud of the boons you have secured from Brahma, you have troubled and insulted *rishis*, gods, *gandharvas*, *apsarasas*, *nagas*,, *yakshas*, and kings. Out of sheer ignorance you have gathered for yourself a heavy burden of sin. That pride will end today. You carried away my wife by stealth and have incurred my wrath. Destined to punish you for it, I have placed, on my bow, weapons of divine potency and stand here before your fortress gate. If you fight with me and meet death at my hands, you will attain the high worlds where gods and *maharshis* and other great souls go; you will be freed from all your sins. Come, then, quickly to the battle. You deceived me by an illusion with the aid of Maricha; you led me far away from the cottage, and you carried away Sita. Now is the time for you to prove that strength on which you depended when you dared to do that deed. He who steals a piece of gold is not qualified to atone and be purged, unless he restores it. In the same way, restore Sita to me and take refuge with me. I shall forgive you all your sins. Or else, my keen shafts will rid the world of the *rakshasa*-race and leave not a trace behind. (If Ravana should surrender to him Rama meant to give him the kingdom of Kosala that was his by right). ‘Vibhishana, the noblest of the *rakshasas* and the very soul of righteousness, has taken refuge with me. And so, enjoying for

ever this kingdom of Lanka, untroubled by foes, he shines with unparalleled lustre. He is gifted with all the qualities needed for ruling over the kingdom. But you are utterly unqualified for it; you have stayed far away from the path of right; you are a great sinner; you have no control over your senses; you are surrounded by fools; between this kingdom and yourself, there is a yawning gulf. If you bring Sita back and take refuge in me, I shall give Vibhishana some other kingdom and let you go alive. Else, come out and fight me. If you meet me in fair fight relying upon your strength and valour, you will be delivered from all your sins by my arrows; and you will attain the heroes' heaven reserved for those who never turn back to the enemy and perish in battle. Should you seek to escape from me and taking the form of a bird fly with the speed of thought, to hide yourself in some other world, you can never survive once you have come within the range of my sight. Now, listen, I shall tell you what is for your highest good. I have your life in the hollow of my hand. I can kill you the moment I am so minded. None among the *rakshasa*-race shall survive. You will have no one to perform your funeral rites. Hence, perform them yourself now. Those about to meet their death, long to take a last look at their children, friends, and kinsfolk and other objects dear to them. Even so, take a last look at the Lanka that you have guarded so lovingly."

Angada took leave of Rama and like the god of fire in human form, coursed swiftly through the sky and alighted on the palace of Ravana. He found him taking counsel with his ministers. He drew near, announced himself and delivered the message of Rama, adding nothing and omitting nothing, while Ravana's ministers sat and listened. "I have been sent here by Sri Rama, the king of Kosala, who does good to all beings. I am the son of Vali and my name is Angada. All this is no news to you. Raghuvira has ordered me to convey this message to you. 'Oh you of cruel heart, if you call yourself a man, come out of Lanka and meet me in fight. When I see your unwillingness to do so, even after I have laid siege to your capital, it seems to me you are the refuse of creation. I mean to slay you and your ministers, your sons, kith and kin. Let all the worlds breathe freely and without fear. Today I shall annihilate you, the eternal foe of *devas*, *danavas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *uragas*, *rakshasas* and *rishis*. (The *rakshasas* are included here because even

among them there are good and righteous souls like Akampana, Malyavan, Mandodari, Vibhishana, his ministers, his wife, and his daughter). If you wish to avoid such a fate, bring Janaki back to me and seek refuge with me.' This is the message I have been ordered to deliver to you."

The ruler of the *rakshasas*, hearing these harsh words, was beside himself with wrath and blazed like the god of fire; his eyes were bloodshot and emitted sparks of fire. He cried to his ministers, "Seize this wretch and slay him out of hand." Four *rakshasas*, obeying these orders, fell upon Angada. Angada wanted to show his strength in the midst of the *rakshasas*. So he bore with them for a while, and with two *rakshasas* hanging on each of his arms, he sprang into the air lightly and shook them off from him on his way. And they fell dead senseless at the feet of Ravana himself. Next he smashed to pieces with a mighty kick the lofty tower of Ravana's palace, that was hid by clouds like a huge mountain peak. And the broken part was but a mass of dust even like the peak of the Himalayas struck down by the *vajra* of Indra. Thus he demolished the mansion of Dasamukha, roared out his name and fame like a lordly lion, came back through the sky and took his place among the monkeys close to Sri Rama. At this sight, the *rakshasas* were grief-stricken, while the monkeys rent the sky with shouts of joy. Ravana was filled with boundless wrath when he saw his palace ruined before his very eyes. He heaved deep sighs at the thought that it was a portent of his impending destruction. (Vibhishana had at heart the idea that Ravana should be given the kingdom of Lanka if he would surrender himself to Rama. Rama agreed to it and said 'My kingdom is yours').

Meanwhile Rama, surrounded by his monkey-hosts, began the fight with intent to slay Ravana. Sushena, huge of bulk like a mountain top, had taken permission from Sugriva and accompanied by monkeys that could assume forms at will went round the fortress gates, even like the moon making the round of the zodiacal signs. The bravest among the *rakshasas* were filled with wonder when they saw the countless monkeys encompass Lanka, while the timid trembled in terror. Some were glad at the prospect of a hand to hand fight with valiant monkeys. Some *rakshasas* went mad with

fear at the sight of the monkeys massed thick between the walls and the moat, so that there was no room for a needle to enter. And they cried "Ha, Ha". Thus loud war cries increased in the city. The *rakshasa*-heroes wielding arms moved to and fro like the dreadful winds on the day of dissolution.

CHAPTER 42

BATTLE BEGINS

WHEN the *rakshasas* went and informed Ravana of the siege of Lanka by the monkey-forces. He was furious and strengthened the measures he had taken to guard the capital. He went up to the top of his palace and looked around : the hills, mountains and woods round Lanka were hidden from view by monkeys, eager for a fight. He was filled with anxiety as to how he could destroy them. He thought over it long and plucking up courage, gazed with wonder at Rama and the monkey-hosts. Meanwhile, Rama approached the walls with his monkeys and saw the joint quarters of Lanka guarded well by *rakshasa*-heroes. As soon as Rama set eyes on Lanka adorned with curious flags and banners, the memory of Sita overpowered him. He said sadly, "Alas! my Janaki whose eyes are like those of a frightened dove, she is too delicate to endure hardship. Here in Lanka, she lies stretched on the ground tortured by ghastly *rakshasis*, consumed by grief. All this was brought about by me and all this she endures for my sake." Because of his infinite compassion, he controlled his swelling wrath and ordered the monkeys to begin the battle.

At this the monkeys vied with one another in roaring like lions. Each said to himself "With mountain peaks and with our fists, hard like diamonds, we shall reduce this Lanka to dust."

Armed with rocks and boulders and uprooted trees, the warriors got ready for battle. Before the very eyes of Ravana and utterly disregarding him, the monkey-army began to cross the fortress walls at many points, as ordered by the chiefs. Observing this, Raghava was glad. Ready to give up their lives for Rama's sake, the monkeys

with red faces and golden bodies surrounded Lanka, carrying trees and rocks as weapons. With trees, rocks, and fists, they destroyed walls, groves and gateways. With logs, grass, boulders, trees and earth, they filled the moats which had once held clean, sweat water. The leaders swarmed over the fortress walls, followed by a million monkeys. They pulled down the golden gateways and the towers that looked like the summit of Mount Kailasa. From all the four quarters they entered Lanka, roaring, jumping and going hither and thither. Able to assume what forms they would, they roared like lions, shouting "Long live the mighty Rama and Lakshmana and their ally Sugriva!", laughed uproaringly and marched towards Lanka. Meantime, the monkey-leaders, Virabahu, Subahu, Nala and others, crossed the walls and arrayed their forces in various places. At the eastern gate stood Kumuda with ten crore monkeys. Prahasa and Panasa were stationed there to assist him. At the southern gate stood Satabali with twenty crore monkeys. Sushena, the father of Tara, stood at the western gate with sixty crores of monkeys. Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, stayed with Jambavan, near the northern gate where Rama and Lakshmana were. Gavaksha, the chief, with terrible eyes and mountain-like body stood, with a crore of monkeys to the right of Rama. Dhumra, the king of the bears, terrible in his swiftness, stood to the left of Rama with a crore of monkeys. Vibhishana, peerless in strength and valour, stood, mace in hand, near Rama. Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sarabha and Gandhamadana moved from place to place and guarded the army.

Enraged by this sight, Ravana ordered all his forces to start for the battle. The *rakshasas* rejoiced thereat and raised terrible shouts. They beat with golden rods their war-drums white like the moon and blew their conches. With their black bodies adorned with priceless jewels, and with their conches making deafening music, they looked like rain-clouds surrounded by storks and pierced by lightning. As the rivers fall into the ocean at the time of moonrise and on the day of dissolution, the *rakshasa*-forces mingled together shouting and roaring in mad glee. The monkeys roared and shouted in return; so that the mountain Trikuta and its slopes and caves echoed with the din. Conch, kettle-drum, war drum and other instruments of martial music mingled with the trumpeting of elephants, and neigh of horses, the crash and thunder of chariots, and the war

cries and shouts of the soldiers, to shake the earth and sky to their foundations.

Meanwhile the battle began between the monkeys and the *rakshasas*, like the fight between the *devas* and the *asuras* in the far past. The *rakshasas* shouted out their names and prowess and achievements, as they struck at the monkeys with clubs, swords, tridents, and hatches. The cries "Victory, to our Majesty!" from the *rakshasas* were answered with cries of "Victory to our Lord Sugriva!" from the monkeys. The *rakshasas* were slain in countless numbers by the monkeys with trees and rocks, with nails and teeth. From the battlements the *rakshasas* struck and stabbed and tore the monkey-forces with swords, tridents and sticks. The enraged monkeys sprang at them and pushed them down. Thus a river of blood flowed above the bodies of the dead and dying. The fight between the *rakshasas* and the monkey-forces was unique and incomparable.

CHAPTER 43

CLOSE FIGHT

AS the monkeys and the *rakshasas* fought, mad fury took hold of both sides. With horses of noble breed decked with gold ornaments, banners and flags like lambent flame, chariots like solar orbs and beautiful armour, the *rakshasas* set out for war and the quarters reverberated with their lion-like roaring. Doing terrible deeds, they ever sought the victory for their lord and master, Ravana. The monkey-forces too were determined to defeat them and sprang at the *rakshasas* who could assume what form they would. Meanwhile there began a series of hand to hand fight between the famed warriors on either side. Like the lord Rudra and Yama in the far past, did Angada and Indrajit meet each other on the battlefield. Prajankha, the *rakshasa*, faced Sampati, the minister of Vibhishana, Jambumali and Hanuman; Vibhishana and Mitraghna, Gaja and Tapan, Nila and Nikumbha, Sugriva and Prahasta, Lakshmana and Virupaksha, Sri Rama and Agniketu, Rasmiketu, Suptaghna and Yajnakopa; Samanta, and Vajramushti, Dvidiva


and Asaniprabha, Nala and Pratapana, Sushena, the son of the god Dharma, and Vidyunmali; and other veterans were pitted against in dreadful fight. Streams of blood flowed through the battle-field, carrying with them the bodies of the monkeys and *rakshasas* like logs of wood and covered with hair like tender grass.

Indrajit hit Angada with his club like the *vajra* of Indra. Angada, in his turn, smashed the splendid chariot, horses, and the drivers of Ravana's son. Prajankha pierced Sampati with three keen shafts; Sampati struck Prajankha dead with a lofty tree. Jambumali from his place in the chariot aimed the weapon Sakti, right at the breast of Hanuman. Maruti ground him and his chariot to dust. Pratapana sprang upon Nala with a frightful roar; but the monkey-lord, cloven as he was with the keen arrows of the *rakshasa*, tore out the eyes of his enemy. Pragma consumed the monkey-forces as if he sent them down his huge throat; whereat Sugriva felled him down to the earth with a huge tree. Agniketu, Rasmiketu, Suptaghna and Yajnakopa hit Rama with their sharp arrows; while the son of Dasaratha shore off their heads lightly with his flame-like arrows. With a blow of his fist Samanta struck down Vajramushti, his car and horses. Even as the sun pierces a cloud with his rays, Nikumbha pierced the black body of Nila. He followed it up most skilfully by a shower of arrows, clove the limbs of his enemy and roared out in mad glee. But even as Mahavishnu slew of old the *asuras* with his *chakra* (disc), Nila plucked the chariot-wheel of Nikumbha and cut down the head of the driver. Dvidida, with his limbs hard like the *vajra* of Indra or the thunderbolt, hit Asaniprabha with a mountain-top; and the *rakshasa* pierced Dvidida with his arrows hard like thunderbolt. Thereat the monkey mad with wrath, struck down with a huge *sala* tree the *rakshasa* and his car and horses. Vidyunmali, seated in his car, hit Sushena with gold-bound shafts and roared again and again; but the monkey with a huge mountain-top ground to dust his car. Vidyunmali foiled the blow most skilfully and leapt down with his club. Then Sushena sprang upon him with a big boulder. The *rakshasa* hit the foe with his mace. Yet the monkey paid no heed to it, but brought down the boulders upon the head of Vidyunmali, who fell dead upon the earth with a cloven heart.

Even as the *daityas* of old were defeated by the *devas*, the *rakshasa*-heroes were foiled by the monkey-warriors in this hand to hand fight. The battle-field was a frightful sight, with its broken swords, maces, *saktis*, *tomaras*, broad swords, and crashed cars, dead war-horses, elephants, monkeys and *rakshasas*; cars with their axles, wheels and yokes broken and jackals and vultures feasting joyfully on the corpses. Headless trunks of monkeys and *rakshasas* bobbed up and down along the rivers of blood. In that battle that resembled the fight between the *devas* and the *asuras*, the *rakshasas*, torn by the nails and teeth of the monkeys and with bodies covered with blood, awaited the setting of the sun, to renew the fight. (The *rakshasa* strength waxes during the night and it was the best time to practise magic).

CHAPTER 44

NOCTURNAL BATTLE

 HE sun set as the two forces were thus engaged in fight; and night came in that was fatal to the monkeys; *rakshasas* and monkeys with relentless ferocity and equal ardour for victory fought at night more dreadfully than before. Nothing was visible in the darkness; the *rakshasas* and the monkeys slew their own comrades, mistaking them for enemies. "Hold, kill, cut, cut, flee, flee;" such dreadful cries alone were heard. The *rakshasas*, nocturnal wanderers, were themselves confused by the darkness. Their black bodies, set off by flashing ornaments of gold, resembled huge mountains covered with forests put up by rare herbs. In the ghastly darkness, the *rakshasas*, mad with fury tore and ate the monkeys. In their turn, the monkeys sprang upon horses with golden saddles, upon flags flaming like fire, upon elephants, elephant drivers, and chariots, dragged them down in mad fury and tore them with their teeth and nails. Rama and Lakshmana, with arrows like hissing snakes, stuck down the *rakshasas*, whether visible or hidden. The dust raised by the horses and chariot-wheels filled the nose and ears. Thus as the battle raged dreadfully and one's hair stood on end, blood flowed in torrents. Huge drums, kettle drums, conches, flutes and other instruments produced a wonderful harmony. The cries

of the wounded were terrible to hear. Monkey-warriors killed by sword, trident and other weapons, and *rakshasas* slain by mountain-tops were the offerings made to the goddess of earth; weapons were the flowers used in this worship. The battle-field had no visible landmarks and was utterly impassable, because it was all covered with blood and flesh. Like the Black Night that swallows up all created beings, this night carried death and destruction to the *rakshasas* and the monkeys (Bhimarathi is the night that brings fear to all beings. Or the name might be interpreted to mean the *saktis* known as Gananayikas — Sati, Kalaratri, and Bhairavi). In that frightful darkness, the *rakshasas* hid Rama from view under showers of arrows. The roaring noise of their onset was like the seven oceans surging up on the day of dissolution. Observing this, Rama sent against them in a moment arrows like flames which pierced their vitals. From these Yamasatru, Mahaparsva, Mahodara, Vajradamshtra, Mahakaya, Suka and Sarama escaped with their lives. Then the arrows of Rama, brilliant with golden bands, made the night like an autumn night lit up with fire-flies. The ghastly night was made ghastly by the roars of *rakshasas* and the neighing of horses. Mount Trikuta seemed to speak through all her caves; such was the increasing noise that rose from all sides. Baboons and langurs, huge and dark of body, crushed the *rakshasas* between their mighty arms and made a feast of them.

Then Angada decided to slay Indrajit and struck at him, his driver and his horses. Then Indrajit was forced to leave the battlefield deprived of his car and his steeds. Rama, Lakshmana, the gods and the *rishis* praised Angada mightily. Since the valour and might of Indrajit were well-known, they extolled highly the wonderful feat of Angada in driving this hero from the field. Sugriva, Vibhishana and the monkeys cried, "Excellent, excellent". Indrajit was beside himself with anger at being so foiled.


Then Rama said to the monkeys, "Rest calm and free from fear, all of you with Sugriva. This *rakshasa* troubles the three worlds because of the mighty boons granted to him by Brahma. He will defeat you now since the time is favourable to him. I have to honour the word of Brahma and should put up with this for a while."

Then the wicked *rakshasa*, the unconquered hero, from where he was hid, discharged some arrows hard and sharp like thunderbolts. They fell in the shape of mighty serpents upon Rama and Lakshmana and pierced their limbs.

He made them unconscious through his magic arts and bound them with the *Naga* cords. All the monkeys saw Indrajit in his fury strike down with his serpent weapons and bind and render senseless those lords of humanity. That wicked wretch, unable to defeat them in fair fight during the day, bound these princes through his magic art at night.

CHAPTER 45

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA BOUND BY NAGAPASA

HEN Rama despatched the two mighty sons of Sushena with Nila and Angada, Vinata, Jambavan, Sanuprastha, Rishaba, Rishabhaskanda, and Sarabha, to find out where Indrajit stood. They sprang into the sky in great joy with large uprooted trees as weapons and searched most carefully all round. Indrajit reduced their matchless speed by powerful arrows and displayed his wonderful skill in the art of magic weapons. Their bodies cut with iron nails, they could not see Indrajit, as one could not see the sun hemmed in by dark clouds; those monkey-heroes for all their frightful speed were unable to find out where he was. Then the son of Ravana pierced the bodies of Rama and Lakshmana with showers of arrows and there was not space enough for a pin to enter.

Blood flowed in torrents from the wounds; Rama and Lakshmana shone like lofty trees covered with scarlet flowers. Then Indrajit, black like cloven mountain of collyrium and with bloodred eyes, made himself invisible through his magic arts and said to Rama and Lakshmana, "When I choose to fight rendering myself invisible, the king of the *devas*, Mahendra himself, cannot find me out. Who can approach me? You, puny men, are beneath notice. I will make you a prey to my wrath through my arrows decked with the feathers

of vultures and send you straight to the world of Yama." He clove with sharp arrows the princes who never strayed from virtue and roared with delight like a lion. He bent his bow huge like a mountain and from it discharged arrows unceasingly. Knowing as he did the secrets of weapons and the vital spots in the human body, he aimed his keen arrows at those spots and roared again and again. Rama and Lakshmana were fair fighters; hence they would not strike at the enemy, following the sound made by him, according to the rules of Sabdaveda. They were bound and bitten by arrows in the form of serpents; and in a moment their eyes were closed. Like the banners of Indra, which comes down when the strong cords that held it aloft are loosened, the princes fell on the earth, their vital spots pierced with the arrows shot by the son of Ravana. Covered with gushing blood, bound tight with the serpent arrow, tortured by unbearable pain, they lay as it were on a bed of arrows. There was not a little finger's width in their bodies where arrows were not embedded; nor was there a spot from head to foot not bound and pierced by those serpent shafts; nor a limb that was not clamped tight and rendered motionless. The wicked *rakshasa* who could take forms at will tortured them thus; and like streams that rush down mountain slopes, torrents of blood coursed down from their bodies. Indrajit, who once had taken Indra captive in battle, was beside himself with wrath as he struck the princes again and again in their vital spots. Rama was the first to fall down. *Narachas* with golden bands and keen heads, *ardha-narachas*, *bhallas*, *anjalikas*, *vatsadantas*, *simhadamshtras*, and *kshuras*, were despatched by Indrajit to pierce them again. (Arrows with round heads are *narachas*; the same with a cleft in the middle is an *ardha-naracha*. An arrow with the head of a hatchet is a *bhalla*; a shaft with the head fashioned like clasped hand in appeal is an *anjalika*; while a *vatsadanta* resembles the teeth of a horse; and *simhadamshtra*, the tusks of the lion, and pits point. *Kshura* was like a sharp razor). The redoubtable bow of Rama, inlaid with gold and with three curves, was broken at the grasp; and Sri Rama sank on the earth leaning on the bow, with loosened bowstring. Lakshmana turned and saw his brother lying on the earth, unconscious on the bed of arrows; and he gave him up for lost. Grief overcame him as he cast his eyes on Rama who lay stretched on the earth with his body pierced by the shafts that bound him tight. His eyes, lovely as the petals of a blown red lotus were closed.

And all the monkey writhed with unspeakable sorrow. Hanuman and the other monkey-warriors stood round them, dazed by grief. The sight of the princes bound by the serpent bonds, pierced all over and lying helpless, was too much for them. (Why should Rama and Lakshmana allow themselves to be bound by the serpent-arrows of Indrajit? Sri Rama was the lord of the worlds who had but to move an eyelid to consume to ashes the boundless Universe. It was all because he wanted to do honour to the word of Brahma and abide by it. He himself should not break the law he had laid down for the conduct of the worlds).

There is a text that says "the bodies that the Lord takes on are not formed of the five elements. They are not made up, like other bodies, of flesh, fat and bones. The bodies of Rama and Lakshmana were not like those of mortals. The wounds and the bleeding were only apparent. What does an *avatara* gain by undergoing such limitations and acting like a man? Otherwise people would say, "He is not a man, but a god. How can we follow him in his life? He is far above us and his virtues are not meant for us". But if he lives as a man among other men, his example will lead many on the path trodden by great souls. Again Rama had to honour the boon granted to Ravana by Brahma that the *rakshasa* should meet his death at the hands of none but men. From this incident of the serpent bonds we should learn the lesson that even those that ever walk on the path of *dharma* cannot meet at times difficulties and dangers; but these will soon pass).

CHAPTER 46

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA BOUND

BY NAGAPASA — (Continued)

THEN, the monkeys saw that Rama, Lakshmana, the earth and the sky were all hid from view by the arrows of Indrajit. After his arrowy shower was over, as when the clouds have spent themselves, Vibhishana came there with Sugriva, Nila, Dvidida, Mainda, Sushena, Kumuda, Angada, Hanuman and the rest were there sunk in grief. Rama and Lakshmana lay motionless, breathing softly; their bodies covered with blood and pierced with sharp shafts. Sighing heavily for a while; still for a while; their limbs moving slightly to and fro hissing like angry serpents, they lay drooping like golden banners. Monkey-warriors stood round them, shedding copious tears. Vibhishana and the warriors were filled with grief, when they beheld their master Sri Rama and his brother lying unconscious on the battle-field. Though they searched all earth and the sky quarters, they could not discover Indrajit who was hidden by his magic arts. Only Vibhishana, who knew the ways of the *rakshasa* saw the son of Ravana. Indrajit, resplendent in prowess and glory beheld with joy Rama and Lakshmana bound by his serpent arrows and lying unconscious on the earth; and he cheered the hearts of his troops : "Behold those who slew Khara, Dushana, Trisiras and the other *rakshasa*-heroes these mighty warriors, lie here struck down by my arrows; the *devas* and *asuras* together cannot release them from these serpent bonds. They on whose account my father spends sleepless nights; they whom the inhabitants of Lanka fear and dread like the rivers in flood during the rains, those very Rama and Lakshmana have been slain by my magic weapons. These vowed to destroy us, root and branch. Like the clouds of autumn, the valour of Rama and Lakshmana and their monkey-forces has been utterly washed." And he pierced the monkey-lords further with keen arrows. Fifty of them hit Nila, Mainda and Dvidida, received three each. Jambavan was left with a single shaft in his chest. Hanuman had ten in his body; Gavaksha, the leader of baboons, Angada and the others had countless arrows

all over them. Thus did that mighty hero cleave the monkeys with his flaming shafts; they shook in terror; and the *rakshasa* roared so that the quarters echoed and laughing like thunder, he said, ‘*Rakshasas*, behold Rama and Lakshmana lying there on the battlefield unconscious and bound by my dreadful arrows. The *rakshasas*, used to foul deceit applauded his wonderful feat and roared like lions or black clouds on all sides. They concluded that the princes were dead, since they lay there without breath or motion and they sang the praises of the son of Ravana.

Then Indrajit was delighted beyond measure and returned to Lanka; the *rakshasa*-forces were beside themselves with joy. Sugriva was filled with dire terror when he beheld the bodies of Rama and Lakshmana riddled with arrows from head to foot with no space for a needle to enter. Looking at the monkey-king, with pale face and tearfilled eyes, and overwhelmed by fear and grief, Vibhishana said, “Sugriva, fear not. Stay your hot tears. Victory cannot be the lot of any one for ever. This is the way of battles. If we had done anything good in our past lives these sons of Dasaratha, will revive; the cloud that hangs over them will clear and they will shine as before in strength and valour. Pluck up courage. Put cheer and spirit into my heart too. I have none to look up to. Those whose hearts are ever turned towards truth and righteousness have no fear of death. He consoled him thus; and to ward off evil and to relieve him of fatigue, the *rakshasa* wiped the eyes of Sugriva with water. He uttered over the water some charms that enabled one to pierce the illusions of the *rakshasas* and sprinkled it over Sugriva’s eyes and face. Then he spoke to him apt and timely words so that he might not give way to grief; “This is not the time to grieve. To display too much friendship at the wrong time often leads to death. Hence cast off fear from you; it spoils every good attempt. Think what is good for this monkey-host that depends on Rama? Keep watch over Raghuvira until he comes back to himself. These princes only take a spell of rest; soon they will rise and put an end to all our sorrow. These serpent bonds what are they to Rama? Why should you have the shadow of a doubt that he will meet with death? Does the grace of goddess Lakshmi shine on the face of one whose death is near? And are not the faces of these princes radiant with her grace? Hence you and your forces may rest free from care.

I shall make arrangements for the action that needs to be taken and shall soon return. Till then keep watch here most carefully. Lo, our monkey-heroes whisper to one another about taking to flight, their hair on end with fear. When Indrajit was fighting with us, I ran here and there to put courage into the hearts of our friends; but they took me for Indrajit and quaked with terror. As a man casts away a used and faded garland, let our troops cast fear away from them." He consoled Sugriva and encouraged the monkeys saying, "I am not Indrajit. I am Vibhishana, your best friend and the worst enemy of Ravana. Fear not."

Meanwhile Indrajit, that master of magic, went to Lanka surrounded by his armies, laid his head at the feet of Ravana and spoke with joined palms, "Your Majesty! Rama and Lakshmana are no more." Thereat the Lord of Lanka, beside himself with joy, with a mighty roar sprang from his throne, clasped that best of heroes fondly to his breast, kissed his head and asked him to recount at length how his enemies perished. Then Indrajit described most vividly how he bound Rama and Lakshmana with serpent bonds; how he crashed them down and they lay on the earth, pale and still. The heart of Ravana swelled with joy; he was now relieved of all anxiety and fear about Rama; and he praised highly the valour of his son. (The first day of the fortnight was over by that night).

CHAPTER 47

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA SHOWN TO SITA

THEN the monkey-lords stood round Raghava and kept careful watch over him. Hanuman, Angada, Nila, Sushena, Kumuda, Nala, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sarabha, Gandhamadana, Jambavan, Rishaba, Kanda, Rambha, Satabali, and others arrayed the forces; they tore up huge trees, looked intently up and down and on all sides; they were startled even by the movement of a blade of grass; such was their dread of the approach of the *rakshasas*.

Meanwhile Ravana gave leave to Indrajit to withdraw and sent for the *rakshasas* that guarded Sita and also for Trijata. He said

to them "Let Sita know that Rama and Lakshmana have been slain by Indrajit. Take her in the car Pushpaka and show her these puny warriors lying dead on the battle-field. Relying on the prowess of that husband of hers and his brother she was so haughty, and disdainful to me, was she not?

Both of them are lying dead on the field. Now, she will be free from care and anxiety. With no thought of going back to Rama, she will come to me of her own accord. She has no one else to lean on and will gladly choose me. She will be adorned with garments and jewels to her heart's content." Those *rakshasa* women took her on the car Pushpaka; it was nothing to them that her mind was distracted and dazed with sorrow; they took her to the battle-field to show her Rama and Lakshmana. Ravana adorned his capital with flags and banners and garlands and made proclamation that Rama and Lakshmana had been slain by Indrajit. Sita went with Trijata in the car Pushpaka to the battle-field. She beheld the entire monkey-army struck down; the monkey-lords were sunk in grief as they stood around Rama and Lakshmana. The sons of Dasaratha all unconscious, lay stretched on a bed of arrows. Their armour was broken, their bows slipped away from their hands; and their limbs were riddled with arrows; they looked like two bed rests of arrows. Like Skanda and Visakha, the sons of Agni, those mighty men lay there in that plight, their eyes closed that resembled the petals of the red lotus. The sight was too much for her and she moaned long and grievously. Janaki of matchless beauty and grace wailed aloud as she beheld Rama and Lakshmana stretched in the dust. As the brothers once radiant like unto the very gods, lay there motionless, tears blinded her eyes. She thought that they were no more.

CHAPTER 48

SITA'S LAMENT

“**A**LAS, experts in the science of body marks and prognostication pretold that I would bear sons and never be a widow. The words of these wise ones have now proved false. (The significant marks on the bodies of men and women are many. Women have sixty-six. She whose bosom is hairless, level and symmetrical, is born to have wealth, love of her husband and a long married life. She whose fingers and hair are long will have length of years and many sons). They said that I would be the queen of an Emperor who performs many sacrifices to the gods; ‘now those words are all false, because my husband is no more. You are thrice fortunate; you will be the wife of a king, a hero of heroes’. How can these words come true when my lord Raghuvira has lost his life? ‘Lady, all things auspicious are yours for ever.’ This blessing of the good and the great has gone along with my Raghava (A lovely smile, bright open eyes, level, round and small nostrils — these in a woman signify that she will be the source of happiness). Lo, the lines on my feet, patterned like a lotus, were said to be sure marks that I would be crowned the wife of an Emperor. But, no one has ever found in me any of the marks that indicate widowhood. (She whose toes are laid one upon another will survive two husbands and will be under the control of others. She whose little toe does not touch the ground when she walks will bring about the death of three husbands. If a single hair grows in a sac, she will be a queen; if there are two, she will lead a life of happiness; but if there are three she will be a widow). The word Padma means one who has the marks of happiness and wealth on her feet. My feet are adorned with such lotus lines. And it follows that I should enjoy wealth and happiness. But all this will be true only if my Dasarathi is alive. My hair is soft and level and black. My brows do not meet. My knees are round and smooth; my teeth also do not touch one another; the sides of my head, my eyes, hands, feet, and knees and thighs are high and full. (She whose knees are hairless, round, lovely and smooth, will be the wife of a king — *Skanda*). My fingers are straight and with

round nails. My breasts are close set and full and my nipples low. My naval is majestic and raised all round. My sides and breast are fashioned correctly. My complexion is lovely like the sheen of gems. My toes, feet, and heels are evenly placed as I walk. All the world praises me as one endowed with every kind of auspicious mark and sign. My hands and feet are covered with lines like the grain of barley. My fingers placed together show no gap; and they are red like saffron. Experts in the science of body-marks have always praised me as one with the most charming smile. But what the best astrologers said, that I and my husband should be installed on the throne of the world it is all proved false. (The *Skandapurana* state that the toe-nails should be prominent and round and lovely. The fingers must be proportionate to the hand, neither too long nor too short, and of the same length in either hand. The lines known as Nandyavartta and Pradakshina adorn the palms of her who will be a queen). Rama and Lakshmana sought me far and wide over Janasthana and discovered my whereabouts. They crossed this ocean for my sake and yet have met their death in a puddle caused by a cow's hoof. They who have been the death of Kabandha, Viradha, Vali, Khara, Dushana, and many others have now fallen victims to the magic arts of Indrajit. Alas, have you not in your quivers the mighty magic weapons of Varuna, Agneya, Indra, Vayavya, and Brahmasiras? Rama and Lakshmana, like Indra and Upendra, have fallen before Indrajit who strikes unseen through his arts of illusion; and they have left me lonely and helpless! No enemy, though he be endowed with the speed of thought, can ever return alive once Rama's eyes have fallen on him on the field of battle. But nothing is impossible to Time and Fate is inexorable. Else, could Rama and Lakshmana be struck down by a *rakshasa*? I do not grieve so much for Rama or Lakshmana, for myself or my mother. But my mother-in-law, the good lady Kausalya, artless and simple, when I think of her, I cannot bear my grief. She is ever expecting us; she is ever on the watch for us. "Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita, my dear children, when will they return? When shall I see them and be happy again"; Thus in many ways did Sita lament over the princes.

Then Trijata said to her, Lady, Why do you grieve? Your husband is alive. I have good reason for saying this. If the general of any army is dead, the troops lose their spirit; they are dozed,

and like a ship without a pilot, fall into disorder and confusion. Now, such is not the plight of this monkey-host. Behold their faces bright with joy and their eyes blazing with wrath. Again, with calm, untroubled hearts, these keep watch over Rama and Lakshmana till they should come back to their senses. I tell you this out of my love for you. Assure yourself that Rama and Lakshmana are alive and that no danger can come to them; these auspicious signs are proof enough. Never till now have I spoken an untruth; nor would I do so in the future. Your noble conduct and pure life have won my heart. I have said all this through my love for you. Indra and his *devas* can never hope to defeat Rama. The reasons I have stated and the dream I had are the grounds of my faith. Let this be. Observe the faces of Rama and Lakshmana. Though unconscious, they preserve the lustre of their form and features; the grace of Lakshmi still shines on them. The face of deadmen and of cowards are horribly ugly. Janaki! put away grief and doubt concerning these princes. How can they be other than alive?"

Sita listened to these words, sweet as streams of nectar; Sorrow fell away from her and she spoke over joined palms, "Lady, may your words prove true." (They who tell us of the goodness and glory of the Lord, should be honoured as teachers, no matter who they are). Sita and Trijata returned to *Asoka* grove on the car Pushpaka. But for all that Trijata had spoken to give her courage, Sita could not but think of Rama and Lakshmana, as she was back in her place of confinement, with the *rakshasis* around her. She imagined that the princes were there before her and was plunged in unspeakable grief at the plight they were in.

CHAPTER 49

RAMA COMES BACK TO SENSES


SUGRIVA and the other mighty monkey-heroes overwhelmed by grief, stood round Rama and Lakshmana, bound with terrible serpent arrows; their bodies covered with blood, stretched on the ground and breathing hard like serpents hissing. Meanwhile, Rama came out of the faint and opened his eyes. Was he not matchless in manly courage and strength. He found Lakshmana lying by his side riddled with arrows, covered with blood, his face faded and dusty. In deep sorrow he lamented over him "Should I cling to life even after I have seen you, my brother, struck down by a puny *rakshasa* and lying on the ground? What do I gain now even if I get Sita back? Searching far and wide one may come upon another woman like Sita, but one can never hope to have again a mighty hero like Lakshmana for one's brother. If he, the dear child of Sumitra, should die, I shall give up my life in the presence of these monkeys. She, his mother Sumitra, entrusted him to me and sent him to help me. How can I face her, myself alone alive, and Lakshmana lost to us. When the ladies Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra ask me, "Where is Lakshmana?" What answer shall I give? How can I console the lady Sumitra as she wails and writhes in agony for the loss of her son? How can I meet the scornful question of the mother: "Why did you return alone, leaving behind Lakshmana, who went into the forest with yourself?" How will I tell my brothers Bharata and Satruguna this terrible news? Well, I shall quit this body straightaway; I have no wish to live. It was wicked of me to have brought with me Lakshmana to the forest. No good man would have done a thing like this. Dasaratha bade me go to the forest; but what right had I to take Lakshmana with me? There he lies on the ground having thrown away his life for me. Fie upon myself! My boy, you used to console me when I gave way to grief. But now I wail for you. And you have no life to wipe away my tears. How did it happen that you were struck down by your enemies in this very field where you have stuck down countless *rakshasas*? As the sun descends on the mountain of the west, you have sunk on the

bed of arrows surrounded by arrows like rays and hidden by torrents of blood, red like the evening twilight. (The sun of the solar race now takes his rest. Perhaps you do not speak to me, because of the pain caused by the arrows piercing your vitals. You ever proclaim the boundless love you have for me. With eager joy you came with me to the woods; even so shall I go with you to the halls of Death. You are the dearest of my kinsfolk. All your actions tend towards my highest good. And you have come to this pass solely through my wickedness. Lakshmana, the mighty hero, never spoke to me harshly or against my interests even when he was in the grip of wrath. Before Kartavirya, Arjuna could shoot five hundred arrows with his thousand hands; but my Lakshmana could do the same with his two hands. The hero whose weapons could meet and master the magic weapons of Indra himself, how could he be overcome by a puny *rakshasa*? You, for whom no bed is enough, is it right for you to lie on this bare ground?

I have given my word, Sugriva, that I shall crown Vibhishana as the king of the *rakshasas*; if I fail to fulfil it, the grief will burn me quite. Hence I have to stay here. Go back to Kishkinda this very moment and take your forces over the sea. Perhaps the mighty Ravana may come here and give you trouble, when he knows that I am not here, Hanuman, Jambavan, Dhumra, Angada, Mainda, Dvidida, Kesari, Sampati, Gavaya, Gaja and Sarabha and the other monkey-heroes, who were all ready to throw away their lives for me, the prowess they have displayed and the feats they performed in the battle and the fame they have won to themselves — all this is impossible for others. Sugriva, you have done to the uttermost everything that the best of friends and the dearest of comrades should do. Is it not your sole-concern to discharge the duties and responsibilities of a friend? And ye, monkey-warriors, all of you have rendered without fear and afraid of *dharma*, the highest service that best and the dearest of friends can render. Now I give you leave to go where you will." Hearing this, the monkeys, red-eyed with grief, shed tears like mountain streams during the rains. Then Vibhishana stationed the troops at their places and armed with his club ran up to where Raghava was. As he approached, black of hue like a mountain of collyrium, monkeys mistook him for Indrajit; and fled in afright in all directions.

CHAPTER 50

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA LIBERATED FROM NAGAPASA

HEN Sugriva cried out, "Wonder of Wonders", like a ship struck by a storm in mid-ocean, our ranks are seized with panic; I would know why. "And Angada replied, "Do you not see the Raghu heroes struck down by arrows and lying stretched on a bed of arrows, their bodies covered with blood. What other reason is needed?" But Sugriva rejoined, "Not so, some great terror has fallen upon them. Look at these monkeys throwing away their weapons and running in all directions. With terror in their eyes and not daring to look back, they flee fast dragging one another long. Not in the least ashamed of it, not heeding those that are struck down, they leap forward in their wild course."

Meanwhile Vibhishana came, armed with his club; he blessed Sugriva and saw Rama recovered from his swoon. Then Sugriva turned to Jambavan standing his side and said, "O! our forces run in blind terror mistaking our dearest friend Vibhishana for Indrajit. The thing to do now is tell them the truth, stop the retreat and put cheer into their hearts. "Jambavan did so; the monkey-hosts put faith in his words and took a good look at Vibhishana; fear fell from them, and they came back to their places. Vibhishana, observing the bodies of Rama and Lakshmana riddled with arrows, became agitated, wiped their eyes with water and wailed aloud in uncontrollable grief :

"Most mighty and most valiant, ever fond of battle, these heroes have come to this pass, because of the foul methods of war adopted by the *rakshasas*. My brother is a monster of cruelty and his son more wicked than he. That wretch, with his *rakshasa* meanness and magic arts, has deceived these princes. And thereby he has brought undying infamy to his father. These princes are innocent of guile. I curse my fate that I have to see them writhing on the ground like porcupines, riddled with arrows and drenched

in blood. I placed my hopes of prosperity on their valour and now they lie stretched on the ground, unconscious and about to die. Alas! I am alive alone and those are gone. I have lost all my expectations; and the kingdom too. My enemy Ravana has fulfilled his word and is happy now!" Sugriva clasped to his breast most fondly that best of devotees and consoled him, saying: "Most righteous one! doubt not that the kingdom of Lanka will be yours. Ravana, his sons, his kith and kin, will not live in happiness; believe me. Our protectors can suffer no harm from these serpent bonds. The worst that can come to them is that they will be unconscious for a while. Soon they will recover their senses and destroy Ravana and all his *rakshasas*," Then he turned to Sushena, his father-in-law, who was standing near, and said "Go straight to Kishkindha with Rama and Lakshmana and our monkeys. I shall dispose of Ravana, his sons, his kith and kin, and bring back Janaki to the side of Rama even as Indra of old brought back Lakshmi that had parted from him".

Hearing this, Sushena replied, "I was present at that dreadful battle between the gods and *asuras* of yore. Then the *danavas*, most skilful of archers struck and hit the *devas* again and again with their wonderful weapons. Some *devas* writhed in agony unbearable; some lay senseless; some lost their lives; then Brihaspati saved them from the danger that threatened them, using wonderful arts like *Mrita-sanjivini* and other charms and herbs. Sampati, Panasa and the other monkeys know the mountain where these herbs are found. Where the gods and the *asuras* churned the ocean of milk in the far past, in those very mountains of Chandragiri and Dronagiri, they have been planted and nurtured by the gods. Despatch forthwith some monkey-warriors to bring us the potent herbs *Sanjivikarani*, and *Visalyakarani*. Let the son of Vayu here undertake the mission."

Meanwhile the clouds were lashed with lightning and roared dreadfully. A fierce wind had in its mighty grip those clouds and the waters of the ocean. The earth quaked in affright. Lofty trees fell uprooted into the sea. Serpents with huge bodies that lived in Lanka and all creatures of the deep sought refuge into the depths of the ocean. Some time later, the Lord Garuda appeared before the monkeys. The mighty son of Vinata blazed like a fire; at the sight of him the serpent bonds that bound Rama and Lakshmana

were no more to be seen. The Lord Garuda looked on those mighty princes and passed his hands over their faces like the full moon. At once the wounds on their bodies disappeared, and they shone with the lustre of molten gold. The power to overcome foes, the sensitiveness to dishonour strength of body, radiance, firmness of purpose in mighty ventures, keenness of intellect to pierce into subtleties, the faculty of memory, all these qualities were redoubled. The Lord Garuda clasped to his breast most fondly the two princes who were like Indra and Upendra.

Then Rama turned to the king of birds, and said "Through your grace, we have escaped from the great danger that Indrajit threatened us with and we have been restored to our strength, valour and energy. When I see you it is as if I saw Dasaratha, my father and Aja, my grandfather and my heart rejoices. May I know who you are, wonderful in form and adorned with perfumes and flowers, garments and ornaments of the world of gods." And to him replied, the Lord Garuda, tears of joy blinding his eyes, "Raghuvira, I am a dear comrade of yours. (This is so, since the lord has chosen him for his conveyance). Believe me, I am your life-breaths assuming form and walking about. They know me as Garuda. I came here to be of help to you. None can free you from these serpent bonds, created by the magic of Indrajit, the cruel monster, not even the most valiant and mighty *danavas*, not even Indra himself guarded by his gods. These serpents come of the line of Kadru, sharp of fangs and deadly of venom are they. The magic of the son of Ravana gave them the form of serpents with which to torture you. Knower of *dharma*! hero of unfailing prowess! You and your brother Lakshmana, the terror of his foes, are fortunate indeed. Hearing of the danger that befell you, I came here swiftly, out of my friendship for you and impelled by a sense of duty. You are freed from the bonds of this dreadful weapon. You should be most careful at all times. It is natural for the *rakshasas*, it is the tradition of their race, to use fraud and magic in battle. But to heroes like you, pure of conduct, strength lies in straightness. Never take the *rakshasa* on trust when you fight with them. From what took place now, know that the *rakshasas* are cunning and deceitful." "Garuda embraced Rama close and said, "Friend, Raghunatha, Embodiment of *dharma* , ocean of compassion even for your worst enemies!

I take leave of you. Ask not now how I am your comrade. When you lay now your foes on the battle-field, you will know it all yourself. Your fiery arrows will consume Lanka and all its *rakshasas*, except infants and old men in it. You will slay Ravana and recover Janaki". After delivering Rama and Lakshmana from the danger that hung over them, the king of birds circumambulated and embraced them most fondly and coursed back quickly through the sky even like the Lord Vayu. The monkey-lords, seeing that the danger loomed over the Raghava princes had been removed by the grace of the Almighty, waved their tails aloft in sheer joy and roared like lions. As war drums, kettle drums, conches and other auspicious instruments sounded on all sides; some roared; some slapped their shoulders; and others took mighty leaps. They uprooted lofty trees and broke off mountain tops and stood ready for battle. They battered down the gates of Lanka and shouted in glee. At this the *rakshasas* were struck with wonder and fear; as clouds roar and thunder dreadfully at night about the end of summer, the monkey-warriors challenged their enemies to battle, roaring loud enough to split their hearts.

(Q. Raghuvira declared that he could destroy all beings in this Universe, if he but lifted his little finger. His might and wisdom are boundless. How then did he like an impotent fool lie on the ground, foiled by Indrajit and drenched in blood?).

A. He did so in order to sustain *dharma* and right conduct in the world. Though good men may meet with deadly dangers, yet they are not destroyed. Sinners and wicked wretches may rejoice that their hopes have been realised, they will be disappointed and will meet with destruction themselves. This is the lesson taught by the episode of the serpent bonds.

Q. The gods prayed to the Lord to slay Ravana; and assenting to it, He came down as Rama, did he not?

A. True. The incarnation compassed not only the destruction of the wicked but also the establishment of *dharma*. If his purpose was limited to the slaying of Ravana there was no call for him to take all this trouble. He has to lead all the four orders of society to live according to their respective *dharma*.

Q. Could He not teach these truths clearly and directly?

A. Why, the *śrutis* and *smritis* have tried to do so and failed. It was necessary for Him to teach them by example. And he took human shape for this very purpose”).

CHAPTER 51

DHUMRAKSHA GOES OUT TO FIGHT

RAVANA and his *rakshasas* were surprised to hear the monkey-warriors shout for joy. “Ministers! there must be some reason for this untimely joy which makes these monkeys roar like clouds during the rain. The seas are troubled by their shouts. Rama and Lakshmana lie unconscious bound with keen arrows and the monkeys shout with joy; this rouses grave doubts in me. Messengers go hence as swiftly as you can and bring me news why the monkeys rejoice when they have lost their leaders and should be plunged in grief”. Forthwith countless *rakshasas* clambered up the fortress walls and observed what took place in the monkey camp. Sugriva was marshalling his troops, and making arrangements for their safety; Rama and Lakshmana, freed from the serpent bonds, had regained consciousness and were leading the monkeys as before. With troubled hearts and faded faces, they took back the news to Ravana. “Your Majesty! Indrajit bound Rama and Lakshmana by his arrows and threw them senseless on the ground. Like mad elephants breaking asunder the ropes that bind them, these men have got rid of their serpent bonds; and move about like lions in their pride of strength.” Ravana was filled with anxiety and his face was pale as he said. “By the grace of the gods, these serpent arrows shine like the sun and they never go in vain. With these did Indrajit, matchless in skill, bind Rama and Lakshmana. If they should free themselves from these arrows, it portends, I fear, great danger to our army. These arrows, are as potent as the mighty serpents Vāsuki, Takshaka, and Karkotaka. None so far have escaped their bonds. And if these fail, I do not know what we should do.” And he was sad and thoughtful. After a while, furious with anger, he hissed forth like a terrible serpent, “Hear you, Dhumraksha! what need

have I for anxiety so long as you are with me ? Take what troops you want, go forth now and deal instant death to Rama, Lakshmana and the monkeys."

Dhumraksha was mightily pleased at being the first of the generals, chosen to fight with the enemies; he went round Ravana in reverence and coming out addressed the leader of his troops; "Why delay yet? Let our troops be ready to march forth." Knowing it to be, the order of His Majesty, the captains obeyed and countless *rakshasas* marched forth from all quarters and hid the earth from view. They were decked with war bells in their waists and armed from head to foot. With frightful forms and boundless strength, they resembled huge cloud-banks during the rains roaring frightfully. Some were cased in fine armour; others drove on cars adorned with flags, and golden windows and drawn by mules with diverse faces. Some were mounted on horses swift as thought; some on mad elephants; and they marched forth to battle like fierce tigers. The car of Dhumraksha was drawn by mules with the faces of wolves, tigers, and lions and decked with every kind of ornament. He laughed like thunder and, surrounded by dreadful *rakshasas*, came to the western fortress gate where Hanuman stood expectant. On his way he was warned by many evil omens. A huge and terrible vulture fell on top of his car. Many vultures fell in a mass on the top of his banner. A headless trunk, white and dreadful, covered with blood and crying aloud, fell in front of Dhumraksha. The clouds showered blood; the earth quaked in terror; strong winds blew against him and rumbled like mighty thunder; the quarters were covered with darkness and nothing could be seen. At those dreadful portents, Dhumraksha was filled with sadness. His *rakshasas* were in the grip of fear and confusion. Thus did that *rakshasa*, Dhumraksha of boundless strength and dreadful valour, issue forth from the city with his *rakshasa*-heroes, eager for a fight with the monkeys. He beheld the monkey-troops protected by Rama and boundless like the ocean.

CHAPTER 52

DEATH OF DHUMRAKSHA

SEEING Dhumraksha, of terrible prowess, marching forth to battle accompanied by his *rakshasas*, the monkey-warriors shouted in joy, eager for the prey. Then a dreadful battle ensued between the monkeys and the *rakshasas*. The *rakshasas* were hit with trees, mountain peaks, and blocks of stone. On the other hand, the monkeys were struck with tridents, swords, hatchets and arrows. Countless *rakshasas* slew the monkeys with keen arrows carrying eagle feathers with maces, bars and other weapons. Riddled with shafts, cloven with tridents, the monkeys were enraged; and without the least fear, performed wondrous deeds of valour with trees and stones for weapons. Shouting their names and deeds of fame, they sprang on the *rakshasas*, dragged them down, and roared like lions. Some *rakshasas* were ground to dust by trees and mountain peaks. Some vomited blood. Some lay with torn flanks, some crushed by huge slabs. Some were bit to shreds. Banners and flags broken to pieces, wheels shattered, axles cloven and the yoked mules killed, the cars were strewn over the ground. Elephants of mountainous bulk; *rakshasa*-heroes like elephants in their madness; huge mountain tops pushed by the monkeys; heaps of dead horses, elephant drivers with headless trunk and horsemen hid the battlefield from view.

The monkey-heroes of dreadful valour leapt upon the *rakshasas* and tore at their faces most frightfully. And those rangers of the night, wan of face and with dishevelled hair, fainted away on the earth, unable to stand the stench of blood. Some shouted dreadfully in their mad fury and struck at the monkeys with their hands, hand as adamant. In their turn, the monkeys sprang at them with agility and slew the *rakshasas* with fists, feet, teeth and trees. Unable to bear that onslaught, the enemy began to flee in all directions.

At this, Dhumraksha, the great hero, was beside himself with rage, and began to slay innumerable monkeys. Some, ground down by huge spears, vomited blood; some were hit by iron bars and lay

stretched on the ground; some had their limbs broken by whirl sticks, some were struck by smooth-headed rods and lay dead, their senses in a whirl. Some were pierced with tridents. Some were hit by the *rakshasas* and driven from the field; some lay with hearts cloven. Some lay with their bowels protruding. Thus did the combatants on both side fight most fearfully. That dreadful sound, intensified by the noise of falling mountains and trees, made the hearts of all beings quake in terror. In that battle the bows took the place of the *vina* (Indian lute). The bow strings were the wires stretched upon it. The spasmodic hiccough of the wounded men kept time; the song was but the dying whispers of spent men; such was the music of battle.

Dhumraksha bent his bow, struck the monkeys with arrowy showers, scattered them all round and laughed at them. Seeing the monkeys sore confused and staggering to and fro, Anjaneya ran forth quickly with a huge boulder in his hands. Valiant as God Vayu himself, his eyes afire with anger, he threw the boulder on the car of Dhumraksha. Seeing this the *rakshasa* jumped out of the car, mace in hand. And the stone smashed the car, the horses, the banners, the bow, the weapons and the driver. Maruti, with uprooted trees, struck down the *rakshasas* in crowds. He caused a stream of blood to roll over the field as he brought down the *rakshasas* with broken heads and limbs. He made the *rakshasa*-forces disappear from the battle-ground; next he ran towards Dhumraksha with a mountain peak in his hand. Therupon the *rakshasa* whirled aloft his mace bristling with iron spikes, and sprang at Maruti whom he struck on the head with terrible wrath. But Hanuman, endowed with matchless strength, even like the Lord Vayu, made light of it and struck straight at the head of Dhumraksha with that huge block. His limbs broken, he fell like a lofty mountain crashing down and gave up life. At the sight of their leader thus done to death, the *rakshasas* fled in terror and ran towards Lanka for refuge; and the monkeys chased them and slew many. Thus did Anjaneya slay Dhumraksha and his troops, causing streams of blood to course over the ground. Though tired he was glad at the slaughter of his enemies. The monkeys lauded and praised the hero. (The death of Dhumraksha falls on the second day of the fortnight).

CHAPTER 53

VAJRADAMSHTRA GOES OUT TO FIGHT

RAVANA was wild with wrath at the news of the death of Dhumraksha; in his excitement he hissed like the serpent of Time and roared out an order to the mighty Vajradamshttra, "Bravest of heroes, the brave, take with you what troops you will and rid the earth of Rama, Lakshmana and the monkeys".

"Your Majesty's orders shall be obeyed" replied Vajradamshttra; he went round the king, bowed down to him with reverence, and marched forth to battle surrounded by countless *rakshasas*. Countless chariots drawn by elephants, horses, mules and camels; and graced by banners and flags, footsoldiers armed with rods, *tomaras*, tridents, bars, spears, nooses, swords, *saktis*, wheels, maces, axes and other weapons; decked with curious garments and ornaments and wielding wonderful magic missiles — all these followed Vajradamshttra. He himself shone resplendent with rare armlets, earrings, cases in fine armour quivers on his back and mighty bow in hand, he circumambulated the car before ascending it. Well-trained elephants moved gracefully like lofty mountains, and renowned warriors armed to the teeth rode on them. The black-hued *rakshasa*-forces shone in their bright garments and ornaments; and marched on with shouts and roars, like black storm clouds, during the rains, with lightning and thunder. As they came out through the southern gate besieged by Angada, from the bright, clear and cloudless sky descended blazing meteors; jackals howled fearfully, belching out flames; the inauspicious cries of dreadful beasts foretold the destruction of the *rakshasas*, who were struck with fear and confusion thereat; but Vajradamshttra heeded nothing. Strong, lustrous and skilled in magic, he never lost his courage, but eager for battle marched at the head of his troops. The monkeys, beholding the enemy, roared with joy and made the quarters tremble.

Then the two forces, assuming frightful shapes joined in fierce battle each intent on defeating the other. Some rushed forward in mad haste and soon lay stretched on the ground, their heads broken,

their bodies cleft and blood issuing from their wounds. Some kept on a ceaseless discharge of weapons and fought most skilfully retracing never a step. The noise of falling trees, mountains, blocks, and weapons shook the earth and sky. The twang of bent bows drawn to the ear, the blare of martial instruments like conch, drum and kettle-drum joined in a loud, indistinct noise. Some had shot all their weapons and took to fighting with hands and fists. Some *rakshasas*, hit by hands, feet and knees, lay on the ground with broken limbs. Maddened monkeys threw huge boulders at the *rakshasas* and ground them to dust. Vajradamshtira made the monkeys flee in terror by his keen arrows and walked up and down the battle-field like the god of death blazing with his noose in hand on the day of universal destruction. The *rakshasas*, skilful in the use of every weapon were beside themselves with fury and struck down innumerable monkeys. Angada in uncontrollable wrath, hissed frightfully like the storm Samvartaka on the day of dissolution and, uprooting a huge tree, destroyed the *rakshasas* as a lion destroys the smaller beasts of the forest. Those that stood up and faced the monkey-hero, whose body shone and eyes flashed fire, were for all their valour struck down like uprooted trees with broken heads and shattered limbs. The battle-ground was completely covered with cars, horses, curious banners, *rakshasas*, and monkeys; it was decorated with ornaments and weapons; blood ran in torrents over it; and it shone like the night in autumn. Like serried clouds scattered by a mighty wind, the *rakshasa*-host swayed and staggered under the dreadful onslaught of Angada.

DEATH OF VAJRADAMSHTRA

THE triumph of Angada and destruction of his forces infuriated Vajradamshttra, the mighty hero. He bent his dreadful bow, twanged it in tones of thunder and covered the monkeys with an arrowy shower. His warriors struck at them with every kind of weapon. In their turn, the monkey-heroes hit the *rakshasas* with trees, mountain tops and blocks of stone. The *rakshasas* discharged countless weapons at the monkeys who met these missiles in a shower of trees, boulders and mountain peaks. Both sides fought dreadfully without retreating an inch. Broken heads, broken legs, shorn arms, bodies riddled with arrows and drenched with blood covered all the battle-field without the distinction of friend or foe. Crowds of eagles, vultures, crows and jackals roamed freely among them. Some ran away in terror at the sight of headless trunks. Severed hands, arms, heads, legs and limbs kept falling down. Thus did the monkeys attack the *rakshasa*-forces and made them take to their heels in terror. Thereat Vajradamshttra shot fire from his eyes, sprang among the monkeys, bent his bow and clove them asunder with his keen shafts decked with eagle-feathers. With great skill he with a single arrow pierced five, six, seven, eight, nine or ten monkeys at a time. Some had their arms cut down; some had their bodies cloven; some had their heads shattered; and like created beings taking refuge with Brahma, they ran towards Angada. That monkey-hero, seeing his forces thus sore beset, gazed intently at Vajradamshttra with eyes red with fury.

Then Vajradamshttra and Angada sprang at each other like mad elephants. The *rakshasa* pierced Angada with many an arrow in the vital parts till blood flowed in torrents from his wounds and he stood there like an elephant in rut pierced by javelins. Then the son of Vali tore up by the roots a lofty tree and with all his strength hit Vajradamshttra on the head. Unperturbed, the *rakshasa*-hero splintered the tree with his shafts. Angada threw at him a huge stone and roared aloud. Before it could reach the car, the *rakshasa*, club

in hand, leaped down to the ground. It crushed to powder the car, the horses and the driver. Then Angada tore off a tree-covered mountain and hurled it at the head of Vajradamshttra. Blood flowed from his mouth; his mind was in confusion; he leaned upon his club and swooned away for a while. Then he came back to himself, whirled his club aloft and hit Angada in his breast in mad wrath. Then he threw away the weapon and they fought each other with their fists. They hit at each other, grew tired for a while, and vomited blood, as they fought like the planets, Mars and Mercury. Again taking up keen swords and strong shields covered with the skin of oxen, they fought in uncontrollable fury and used curious patterns of footwork each, intent on defeating the other, each struck and hit and tore the other mercilessly. Wounded all over, and drenched with blood, they shone like tall trees, adorned with red flowers. Fatigued by this hard fight, they rested for a while on their knees. Then like a deadly cobra struck on the head by a rod, Angada hissed at his foe, sprang at the *rakshasa* and in a moment shore off the head of Vajradamshttra with his keen blade. The head, its eyes rolling in anger and moustaches bristling with wrath, fell far away. Seeing this, the *rakshasas*, overcome with terror and dazed, ran towards Lanka with wan faces and heads hanging down. As they ran, the monkeys chased and struck them dead. The son of Vali, equal in valour to his grandfather, Indra, engaged Vajradamshttra in a terrible duel before the eyes of the monkey-hosts and sent him to his death. And he rejoiced mightily. Then even as the gods praised on high their king with a thousand eyes when he returned victorious over the *daityas*, the whole monkey-army crouded round Angada and welcomed him with shouts of praise.

CHAPTER 55

AKAMPANA GOES OUT TO FIGHT

HEARING the news of the death of Vajradamshttra at the hands of Angada, Ravana turned to Prahasta that stood by with joined palms and said, "Akampana, expert in every kind of fight, let him march forth with troops of dreadful prowess. He will make our foes beg for mercy and shield our armies from all danger. He is a general of great renown; he is ever intent upon my welfare; he is ever eager for battle. He will defeat Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva and destroy the other terrible monkeys".


Prahasta carried out the orders of Ravana and very soon the forces were ready. They marched forth to battle with frightful eyes and faces and armed with every kind of weapon. Akampana led them in a huge car. He was dark and lustrous like a cloud, his voice was like thunder; frightful *rakshasas* surrounded him; and priceless ornaments decked his limbs. He derived his name Akampana (unshakable) from his firmness in many dreadful battles. Like the sun among the planets, he shone in splendour among the *rakshasas*. Even as he marched forth for battle, the noble steeds yoked to his car grew wan and weary all at once. His left eye throbbed; the clear sky was covered with black clouds and torn with lightning, rain and storm. Birds and beasts, cried dreadfully. With the shoulders of a lion and the gait of a tiger, Akampana disregarded those omens and came to the field of battle.

Then the *rakshasas* roared with joy till the seas were stirred. Hearing this, the monkey-forces grew confused, piled up trees, mountains and blocks of stone and awaited the foes. Then the monkeys and the *rakshasas* began again a dreadful fight making light of their lives for the sake of Rama and Ravana; Both sides were strong, valiant, of mountainous build and determined to win. Their angry roars and trumpetings were carried far and wide. Red dust rose from the earth, fearful to behold, and hid from view monkeys, *rakshasas* and the four quarters, banners, flags, armour, horses, weapons, cars, nothing was visible. As they sprang at each

other, their shouts and war cries alone could be heard; but no forms were seen. In that utter darkness both sides struck blindly and killed their own men, in mad fury. Friend or foe, they fought on and made the earth miry with flowing blood. That laid the dust and then the battle-field came to view, covered with corpses. Trees, *saktis* (a kind of magic weapon), blocks of stone, spears, and other weapons, bare hands and fists, were freely used in that fight between the monkeys and the *rakshasas*. The monkeys hit the *rakshasas* with trees and stones; the enemy met them with sharp tridents, keen swords, spears and other weapons. Akampana, enraged, put courage into the hearts of the *rakshasas* and urged them to perform frightful feats. Then Kumuda, Nala, Mainda and Dvidida came there quickly and destroyed the *rakshasas* in crowds with trees as large as mountains.

CHAPTER 56

DEATH OF AKAMPANA

 HE sight was too much for Akampana, the redoubtable warrior; he waved his bow aloft and said to his driver, "Look at those monkeys, destroying our forces beyond count. Take my car there; where many a monkey-warriors, strong and frightful of bulk and armed with trees and mountain peaks await me there. I cannot keep refrain from killing those so eager for battle. If I neglect them now, they will despatch the entire *rakshasa*-forces to the hall of death. Then he drove his car amidst the monkeys and pierced them with his cruel arrows, as he went. They were riddled with them and unable to bear the pain, ran away in all directions. They could not stand against him for a moment. No need to speak of fighting with him.

Thus did the monkey-hosts fall a prey to Akampana's arrows, as if they were in the grip of Yama. Thereat Hanuman came forward to help the monkeys. And they surrounded him most gladly. Endowed with natural strength, they were led by Anjaneya the mightiest of the mighty. Akampana cast his eyes on Maruti that towered aloft like a huge mountain, and, seized with a frantic rage, he riddled him with his arrows that fell on him like heavy showers on mount Mahendra. But unperturbed, Hanuman pondered over

the means of staying the *rakshasa*. Suddenly, he sprang upon him; the impact was so terrific that the earth quaked. The figure of the monkey-lord, shining in splendour and roaring frightfully, blinded the eyes of all beholders, like the sun surrounded by his thousand rays. Realising that he had no weapon in hand he quickly tore up a mountain, whirled it aloft with one hand and hit Akampana with it, roaring aloud the while. Seeing that Anjaneya faced him even as Indra faced the *asura* Namuchi with his *vajra* in battle, the *rakshasa* intercepted the mountain, and ground it to powder with many *ardhachandra* arrows. Then Hanuman, beside himself with wrath, uprooted a tall tree that had grown like a mountain, and whirled it round and round with its branches and laughed in tones of thunder. Huge trees crashed down with the speed of his thighs, as he ran towards the *rakshasa*. His feet clove the earth. And with that tree he slew elephants, elephant drivers, cars, car warriors and foot-soldiers. Like the god of death who brings destruction to all created beings, Anjaneya scoured the ground in mad fury; and at the sight of him the *rakshasas* fled in terror. Then Akampana roared with wrath and pierced Maruti with fourteen keen arrows. But Maruti only shone with greater lustre, like a lofty mountain covered with trees or an *Asoka* tree in full blossom or like fire without its smoke. The son of Vayu, huge of body and boundless in valour and intelligence, suddenly tore up another tree and dealt a terrific blow on Akampana's head. Unable to bear the frightful blow that Maruti delivered in his wrath, Akampana fell down on the earth and breathed his last.

The *rakshasas* shook with fear as they beheld it, even like lofty trees in the grip of an earthquake. They cast off their weapons and ran towards Lanka, while the monkeys chased and slew them in crowds. With dishevelled hair, disgraced, discomfited, dazed and sweating, they ran panting. They entered the city, trampling one another. They turned back often to see if they were followed and took shelter in Lanka.

Then the Monkey-hosts gathered round Anjaneya and showered praises upon him. And he returned the compliment. The monkeys were utterly beside themselves with exultation; they shouted until they were hoarse; and they dragged out and tormented forth the

rakshasas that were yet alive. Thus did Hanuman slay Akampana and the *rakshasa*-warriors; and win glory, even as Mahavishnu in the far past did by defeating Bali, the *asura*. And the gods on high, with Rama and Lakshmana, Vibhishana, Sugriva and the other monkey-lords, extolled Anjaneya, the son of Vayu.

CHAPTER 57

PRAHASTA SETS OUT TO FIGHT

HEARING the news of the death of Akampana, Ravana was furious; his face grew wan and he looked intently at his ministers. He thought for a while, took counsel with his ministers and decided to review that morning the troops stationed in the city. It was decked with flags, banners and garlands. Bands of *rakshasas* guarded it most carefully. Battalions of troops were stationed all over their camp. Seeing the capital besieged by the monkeys on all sides, Ravana said to Prahasta, "It is impossible to raise this siege unless we destroy our foes in battle. Either I or Kumbhakarna, yourself, Indrajit or Nikumba must take up this task. Collect what forces you will, go forth to where the monkeys are and come back with victory. The monkey-hosts will take to flight when they see you approaching them; they are fickle of temper. Will they stay on the battle-field once they hear the roar of the *rakshasa*-warriors? Unsteady of mind, untrained in warfare they cannot stay at a place for long. They will die of sheer fright, like elephants when they hear the roar of lions. If their armies are scattered in all directions, Rama and Lakshmana will be distracted in mind and fall into your hands with none to support them. It is not a rule that those that go out to fight meet with death. Even if death befalls us, we would have earned undying fame and the heavenly worlds. But if we do not fight, we are sure to die at the hands of our foes. And such a death brings with it disgrace and hell. Tell me what you think for or against this view."

Thereat, Prahasta counselled Ravana even as Brihaspati counsels the king of the *devas*, "Your Majesty! What has now come upon us, is the very thing that Vibhishana, myself, and others have

discussed and concluded long ago. But there was no agreement among us. We held conflicting opinions and quarrelled. That was why the decision was not acted on. Was it not decided that welfare and glory would be ours, if we restored Sita to Rama, and that ruin and infamy would be our portion if we did not do so? Now, I have received at your hands countless gifts, honours and benefits. You have exalted me with your kind words and precious praise. It is my duty at all times to fulfil your wishes. I have no other joy in life than that. My life, my wife, my children, my wealth, I count as straw, where your interests are concerned. Today I will offer up my life as an oblation in the fire of battle.”

Then he turned to the generals that stood by and said, “Let a huge *rakshasa*-force be ready here soon. Like the thunderbolt of Indra will my arrows fall upon the monkeys and prepare a sumptuous feast for the eagles, vultures and other birds of prey”. The *rakshasa*-troops got ready accordingly. With the sheen of their weapons and the noise of their shouting, the city was like a rut. Some poured oblations in the sacred fire for victory and safe return; some bowed before the *Brahmanas* with flowers and perfumes. The breeze blew soft, wafting the scent of ghee, flowers and other perfumes. The *rakshasas*, eager for battle, wore garlands that charged with enchantment to ensure them victory. Armed with fine armour and bows, they came forward quickly, saluted Ravana and gathered round Prahasta.

He took leave of his master, caused the terrible war-drums to be beaten and ascended his magnificent chariot. It was furnished with every kind of weapon. Horses swift as the wind, were harnessed to it. They were guided by an expert driver. Brilliant like the sun, and charming like the moon, fitted with excellent wheels, axles, and spokes, it was effectively guarded against attack. Shining with golden windows, it seemed to smile on all beholders. ascending his chariot and receiving Ravana’s orders for battle, Prahasta emerged from Lanka, surrounded by the *rakshasa*-forces that surged like the ocean. Then the noise of the kettle-drums joined to the softer notes of lutes and other musical instruments, and the blast of conches spread over the waters like the rumblings of dark clouds. The *rakshasas* that marched before Prahasta, huge of bulk like mountains and frightful

in shape, raised terrible war cries. Narantaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahanada and Samunnata, the ministers of Prahasta, marched behind him.

Surrounded by *rakshasas* like mad elephants, he resembled the ocean-king surrounded by the dreadful monsters of the deep as he came out of the eastern gate. As he issued from the city, even as the god of death that destroys all creatures at the time of dissolution, all beings in Lanka trembled and howled at the shouts that followed the *rakshasa*-general and the roar of the armies. In the clear sky, birds flew inauspiciously round the car in flocks from left to right and rejoiced at the thought of the rich repast they would have that day of flesh and blood. Frightful jackals vomited flames and howled; meteors fell, storms blew; the planets contended with one another and grew dim; clouds roaring dreadfully showered blood on the car of Prahasta and on the *rakshasas* that went before. On the top of his banner a huge vulture sat facing the south and scratched his wings with his beak. Thereat Prahasta's face grew pale. His charioteer, of noble lineage and wonderful skill, let fall his whip by accident. The matchless radiance and lustre and spirit that Prahasta had when he started for battle waned very soon. The horses stumbled in level places. The monkey-forces saw Prahasta, renowned for strength and valour, coming against them; and they faced him with trees, mountain tops, and blocks and frightful war-cries. Both the sides were beside themselves in ardour of fight and shouted so that the quarters trembled. They were of matchless speed, of wonderful skill in warfare, intent upon slaying one another. They filled the earth and the sky with their cries of defiance and slaps on the shoulders. Thus did that black-hearted Prahasta deciding to destroy the monkey-hosts and defeat Rama and Lakshmana, make his way into the ever increasing monkey-armies like a moth falling into a blazing flame.

CHAPTER 58

DEATH OF PRAHASTA

SEEING Prahasta the valiant hero coming forth to fight, Rama turned with smile, to Vibhishana and said, "Lo! there comes towards us a *rakshasa* with a huge body and countless forces behind him. Who is that hero?" (The sight of a powerful enemy brought forth joy and a smile from Rama. Prahasta came out of the eastern gate. But Rama stood at the northern gate. How was he able to know what was happening at the distance of many *yojanas*? Trusted messengers brought him news and he speaks as if he had direct knowledge). And to him replied Vibhishana, "Lord! this is the commander of the forces of Ravana; he is known as Prahasta and is the leader of one-third of the troops in Lanka, strong, expert in weapons, undaunted in battle and the hero of a hundred fights."

Then roaring fearfully like thunder in summer and followed by *rakshasas* like mountains of collyrium, Prahasta came out to battle with bulk and shape that struck terror into the hearts of his foes. And his valour was equal to his strength. In the flush of their strength and anger, the monkeys roared aloud. The *rakshasas* ran towards the monkeys, intent on killing them brandishing swords, tridents, spears, bars, bows, and other weapons of war. The monkey-lords, armed with trees in fruit and flower and long and broad boulders, sprang at their foes. Both sides kept up an incessant shower of stones and arrows and fought dreadfully at close quarters. Countless monkey-warriors met their death at the hands of the *rakshasas*. Countless *rakshasa*-warriors were slain by the *vanaras*. Some were pierced by tridents; some were sawn by wheels; some were cloven by axes; some fell down dead; some died of cloven hearts; some were strung on strings of arrows and perished; some cut by broad swords, writhed on the ground and passed away; some had their sides ripped open by tridents and met their death. The monkeys, mad with fury, ground to dust crowds of *rakshasas* with trees and mountain peaks. Struck with fists and palms, hard like adamant, their teeth broken and eyeballs forced out, the *rakshasas*

vomited blood. Some cried with agony; some roared like lions in joy; thus there was one mighty deafening uproar. The heroes on both sides showed all their skill. Rolling their eyes fiercely without a touch of fear, they performed deeds of valour with relentless fury.

Narantaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahanada and Samunnata, the ministers of Prahasta, sprang at their enemies on all sides and slew them. Thereat Dvidida killed Narantaka with a mountain top; Durmukha, Samunnata with a huge tree. Jambavan smashed Mahanada with a big block of stone; and Tara sent Kumbhahanu to his death with a blow from a lofty tree. Prahasta could not bear this sight and he destroyed with his arrows the monkeys in crowds. The two armies joined hands and moved to and fro and staggered like a huge whirlpool in the ocean. There arose a frightful sound like waters being lashed by a storm. Prahasta, in his rage, kept up a ceaseless downpour of arrows and displayed his wonderful skill in fight. That field of battle was frightful to see, covered as it was with the mountainous heaps of *rakshasas* and monkeys slain in fight. The ground was hid beneath a torrent of blood and looked like a large forest hid by Palasa flowers in summer.

That battle-ground was a large river; the two ridges of slain warriors were its banks; the broken weapons were the trees; blood was the water that flowed in it. The Lord Yama, that gathered to himself the lives of the combatants, was the ocean; the flesh on either side of the heart was the mire; the protruding entrails were the moss. Severed heads and limbs were the fish; hands, legs and trunks were the lender green grass on the banks; vultures and eagles were the swans and water ducks; the fat was the foam, the cries of the wounded were the noise of falling waters; cowards dare not cross it. A river bright with swans, and water fowls at the end of the rains, the monkeys and the *rakshasas* leapt over it, waded through it and swam in it, like mad elephants entering a lovely lotus pool, troubling its waters and crossing to the other bank covered with lotus stalks; the warriors were bathed in blood and came out of the river red of hue.


Nilā, the commander of the monkey-forces, beheld Prahasta destroying the monkey-troops by the arrowy shower he kept up from

his car. Like a fierce wind driving the cloud-banks before it, Nila drove the *rakshasas* in panic before him. But Prahasta guided his car, shining like the noonday sun, to where he was. Best of archers, he bent his bow, strung it, twanged it, and riddled Nila with countless shafts. They passed through his body and entered the earth, hissing like infuriated serpents. Pierced by arrows that burned like flames, Nila tore up a lofty tree and hit with it the *rakshasa* rushing towards him. Prahasta roared in fury and kept up his arrowy downpour upon the monkey hero. Unable to stop it, Nila closed his eyes and stood there motionless like a huge bull suddenly caught in an autumnal shower. Then he plucked off a huge sal tree and struck down the swift horses yoked to the car of Prahasta, broke his bow and roared in triumph. Prahasta, his horses dead and his bow broken, jumped on the ground and snatched a bar of iron. Both of them were commanders of troops; mighty in speed; implacable in hatred; and like elephants in rut they bit and tore each other's, their bodies drenched with blood. They were strong and agile like lions and tigers; never till then had either known defeat; famous warriors both who had never retraced a step in battle; each tried to defeat the other and win boundless fame. They were like the god Indra and the *asura* Vritra. With all his strength Prahasta struck Nila on the forehead with the iron bar. Nila covered with blood, tore up a mighty tree and struck Prahasta with it on the chest. Prahasta made light of it and sprang upon the monkey-hero with the huge bar in his hand. Then Nila took a huge boulder and brought it down with force and speed upon Prahasta's head. It was smashed to pulp. Bereft of sense, he fell on the earth lifeless, and lustreless, like a large tree uprooted. And from his body and head there flowed torrents of blood like cataracts down a mountain slope.

At the sight of their commander slain by Nila, the *rakshasa*-forces, till then undaunted, lost spirit and joy. They were dazed and could not stand.

CHAPTER 59

RAMA SHATTERS THE CROWN OF RAVANA

 WHEN the general Prahasta was thus slain by the commander of the monkey-hosts, the *rakshasa*-troops endowed with the speed of the raging seas and armed with every kind of dreadful weapon, were routed and, seeking the presence of Ravana, told him how Prahasta had met his death at the hands of the son of Agni. Never even in his wildest dreams had Ravana thought that such a thing could happen. Hence, he turned to the *rakshasa*-warriors that stood round him like the heavenly heroes round the throne of Indra, and cried, "Look! Our commander Prahasta is no ordinary warrior. He could make Indra cry for mercy. And now he and his countless *rakshasa*-troops lie slain by these wretched monkeys. Here is a lesson for us; we should not underrate the foe. I shall myself go out to fight and come back victorious, consuming in the fire of my arrows Rama, and Lakshmana and their monkey-hosts, even as a forest fire burns down the trees." And he ascended his car that blazed like a flame. Horses of the noblest breed were yoked to it; its splendour illumined all the quarters. When the Lord of the *rakshasas* went out to battle, the sound of conches, drums, kettle-drums, war-drums, tom-toms and other martial instruments, the slaps of warriors on their shoulders, their defiant cries and shouts and the solemn music of purifactory religious chants filled the atmosphere. The Lord of Lanka went forth crowned with the blessings of elders and the praises of his subjects. Surrounded by *rakshasa*-braves, with bodies hard like mountains, able to change at will their forms like cloud-banks, their eyes blazing like fierce flames, he resembled the Lord Rudra, the leader of *asuras*, surrounded by his hosts of *bhutas* (elementals). (The *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* tells us that the *tamasa* or the dark aspect of the Almighty is known as Rudra; hence it follows that he is the Lord of the *asuras*).

Then Ravana, the shining one, came out of the city and found the monkey-forces armed with trees and mountains, dreadful to

look at and roaring like the ocean and the rain-clouds. At the sight of the *rakshasa*-forces marching furiously against him, Rama's arms grew longer with ardour for battle; the goddess of heroism shone forth from him. As he stood there in the midst of the boundless armies, his eye fell on Vibhishana who knew the strength and weakness of the *rakshasa*-warriors and he said, "Oh! brother of Ravana, this vast *rakshasa*-host — who leads it? It is furnished with banners, flags, bows, tridents, spears and other weapons of war; elephants, huge like mountains, and fearless warriors grace it. It seems impossible to rout it. Vibhishana, brave like Indra, then described in detail the names and valour of the *rakshasa*-heroes. "See you there a warrior with a huge body and his face red like the rising sun? He is seated on the shoulders of that rutting elephant and by the weight of his body causes his mount to tremble. He is AKAMPANA, the son of Ravana.

And that other warrior there, whose car flies the lion-banner and who whirls his mighty bow aloft like the rainbow in the sky, out of the sheer strength of his arm, he is none other than INDRAJIT, the first born son of Ravana. His strength is that of an elephant in rut; his front teeth are deformed and project dreadfully; thanks to the boons he has won from Brahma, he can make himself invisible at will.

That warrior there, whose body is huge like the mountains Vindhya, Mahendra and Astagiri (the mountain of sunset) — he is ATIKAYA. He twirls between his fingers his enormous bow and he comes towards us in a car drawn by a thousand horses. Though he has not the magic art of Indrajit, he is a more mighty hero.

And look there where that other *rakshasa* stands with eyes red like the rising sun; he rides a noble elephant and his dreadful roaring harmonises with the sounds of the bells on his mount; he is MAHODARA.

Yonder comes PISACHA, mounted on a horse adorned with priceless ornaments and trappings; he whirls aloft a spear blazing with splendour. Mark his course that shines like a mountain covered with clouds at sunset and his speed like rolling thunder.

Again, cast your eyes upon another renowned warrior that stands there, TRISIRAS by name. He is mounted upon a bull that looks like a mountain on feet and in his hand shines a trident with sharp points, blinding like lightning and swifter than the thunderbolt.

And there comes KUMBHA like a huge cloud in shape; his chest is broad and high and hard; there is a serpent on his banner and he waves aloft his bow, eager for the battle.

NIKUMBHA is there, armed with an iron-bound rod, inlaid with gold and gems and emitting fire and smoke. The most prominent among the *rakshasa*-hosts, he does the most dreadful deeds.

NARANTAKA drives towards us with lightning speed in his car shining like a flaming fire and furnished with bow, sword, arrows and other weapons of war and with a fine banner. Finding none to stand up to him to fight, he vents his strength by battling with the mountains.

And last there comes one who has curbed the pride and strength of the gods themselves. Round him crowd elementals with rolling eyes and faces like tigers, camels, serpents, stags, horses and other dreadful shapes. Above his head is held a large moon-like white umbrella with delicate wires. Seated beneath it is the ruler of the countless millions of *rakshasas*, like Rudra surrounded by his elementals. His face is lit up with the lustre of his noble crown and ear-rings; his body is huge like the Himalayas or the Vindhya. He is the Lord of Lanka who has vanquished Indra, Yama and the other regents of the quarters. Behold him in his radiance like the blazing sun."

Hearing this, Rama said, "Vibhishana, what brilliance! Ravana, the king of the *rakshasas*, is glorious to behold; one's eyes are blinded as they gaze at his, even as they are by the sun in his noonday splendour. I see that his body is enveloped in lustre. I have never seen such splendour about the gods or *danava* warriors. Every one in his ranks is of mountainous bulk; mountains are his missiles; with keen weapons he comes towards us, surrounded by his chosen warriors like Yama in the midst of his terrible elementals. It is good that this sinful wretch has come within my ken today. Till now

I have controlled within myself my anger at the abduction of Sita. Now I shall turn it upon him." Raghuvira bent his redoubtable bow, twanged it with a dreadful noise, fitted to it a most powerful arrow and, with Lakshmana by his side, waited for Ravana.

Then Ravana turned towards the *rakshasas* around him and said, "Cast off all care and guard most carefully the inner fortifications, the gates and towers of Lanka, and the quarters for the troops built on either side. If our foe should come to know that you are here with me, he would make his way into Lanka, subdue the handful that we have left there and gain control of the city." He ordered them away and, like a huge whale that makes its way lightly through surging seas, he moved through the monkey-host.

Sugriva saw him coming to destroy the monkeys with a bright bow and arrows in his hand, like the Lord of Death with his noose of Time. And he tore up a mountain top, rushed towards the *rakshasa* and threw it at him. Ravana beheld it as it came towards him with its trees and torrents, and cut it to bits with his gold-bound arrows. Hissing like a huge serpent, he chose an arrow with which to slay the king of the monkeys. It was swift like the *vajra* of Mahendra; it shone like the Lord of Fire emitting a shower of sparks around; it could destroy the universe like the Lord of Death himself. This shaft, like the *Sakti* sent by Lord Subrahmanya against the mount Krauncha, pierced Sugriva through and through. Unable to bear the agony, the monkey-king lost his senses and fell on the earth with a woeful cry. The *rakshasas* roared with joy as they saw him stretched unconscious on the ground. Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sudamshttra, Rishabha, Jyotirmukha and Nala at once sprang at Ravana increasing the bulk of their bodies and uprooting mountains for their weapons. But he foiled their strokes with keen arrows and pierced them with other shafts curiously bound in gold. They were dazed and fell upon the ground with frightful contortions of hands and feet; and Ravana hid the monkey-hosts under heaps of arrows. Struck by his shafts and unable to bear the torture, some were howling dreadfully; others whimpered under the strokes of another weapon, FEAR. Some crashed down to the earth by the mere impact of the speed of the *rakshasa*-ruler; the rangers in the wood shouted in terror since they had never before beheld such foes and weapons;

but all took refuge with Sri Rama to whom the worlds look for protection. (Surrender requires no other motive or reason than the experience of some pain or grief that cannot be put away. Time, place, fitness, strength or preparation need not be enquired into).

Raghava who knew the mystery of this doctrine and who is the only one to whom such a surrender is due, grasped his mighty bow, strung it and confronted Ravana. When a person comes to us in the grip of sorrow or danger, we are bound to give him prompt relief. Hence Raghunatha, was afraid that Lakshmana would perhaps march forth to battle without asking leave of him and he himself set out armed with bow and arrows. As Rama hastened forward to save those who looked to him for protection, Lakshmana with folded hands barred his way and addressed a *PRAYER TO HIM*. (Lakshmana, the devoted servant of Rama, shone in the glory of this service, as he folded his hands in prayer that his words might find acceptance. The service of the Lord of all is the highest reward and final fulfilment of his servants). "Brother, it is but right that you and no one else should slay this wicked wretch who dared to carry away your wife. And it is but child's play to you. But it is not seemly that you, endowed with boundless strength and prowess, should do battle with this puny *rakshasa*. Give me leave and let me slay him". (It might be asked, "Why not go and do it if you can?"). Another would be, "I am the servant and you my Lord; I am a part and you the whole. For me to do anything without your leave is against my nature, as a dependant on my Master). And to him replied Rama, the hero of unfailing prowess, "Well, go if you will. Do not think lightly of your foe. Be as cautious as you keep to fight. Ravana is a mighty warrior; his prowess is wonderful. He seems to choose one weapon but in reality chooses another; he seems about to fit it to his bow, but fits another; he seems to discharge this but in fact shoots another. The fire of his wrath will consume to ashes all the beings in the three worlds. So mark well his defects and rid yourself of your own defects. Protect yourself well by your bow and eye". Lakshmana embraced his brother, circumambulated and saluted him with reverence and marched forth to fight armed with the consent of Rama. And there he found Ravana, bending his shining bow, covering and decimating the monkey-forces with his arrowy showers.

Meanwhile, Anjaneya ran up to him and cried, "How unfair! Here am I, your humble servant. How could you come out like this?". He thrust aside the flights of arrows and sprang at Ravana. He drew near his car, raised his right hand and shouted menacingly. "You and your *rakshasas* have put to rout *devas*, *danavas*, *gandharvas* and *yakshas*. But do you not know that you will meet with death at the hands of the monkeys? It was a fault to have allowed you to live so long. Look here, like a lofty tree with five branches, this my right hand will drink your life's breath". And to him replied Ravana, his eyes red with anger and laughing like thunder in his peerless prowess, "You monkey! strike quick! do not hesitate. You desire the glory of having struck Ravana in fight. Why should I deny you this? I shall gauge your strength thereby and then kill you with just a force needed and no more." But Maruti answered, "You wicked wretch! killing me can wait. It is yet to come. But it is a fact, it is not, that I slew your son Aksha?" Then Ravana, the shining one, struck the son of Vayu a terrible blow on his chest. At this Hanuman shivered again and again and then stood motionless for the space of a *muhurta*. But most intelligent as he was, he recovered courage and gave Ravana an angry blow with his fist. Ravana shivered as a lofty mountain does rock during an earthquake. Seeing this, sages, monkeys, *siddhas*, gods and *asuras* raised shouts of joy. Then Ravana, when his pain subsided a little, cried, "Well done, you monkey? I admire your prowess. You are a foe worthy of myself." But Anjaneya was sorely disappointed and cried, "I should curse my valour. You are still alive even after being struck by me. How can my valour be praised when it has not killed you? You strike me once again. Let me see. Do not boast in vain. I will despatch you to the world of Yama with my fist. Wicked fellow! You have survived because of my carelessness. You won't escape now". Ravana heard these words and his eyes turned red on account of wrath. He folded his right fist and dealt a severe blow on the chest of Maruti with all his strength. Being struck again on the chest Hanuman shook violently. Noticing the mighty Anjaneya standing confused Ravana drove his chariot towards Nila.

The mighty and valiant Ravana struck Nila at his vital points with shafts resembling dreadful serpents and caused him suffering. Nila got annoyed and held back the shafts with one hand, plucked

a mountain peak with the other hand and threw it on Ravana. Hanuman who excelled in his splendour, intellect and valour, got rid of his fatigue in the meanwhile. Getting interested in the fight, he noticed Ravana fighting with Nila. With wrath he said, "O vile *rakshasa*! I am letting you off this time because you have been fighting with some other person". Ravana pierced to pieces the block of stone that was falling on him with seven sharp shafts. Nila noticed that and struck him with many flower trees plucked together with their roots. The demon-chief made them to pieces with his shafts and pierced the body of Nila with a shower of arrows. Nila remained unperturbed by the shower of arrows like a mountain, contracted his form and jumped on the tip of the banner of Ravana. Ravana became infuriated on seeing that. Nila roared. He was moving from the banner to the tip of his bow, and again to the top of his crown, Nila was quite at ease. Rama, Lakshmana and Maruti wondered at it. Ravana admired the agility and skill of the monkey; he took up a blazing magic weapon, wonderful in its might, dedicated to the Lord of Fire. The monkeys, observing that Ravana was confused by the quick movement of Nila, shouted for joy. But this only added to the confusion of Ravana who remained for a while lost in thought. Then he chose an arrow, chanted over it the charm of the Lord of Fire, turned his eyes towards Nila who sat on the top of the banner, and cried, "Monkey! with your speed and skill, you seem to take any form at will, as if by magic. Your wiles are all in vain. This arrow in my hand will drink up your life-breaths. Save yourself if you can." With this threat, he discharged the magic weapon of Agni at the head of Nila. The commander of the monkey-troops, hit in the chest by that magic missile, felt his whole body burning and sank to earth in agony. But being endowed with great lustre and by the grace of his father, the Lord of Fire, he escaped death. He fell on his knees resting on the ground.

When he saw Nila stretched senseless on the earth, Ravana was afire with the lust of battle and drove his car, rumbling like a black rain-cloud, to where Lakshmana was. He thrust aside Sugriva and others; he shone like a raging fire in the midst of the troops; he bent his bow, strung it, twanged the string till the earth trembled, and waved it over his head. Lakshmana, of matchless might, cried, "King of the *rakshasas*! these monkeys are no match for you. Come

to me. Do not go elsewhere.” Ravana heard his words, his lionlike roar and the terrible twang of his bow. He drew near and cried in wrath, “With confused mind and seeking your own death, you have come within my ken. Good, very good, Behold, I will cut you to pieces with my arrows and despatch you to the halls of Yama.” Unperturbed by these words of Ravana, as he roared exposing his deformed white teeth, Lakshmana said, “Ruler of the *rakshasas*! the truly great do not brag. But you are the prince of wicked wretches; you trumpet your empty vaunts. Know I not your strength and fame, your valour and prowess. You are the mighty hero, are you not, who in the guise of a holy ascetic carried away Sita when she was all alone? Here I have come, bow in hand, to face you in battle. Let me see what you do now. No empty bragging, please.” Ravana, infuriated, struck Lakshmana with seven keen shafts. And the latter cut them to pieces, which made the *rakshasa* madder yet. He shot other sharp arrows at Lakshmana. The prince kept up a ceaseless shower of arrows upon the *rakshasa* and cut down the arrows of Ravana with *ardhachandra*, *bhalla*, *karni* and other weapons. The Lord of Lanka admired the skill of Lakshmana and employed many new weapons against him. Lakshmana discharged again some arrows of boundless potency at the *rakshasa* with intent to slay him. They were sharp, swift and strong, like *vajra*, and bright like fire. But Ravana cut them down lightly and struck Lakshmana on his face with an arrow blazing like the fire of dissolution, a gift to him from Brahma. Then Lakshmana let fall his bow and shivered. Then recovering himself, he broke the bow of the *rakshasa*-king and hit him with three arrows. The force of its impact caused intolerable pain to the *rakshasa* and in his turn he shook dreadfully.

He came back to himself soon and finding himself with his bow riddled by the arrows of the foe and covered with blood and fat all over, the Lord of Lanka took up a mighty weapon named *Sakti* that had been given to him in the past by Brahma. The monkey-troops trembled at the sight of it. Ravana sent it, blazing like smokeless fire, at Lakshmana with the intent to slay him outright. The brother of Rama struck it with many an arrow emitting lambent flames, but nevertheless it hit Lakshmana’s chest and pierced him through. The young prince, endowed with matchless might, was

struck down by the SAKTI of Ravana and staggered senseless, surrounded by flames. At once Ravana sprang forward and tried to lift him up with his twenty hands.

The Himalayas, the standard of comparison for firmness and fortitude may perhaps be lifted up; for Ravana had once displaced Kailasa, a portion of it. One may uproot with one's arms the mount Mandara that was found fit to churn the ocean of milk, the most mighty of its kind; for the Lord of Lanka had defeated many times the *asuras* and *devas* that churned it. One may uproot even Meru that shines as the central jewel of all the lofty mountains of the earth, for once Lord Vayu crashed down its top and it fell into the sea that surrounds Lanka; and that Lord Vayu was mortally afraid of Ravana. It is not difficult to tear up the world, fifty *kotis* of *yojanas* in extent. For Hiranyaksha had, once before, carried away under his arms a portion of it, the earth, and he was but a previous incarnation of Kumbhakarna. It is possible to bear aloft the three worlds and the gods that rule it, for the son of Ravana had defeated the Lord of the gods and thrown him in prison. But Lakshmana, younger than Bharata who was younger than Rama, was a fourth of the essence of Mahavishnu. Ravana could not move or lift him up. With but two hands, the *rakshasa* shook Mount Kailasa, but even with his twenty hands he could not move Lakshmana. The ruler of the *rakshasa* and all his armies together could do nothing here.

Lakshmana, pierced in the heart by Ravana's Sakti, granted to him by Brahma, reminded himself of his nature as a ray of Mahavishnu that passeth thought and speech. (Since he did nothing else, there could be no other reason for his body becoming preternaturally heavy, except his reminding himself of his divine essence — Tirtha. This cannot be; it is not allowed by the words and their order. There are no facts to support the above view — Govindaraja. He thought of Mahavishnu from whom he came, to free himself from the danger that had befallen him. Otherwise, if this memory was ever with him, it would follow that he did not at any time manifest the human mind in his actions. And in that state it was impossible for him to have performed what he is credited with, like the slaying of Ravana — Tirtha. Not so; himself being Vishnu,

there is no one else to call upon to free him from danger. The heaviness of body is quite natural to him, though it might be contrary to the nature of things in the mortal world. But no one could know what Lakshmana thought at that time. Even so his acting out his part as a mortal man might have been in tune. The expression — ‘beyond thought’ — means that he was wet clay in the hands of those devoted to him and adamant in the hands of those that had turned their hearts away from him — Govindaraja. Ravana found it utterly impossible to move a hair on the body of Rama’s brother, who was a terror to the pride of his enemies, though the *rakshasa* brought into use all his arms. Was not Lakshmana a ray of Mahavishnu that manifested itself in the mortal world?) (It might be questioned how Mahavishnu who was above time and space and without parts, could have a ray proceeding from him. His innate essence might be so, but his divine qualities as they manifest themselves in the Universe, come out in sequence and appear as rays different from one another).

Then Anjaneya, beside himself with wrath, sprang upon Ravana and gave him a punch on his chest with his clenched fist hard as adamant. The force was so terrible that the *rakshasa*-king fell kneeling on the floor on his car and shook like a leaf. Blood flowed from his eyes, ears and mouth. Dazed for a while, he lent motionless on the floor of the car. Then he swooned away. After some time he came back to himself; still he could not stand firmly on his feet. Seeing the mighty Ravana lying senseless, the sages, monkeys, gods and Indra shouted in joy. Hanuman gently lifted the body of Lakshmana, who was sore afflicted by Ravana, and placed it before Sri Rama. Lakshmana, whom Ravana and his retinue could not move at all, was easily lifted by an ordinary monkey who was friendly and devoted. (Lakshmana, even when he fainted away, retained his might and memory. This proves that, though Rama and Lakshmana appeared at times to be ignorant and helpless, this was only in consonance with the human roles they assumed on earth. It was not merely to slay Ravana that the Lord came down on earth as a man. He wanted to teach by example the duties of men to one another. Else how could he grieve at parting from Sita and Lakshmana since he was omniscient, omnipotent and the soul of bliss? — Suka). Finding that Lakshmana was

unconquerable in battle, the weapon *Sakti* let him go and come back to its place in the car of Ravana. Lakshmana, reminding himself of his essential nature as a ray beyond thought and speech from Mahavishnu who could destroy all obstacles and all foes, was healed of his wounds and became as strong as before.

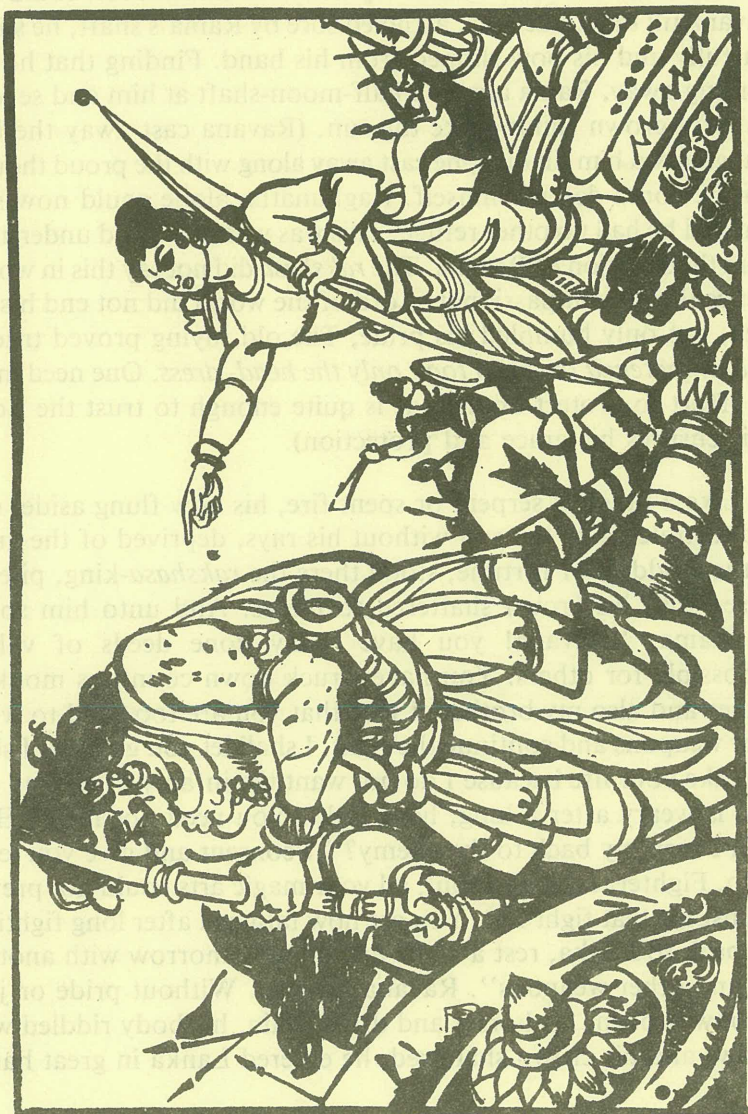
Meanwhile Ravana, endowed with splendour, came out of his swoon, bent his bow and troubled the monkeys with his keen shafts. Raghava, seeing the monkey-heroes being slain and the army being scattered in all directions, hastened towards Ravana. Then Hanuman bowed low before him and said, "Lord! be seated on my back and do battle with the *rakshasa*, even as Mahavishnu, bestriding Garuda the mighty, slew the wicked *asuras*". Raghuvira complied with his prayer and, beside himself with wrath at seeing Ravana proudly seated in his car, he was like Mahavishnu who in the far past rushed upon Mahabali to slay him. He bent his mighty bow, twanged it like thunder, drew near Ravana and told him in a majestic tone, "Best and bravest of the *rakshasas*! Stay, stay; flee not. You carried away my beloved wife and so incurred my wrath. Where can you go and how can you escape? You may seek refuge with Indra, Yama, Surya, Brahma, Agni or Sankara; you may run and hide yourself in the ten quarters; but having come within my ken, you cannot escape with your life. Here comes my brother, who is Death to you and all your men. Did you try to kill him with your *Sakti*? Do not gloat because you struck him down and made him senseless. If you think, 'Lakshmana could not touch me. How could you?' Do you know that with these very weapons, I destroyed, within a *muhurta*, the fourteen thousand *rakshasa*-heroes that dwelt in Janasthana, besides Khara, Dushana and Trisiras?" Hearing this, the ruler of Lanka struck the mighty Anjaneya with his keen arrows, flaming like the fire of universal destruction. The monkey that had struck him down was now coming back with Rama on his back. This maddened him and he pierced Maruti again and again but only heightened his natural lustre.

Seeing the son of Vayu thus wounded all over by Ravana, Rama was enraged; and with his terrible arrows he destroyed the car of Ravana, its wheels, its flags and banners, the umbrella and weapons in it, and the driver. Like Indra's thunderbolt shattering mount

Meru, the arrow shot by Raghunatha struck the broad and handsome chest of Ravana. Neither *vajra* nor the thunderbolt could hurt Ravana till then; but now, afflicted sore by Rama's shaft, he shook fearfully and his bow slipped from his hand. Finding that he was fainting away, Rama aimed a half-moon-shaft at him and severed his lofty crown shining like the sun. (Ravana cast away the bow that guarded him till then; he cast away along with the proud thought that he could defend himself. Raghunatha alone could now save him and he had no other refuge. This was what the Lord understood from the situation of Ravana. The *rakshasa* did not say this in words. Hence the all-compassionate Lord of the world did not end his life then, but only humbled his pride; The old saying proved true — *what threatened the head took only the head-dress*. One need make no effort to protect oneself; It is quite enough to trust the Lord. This ensures his grace and protection).

Like a fangless serpent or spent fire, his bow flung aside, dull and lustreless like the sun without his rays, deprived of the grace of the Goddess of fortune, stood there the *rakshasa*-king, piteous to see with his crown shattered to pieces. And unto him spoke Sri Rama, "Ravana! you have today done deeds of valour impossible for others. You have struck down countless monkey-heroes and also my brother. I fear that you are too tired to wield your weapons and continue the fight. I shall let you go now. I shall not take your life because I do not want the infamy of slaying one who is weary after a long, hard fight. You need not feel, "How shall I turn my back to the enemy?" I consent and give you leave to go. Fighter, false and foul; all your magic arts could not prevail against me that fight fair. You are now fatigued after long fighting. Go back to Lanka, rest a while and come tomorrow with another car and other weapons". Ravana listened. Without pride or joy, his bow broken, his horses and driver slain, his body riddled with arrows and his crown shattered, he entered Lanka in great haste.

When Ravana of matchless might, the terror of gods and *asuras*, retired from the field, *devas* and *danavas* rejoiced and celebrated the event. Then from Lakshmana and the monkeys Rama removed the arrows that had pierced them, caused their wounds to be healed and led his forces to another spot. When they beheld



the ten-headed Ravana, the eternal foe of the gods, put to rout, gods, *asuras*, elementals, rulers of the quarters, creatures of the deep, sages, *uragas* (gods with the heads of serpents) and the denizens of the earth, cast away their fear and exclaimed with joy, "Ravana, that monster of vice, has atlast met defeat at the hands of Rama. Now the time draws near when he shall perish and we will see our sorrows end."

CHAPTER 60

KUMBHAKARNA ROUSED FROM HIS SLEEP

RAVANA entered Lanka; he turned back again and again; for he was afraid that the arrows of Rama might chase him even there. He was shorn of his pride and his heart was troubled mightily. Like an elephant pursued by a lion, like a serpent pursued by Garuda, he was defeated by Raghuvira the mighty and was put to disgrace.

"Wonder of wonders! arrows like these, I never dreamt that there were such. They blazed like the rod of Brahma; They blinded one with their lightning splendour." This thought came upon him again and again and made his heart heavier with sorrow. He reclined on his throne of purest gold and spoke to the *rakshasas* round, "All my *tapas*, laid up with indescribable effort and trouble has now gone to waste. I who put to rout again and again the gods, the *asuras*, and Indra himself (and it was child's play to me), have now met with defeat and disgrace at the hands of a puny mortal, is it not? The terrible curse that Brahma laid upon me in the past, would it go for nothing? He said, 'Fear and danger comes to you from men.' And those words have now proved true with me. I prayed of his that I should not meet my death at the hands of gods, *danavas*, *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, *rakshasas*, *pannagas*, and the others; that much and no more. But I counted not men along with them; they were too insignificant in my estimate. In the far past, Anaranya, king of the Ikshvaku race, was defeated and slain by me. His last words were "Wretch! meanest of the *rakshasa*-race! wilful and

wicked! there comes in my line a mighty hero who will slay in fair fight yourself, sons, kith and kin and the entire *rakshasa*-brood." Now this Rama, the son of Dasaratha, has he taken human shape to send me to my death? When I laid violent hands on Vedavati of peerless chastity, she has laid upon me a dreadful curse. 'I will be your Fate.' And to make good her word, has she come back as Sita, the daughter of Janaka? Parvati, Nandi, Rambha, the daughter of Varuna, these four are endowed with extra-ordinary might of *tapas*; and their words will not go fruitless. (When Ravana tried to tear up the mount Kailasa, Parvati was sore afflicted with fear and cried, "Wretch! you dare to intrude upon the privacy of myself and my lord and put fear upon me. So a woman like myself will place you in fear of death." The daughter of Varuna spoken of here is probably the same as the *apsaras* Punjikasthala. These details are found in the *Uttarakanda* — Tirtha). I should ponder deeply on these points, and take measures to defeat my foe. Let all our *rakshasas* guard the inner fortifications, towers and the houses adjoining them.

Kumbhakarna, my brother is of matchless might and strength; he extinguishes the pride of the gods and the *asuras* and he is now sunk in deep sleep, through the curse of Brahma. Awake him. Sometimes he sleeps on free of care through nine or six or seven, or eight months. But, on the other hand sleep does not visit my tired eyes; every step I take is foiled; my plans go for nothing; and care and anxiety lie heavy in my heart. ("Lord, grant me that I sleep soundly through many years," was the boon that Kumbhakarna craved of Brahma without mentioning any time limits; this is what the *Uttarakanda* tells us. "But Vibhishana said to Rama, "He sleeps for six months at a stretch and wakes up but for a day. It is to be taken that the period is not less than six months). It is only some nine days ago that he was present at our counsel chamber before he went to his sleep. So it is easy for us to rouse him. What do we lack since we have such a man of might as he. He is a past master in battle. He towers like a lofty peak on the mountain of the *rakshasa*-race itself. He will slay out of hand in a moment Rama, Lakshmana and the monkeys. Like unto the army that is filled with enthusiasm and courage at the sight of the commander on the field of battle, our *rakshasa*-forces have but to catch sight of this

crest-jewel of the *rakshasa*-race on the field of battle to grow in strength and courage and energy. But it is a pity he is not conscious of his own greatness and spends his intellect in small things and delights in long sleep. Else he would have achieved many a deed of fame and valour. I have been put to disgrace sorely in this dreadful battle. If Kumbhakarna were awake I have no call to be anxious. Alas! it is a pity that I have to rouse him from his sleep. What shall I do? I see no other way. I am beset by these troubles; I am put to disgrace; I have a brother like unto the king of the gods in strength and valour; yet I grieve without receiving any kind of assistance from him. So take the necessary steps to rouse him as soon as you can."

(Kumbhakarna comes out of his long sleep and attends the business during a single day. So he ought to have begun his sleep on the morrow of the day when the council met. And it was on the self same day that Vibhishana took refuge with Rama and was accepted. And from that day onwards, Rama laid himself on the bed of holy grass, seeking the assistance of the king of the waters, and that for three days in succession. Then the bridge was laid over the sea during five days. The evening before that Rama went up the mount Suvela. That night saw the duel between Sugriva and Ravana. The two forces joined in battle the next day. That very night Rama and Lakshmana were bound by the *nagapasa* and freed therefrom. Dhumraksha, Vajradamshtra and Akampana were slain. Prahasta met his death the very next day when the crown of Ravana was shattered by Rama. Thus passed away nine days according to some).

But it is not correct. We read that it was full-moon on the night that Rama went up the mount Suvela. Ravana met his death on the next new moon; so his crown ought to have been shattered on the second day of the fortnight. From that day to the full-moon day, Ravana ought to have fought on and that is not possible. So omit the day when the battle began and count nine days from the previous day; and that was the beginning of the sleep of Kumbhakarna. The council met on the day previous. In other words the Suvela mount incident falls on the full-moon; the battle began on the first day of the fortnight; nine days before that comes the seventh

day of the fortnight and Kumbhakarna began his sleep then. Rama began his penance on the bed of grass. The council met on the fifth day of the fortnight; and Vibhishana left Lanka for good.

But thirteen years passed before the abduction of Sita. At the beginning of the fourteenth year, Ravana carried her away. The description of the spring in the conversation with Sampati proves this. The rainy season is described after the death of Vali and so it must have been in the month of Ashadha. Measures were taken to send out search parties for Sita in the month of Asvayuja. A long time passed over the heads of the monkeys during their stay in the cave of Svayamprabha. Maruti entered Lanka on the thirteenth day (Suddha) of the month of Phalguna. The trees in full bloom during spring attests to the correctness of this conclusion. The moon is said to rise in the sky like a bull with sharp horns and the queen of the night must have come very near her orb, on that day. Lanka was set on fire the morning next to the day when Maruti searched for her, through the city. "I should go through Lanka most carefully when this night is spent. This is proof enough. "Sita said to the monkey-hero "if you so desire, rest here for a day before you proceed." And he consoled her and prepared to go back. So Lanka was set on fire in the morning; the sea was crossed again; Maruti met his monkey friends, the honey-garden was laid in waste; and the monkeys came back to Rama. In the description of the ascent of mount Arishta, we find sunrise described as, "as if roused from happy sleep by the soft fingers of the sun's rays." The omission of a description of the sunset proves this point. That falls on the full moon day when there yet lingered somewhat of the fourteenth day and the troops marched out to battle then. "Now comes upon us the *muhurta* named Vijaya. The sun is in the centre of the sky. It is good for us that we make a start now." The monkey-host travelled night and day without taking rest; and we find that it camped the next day on the seashore. On the day that Lanka was set fire to Ravana held counsel for a while and sent them away to retire into his palace. The very next morning Vibhishana gave healthy advice to his brother for the second time. Then followed the taking counsel again with Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana present therein. For the third time Kumbhakarna offered his well-meant advice. Unable to bear the cruel words of Ravana, Vibshishana sought

refuge with Rama on the seashore. So we see that Rama came to the seashore the very next day after the burning of Lanka. On that day there was yet left somewhat of the full moon day in the month of Phalguna. This is the asterism Uttara-phalguni," says Chapter 4. And the monkey-forces began their march on the day of the full moon. Further, night fell and the day closed on the waters infested with dreadful monsters; and the moon rose at the beginning of night; this tells us that moon's light began early during the evening twilight itself. It was in one and the same day that the monkey-armies camped on the seashore and Vibhishana took refuge with Rama; yet they are described in order.

Rama began his vow on the sacred grass on the first day of the fortnight; and Kumbhakarna began his sleep. The bridge was laid on the seas on the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and the eighth days. They camped on mount Suvela that night. The sentence, "the night shone with the lamp of the full moon on mount Suvela," should be understood to mean that the mount was ablaze with lamps, torches, and lights that made it as bright as the moon in her full. It seems that the monkey-armies were furnished with lights even as they had instruments of martial music. The next day Lanka was besieged. The stanza, "When the *rakshasas* and the monkeys were fighting, the sun set and the night began that proved fatal to the monkeys," tells us that Rama and Lakshmana were bound by the *Nagapasa* and were freed therefrom. That very night, Ravana sent Dhumraksha to the battle-field enraged by the shouts of joy from the monkeys. Since there is no mention of their breaking upon them, and since we read, "the monkeys roared for very joy", we take it that they were killed that very night. Akampana fought and fell the very next day; we read, "when he started for the battle-field, the clear day was overcast with clouds and adverse wind blew fiercely, this noting the day. Then Ravana inspected the town in the forenoon. Prahasta fought and fell at about midday. We read, "The planets fought with one another and were dim of lustre."; and so some give a wrong inference from it that the battle took place at night. The planet Budha afflicted the constellation of Rohini and brought down evil and harm to all creatures; this statement informs us that many things took place during the day that are naturally invisible then. In the second day's fight, Ravana was put

to disgrace and roused Kumbhakarna who marched forth to battle. We read, "during the fifth part of the day, at about sunset, sixty-seven *kotis* of monkeys were slain. And along with it the death of Kumbhakarna, the binding of Rama and Lakshmana by the *Brahmastra* and their freedom from it, the second siege of Lanka and the burning thereof, the slaying of Kumbha, Nikumbha, Yupaksha, Sonitaksha, Prajankha, Kampana, and Makaraksha. The sentence, "the sun set and the night fell, the monkeys marched towards Lanka with blazing brand", is our authority for it. Thus in two days all the prominent *rakshasa*-heroes were killed except Indrajit, Ravana, and their *mula-bala* (domestic armies). Indrajit fought on the third, fourth and fifth days and fell, as the sentence, "he fought for three days and night at a stretch and was slain," indicates. The *mula-bala* was destroyed on the sixth day. That evening was the beginning of the battle between Rama and Ravana; it went on day and night without a break and Ravana fell on the seventh day, or one may take it that he began the fight on the seventh day and fell on the morning of the eighth. We have two interpretations of the sentence. "This is the new-moon day of the black fortnight, when there is a slight remnant of the previous day. Go forth to battle and come back with victory. Some take it that Ravana fell on the latter half of the full-moon day. As to the stanza that Rama and Ravana fought for seven days and nights, we take that it signifies the period of fight between the two armies. So we conclude that we should omit the day in which Rama put Ravana to disgrace and on the ninth day from the previous day, Kumbhakarna began his sleep. But how to reconcile these two statements — "I will put up with this patiently for another two months," from Ravana to Sita; and "this is the tenth month going and only two months remain to me of the time he had fixed," from Sita to Maruti, since she has sent word to Rama, "I will not be in the land of the living beyond a month." This leads us to conclude that Ravana allowed her only a period of two months and that he only said so to bend her to his will. She knew that that month was the last of the period of fourteen years and it was but right and fit that she should not be alive for more than a month).

Thereupon, the servants of Ravana were at a loss to find means to rouse Kumbhakarna at the wrong time; they took themselves to

his palace with heavy hearts. Yet they resolved to carry out the orders of Ravana and partook plentifully of flesh and bloom that they may be fully equipped with the might and power to rouse him. They made ready mountainous heaps of flesh, cakes, perfumes, garlands as also drinks and incense. The cave where the *rakshasa* lay asleep was one *yojana* square; the gate was correspondingly large and spacious; and the building was very skilfully constructed. The perfume that he was adorned with carried itself very very far. The gale rushing from his nostrils blew them out of the cave again and again; yet they were mighty men and stood firm and made their way into the cave with great difficulty. Many a platform large and broad was erected within it, and they beheld him extended at his length with his limbs tossed about in frightful disorder like a huge mountain, toppled over. They were sore afraid and gathered together to take measures to rouse him from his sleep. His body was covered all over with hair, long and hard like lofty trees. Like a huge serpent mad with fury, he lay there breathing fiercely. The thunder of his snoring brought terror to the hearts of all creatures. His form and features were dreadful to behold even when he lay passively in the arms of sleep. His nostrils were like huge mountain caves; his mouth was large and spacious like the nether world Patala; the fat and blood that trickled down from his mouth smelt awfully all round. He was adorned with a crown, armlets, garlands, and flowers. He lay in sound sleep entirely unconscious of what became of his body and limbs. The *rakshasa*-servants heaped up before him huge the flesh of stags, bulls, oxen, and boars, like mount Meru and with vast flagons and casks of strong drinks to wash it down when he should come out of his sleep. They placed by his side jars of blood and liquors, adorned him with fine sandal paste, threw garlands over his shoulders and threw perfumes on him, so as to give a sweet and pleasant aspect all round.

Then all joined and roared like the rumbling of clouds. They blew huge conches, like unto the moon in brightness. Finding that their efforts were in vain, they were enraged and kept up roaring frightfully, without a break. They shook him, rolled him over, struck at him with open palms. The sounds of martial music (conch, drum, and tomtoms, etc.), the sounds of the servants hitting the *rakshasa* shouting like lions to rouse him spread over Lanka. Birds were sore



afraid at it and ran in all directions, seeking relief from it; yet it followed them. They flew high in the sky; yet it chased them even there. They fell down on the earth in a faint. The *rakshasa*-hero of mountainous bulk of body did not come out of his sleep for all these; the servants were mightily angry that they had nothing in return for their pains and trouble and hit him until they were tired with wooden bars, iron bars, maces, block of stone, mountain peaks and lofty trees. They hit him with their hands and fists. Yet Kumbhakarna was none the worse for it, nor was his sleep disturbed. Those *rakshasas* were no weaklings; but they could not stand before rushing breath from his nostrils. Then those servants of dreadful valour made other preparations and banded themselves in a group of ten thousand and kept up a continuous uproar on their martial instruments of music; those servants of Ravana with bodies of the hue of collyrium mountains, found that for all their shouts and roars and blows from all sides, he was none the worse and did not come out of his sleep, devised other dreadful measures to effect their purpose. Countless horses, camels and elephants were struck with rods, whips and goads and lashed to fury and driven over him. All the instruments of martial music were sounded with the utmost vehemence and force possible. Whips of iron tied to huge posts, and wooden bars were freely used on his limbs and mercilessly. The roar of it, filled the town of Lanka; and the hills and forests round it trembled in affright. But Kumbhakarna was not in the least roused from his sleep. Then they struck and sounded thousands of huge war drums with golden rods at one and the same time without taking breath. But that *rakshasa*, thanks to the curse of Brahma sunk deeper and deeper into the arms of sleep and was utterly dead to the world. Thereat the *rakshasas* were beside themselves with wrath. Some hit him with their fists; some stabbed him; some sounded huge drums; some roared until they were hoarse; some uprooted the hairs on his face; some bit at his ears; some poured countless jars of ice-cold water in his ears. But he moved not a hair-breadth through the terrible force of his sleep. Some strong men, experts in the use of sword, sticks, hit him again and again on the head, breast and hands. Huge maces covered with leather and strongly bound with ropes and spike all over were in play over him from all sides without rest or interval. But there was not even any touch of feeling

or sensation on his body. Then as a last resource they drove thousands of huge elephants over his body.

Then and then alone there was some vestige of sensation over his body. He came out of his sleep somewhat, and thought that some vermin were crawling over him. Then the *rakshasas* took advantage of it and struck him again and again with all their might with lofty trees and mountain tops to bring him back to consciousness. But he made nothing of it and was wrath at them for rousing him from his sleep in such an unseemly hour. Then fear touched him, when he thought of the weighty reason that induced them to rouse him thus. Dreadful hunger caught him in its grip. He stretched his heads and legs and sat up. He flung out his arms long like huge serpents, hard like mountains and strong like their peaks. He opened his frightful mouth, like unto the mouth of the ocean fire Badava, and yawned dreadfully. Then his mouth like unto the dark nether world Patala, took on the look of the sun rising on the top of the mountain Meru (one Badava is a mare that has its abode in the waters of the sea — Kishkindhakanda 168).

(The mountain Savarnimeru, is mentioned here. It is only on its top that the sun can meet it. His rise thereon refers only to the countries on the northern side of it).

Kumbhakarna indulged in his yawn and woke up. Then that *rakshasa* of illimitable strength, breathed fiercely and the sound thereof was like the thunder storms that blew from lofty mountains. As he sat there, his body decked with gold and gems resembled a black cloud-bank discharging its refreshing rains at the end of summer, when lines of cranes surrounded it. His eyes cruel like blazing fires rolled fiercely all over like lambent lightnings; he was lashing himself into fury at being roused before his time. They boded danger and destruction to others like the planets Saturn and Mars. Then the *rakshasas* drew his attention to the huge heaps of food, flesh, and cakes, that were placed before him ready for his consumption. He devoured hills of flesh to calm his dreadful hunger and drank correspondingly to slake his thirst. That was not enough for him; so he drained vessels beyond count, filled with liquor, and fat. Then those servants noted that his hunger and thirst were

appeased and he was satisfied and in a pleasant mood. So they came before him but slowly and with fear in their hearts, at rousing him at the wrong time. They dared not appear before him till then. Now, they threw themselves at his feet and stood round him in reverence and respect. His eyes were yet partially closed heavy with sleep. He gazed round intently and caught sight of the *rakshasas* sent by Ravana. He was surprised to find at his being roused so suddenly, since he was not used to it at any time. He accosted the *rakshasas* graciously and said, "what made you rouse me with so much trouble to you? Is our majesty well and happy? or has fear got him in its grip? You have roused me from my sleep so quickly and that makes me infer that there is some fear hanging over my brother from a foe. This very moment I will free him from it. I will thrash down Mahendra from his lofty seat. I will destroy the Fire god beyond recognition. My brother has some weighty reasons for thus rousing me from my pleasant slumbers. So let me have the truth of it."

Thus did Kumbhakarna demand of them reasons with eyes red with wrath. Then Yupaksha, the minister, joined palms of reverence over his head and spoke humbly, "Lord! There is no fear to you from the gods or the *asuras*. Puny mortals that we passed over as insignificant have now worked great evil to us. *Daityas*, and *danavas* have never troubled us thus; nor were we so much afraid of them as now. Monkeys of mountainous bulk have laid siege to Lanka and the very air itself finds it impossible to pass through them. Raghuvira causes us to tremble with fear, even he who is wroth at us for having carried away Sita. Once before a puny monkey set on fire our capital that none dared to set fire, and reduce it to ashes. It destroyed Aksha, the prince and other heroes with their armies. Our ruler of Lanka, the terror of the worlds, and the sole monarch of our race, has been put to shame in battle by Rama. His car was shattered, the horses were killed and their driver too; his bow was broken in his hand and his armour cloven on his body. His crown was shattered to bits and he escaped with his life. He might be the great grand-son of the Lord Brahma; but what matters it to Raghuvira who is invested with the splendour and brilliance of millions of sons. The gods, the *daityas*, the *danavas*, afflicted us not so much. Our Majesty escaped with his life from the battlefield and it is a source of great wonder to us.


At the news of the defeat of his brother in battle, Kumbhakarna rolled his eyes around fiercely with wrath and like the rumbling of huge cloud-banks cried, "Hear, you, Yupaksha! I will not meet my brother before I have wiped out from existence, Rama and Lakshmana and the entire monkey-hosts. I will give a feast sumptuous to all the *rakshasas* of Lanka over the flesh of monkeys. I reserve for myself the blood of Rama and Lakshmana and their flesh. Thereat Mahodara, the *rakshasa*-hero noted with pleasure that the cruel nature of Kumbhakarna took a keener edge through pride and wrath. He joined his palms in reverence and said, "Lord, Get at the desire of His Majesty; ponder deeply over the pros and cons of it and deal with the foes as you will." Kumbhakarna assented to it and started to go to the council-hall of Ravana. Then *rakshasas* adorned him with garments, ornaments, sandal paste, flowers and garlands. Some went in advance to Ravana and cried, "Your Majesty! your brother Kumbhakarna has been roused from his sleep; he has appeased his hunger and thirst, and is on his way here to wait upon you." Ravana was mightily pleased thereat and replied, "I too am very eager to meet him. Let him be brought here with the honour and respect due to him." They went back to Kumbhakarna and said, "Lord, the ruler of the *rakshasa*-world desires to meet you. Proceed there and bring peace and happiness to his heart."

He accepted the invitation of his brother that was almost a command with him. He came down from his bed, washed his face and ordered the servants to bring him rare drinks that will add vigour and strength to his naturally rare constitution. They placed before him vessels filled with various kinds of rare and wonderful liquors. He drank two thousand of them and it had some slight effect on him. His strength and splendour increased thereby and he was glad of heart. He gave one the idea of Yama who took upon himself to destroy all creation on the day of dissolution. He took his way on foot to the palace of Ravana, followed by bands of *rakshasas*. The earth trembled in affright being unable to bear his weight. Like unto the sun irradiating the earth with his rays, he walked along the high road illuminating the space around. The folded palms of reverence of the subjects formed the garlands thrown over his shoulders; and he entered the palace of the Lord of the *rakshasas*,

like Mahendra entering the audience-hall of Brahma. As he walked along the royal road, the monkey-hosts camped round Lanka cried, "Like unto a huge mountain, scraping the sky above and causing the earth to quake with his steps — who is this huge monster?"; dire fear filled their hearts thereat. Some of them took shelter with Raghuvira to whom all beings look for protection and safety. Some fell down utterly confused. Some ran here and there to hide themselves; some sat themselves demented as it were with fear. Adorned with a crown set with gems and huge as a lofty mountain peak, he came along as if he would invade the orbit of the sun with his splendour. At that wondrous sight the monkey-hosts were utterly dispirited with fear and ran here and there, to hide themselves.

CHAPTER 61

THE ANTECEDENTS OF KUMBHAKARNA

T the sight of the monkeys, fleeing from the battle-field, in affright, Rama grasped his bow and cast his eyes around to know what caused this sudden panic, and beheld Kumbhakarna coming along. His huge body was adorned with priceless crown that made him look like the mount Meru, illumined with the Sun. He looked like Mahavishnu that covered the worlds three in number with his three steps when he came forth as Trivikrama. He was adorned with garlands of gold, armlets, ear rings, that they lay upon his body like lightning over rain-charged cloud-banks. He was like an axle on which were fixed the two wheels of the earth and the sky; for he touched both. When that wondrous form drew near, the monkey-hosts fled in fear and the *rakshasas* roared like lions with joy and enthusiasm. Rama was surprised thereat and said to Vibhishana, "Lo! there comes towards us a huge being like unto a huge mountain and takes its way along the streets of Lanka. His tawny eyes resemble Mars and Saturn so cruel is his look as it rolls about terribly. A mighty crown rests on his head and he shines as if he were a lofty banner raised upon the earth to glorify it. Who is this warrior moving about like masses of clouds, lighted with lightnings? I see no other in Lanka like him. Our monkeys flee for shelter at the sight of this monster. Who is he? *Rakshasa* or *asura*? I have never set my eyes till now on such a creature."

And to him replied, Vibhishana most wise and intelligent. "Lord, this is the famous warrior who defeated in battle Yama and Indra. He is the son of the Maharshi Visravas and the brother of Ravana; they call him Kumbhakarna. There is no *rakshasa* like unto him in stature. Countless are the *devas*, *danavas*, *yakshas*, *bhujangas*, *rakshasas*, *gandharvas*, *vidyadharas*, *kinnaras*, and *pisachas*, that have been defeated by him in the battle. Frightful of look, he takes his place on the battle-field armed with trident like Yama himself. The very gods dare not raise their eyes to him then. They swooned away in affright, taking him for the Lord of Time himself. Ravana and the other *rakshasas* derive their might from the boons granted to them; but this one is naturally endowed with boundless strength and splendour. Hunger afflicted him sorely as soon as he was born; and he began to eat thousands of the creatures that he saw around him. All creation trembled with fear and took refuge with Indra and complained to him sorely knowing not what to do. The king of the gods was mightily wroth and struck him with his keen *vajra*. But Kumbhakarna paid no heed to it and roared in fury so that his body quaked with it. The earth and the creatures thereon frightened to death before at his sight trembled with terror even more pitiably. Then the *rakshasa* in his mad fury plucked out one of the tusks of Iravata, the elephant that Indra rode on and hit the ruler of the gods with it, on his chest. Indra was sorely afflicted and could not stand it and his anger blazed forth. Gods, Brahmarshis, *danavas*, and the creatures on the face of the earth, placed before them, Indra and sought the presence of Lord Brahma himself and laid before him the wickedness of Kumbhakarna, his destroying the creatures without count; his cruelty afflicting the gods. They told him how he had laid waste the sacred lodges of the *rishis* and laid violent hands on women. "Lord, if he is allowed thus to work his will on the creatures in the worlds it needs no saying that they will be untenanted and empty. The grand sire sent for the son of the Visravas and beheld him for the first time. He himself was sorely beset with fear. Then he called him to the side, spoke to him kindly and secured an influence over him, when he said, 'Boy! Did my grandson beget you to compass the destruction of all the worlds I have created. So from this moment, you fall lifeless like a log.'


Then Kumbhakarna fell down before him, bereft of consciousness. Thereat Ravana was sorely troubled at heart and said, "Lord, you reared a mighty tree and now you seek to cut it down when it bears fruit; is this just? The protector of all beings! it becomes you not to curse this great grandson of yours. But your word comes true; and this my brother will sleep on endlessly. So I pray you in the beginning and the end of it." Then said to him Brahma, "then he will sleep on for six months at a time and keeps awake but for a day." So this mighty warrior is sorely afflicted with insatiable hunger on that one day, roams about with his mouth gaping wide like the nether world Patala. His anger and wrath makes him look like the Lord of Death; and he devours all the creatures that he comes across. Ravana, put to shame by you, and afraid of your valour and prowess, has roused Kumbhakarna from his sleep and very soon this *rakshasa* will march out from the palace and eat up the monkey-hosts past count. Then he clean loses control over himself with the madness of anger upon him. Our monkeys flee in terror at the sight of him. I do not know how they could be brought to face him on the field of battle. So let somebody tell them that this is a huge machine worked and moved by rare engines. Then they will not be so much in terror of him" ("Lord, I have it in me that I should sleep for a very long period, undisturbed, I pray you accept my humble petition). And to the request of Kumbhakarna, Lord Brahma replied, "be it so". And he got thereby his long spell of sleep as the result of his dreadful *tapas*. But this even ought to have happened long after, since a man lying like a log cannot perform *tapas* and be granted boon thereby).

Then Rama sent forth Nila the general and said, "Array our forces and invade and hold the walls, the road, and the fortifications. The other mountain peaks, trees, and blocks of stone. All our monkeys should be ready to give battle armed with sword, shield and other weapons." Nila passed the orders on to his troops. Gavaksha, Sarabha, Hanuman, Angada and the other monkey-heroes rooted up lofty mountain tops and blocked the gates of Lanka. The monkeys and their leaders were filled with enthusiasm and courage at the words of Rama, and hit with huge trees the *rakshasas* that guarded the outer fortifications of Lanka. Like

unto black storm-clouds gathering round a huge mountain, did those fierce monkey-troops take their place round Lanka armed with huge blocks of stone.

CHAPTER 62

RAVANA CALMS DOWN KUMBHAKARNA

 KUMBHAKARNA, the best and the bravest of the *rakshasas* was not free from completely the influence of sleep from which he was so rudely roused and so untimely; the countless draughts of liquor he had taken but increased his pride and haughtiness; and he took his way along the royal road rich in everything rare and priceless. Thousands of *rakshasas* came after him; invincible by his foes, he was covered with the clouds of flowers showered upon him by the citizens on his way. He came to where was built the palace of the ruler of the *rakshasas*, resplendent with garlands and windows of gold and shining like another Sun in the sky. Like unto the lord of the day disappearing into the cloud-banks, Kumbhakarna entered the palace and proceeded to the hall of audience and beheld Ravana, as he reclined on his gem-encrusted throne, even as Indra beholds the grandsire in his seat of the lotus in the world of Brahma. The earth quaked in terror as Kumbhakarna walked along with his *rakshasa*-heroes around him. He passed many a suite of apartments and beheld his brother seated in the Pushpaka car with a faded look and heavy heart. Ravana saw him coming and rose in eagerness; for his heart was glad. Kumbhakarna saluted him and touched his feet and said, "What are your Majesty's orders? The ruler of Lanka raised him and clasped him to his breast fondly, enquired after his health, smelt the crown of his head and made him take his seat on a priceless throne. Kumbhakarna of boundless strength and prowess was not yet appeased in his anger by those marks of honour. His eyes blazed like fire, as he said, "Your Majesty! What might be the reason of your having roused me from my sleep? I am honoured that I am something in your eyes. Who is there that has dared to bring fear to your doors? Who is it that passes from the land of the living to the land of the corpses? Ravana found that his brother was out of temper and said to himself, He shares my wheel and

woe; rather he ought to do so. Now, he is in a bad mood at being roused before his time. Sleep is dearer to him than my wheel." That thought roused him anger a bit in turn and he replied," It is nine days, since you began your sleep. Clapsed in the arms of slumber you are utterly dead to the concerns of this world. You know not the fear that has come to us through Rama. This Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who trembled at the very sight of us has secured the alliance of Sugriva, the lord of the monkeys that feed upon roots and fruits and leap from tree to tree in the forest. He has thrown a bridge over the sea and has passed to Lanka with his armies and takes means to wipe us out all from the face of the earth. Behold, the monkeys have invaded like a billowy sea the groves, the gardens, the glades, the forests, and the mountains, around our town. Our famous heroes have fallen a prey to those monkeys. But I see no means of slaying my enemies in battle. This is the fear that lies at my doors now. Even as the Maharshi Agastya drank through his spiritual might, the boundless ocean, I trust you to destroy this ocean of monkeys through your valour and save Lanka. This is why I roused you from sleep. Our capital has in it only boys and old men. All its magnificence and splendour are a thing of the past. I trust to you and to you alone to save us. You should do this for me, as coming into the world together with me. Brother of mine, Death of your foes! have I ever asked of you anything like this till now? Is there a bound to my love, friendship and admiration for you? Do I not know how you again and again put to rout the gods and the *asuras* in battle, so that they fled in mad terror? The worlds hold none who can stand by you in strength, courage and valour. Take upon yourself your dreadful valour; and like a terrible storm scattering the winds in autumn wipe off from the face of the earth this monkey-hosts. Take from me the heavy load of anxiety and bring peace and happiness to cool my burning heart. I know the love you bear for me. I know the love you bear towards battle. I trust to you to behave as befits you.

Let this be, you should have waited and first before everything Rama and Lakshmana that could come against you; and then alone you should think of bringing away Sita. But you carried her away first and now seek measures to slay Rama and Lakshmana and acts that are highly fruitful if performed in consequence with time

CHAPTER 63

KUMBHAKARNA COUNSELS RAVANA

KUMBHAKARNA listened to the words of Ravana the lord of the countless millions of the *rakshasas* and the famed ruler of Lanka; yet like a helpless wight, he wailed out of the heaviness that sat upon him. His brother was naturally impelled to burst in a thunderous laughter as he said to himself, "There yet remain surprises for me like this." But he hastened to reply, "Brother of mine! when we met here last time in council I gave it as my decided opinion that danger is near you than you think; and that very same thing has now come about. You paid no heed to the well-meant advice of those that seek your well-being; and this is what you reap out of it. Like unto a worker of dreadful evil who falls into the lowest and most dreadful of hells, you carried away by force lady Sita; and the result of that sin has found you out very quickly. You acted then solely under the impulse of your boundless strength. Your intellect was under a cloud; you stopped not to consider whether that step would do us good, or evil; you did not take into consideration the evils that might flow from it. One should ponder deeply before he begins a thing, on the good and evil aspects of it, and on the good or evil that might flow from it to ourselves. If on the other hand you do things against the natural order setting the before and the after in wrong places he knows not the science of polity and what militates against it. You have acted thus against natural order of things. Before you thought of carrying away Sita you ought to have taken deep counsel with your ministers and alone, on the good, the sorrow, the benefit, and the loss of the act. And it is only then that you should give your thought the phase of action. You carried her away by force and have now met us in counsel.

Let this be; you should slay outright and first before everything Rama and Lakshmana that could come against you; and then alone you should think of bringing away Sita. But you carried her away first and now seek measures to slay Rama and Lakshmana and acts that are highly fruitful if performed in consequence with time

and place; on the other hand if performed at the wrong time and place, they not only destroyed the high efficacy of it, but bring home very great danger. Like unto offerings to the gods in vessels not purified by the chant of holy *mantras*, these bring to you only results of an undesirable kind. A king should take deep and careful counsel with his ministers upon any measure he desires to take. It is excellent to march forth against the foe when defeat is certain to him and victory is unequivocally certain to us. It is middling to march forth against the foe when he is equal to you in strength. It is utterly ridiculous and low to march against the enemy when defeat is certain to himself and victory is equally certain to the foe. One should carefully secure to himself the following five priceless measures. He should reflect deeply on the above three methods of act; He should canvass the means of the right beginning of things; he should furnish himself with the necessary men and materials, he should march forth with due consideration to time and place; he should remove from his path all obstacles; and lastly he should secure victory in the undertaking. (These are otherwise known as place, time, self, materials, and results). The king should take counsel with his ministers as laid down in the rules of government; and he reaps the golden harvest of kingly polity to the utmost if he follows these instructions.

Dharma should be taken in hand in the morning (The best definition of this word is : Everything that conduces to the attainment as the next step in evolution). The day should be devoted to the pursuit of *artha* (material prosperity). The evening and the night form the fittest occasion for the enjoyment of life and its pleasures. Or one may pursue the first two in the morning, the second and the first in the noon and the third and the second in the evening. But he comes under the lowest grade of humanity who devotes all his time to the indulgence of pleasures of life to the exclusion of the others ends. A king to make his learning and studies fruitful should choose the very best of the above aims of life; he should also decide on the separate and individual pursuit of them; and last, but not the least should put into practice what he has heard and studied on. (You have turned your back upon *dharma* the best and the noblest of the above and have attached yourself solely and wholly to the pleasures of the senses. It is a sheer waste of time and energy,

your sitting at the feet of the learned and the wise to listen to the science of government; it is like a man crying himself, hoarse against the raging billows of the ocean). One should avoid indulgence and pleasures out of season; even so one should put into action his valour and prowess at the right time. One should seek the alliance of his foes at the right time; and he should sow dissensions and quarrels in his camp by lavish distribution of money and honours. He should speak as befits the individual position of men. He should bring enmity between them and their kith and kin. He should march against his foe with due consideration to place and time. So he should pursue the above aims either singly or in groups. He should acquaint himself thoroughly with everything that goes to place obstacles in his way; he should so manage that he has on his side everything that goes to further the pursuit and attainment of them. He should also take deep counsel with his ministers on these points; and last he should live out the above keeping perfect control over his senses and mind; and such a ruler never comes to evil. He reaps the highest good possible who ever acts after pondering deeply over the measures that are consonant with his well-being and also upon the obstacles thereto; and this with the ministers who have grown grey in the science and practice of kingly polity. (You have not done so; and you now reap the results in trouble and danger).

One should seek to know the teachings of political science through expert teachers; but there are some who do not follow the above rule and yet go about as beasts in human form. They know nothing in this world except food and drink and sleep. Witless rulers take them into their counsel to discuss affairs of state. Then they advise the king through bare pride and haughtiness with nothing of intellect or skill to back them. They do not decide a point after taking into consideration the gains and otherwise or the dangers and the means to avoid them. The king who would seek his own good should never follow the counsel dangerous in the extreme of those ministers who have no such acquaintance with science or art. He should thoroughly test such ministers who prate through conceit what appears to be conducive to his welfare but what in reality is dangerous to him; and then should remove them from his council. Such men are the most likely to spoil a scheme at the very moment of its achievement. They do not stay here. They are under the thumb

of foes that know how to use the means, and take the shortest way to destroy their king by inducing him to undertake measures that would bring him evil and woe. They are drawn away from their legitimate ruler by the heavy bribes of the enemy; and you may easily find them out by what they speak; it betrays on a closer acquaintance the enemy in the guise of a friend. Verily he comes to grief and ruin who rushes into action without previous thought thereon. He takes counsel only with ministers, who are the workers of evil to him. The steps that he takes are based upon what they put him on to do; it is like the Krauncha mountains where birds pass through a cleft made in it by Skanda.

He who spots out in time the ministers that seek his destruction, and puts them away from him in self preservation, lends himself to grave dangers and loses his throne. The advice of our brother Vibhishana offered to you before is most conducive to your highest good. You may safely adopt it. The rest I leave it to the pleasure of Your Majesty.

Dasamukha knit his brows into a terrible frown and said, "I came into the world before you; I am worthy of your respect; it was I that set your feet on the path of knowledge. It being so, it becomes you not to advise me taking my place. Your advice is wasted upon me. We have now passed the stage where we should engage ourselves in councils and deliberations and kingly policy. It is upto us now to use our strength and valour. No need to discuss about the past; it matters not whether reacted without discrimination of right and wrong or through ignorance or through overweening confidence in strength and force. It is enough we failed to act right. Let the dead past bury itself. The wise waste no grief over it. Let us look to it that what is to be done is done best. If I have acted against the canons of polity or prudence, it is upon you to rectify by your might, if your heart beats for me truly, if you are conscious, to some extent at least of your wonderful and boundless strength, if it seems to you necessary and imminent that you should face your enemies, do it so and waste no time over it. Put courage and confidence in my heart; see you not that dangers lie heavy upon my heart; my plans have gone awry; and I know not what to do. He is one of my kith and kin who does not turn his back upon the

enemy; he is verily by my side. He is ever intent upon helping me to his very best. He is my best friend and he stretches out his hand to me in help, who has gone astray from the path of wisdom, through evil counsel.”

Kumbhakarna noted that Ravana spoke harshly and haughtily; he saw that his brother was angry with him; so he spoke gently and slowly to conciliate him. “Mighty monarch of the *rakshasa*-world! you have grieved enough; do not give way to wrath; calm yourself. Bring back peace and serenity to your heart, blot out of your memory the unwelcome past. He who causes you this care and anxiety shall meet with his death this moment at my hands. What call have you to grieve or regret so long as I am alive and by your side. I came into the world with you; I am your truest and most loyal friend. I share with you your joys and grief, gain and loss, foul and fair weather, so I should ever give you the healthiest advice I could. The kinsmen whose heart beats for you in affection knows his duty at this moment; even so will I make short work of your enemies today on the battle-field. I will send Rama and Lakshmana in hot haste, to the halls of death and scatter to the winds the monkey-forces; behold it. The flower of valour and prowess of yourself will stand wonder-stricken at my achievements today. The head of Rama shall lie under your feet to tread upon. I hope care will take itself away from your heart. I hope that Sita will throb and quiver with agony and grief. Our *rakshasas* who have witnessed till now the death of their kith and kin and friends, will behold today with joy their enemy Rama give up his life in shameful defeat. Lanka will resound all over with the news of Rama’s death at my hands. Like unto cloud-banks red with the rays of the sun, will the torrents of blood flow from the huge mountainous bulk of Sugriva. So long as you are guarded by these *rakshasa*-heroes and myself who have vowed to take the life of Rama, what danger can draw near you through him? He should pass over my body to come near, is it not? My heart entertains not the least fear that any one will slay me. So let me have your orders to march to battle this very moment; no other shall go upon this venture. Your foes shall be wiped off from the face of the earth. I care not who comes against me. Indra, Yama, Agni, Marut, Kubera, Varuna, or any other, he meets his fate in me today. The very monarch of the gods will faint away

in mad terror at the sight of my huge teeth like unto mountain Meru and at the sound of my terrible roars. This too is too much. I will slay by thousands my foes with no weapon but my bare hands; then who will come within the range of my eyes who has the least care for his life? *Sakti*, mace, sword, sharp arrows, I need none of them. Indra may attack me with his terrible *vajra*. Yet I will kill him with a blow of my fist. Raghava will be knocked down first; should he survive my arrows shall drain his heart's blood. What call have you to grieve so long as I am here. Let me have your orders this very moment to root out your foes. Put away behind you any fear you have of Rama. This very day I will fight a terrible fight; Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, of wonderful strength, Hanuman, that burnt our capital to ashes, and slew our *rakshasa*-warriors and every monkey that comes within my ken will not live to tell the tale. You need not entertain any fear even of the Lord of the *devas*; for I will secure to you boundless and undying fame today. I care not who comes against me; not even for the Lord Brahma with his four heads. I have but to give way to my wrath; and the very gods will measure their length on the earth, in the agonies of death and senseless with fear. I will curb the pride and haughtiness of Yama. I will send down my foes to the very god of fire; I will scatter upon the earth the sun and the stars from their homes in the sky; he who holds his place as Devaraja through the careful performance of one hundred horse sacrifices shall be cruelly tortured today. I quaff most pleasantly the seven oceans in which Varuna has his abode. I will grind to fine dust the eight lordly mountains of the earth. I will cleave this earth in twain with a mighty kick. The might and valour of Kumbhakarna fresh from his long sleep will be attested to by the creatures that will form his prey today. These three worlds are enough to appease my hunger. I go forth now to slay Rama and Lakshmana and bring you the highest joy and happiness. Not one monkey shall escape my hands. Your Majesty may indulge yourself in everything that will gladden our heart; drink deep, of whatever pleases your fancy; busy yourself with the usual affairs of state; and put away grief and anxiety from you. Rama marches to the world of death this very day; and then Sita will come to your side in a moment.

CHAPTER 64

MAHODARA RIDICULES KUMBHAKARNA

MAHODARA could not brook the words of Kumbhakarna. He thought that they were the outcome of the boundless bulk, valour and strength of the prince; so he lost his temper and cried, "Kumbhakarna! coming as you are of the race of Maharshi Pulastya, famed beyond compare through the worlds, you have not yet put away from you your meanness and littleness of intellect. You speak from mere pride and haughtiness, without any touch of learning or study. You have lost your wits through insolent pride and you have lost also the ability to think aright about any subject. Our Majesty is not ignorant of the science of government and what work against his interests. But you are a witless boy; you prate out of overweening self conceit. Our Majesty knows full well the time and place of taking counsel, the obstacles to it, the relative strength of the two sides and its growth or decrease. You have not waited upon the good and the wise; you have not sat at their feet to learn from them great truths; you place your entire trust on your prowess. A man of discrimination would never take a leaf from the book of a man of the ordinary level. Then how much more does it apply in the case of our majesty.

You say that the aims of life, *dharma*, possessions, and happiness are different in the matter of their results, different in the matter of their source; you affirm that they will produce those results unfailingly. Your intellect cannot compass their nature, nor their basic truth. The performance of vedic rites that leads a man to the world of the gods entail at the outset physical worry, fatigue, and the like. Even so such acts like the acquisition by force of what belongs to other, bring on sorrow at the end and happiness at the outset. So you are not right in your allocation of the results to the acts; nor are they inevitable; nor have we anything to support your position. Our acts compass for us heaven or hell. But we see that some special sins do bear great results. *Dharma* and possessions and whatever is opposed to them, these four bring us excellent

results; sometimes these last two cause grief. So *dharma* and the like as also their opposites give us two different results. All creatures go through actions that are helpful to them here and hereafter and reap the results thereof. We have seen a man entirely devoted to pleasure and happiness, enjoy the results of good deeds. Therefore it is not just to decide that the acts enjoined by the *sastras* produce happiness, when they conform to the rules laid down in the scriptures. On the other hand acts are capable of giving every kind of result. There is no inevitable connection between acts and their results. Our majesty based his abduction of Sita on this principle; and we consented to it. We never took any step without taking deep counsel in anything relating to the foe. Kindly oblige thus by laying your finger on any particular act — You proclaim your readiness to fight singly and without any help and you based your assertion on your strength and prowess. I will prove to you that your words are but a waste of breath. The *rakshasa*-heroes that made Janasthana their home, led by Khara and Dushana, do you make them out as men of no note? Yet Rama slew them out of hand by himself within a *muhurta*. Dare you defeat that warrior of warriors, hero of heroes? The kith and kin of the *rakshasas* that fell on the field of Janasthana are yet mad with terror at the very name of Rama. Rama is the first born of king Dasaratha whose war car knows no bar to its march in all the ten quarters of the earth. He is like unto a lion enraged; there is no wiseacre, but yourself, who will go out of his way to hit a sleeping black cobra and that when it is sunk in deep sleep or in the grip of hunger. Rama is ever radiant with lustre like the very lord of day; he is unapproachable when his wrath is up. No one dares to lift his eyes up to Raghuvira who resembles the lord of death come to collect the lives of the creatures in the worlds. Our forces, all told cannot stand against him for a moment. I have my own doubts upon it. Then what can you do, all by yourself. A man whose strength is gradually waning cannot hope to achieve anything when his foe whose strength is ever waxing; his utter disregard of the foe is not the path that will lead him on to victory. Such a counsel will impel a man to act only when life is distasteful to him and when death is a most welcome friend. Ofcourse you are the pride of the *rakshasa*-world, but Rama is likewise a pride of the world of men. Why something more? Indra, Surya, and the other gods have no place by him. You have not even the right or

the ability to speak of standing upto him in battle. He turned to Ravana and said, "Your Majesty" why trouble yourself with varied counsels when you have in your possession and at your easy disposal that very Sita whom ordinary efforts and measures cannot place in your hands. It comes to me to make a suggestion as to bend her to your purpose and make her come to you of her own accord. If you approve of it, I pray you put away the advice of others, and act as you think fit in that matter. I, Dvijihva, Samhradi, Kumbhakarna and Vitardana, will march forth to slay Rama — thus should a proclamation be made all through Lanka. Then we give battle to the enemy without the fort. If we win, you need not trouble yourself with any schemes or measures discussed above. If we do not win, we will pierce ourselves with the arrows bearing the name of Rama, blood streaming from our wounds; we come back shouting for very joy that we have eaten up Rama and will throw ourselves at your feet and you will honour us befittingly. Then cause a proclamation to be made all through Lanka by the beat of drums on elephants back "Rama and Lakshmana and the monkey-hosts are no more. Then make lavish presents of garments, jewels, and gems, to your servants and delight the hearts of the *rakshasa*-heroes with flowers, perfumes, garlands, meat and drink. This glad news will spread all over Lanka — "Rama is eaten up by our rakshasas." Then you take your way straight to Sita, console her, for the loss of her husband, and pray her to place her affection on you and accede to your wishes. Lord her with gold and gems and garments and wealth of every kind. This measure will bring fear and grief in the heart of Sita. It matters not that she has till now entertained no thought of love towards you. Now, she has lost her husband and there is no one to whom she could turn for help or comfort; so she will take refuge with you and you alone. When she comes to know most assuredly and definitely that he who was the object of her deepest love, is now no more, she will put away all hopes of going back to him. She will place herself at the disposal, thanks to the innate tendency of unsteadiness of women. She has been brought upon the lap of royal luxury; she is fitted to go through the life of unalloyed happiness; she has for sometime been a mark for the arrows of misfortune and misery. It is not difficult for her to decide that life and all that it holds of happiness and delight is before her only through you; so she will come to you of herself.

This is my scheme, so far as my intellect can compass. But serious and inevitable danger lies before any one who goes out to battle against Rama and comes within the range of his vision. So there is no call to invite death to our homes. Happiness, joy, delight, and everything that the heart holds dear on high is yours without stirring from your seat and without any trouble about fight or battle. We need not face the forces of our enemies; we need not entertain any fears about our lives on the battle-field. We can defeat them without the trouble of fighting him. Unparallel fame, happiness, is yours, as also the priceless treasure of Sita, the abode of all that is good, noble and auspicious — all these, are yours. (Mahodara hints that Rama and Lakshmana are sure to die the very moment when Sita has turned away her heart and placed it upon another and has become his wife).

CHAPTER 65

KUMBHAKARNA GOES OUT TO FIGHT

THEREAT, Kumbhakarna frowned at Mahodara and put him down roughly; he turned to Ravana and said, "I will wipe out the fear that has come to you through that Rama, the wicked wight; and that through his death. May you live long without the shadow of a foe to cross your path. Heroes waste not their words like spent clouds. My words shall be fully borne out by my acts. Heroes brook not the insult put upon them by others; they never brag or blow their own trumpets; they do not sing their praises, but will reveal themselves and their valour through acts, but those that are bereft of reason and calm judgement, those that are inwardly afraid of the enemy, those that are hopelessly conceited as all wise, those that are of your clan, Mahodara, to you and to ministers like you have our majesty lent his ear and has brought himself to this pass. The very word battle falls upon your ears like thunder and grips your heart with terror; then you simply echo the sentiments of your master and speak what is pleasant to him; you lend yourself unresistingly to all his purposes. Your counsel and that of your kin has impelled our majesty to carry away Sita and invite this terrible fight upon us. Alas! this Lanka, perfect in every way has for its ruler one whom

it is hard to describe; dreadful indeed must have been the *karma* that it laid upon the past to win for it such a ruler. The best of friends, to all appearances, is but in secret his worst foe and destroyer. The people of Lanka are bound for ruin and destruction at the hands of such a king. Our forces have been scattered to the winds; our wealth and power have had a dire fog; and there remain but our majesty to tell the tale. Now, here do I march to battle to remedy the evil that you have brought upon us. I will make short work of our foes. No one here has any call for care or anxiety." Thus did he roar and shout in exultation and in lust of battle like serried thunder-clouds.

His words brought joy and peace and assurance to the heart. He applauded the sentiments of Kumbhakarna; he expressed his pleasure at the clever and considered words of his brother. He glanced at Mahodara and said in high glee, "Brother of mine, this fellow seems mortally afraid of Rama. Hence battle is far from his thoughts. But no one can come upon the like of you whose heart ever thirsts for the joy of a noble fight. There is nothing about fights or battles or wars that you know not; likewise you have no peer in strength, courage, and your love towards me. So I ventured to rouse you most untimely from your sleep, only to rid myself of my foes and fear. Now is the moment when the *rakshasas* that are intent upon my well-being should express their loyalty in action. Go forth to battle, armed with your trident, like unto Yama with his noose of destruction; Rama and Lakshmana and the entire monkey-hosts cannot afford you a mouthful. They might shine in the brilliance and splendour like unto the Adityas; but what does it matter to you. Why they have but to cast their eyes upon your wonderful bulk to die of cloven hearts. As for the monkeys they will hide themselves all over the earth like unto cloud-banks lashed with fierce winds and storms. Go forth unto battle, brother of mine, and come back crowned with victory." Ravana spoke thus to put fresh spirit and enthusiasm in the heart of Kumbhakarna, whose natural strength and valour were boundless. He felt himself in possession and enjoyment of the life-breaths that had passed away from his body. Full well did he know the matchless strength of body and prowess of his brother. So his face shone like the spotless moon, free from all care.

Kumbhakarna grew in bulk and strength as it were from the words of his brother and king. His heart was glad at the praise and confidence bestowed on him; so he took leave of Ravana and prepared to go forth to battle. He raised aloft his trident frightful to see, forged of black iron. It was decked with gold of the most precious kind molten and pure; it blazed like the flame of the huge fire. It was frightful to behold like the *vajra* of Indra and was heavy in proportion. It was the trident that won for him victory many a time on the field of battle, when *devas*, *danavas*, *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, and *kinnaras*, fell before him. It was ever adorned with red flowers and vomited cruel flames through its natural spirit of cruelty and malignity, the result of its blinding splendour. The blood and flesh of countless foes were imbedded in it. Kumbhakarna played with it lightly and cried, "Your Majesty! I go forth to battle with none by my side, my armies shall stay here. The lust of battle and the wrath of it is to be upon me today; and the monkey-hosts shall go down my throat like anything; and he roared frightfully. But Ravana intervened and said, "My dear boy, not so; march forth to battle in the midst of your armies and armed as becomes the hero like yourself. The monkeys are very intelligent creatures, very highly endowed with reason and judgement; they are bursting with enthusiasm and perseverance. Should they come upon their foe in careless moment, and all alone they will bite him to death. So go to fight with forces that might keep you away from them. Send to the halls of death every foe that seeks to stand up against the *rakshasas*." He came down from the throne and threw round the shoulders of his brother a huge garland of gold encrusted with priceless gems. He made a further present of armlets, shoulder plates, rings, chaplets, ear pendants, and other noble ornaments; he decked him with graceful ropes of flowers, threw scents and perfumes over him and gave him leave to go and fight. Then Kumbhakarna blazed forth like unto the sacrificial fire, set with offerings and made powerful with mighty *mantras*. A waist band ran round his loins decked with rare gems like *Gomedaka* and *Indranila*; it sat upon him like the huge serpent Vasuki as it was wound about mountain Mandara when the *devas* and the *asuras* threw it in the ocean of milk to churn it to get the waters of immortality. His armour of gold made him mighty. It was proof against the weapons of the foe and shone in its splendour like

lightning flashes. He gave one the appearance of a huge mountain surrounded at sunset by cloud-banks. He started towards the battle-field gracefully adorned in every way and armed with his trident. He resembled at that moment the Lord Narayana who came down as Trivikrma to measure the three worlds in three feet. He clasped his brother warmly to his breast, went round him in reverence and bowed low before him and that mightiest of the mighty of *rakshasas* took his way to the battle-field. Of boundless bulk and strength and vigour, that hero among the *rakshasas* went on his way roaring frightfully like black thunder; and Ravana sped him on his way with powerful blessings for his success.

Conch, war drum and other martial music crashed wildly. Armies of *rakshasas* followed him with weapons of rare make and power and there followed him elephants of mountainous bulk, horses fleet as the raging tornado, chariots and car warriors by thousands roaring with pride and exultation like surcharged clouds. Serpents, camels, mule, horses, lions, elephants, deer, swans, and the like were the mounts used by the *rakshasa*-heroes. Kumbhakarna, the terror of the gods and the *asuras* was clean hid under the shower of flowers rained on him by the people. A spacious white umbrella spread over his head like unto the moon in its full. He walked long as he played lightly with his sharp trident. Endowed with pride and haughtiness of no ordinary kind, the smell of blood from the field of battle but made him more haughty and furious. Infantry past count and past any chance of defeat came after him; of frightful shape and bloodred looks of anger of hews and thews like unto mountains of black paint, they marched around him armed in every possible way and rending the air with their war cries. Some sported tridents, some short swords, some hatchets, some long spears, and clubs and bars and palm trees and these were light materials in their hands and fed their martial spirit. Kumbhakarna himself took a form that turned the hearts of his foes to water and cast their hair to stand upon end; his strength and splendour waxed illimitably, as he set out to battle. His body looked like a huge mountain; it was one hundred bow-lengths around and six hundred bow-lengths in heights. His eyes struck terror into the hearts of those that held them and were huge like unto car wheels. He walked and the earth quaked under his feet like unto a lofty mountain with

its woods and forests burnt down by a conflagration. He glanced round at his *rakshasas*, opened his mouth like unto the dark underworlds, laughed in tones of thunder and cried. Behold my prowess and valour today. This monkey-host and its leader are like moths at a flame, to fall into the fire of my wrath and be reduced to ashes. These creatures that range the woods have till now, done me no harm or given me any offence. They formed a pleasing ornament to the groves, glades and gardens of Lanka. But now they have dared to besiege the town and have to pay for the music they have called. First and foremost I will send to their death Rama and Lakshmana, the head and front of all this evil, and then I will rid the earth of every vestige of the monkey-tribe. The *rakshasas* roared dreadfully out of joy at these words and the waters of the sea were sorely troubled thereby. Countless were the dreadful portents that arose on all sides when Kumbhakarna marched to battle. His keen intelligence failed not to read them right. Clouds taking the shapes and colour of asses, loomed dreadfully on high with thunder and meteor and blazing fires. Woods, mountains, oceans, and such like quivered in agony. Frightful jackals howled fearfully, emitting flames from their mouth. Birds circled in the wrong direction. Vultures and eagles fell across the path of the *rakshasa*, as if roped in garlands. Nay his right eye and arm throbbed painfully. A blazing fire-brand fell in front of him with a terrible roar. The sun grew dim; the winds blew painfully. Bound by noose of Yama, Kumbhakarna was confused of mind and did not pay any heed to those dreadful portents that caused the hair to stand on end. He walked through the city and crossed the courts and came out on the plains beyond, only to behold the monkey-host hide the earth from view like serried cloud-banks on high; the sight filled him with wonder. On the other hand the monkeys were clean dazed at the sight of the *rakshasa*-hero coming towards them like the mountain on foot; so they hid themselves wherever they could find a corner. Like unto black heavy clouds lashed by a fierce whirlwind and scattered all over, that vast monkey-host, frightful to see in itself, took to their heels, chased by fear, thereat that *rakshasa*-warrior roared in joy. It fell upon the flying monkeys like surcharged rain-clouds called to one another in tones of thunder. Even so Kumbhakarna black of hue like those very clouds and rending the air with his lion like roars, caused the best and bravest among them to fall

dead or senseless where he stood like lofty monarchs of the forest uprooted by fierce gales. The mightiest of the mighty *rakshasas*, endowed with form, strength, prowess, courage, and other heroic excellences to an unparalleled degree, brandished his trident aloft and rushed forth on the battle-field to wipe his foes out of existence. The monkeys fell senseless taking it for the Lord Yama issuing forth from his abode on the day of destruction to gather unto himself, the worlds and all that they held, his rod of Time waiting upon him with the words, "What are thy orders?"

CHAPTER 66

KUMBHAKARNA IN THE BATTLE-FIELD

KUMBHAKARNA, stronger than the strongest of the sons of the earth, leapt over lightly the courts and the walls of Lanka and came out of the city like a lofty mountain peak. The waters of the sea gave back his terrible roar, millionfold intensified; bolts fell from the blue; mountains were consumed to ashes; Indra, Yama, Varuna and the other regents of the worlds on high failed woefully when they stood up against him with mortal intent and when he came against them with his frightful eyes rolling about like comets, the monkeys took to themselves on all directions. Then Angada said to Nala, Nila, Gavaksha, Kumuda and the others. "What are you at now? You have clean forgot your noble ancestry, strength, courage, prowess, and valour; you are on the grip of mad terror and like the ordinary rut of monkeys, you take to your heels; is it seemly? Friends! well, enough of it, come back. Life, is it so sweet and dear? I wonder what you keep it for unless you sacrifice it in the cause of Raghuvara. This is no *rakshasa* that you should fight with. This is but a huge machine fashioned like a *rakshasa*, sent here to frighten us, that is all. This is used at Lanka for a similar purpose; and it is upto us to grind it to powder with our strength. Come back one and all. Then the monkey-warriors took heart slowly and gathered themselves again in bands and marched forth against the enemy with trees and stones. They barred the way of Kumbhakarna like maddened elephants and hit him to their hearts content, fired by wrath. Huge mountain peaks, blocks of stone, trees with

flower in bloom, were used most lavishly on him; but that *rakshasa*-hero stood still and only laughed in tones of thunder and derision at their fruitless efforts; such was his unparalleled strength. On the other hand blocks of stone and trees touched his body only to fall around him ground to dust. Like a conflagration making short work of the forests, he clean consumed with his wrath the monkeys, no mean warriors themselves. Heroes and warriors among the monkeys, beyond count fell on the earth bathed in their blood; some were clean shot for far away like lofty trees with their blood-red flowers. Some took to their heels with grim terror after them; leapt over everything that stood in their way and ran on and on afraid to cast a look behind. Some took shelter in the waters of the sea; some vanished among the clouds on high. Some were sorely handled by the mighty Kumbhakarna and ran along the bridge laid upon the waters. Bears ran up the trees; some hid themselves in deep valleys and clefts; some vanished from view among the mountains; some entered the depths of the ocean, others concealed themselves in dark caves; others lay where they fell; yet others left behind them the battle-field and all it held; yet others fell on the earth and craved for mercy; some held their breath and lay on the ground like dead. Angada beheld with such a heavy heart, the monkey-host thus put to rout and cried, "Stay, come back, let us fight to the last. You can go no where on this hearth and hide yourself to escape from him. So, come back, it is your only chance. Why should you keep your lives soiled with disgrace and shame. Monkeys whose valour knows no stress or stay, our women have but to behold you at present fleeing in mad terror with your arms and weapons flung away from you; and they will have a rare laugh at it, is it not so? Death takes no other form but this in the case of those to whom honour and fame is dear. There is none among but comes of a noble race and where would you flee, mad with terror like the ordinary monkey on his perch? Such as cast away behind them their strength and courage and take to their heels chased by fear, they are the lowest of the low, the meanest of the mean, is it not? Your brag, your boast, your proud and haughty estimate of yourself, your war cries, your slogans, your holding forth on your own self before admiring crowds where are they now? The entire creation split in utter scorn and contempt as a trembling coward, as a mankind, him who grabs fiercely at his life even when the world has put upon

him shame and disgrace. I ask you but to tread on the noble path of honour and fame that your ancestors trod; cast away behind you fear and terror. We may flee for all time and through all space; but Yama not likely to strike our men from roll; but, should we resolve to lay down our lives on the battle-field with our faces turned to the foe, in grim defiance, the world of Brahma is ours, where mighty warriors, shine in glory and radiance; and that is no crown for all the sundry to wear. Should we send our enemy to his death, boundless fame is ours by right. Our life is the only price we have to pay for a seat in the halls of the glorious warriors on high. It is a trifle we have to pay while what we get in exchange is illimitable. This Kumbhakarna, would he go to where he came from, once that he has come within the range of our Raghava's eyes. As well speak of a moth that returned to tell the tale of its experience in the heart of the flame. Should we take measures to save and guard our pitiful life, driven forth from the battle-field by this *rakshasa* and we famed till now over the earth — we lose our real life, the life of fame and renown, is it not so?" But the monkeys heeded him not and his well-meant counsel and cheer. They stayed not their course, lashed by fear and clean bereft of their wits. Yet they managed to reply as they ran, "This Kumbhakarna kills us in dreadful torture, is this a time for us to stay and fight. He who fights and lives may yet see happier days; there is many a thing to his hands to eke out a kind of existence known here. He who fights and runs away with his life may yet live to fight many a battle and crown himself with glory; and in a moment they vanished from view. Then Angada tried his very best to bring cheer and courage to the hearts of monkey-warriors who took to their heels at the sight of Kumbhakarna of frightful bulk and form, his eyes blazing dreadfully with the wrath that burnt within him. He managed to calm their fears; he held before them the death of Vali at the hands of Rama; he told them of how he managed to pierce the seven lofty trees and mountains; he related unto them the wonderful achievements of Rama when he threw a bridge across the frightful seas; he discoursed unto them of the unparallel and boundless strength and prowess and valour of Ramachandra; and managed to rally the monkey-hosts as far as he could. They too took heart slowly and managed to pluck up courage and enthusiasm from the depths of despair; they obeyed the words of Angada, and returned in hot haste to fight

with Kumbhakarna, come what may — Rishabha, Sarabha, Mainda, Dvidida, Dhumra, Nila, Kumuda, Gavaksha, Rambha, Tara, Panasa, and their clan. And Anjaneya marched along with them.

CHAPTER 67

DEATH OF KUMBHAKARNA

THUS did the monkeys of mountainous bulk, listen to the words of Angada; their innate courage and valour came back to them; and they were eager for a fight with the monster. They shouted their valour of deeds; they placed their hopes in their own strength and prowess; they resolved to sacrifice their lives in the cause of Rama and that most gladly; so they hemmed in Kumbhakarna on all sides with joyful cries and offered him dreadful fight. They hit him from all sides with uprooted trees and mountains. But Kumbhakarna was beside himself with wrath; he brandished his mace with frightful force and slew the monkeys in large crowds at a time and threw them forth all round. Seven hundred, eight hundred, one thousand, and thus did he crash down to the earth the monkeys at one stroke. Eight, ten, sixteen, twenty, thirty, and so on did he throw down his throat, the monkeys as he ran. Like unto the serpents that pass through the throat of Garuda, the monkeys that found a place in his stomach were past count. Then the generals did their best to allay the panic among the monkeys; they rallied back from all quarters and gathered round him with trees and rocks in their hands.

Dvidida uprooted a large mountain and sent it against Kumbhakarna like a boundless cloud-bank resting lightly upon a big hill. But it missed him and fell upon the *rakshasa*-troops around him and smashed countless horses, elephants, chariots and *rakshasas*. Once again he tore up another mountain and crashed it upon the horses and drivers of the *rakshasa* cars, causing a veritable deluge of blood to flow. On the other hand the *rakshasa*-warriors shore off the heads of the monkeys with their keen arrows and roared frightfully. The monkeys in turn retaliated with huge trees and made short work of the cars, horses, elephants, camels and soldiers.

Hanuman stood in the sky above and kept up a continual shower of mountain peaks and trees on the devoted head of Kumbhakarna. But the latter clove them with his trident, smashed them to powder, and rushed upon the monkey-hosts with his sharp weapon aloft. Maddened at the destruction of his clansmen, Maruti tore up a large mountain and barred his way and hit him frightfully. The *rakshasa* shook and staggered at the terrible impact of the blow, with his mountainous bulk of body covered with blood and fat. Then he blazed like a mountain-peak on fire, whirled his trident that shone like lightning and like unto Shanmuga who hit the mountain Krauncha of yore with his dreadful weapon *Sakti*, landed a terrific blow right on the chest of Hanuman. Anjaneya fared badly at the hands of his foe. His chest was cloven; his senses were dazed and confused; he vomited torrents of blood and roared frightfully even like the black cloud-banks on the day of dissolution. The *rakshasas* roared with joy when they saw him so beset. The monkeys lost heart and fled from the battle in mad terror.

Then Nila ordered the troops afresh, calmed them a bit and hit Kumbhakarna with a mountain peak. The foe clenched his fist and struck at the rock. So terrible was the force behind it that it crumbled into dust and fell on the earth emitting sparks of flame. Then Vrishabha, Sarabha, Nila, Gavaksha, and Gandhamadana, gathered round Kumbhakarna and hit him fiercely with mountains and trees, feet and fists. But these were to him as if someone was gently pressing his limbs to bring ease and comfort to them. In his turn he crushed Vrishabha between the arms and the monkey had no whole bone in his body. His eyes and tongue hung out; and he fell on the earth vomiting blood profusely. Kumbhakarna crashed down Sarabha with his fist, sent Nila flying with a blow of his knee; struck with his open palm at Gavaksha and kicked Gandhamadana aloft with his feet. Unable to withstand the blow, they fainted away like uprooted Kimsuka trees, and measured their length upon the earth, deluging it with their blood. Thereat thousands of monkeys gathered round Kumbhakarna and climbed upon his mountainous body; they bit and tore and hit at him. Finding them running all over his body like lofty trees on a large mountain he gathered them in his hands and like Garuda himself sending the serpents down the throat, swallowed them in his mad fury. But the monkeys that fell into the

abysmal depths of his throat resembling the dark underworlds came out through his ears and nose. Thus did he make a meal of thousands of monkeys, his fury was but increased thereby and he gathered them between his arms in crowds and bands, crushed them into a shapeless mass and sent them down to find a place in his voracious maw. Covered all over with flesh, fat and blood, that ran down him wherever he went, he roamed among his *rakshasa*-troops like unto the Fire of Dissolution in the height of his wrath. Every one was in the grip of mad terror when they beheld him brandishing aloft his dreadful trident; they took him for Indra with his thunderbolt or Yama with his noose of destruction. Even as a conflagration burns down in mid-summer the dry wood of the forest, Kumbhakarna consumed to ashes the monkey-hosts with the fire of his anger. Their leaders lay in hopeless swoon; there was none to lead them; and they were howling frightfully, as they trembled and shook with fear. Crushed down by that *rakshasa* in crowds their hearts turned to water; and utterly dazed and confused, they took refuge with Raghava. Thereat Angada tore up a mountain, roared frightfully so that the hearts of the *rakshasas* that followed Kumbhakarna quaked in terror and hit the monster on the head. Kumbhakarna minded it not in the least; he blazed all the more fiercely. He roared so that the monkeys fell down bereft of their wits, sprang at Angada and sent his trident at him with a dreadful whirl. But Angada, a past master in all kinds of fight, escaped it lightly by his strength and agility; he sprang at his foe and hit him squarely on the breast. Kumbhakarna staggered a bit. Then he steadied himself, clenched his right fist and hit and threw Angada far away from him. That hero of a monkey could not stand it and fell on the earth all unconscious.

Then Kumbhakarna recovered his trident and rushed at Sugriva. The monkey tore up a mountain peak, rolled it round to give additional force to it and faced the *rakshasa*-prince. But he bent his body and limb and stood like a rock awaiting the impact. Sugriva addressed him as he stood there with his body smeared with streams of blood munching the monkeys without a stay or stop. "You have thrashed down the heroes among us; you have performed today feats of valour impossible to others; you have devoured my armies past count. Peerless fame you have laid to your account. But what have you to do with these puny creatures? Come to me

holding this mountain-peak in my hand;- dare you stand the blow with this?" Kumbhakarna listened to the brave and haughty words of Sugriva and laughed in thunderous tones and said, "I know you as the grandson of Lord Brahma; as the son of Riksharajas, you are well-known to the world for your valour and prowess. Then why waste your words in brag?" (One day Brahma chanced to yawn frightfully; and Riksharajas, that renowned hero of a monkey, sprang from it. He was roaming one day in the world of Brahma and plunged into the cool waters of a lake in sport. But he was not aware of the peculiar nature of the lake. His form changed into that of an *apsaras*. Indra and Surya beheld her then, loved her at the same time and made violent advances to her. Then their soul-force found a way into the body of the monkey, one in the tail and another in the neck. The result was the birth of two children known later on as Vali and Sugriva. Lord Brahma laughed at it and said, "Plunge again into the waters of this lake here and resume your monkey form". So Vali and Sugriva are the grand-sons of Brahma and the sons of Riksharajas. Some have it that the line runs from Brahma, Kasyapa, Surya, and Sugriva. Kumbhakarna alludes scornfully to the birth of Sugriva and his being chased to the ends of death by Vali.

The lord of the monkey-world was enraged beyond control thereat and hit Kumbhakarna on the chest with that mountain peak, hard and cruel as the *vajra* in the hands of Indra. But it was smashed to powder, when it came against the broad adamantine chest of the *rakshasa*. Thereat the *rakshasas* shouted for joy and the monkeys grieved sorely. The *rakshasa*-lord was roused to fury thereby and opening his mouth wide that resembled a huge mountain cave, gave a leonine roar that caused the quarters to tremble and quiver. Then he whirled his trident aloft with incredible speed and sent it against Sugriva with intent to kill him. Adorned with garlands of gold, fitted with sharp points and spikes, it emitted flames as it fell on Sugriva; but Anjaneya rushed between and snatched it away and broke it to pieces with his bare hands. One thousand tons of black iron went to fashion it; and Maruti broke it like a chip of wood on his knees. It sent many a brave warrior to his death among the monkeys. They roared lustily when they saw that Maruti made short work of it. They took wild and frantic leaps and shouted themselves hoarse;

gaining courage, they rushed from all sides and crowded round Maruti whom they praised to the skies and offered reverence to. Kumbhakarna saw that his trusted weapon was broken. He tore up a peak of the mountain Trikuta and hit Sugriva with it. (He fought outside the fortress gates; and one may wonder how he could tear up the peak that was so far away. It is enough to say that his huge bulk managed it). The lord of the monkeys measured his length on the earth bereft of his senses. The *rakshasa*-host roared mightily with joy thereat. Kumbhakarna lost no time in throwing him over his shoulders and took his way back to Lanka with the speed of a tornado chasing before it light cloud-banks. As he walked along with the lord of the monkeys who was no light burden but resembled a huge cloud-bank, it gave him the appearance of the mountain Meru walking on the earth with its lofty peaks. The *rakshasa*-army praised him to the skies and shouted their war cries. But the hosts of *devas* were struck with wonder and cried ha! ha! in sorrow. If Sugriva, the king of the monkey-world, and the intimate friend and ally of Rama and Lakshmana is carried away there will be confusion in army. Then it is but light work to disperse them and Rama and Lakshmana will have to go back in despair.' Such was the thought of Kumbhakarna as he concluded that the battle was practically over. On the other hand Sugriva was in the mighty grip of the monster and failed not to see that his army was melting away in fear. Hanuman too saw it through his keen intelligence and said to himself, "What shall I do now? I cannot keep myself back from doing which is useful and prudent on the occasion. Shall I take the form of a huge mountain and crush the *rakshasa* to death under my weight? Or, I may bring back spirit and courage and cheer to the hearts of these monkeys if I kill him with my bare fist and free their king. Well, that is not so prudent. For his majesty will free himself in a moment. The *devas* and *asuras* combined cannot keep him in bond. But he is now unconscious through the effects of the mountain thrown at him by Kumbhakarna. Very soon will he recover himself and take such measures as will conduce to the interests of himself and the monkeys. If I precipitate matters and free him, that warrior king par excellence will be wroth with me, for it will put upon his fair name and fame an indelible blot. So let me wait a while. Let me see what Sugriva does. Meanwhile I will rally the troops and calm their fears". So he stayed them all round and put hope and courage in their hearts.

Kumbhakarna made his way into Lanka carrying with him Sugriva of blazing lustre. Clouds of flowers rained on him from houses, aircrafts, towers, and palaces; fried rice and perfumes, fell upon him in torrents. The royal road was cool and brazing; and Sugriva was endowed with unparalleled strength and spirit; so he came back to himself very soon and found himself on the chest of Kumbhakarna of mountainous bulk and between his arms. All around him he beheld the mansions of the *rakshasas* and the inhabitants themselves crowding round. So he said to himself, "I am in the power of the foe and in his grip.

Now I should set about to free myself and make adequate return for the insult and injury he has inflicted upon me. What shall I do? Only that, which will conduce to the well-being and joy of the monkeys'. Then he tore away with his keen claws the ears of Kumbhakarna and bit off the sides of his nose. Deprived of his ears and nose, Kumbhakarna was maddened with a torrent of blood flowing round his body and whirled the monkey aloft, brought him down with a terrific force on the earth and ground him beneath his feet. Even then, the monkey somehow managed to spring up into the sky above and reached the side of Sri Rama very soon. (It seems that he tore at the *rakshasa* with his feet on his cheeks, shoulders and stomach).

The *rakshasa* stood there bereft of his ears and nose, torrents of blood raining from him, like a huge mountain with its roaring and rushing streams. Boundless was his strength and valour; so he heeded it not, but came back to the battle-field. He could not put up with that insult. Vomiting forth blood, he resembled a mountain of black paint covered with clouds of a red hue. Finding himself without a weapon, he snatched a dreadful bar of iron and struck down the monkey-host and threw them down his throat; and his followers marched after him. He blazed like the Fire of Destruction on the last day of the cycles when all beings are gathered back. Even then his appetite was not satisfied; his craving for flesh and blood grew apace; he grew mad with the lust of battle; and he slew and ate without any distinction of friend or foe, *rakshasas*, monkeys, demons, and bears. Like unto the lord of Death laying low all creation on the day of universal destruction, he gathered in one hand

monkeys and *rakshasas*, crushed them out of shape and ceased not throwing them down his bottomless mouth. Blood and fat flowing all over his body, struck and hit with mountain-peaks but heeding it not thanks to his extra-ordinary strength, two huge torrents of blood ran down the corners of his mouth as he bit and munched the monkey-hosts. Running with frightful speed he gathered together in his hands his enemies, seven or eight hundred at a time, crushed them to pulp and threw them down his voracious mau. Thereat the monkeys took refuge with Sri Rama, the Lord of the worlds.

Then Lakshmana was mightily wroth. He barred Kumbhakarna's way, sending into his body seven keen shafts. The *rakshasa* paid no heed to it; he passed by the prince and rushed at Rama while the earth shook under his feet. Then Rama hit him on his breast with a keen arrow into which he placed the weapon of Rudra. At once, burning cinders fell blazing from his mouth. Hit with the arrows of Rama, he howled dreadfully and stayed not his force as he struck down and chased the monkeys in fury. The arrows of Rama decked with the feathers of the peacock were imbedded in his chest and troubled him somewhat. The bar of iron fell from his grasp and the other weapons were scattered all around. Finding himself weaponless, he struck to death the monkeys with his fists and feet. Riddled all over his body with arrows, he resembled a mountain down whose sides roared torrents and cataracts of water. He was clean beside himself with frightful anger and lust of blood and continued to eat the monkeys, the *rakshasas* and the bears. Next he tore up a mountain peak and whirled it aloft and brought it down upon Rama, who reduced it to powder with seven dreadful arrows. At once two hundred monkey-heroes struck at him with shafts as he ran along blazing in his lustre like the mount Meru. Lakshmana of a righteous and just soul, thought over many plans to kill him and said, "Sugriva, this monster is crazy with the smell of blood and kills and eats the monkeys and the *rakshasas* without distinction. So let our warriors get up on him from all sides. Let our generals gather round him. May be he will crash down under their weight. Let them take care to avoid being crushed under him in that case."

Thereat these monkeys cheered up and climbed up the body of the *rakshasa*. He was immensely wroth at this and like an elephant

in rut casting off his bonds, he flung away the monkeys from himself with the speed of thought. Rama beheld it and said, "This *rakshasa* is very dangerous." And he bent his bow and rushed at Kumbhakarna with flaming eyes as if he would burn up in his wrath his puny foe. At this the monkeys cast off their fear and plucked up courage and joy. He allayed their fears and whirled round him his bow, beautifully chased with gold and strung like unto the serpent of doom. His quivers of matchless make and potency graced his back; Lakshmana followed him close and started to give fight to his foe surrounded by his monkey-hosts. There he beheld Kumbhakarna who with his crown set with flowing jewels, shone like a peak of mount Meru adorned with the rays of the sun. Torrents of blood rolled down his body. Boundless was his strength and might. He crashed down everything that came in his way like the elephants that guard the regions of the earth when they are roused to anger. Surrounded by the *rakshasas* he chased the monkeys to eat them up. He was frightful to behold even like the mountains Vindhya and Mandara. He was adorned with garlands of gold, armlets and ear-rings of many a curious pattern and design. Streams of blood ran down the corners of his mouth like torrents from the clouds. He licked it with gusto as he gathered the monkeys and ate them up. His splendour and lustre was like a flaming fire. At the sight of that best and bravest of the *rakshasas*, Rama bent his bow, strung it and twanged it dreadfully so that the quarters trembled in affright. That filled the *rakshasa* with anger and impatience and he rushed at Rama like a black cloud lashed by a storm, with arms long and stout like the great serpent Adisesha. He tore along like a huge mountain on foot. Rama addressed him thus, "Most mighty of the *rakshasas*! come on and cast away your anxiety and care; here am I eagerly awaiting your arrival with bow in hand. I am he whom the world knows as Rama. In the short space of *muhurta*, your life-breaths will be forfeit to me." Kumbhakarna was convinced that he was Rama; he laughed with wrath and joy like a dreadful thunder-cloud flung away from him on all sides the monkeys that came within his reach, roared like huge cloud-banks and clove their hearts. Then he turned to Rama and replied, "Class me not lightly with that puny brute of Viradha, Kabandha, Khara, Vali, and Maricha. Know that it is he, Kumbhakarna that stands before you. See you the dreadful iron rod in my hands. It has been the means

of worsting countless gods and demons. It is made of hard black iron. Would you slight me that I have lost my ears and nose? I feel not their absence in the least. I give you leave to spend upon me to your heart's content and to the best of your might, your valour and skill of hand. I will give myself an idea of your manhood and prowess and make a meal of you later on''

Thereat Rama pierced him with keen shafts. They fell upon him with the speed of thought like the bolts of Indra. But he felt them not, nor did he suffer any way. The arrows that went through the seven *sala* trees at one time, the arrow that drank the life-breaths of Vali, the mightiest of the mighty, pierced into the body of Kumbhakarna like the *vajra* of Indra. Yet it affected him not. The shafts that hit him vanished from view like rain-drops in the ocean. Its waters are not disturbed in the least and do not overflow its shores even though the waters of the rivers and from the clouds run into it. That has what happened to Kumbhakarna. He whirled aloft the dreadful bar of iron with frightful velocity and struck down the arrows sent by Rama. Again he brought it down upon the monkey-hosts; and it was the weapon that made to water the armies of the gods. Then Rama discharged at him an *astra* dear to the god Vayu and shore off his right arm with its weapon. Kumbhakarna was sorely pained by it and howled and roared dreadfully that the quarters shook in echo. That hand, huge like a mountain peak, and the weapon like Indra's *vajra*, fell upon the monkey-groups and crushed many of them to death. Those that escaped his grasp kept themselves far away with pale faces and wan, and watched most anxiously the terrible duel between Rama and the *rakshasa*-hero. He tore up with the other hand a mighty tree and rushed to Rama like a mountain reft of its peak. Like a huge serpent dashing through the sky, the *rakshasa*'s hand came along and Raghuriva shore it off into two with the tree by an *astra* dedicated to Indra. It fell on the earth with a mighty crash and made short work of trees, mountains, blocks, monkeys, and *rakshasas*. Even then he blenched not; he roared most frightfully and kept up his attack upon Rama. Rama cut down his legs with two shafts known as *Ardhachandra* (shaped like a crescent). The quarters, mountains, caves, the sea, Lanka, and the armies of the monkeys and the *rakshasas*, shook in afright and gave back the crash that came out of the impact of



Rama cut down his legs with two shafts known as *Arbhadra* (shaped like a crescent). The quarters, mountains, caves, the sea, Lanka, and the armies of the monkeys and the rakshasas, shook in fright and gave back the crash that came out of the impact of

the legs with the earth. Bereft of his hands and legs, that mightiest of the mighty *rakshasas* paid no heed to it. He roared dreadfully with his mouth open like the ocean fire *Badava*. He rolled himself on the earth with incredible speed and came at Rama like Rahu rushing along the sky to swallow the moon. Countless monkeys and *rakshasas* were crushed to death thereby. Kumbhakarna kept on throwing down his throat all that came in his way. Thousands of monkeys and *rakshasas* were drawn towards him by the speed of the wind that rushed from his infuriated nostrils and gave up their lives. Some were shot out far away and known no more among their friends. Thereat Sri Rama filled his mouth with keen arrows. Unable to speak clearly, Kumbhakarna gave a mighty roar and fainted away. Deprived of hands and legs, his mouth filled with arrows, even then he walked along on his stumps and crushed to death countless monkeys. Raghava beheld him as he ran against him; he knew that the moment of the death of the *rakshasa* drew near. He selected an *astra* over which Indra presided, spoke over it the particular spells and sent it against the *rakshasa*. It flamed like the noon-day sun; none could stay it like the rod of Brahma. It was intent upon destroying all things like Yama, the god of Time. Its force and speed was irresistible like that of the thunder-storm on the last day. Its joints were beautifully fitted; keen was its end. Like the lord of Day, in the full splendour of his crown, like the fire on the sacrificial hearth, fed to fullness by offerings and glowing in its joy, like unto the *vajra* of Indra or the bolts that crash from the blue, it clove the hearts of all that beheld it, with its speed. And Sri Rama discharged it at Kumbhakarna; the bands of gold shone upon the mighty *rakshasa*. In the far past Indra's *vajra* shore off the head of Vritrasura. Even so, the head of Kumbhakarna parted company with its body and fell down on the earth. It gave the beholders the idea of a huge mountain-peak coming down to visit the mortal world. The tusks glared out frightfully from his mouth; the beautiful ear-rings rolled upon it. The severed head of Kumbhakarna shone high and huge in the heavens, its splendour heightened by the ear-rings he wore. It sprang into the sky with the force that severed it and brought to those that beheld it, the memory of the moon shining between the two constellations — Punarvasu, ruled by the goddess Aditi. (So we should take it that Sugriva did not bite away that part of the ears to which the ear-rings were attached). That

head of the *rakshasa* struck down by the arrow of Rama, fell down from the sky like unto a huge mountain. The houses and towers and lofty walls, the quarters of the vants, were destroyed thereby. Then his body measured its length on the battle-field, bringing death to millions of monkeys that ran to escape that fate. A portion of it shining like the Himalayas fell into the sea near Lanka, and countless were the crocodiles, whales, *Simsumaras*, sea elephants and other monsters of the deep that were crushed to death thereby; and even then the mighty body of Kumbhakarna sank to the depths of the ocean and clove for itself a way through its bottom.

Thus did Kumbhakarna who was the holy terror of the *brahmanas* and the gods, through his terrible deeds meet his death at the hands of the Almighty, the Lord in his boundless mercy. The earth, the mountains and the gods were mightily pleased and danced and shouted for very joy. The holy sages in the world of the gods, their brethren on earth, the *pannagas*, *asuras*, *bhutas*, *suparnas*, *guhyakas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, one and all were beside themselves with delight at the illimitable prowess of Rama and sang his praises on high. The kith and kin and the retainers of Ravana beheld Kumbhakarna their lord and master who shone among them like a mighty banner thus done to death by *Raghupati*. Even like unto the *asuras* of yore who trembled at the sight of Lord Narayana, they cried in affright at the sight of Rama as he blazed in the radiance of war-like fury, boundless lustre and the flush of victory upon his arms. Like unto the lord of the day emerging from the mouth of Rahu dispelling the darkness and fear from the three worlds through his supreme effulgence, did Raghunayaka shine in the midst of the monkey-hosts. The monkeys with faces blooming with joy like blown red lotuses, praised Rama who, out of his supreme compassion, slew in battle Kumbhakarna of frightful strength, bulk and valour. Even as the lord of Heaven rejoiced when he slew Vritrasura who held in terror the countless worlds, did the son of Dasaratha rejoice when he slew in battle dire the best and the bravest of the valiant *rakshasas*, who routed the hosts of gods in countless battles and who knew not fear or fatigue when he stood up unto his foes.

CHAPTER 68

THE LAMENT OF RAVANA

THE *rakshasas* flew on the wings of speed to take the news of the death of Kumbhakarna at the hands of Rama, the great one. “Kumbhakarna our lord and master, who was death and destruction in human form among us even he is now on his way to the worlds on high sought after by great heros. He put to flight as if in sport the mighty armies of Sugriva. Thousands and thousands of monkeys found their way down his throat. For the space of a *muhurta* did he hold in terror and agitation every one about him and then he was subdued by the radiance of Rama; the fates snapped the thread of his life; and he is now crowned with eternal fame and glory. His huge body is shorn of its arms and legs; torrents of blood streamed from it; it is no pleasant sight to see; like the huge tree consumed by forest fire, one half of its lies in the waters of the ocean and the other half blocks our fortress gates like a lofty mountain. Your brother has been elevated to the halls of great heros on high, thanks to the arrows of Rama.”

Ravana heard of the death of him who came into the world after himself; him who was his main stay and support through his supreme loyalty and matchless strength, courage and valour. Grief unspeakable had him in its mighty grip; his senses left him and he fell headlong from his lofty throne. Devantaka, Narantaka, Trisiras, Atikaya and others received the news of the death of their father's brother and gave vent to their unbearable grief in cries and wails and laments. Mahodara and Mahaparsva sank in the depths of sorrow at the news of the death of their brother. Then Ravana came back to his senses after a while and cried out, from a sore heart, “Alas! best and bravest! terror to your proud and defiant foes! boundless of strength: you have left me behind all alone and helpless while you take your way to the halls of Yama on the wings of the resistless time. I and our kin held on to you as our stay and support and hope; you have not wiped away our tears; you have not brought joy and happiness to our hearts; you have scattered your foes to the winds; and is it just of you, is it kind of you, is it brotherly


of you to leave me alone? The *devas* and the *asuras* were a whisp of straw to me, thanks to my trust in you and this day has my right arm been shorn from my body. From this moment I am dead, though living . Wonder of wonders! matchless bulk of body, strength, and valour; the terror of *devas* and *danavas*; the fire of Dissolution whom his foes dared not draw near in battle and him, did Rama slay in battle. Why, the very *vajra* in the hands of Indra hit you fiercely but to be broken into splinters and it caused you no pain, not the slightest. Then how did it come about that you fell before the arrows of Rama and measure your length on the earth in endless sleep? Lo! there stand in the sky the gods and *rishis* and rejoice at the thought that their fear and danger are now things of the past. And my heart burns to behold it. This day is a red letter day in the annals of the monkeys where they may dance and sing in the fullness of heart. Lanka, its fortress gates, its walls, are now open to the monkeys to climb over. Without him by my side, what have I to do with this dreary kingdom of mine? What have I to gain by that Sita for whom I go through all this trouble and danger? He that came into the world with me, he that is dearer to me than life itself is now no more to gladden my eyes. Then why should I keep hold of this wretched body mine? In truth , I should torture infinitely him, who slew my brother; happier that that, I should lay violent hands on myself. Living, what joy, what pleasure, what delight, awaits me? Gladness and rejoicing for me after Kumbhakarna has passed away! My place will be with him who shared with me my joys and sorrows, here or anywhere. How could I bring myself to drag on a miserable existence here all alone and without him? The *devas* whom I brought to my feet with cries of terror and abject prayers on their lips now their time is come to flout me and hold me up to their ridicule. Boy! how shall I manage to defeat Indra without you?

Alas! I turned a deaf ear to the well-meant counsel of Vibhishana, the wisest of the wise. Gross ignorance and stupidity made me slight it at that time; but after the death of Prahasta and Kumbhakarna, most cruelly, that healthy advice is slowly but surely backing away at the roots of my heart. The soul of righteousness, my brother, I hounded him from here, thanks to my befogged mind through anger and pride; and I reap abundantly the harvests of that

unspeakable sin." Thus did the ruler of Lanka wail and lament over the death of his brother, Kumbhakarna, out of a heart, dark and dreary and sorely confused. He gave a terrible cry, "Indra and his gods swooned away in affright at the very mention of his name. Kumbhakarna, thou paragon of valour and prowess; how was it brought about that you fell an easy prey to the lord of Death who quaked at the very thought of you?". And he crashed down upon the earth in a heavy swoon.

CHAPTER 69

ATIKAYA GOES OUT TO FIGHT

RISIRAS gave ears to the laments of Ravana and hastened to address himself to his king and kinsmen. "Your Majesty speaks true; the countless worlds hold none that could take his place by the side of my uncle in valour and strength. And yet, he met with his death — an inexplicable mystery indeed. But great men like Your Majesty are not wont to grieve so over much. You have in the hollow of your hands the worlds three in number to protect and destroy; and it becomes you not to give way to grief like an ordinary mortal. You have from Brahma himself the mighty weapon, *Sakti*, divine armour, bow, and arrows as the result of your stern *tapas* and his grace. You ride on a car drawn by one thousand mules; it marches alone with the roar of the mighty cloud-banks. With your bare hands you have worsted times out of number the *devas* and the *danavas* and sent them to death. And should you enter the battle-field fully armed and nobly mounted, there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that Rama will lie low before you, a headless carcass. Put away care far behind you. I go forth to fight like unto Garuda that brings death to the huge sea serpents, I will make short work of the foes. Even as the king of the gods sent the *asura* Sambara to the halls of death, even as the Lord Vishnu wiped off the *asura* Naraka from the face of the worlds, shall I hack to bits that Rama with my dread weapons?"

His words brought peace and gladness to the heart of Ravana, even as he was granted a new and longer lease of life; and fate willed it so. At the words of Trisiras, Devantaka, Narantaka and Atikaya,

were eager to fight and rushed towards the battle-field, each trying to be there before the other, roaring 'mine the first', (The *asura* Naraka was one of the sons of Viprachiti, the *danava*, and his wife Simhika; his brothers were Vatapi, Namuchi, Ilvala, Siruma, Antaka, and Kalanabha. Now Naraka was the *asura* killed by Krishna later on; but this was different). The *rakshasas* took the words of Trisiras as including themselves and started for the battle-field along with him like unto Indra, the ruler of the gods, in valour, coursing at will through the sky and the heavens; adepts at the magic art of illusion, the holy terror of the *devas*, never known to have given way in battle, or ever been worsted; unparalleled in the ranks of the mighty and illustrious heroes — they were never known to come back from the battle-field without destroying their foes. Their very names were enough to turn the hearts of the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, and *uragas*, to water. They were intelligent and learned, valiant, past masters in the use of weapons, grown grey in wisdom, gifted with wonderful tools, radiant like the noon-day sun and a tornado in the heart of the armies of the foes. And Ravana surrounded by these sons of his shone even like Mahendra in the midst of the *devas* who curbed the pride of the *danavas*. He embraced them fondly, uttered mighty blessings over their heads and sent them forth to fight. With them he despatched his brothers Yuddhonmatta, Matta, to guard them, in case of any contingency. Like unto the planets circling round the sun, they went round in reverence Ravana the mighty hero, saluted him and took their way to the field of battle. Graced with every perfume of magic potency and herbs of wonderful powers, those six *rakshasa*-heroes were filled with the lust of valour and emerged from the capital. (Yuddhonmatta and Matta are but other names for Mahodara and Mahaparsva).

Mounted upon an elephant in rut, Sudarsana by name, born of the breed of Iravata, Mahodara came to the battle-ground like unto the sun blazing on the top of the setting mountain. On the turret fixed on its back were ranged in order quivers and weapons of every kind. Trisiras rode on a car drawn by noble steeds and fitted with every war like material. Three crowns adorned his three heads. They gave one the idea of the Himalayas, with its golden peaks; or like unto a huge cloud-bank resting on the top of a lofty mountain through which played lightning chains and over the surface

of which coursed meteors and rainbows. Atikaya that matchless bowman rode on another car of divine make fashioned beautifully and skillfully and furnished with all kinds of weapons and coming upon one like the very armour of the sun a crown of molten gold chased with gems and ornaments of every kind gave him the look of the sun resting on the mountain Meru, resplendent with his thousand rays. That prince followed by the *rakshasa*-heroes marched forth to battle looked very much like Indra going forth to give fight to his foes the *danavas* with his hosts of the heaven-world about him. On his part, Narantaka started to go to the field of the battle decked with gems and gold and mounted on a horse fleetier than thought itself. It was huge of bulk; every kind of excellence went to adorn it; and it came of the lordly breed of Uchchaisravas, the horse that Indra bestrode. Even as Skanda himself on his peacock marching forth with his terrible *sakti* playing lightly in his hand, did Narantaka grasp a flaming spear like unto a blazing meteor itself. Devantaka was there with a huge weapon named *parigha* (bolt) of iron adorned with gems, and looked as if he was mocking the Lord Mahavishnu himself, who bore lightly the mountain Mandara, on the day when the gods and the *asuras* joined hands to churn the ocean of milk. Mahaparsva, of prodigious bulk of body came along with a terrible club in his hand like the Lord Kubera with his mace. And these *rakshasa*-lords were followed by troops of every kind, infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and cars, flashing with weapons of various kinds and boundless in their courage and enthusiasm. The princes, radiant in the sheen of noble crowns on their heads, rivalled the Lord of the Day in lustre and recalled to one the notion of sacred planets coursing through the sky in their shining glory. The weapons that they bore shone like serried swans resembling autumnal clouds. "We go back with victorious arms or we take our way to the halls of immortal heroes in the heaven world." With these resolves on their lips did they roar and shout in their mad battle lust. They threw their arrows aloft in the sky and caught them back skilfully. The earth trembled in affright at the war cries of the *rakshasa*-heroes, their lion roars, proud challenges and shouts of joy; the sky was clean riven. Thus did that *rakshasa*-army issue forth from the fortress gates of Lanka and come upon the monkeys that expected them most eagerly with mountain-peaks and lofty trees and huge slabs to welcome them. The monkey-heroes beheld the

rakshasa-troops and boundless was their delight and surprise. The vast array was coming towards them; countless elephants and horses were there in evidence; their tinkling bells many thousands in number fell sweetly on the ear; their ornaments and weapons shone on their black frames even as chain lightnings playing amongst cloud-banks; a smokeless fire, a radiant sun were the sights recalled to one's mind by the *rakshasa*-warriors blazing in their lustre; and the monkeys roared most frightfully and fiercely and cried, "This day, dawns upon a most noble battle. The *rakshasas* were no whit behind them and gave forth roar for roar and shout for shout.

Like unto mountains in the glory of their lofty peaks did the monkey-heroes grasp hills and mountains in their huge hands and made their way into the frightful ranks of the *rakshasas*; and went through it from end to end. Some fought from the sky and some from the ground; and kept an unceasing downpour of trees and rocks on the *rakshasas*. In their turn the *rakshasas* beat them back with their arrows. The monkeys and the *rakshasas* roared like lions every now and then. Huge slabs crashed down upon the devoted heads of some *rakshasas*. The monkeys sprang upon the *rakshasas* adorned with armour and ornaments of priceless value; some bore down upon the warriors in their car and others took charge of yet other *rakshasas* on their elephants and horses. Some of them were frightfully crushed by mountain peaks; some were hit by the fists of their foes and lost their eyes in consequence; many a brave warrior was hurled down and roared in impotent anger. Yet they brought their keen arrows to cleave the bodies of the monkeys. They struck at them with their tridents, rods, swords, javaline, *sakti*, and the like. Others were resolved in dead earnest to defeat their opponents; blood coursed in torrents down their bodies; they hit and thrust and pulled and fell senseless. That field of battle was in the space of a *muhurta* hid from view by the mountain hurled by the monkeys and the *rakshasas*. The swords were wielded and knives thrown; and from it there poured on all sides huge torrents of blood. The *rakshasas* filled with the lust of battle lay there all over the field like mountains uprooted. Some were clean hurled aloft by the monkeys; some were being thus punished; some had their tridents broken and yet rushed forth to fight with bare hands. Some *rakshasas* killed the monkeys by their own clansmen. Likewise some

monkeys struck down the *rakshasas* with their friends as weapon, the huge slabs hurled by the monkeys were lightly struck aside by the *rakshasas* who slew the enemies thus rendered weaponless. In return the monkeys broke to pieces the weapons discharged by the *rakshasas* and slew them, smiting them terribly. They hit each other with mountains, tridents, and magical weapons; and roared and shouted like lions for pure joy. The *rakshasas* were struck down by the monkeys and had their armour smashed to bits and vomited torrents of blood like blood-flowing trees. Some monkeys struck chariots against one another and horses likewise. In fact, the monkey-troops were filled with boundless joy and glee and fought with the *rakshasas* with slabs, trees, and huge peaks. In the battle between the monkeys and the *rakshasas*, terrible to behold, weapons like *ardhachandra*, *bhalla*, *kshura*, sharp and keen, were freely used by the *rakshasas* to cut down trees and mountains. That field of battle was made impassable by crashing mountains blown to pieces, falling of trees broken to bits and by the dead monkeys and *rakshasas*. Gradually the monkeys grew apace in pride and haughtiness and joy, threw aside terror and care; with boundless courage and valour they gave fight to the *rakshasas* with weapons of various kinds. While the two forces were fighting with one another at close quarters, the monkeys roared in victory and the *rakshasas* were routed all along; the great sages and the hosts of the god-worlds praised the victors mightily and cried, "good, "good".

Narantaka mounted upon a steed fleet as the lord of air himself he grasped a terrible weapon named *sakti* and like a huge whale entering the deep waters of the ocean, fell upon the monkey-troops and with his flaming javelin he hit and clove the monkeys seven hundred at a time. In a moment he put them to flight single-handed. Why, the very lord of the gods trembled at his sight. Huge of body mounted upon a horse huge as a lofty mountain, he marked his passage with mire and mud made of the flesh and blood of the foes. On his either side were piled the bodies of countless monkeys of mountainous bulk struck down by the *rakshasas*. The *vidyadharas* and the *maharshis* grieved sore to behold it. Even before the monkeys essayed to attack him, he was upon them and clove them to pieces. Like the forest-fire playing amidst trees and shrubs and under-growth in the midsummer, did Narantaka roam through the

battle-field with his blazing javaline, he verily reduced to ashes a very large portion of the monkey-hosts. Before the monkeys had time to discharge trees and mountains against him, they were struck down with his blazing javline like unto mountains struck down by the *vajra* of Indra. Like an angry storm crashing down black cloud-banks during the rains, did that *rakshasa* make himself felt all over the battle-field, and chased the monkeys all over. They could neither run away nor stay nor move. He pursued those that strove to escape by desperate leaps or stood dazed or sought to avoid him by the fleetness of their feet and to seek cover. Thus did Narantaka drive away behind the countless monkey-hosts with his fiery javaline to aid him, even like the Lord of Death stalking about a dying world with his trident. It fell upon them like the *vajra* of Indra himself; and the monkey-troops cried and howled most pitiably unable to bear with the onslaught. Like mountain peaks falling to pieces under the strokes of Indra's *vajra*, the bodies of the monkeys rained all over the place. Meanwhile the monkeys that were cruelly punished by Kumbhakarna sought the presence of Sugriva and were resting for a while.


He, the ruler of the monkey-worlds beheld his forces put to rout by Narantaka and escaping here and there in mad terror. He beheld that *rakshasa*, coming towards him on his lofty horse with the fiery javaline poised in his hands, ready to throw. He called out to Angada, who was by and said "Boy! your valour is on a level with that of Lord of the heavenly world, is it not? Lo! there comes that *rakshasa* on his horse and afflicts our forces sore. Bar his way, fall upon him and let his life be forfeit to you". The son of Vali, bowed in obedience; like the sun emerging from the black clouds did he march out from the midst of the black monkey-regions. That prince with a body hard as the very mountains themselves, decked with beautiful armlets looked like a mountain streaming with veins of ore. He had no weapons but his peaks and claws, not that he need any. He barred the way of Narantaka and cried, "Hear, you puny *rakshasa*, what are you about? What do you gain in the way of glory and fame by wasting your might and strength on these insignificant monkeys? Stay and hit me with the javaline in your hand that blazes like the *vajra* itself". Narantaka bit his lips at being thus slighted by the monkey; he hissed like a mighty serpent; he

whirled aloft his fiery javaline and struck with it at the huge chest of the son of Vali. It came into contact with the broad breast of the best and bravest of the monkey-world; it was hard like *vajra* itself; yet it was shattered to bits. Like a serpent torn to pieces by the lord Garuda, it met the sight of Angada and inflamed him to fury. He laughed in thunderous tones, sprang upon the steed of Narantaka and hit on the head. The skull was clean cloven, the eyes gouged out, the tongue hung from the mouth and the noble steed gave up its life-breaths. Narantaka was mad with fury thereat and clenching his huge fist he struck Angada on the head a terrific blow. It crashed under the blow; torrents of blood rained over him; and he lost his senses for a while. Recovering himself in no time he was filled with wonder and blazed in his wrath. He brought his mighty fist huge as a mountain against the breast of Narantaka even as the bolt of Indra fell upon him. That *rakshasa* had his breast broken to pieces, vomited torrents of blood like unto fiery flames and fell upon the earth, a lifeless corpse drenched all over with blood, even as a lofty mountain hit by the *vajra* of Indra. Thereat a mighty roar of joy and victory came out of the monkey-host and the heavenly spectators ranged on high.

Thus did Angada place his account a deed of valour impossible for others to achieve and gladdened the heart of Rama. And Raghuvira, of matchless strength and valour could not praise him enough nor give expression to his wonder. Angada felt himself quite a new being thanks to the appreciation of Rama; his strength and courage and energy grew apace and he stood forth ready and eager to give battle once more.

CHAPTER 70

DEATH OF DEVANTAKA AND HIS FRIENDS

 HE *rakshasa*-heroes raised a huge roar of fear and surprise when they beheld Narantaka done to death by Angada. Devantaka, Trisiras, Mahodara, were beside themselves with rage and fell upon the monkey-hosts. Then Mahodara mounted upon an elephant in rut like unto a huge cloud-bank rushed upon Angada. He could not contain himself for wrath at the death of his brother; and so Devantaka grasped a weapon named *parigha*, blazing like fire, drove a car shining like the sun in his noon-day glory and drawn by noble steeds. He barred the way of the monkey-prince who though brought face to face with these *rakshasas* of no mean might and repute, heeded it not. The lust of battle was upon him; and he tore up a huge tree with its branches and hit Devantaka even as Indra hurls his *vajra* at his enemy. But Trisiras cut it to pieces by keen arrows. Angada sprang in the sky and kept up a never ending downpour of trees, blocks and mountains. And Trisiras continued to shatter them with his keen shafts. Devantaka hit the trees and broke them with the point of his weapon *parigha*. Then Trisiras pierced Angada in his turn with his sharp shafts. And Mahodara joined him and drove his huge elephant against the son of Vali, and hit him on the chest with Tomaras, dreadful as the bolt of Indra. And Devantaka too joined in the attack and hit him sorely with his *parigha* and leapt back. Thus Angada, the son of Vali, was sore beset by the three *rakshasa*-heroes; yet he blenched not, he was absolutely a stranger to weariness or fatigue or pain. Endowed with speed, by nature, he increased it immeasurably on the occasion and hit the huge elephant with all his might. Its eyes shot out of its head; and it trumpeted forth in dreadful agony, unable to withstand the tremendous blow. Then Angada tore out its tusk and hit Devantaka with it. Like a huge tree struck down by a mighty whirl-wind, did that *rakshasa* feel his limbs give way under him; and torrents of blood rushed forth from his mouth, nose, eyes and ears. Then he steadied himself; his strength and lustre was a thing to wonder at;

he whirled above his head his terrible weapon *parigha* and brought it down upon the devoted head of Angada. The prince gave way before it and fell upon the earth on his knees; but the next moment he took a mighty leap aloft, whereat Trisiras hit him on the forehead with three keen shafts.

Thus did Angada manage to fight single-handed to three *rakshasa*-warriors of renown. He felt himself weary. So Hanuman and Nila came up to his aid. Nila tore up a mountain-peak and brought it down upon Trisiras. That son of Ravana cut it down by his keen arrows and it fell on the earth covered with sparks and flames. Then Devantaka bent his mighty bow to his ear and rushed at Anjaneya armed with his *parigha*. But Maruti met him as he came along and crashed his adamantine fist against him and caused the hearts of the *rakshasas* quake with fears by his lionlike roars. Devantaka, son of Ravana, measured his length on the earth a lifeless corpse; his head was cloven; his teeth were shattered; his eyes fell out and his tongue rolled out of his mouth. When that *rakshasa*-hero, who drove before him the hosts of the heaven-world was thus laid low, Trisiras was inflamed with wrath and pierced Nila on his chest with unceasing down our of keen shafts. Meanwhile Mahodara on his elephant of mountainous bulk clean forgot himself in his fury and shone like the sun on the top of mount Mandara. He struck with his continuous arrowy shower at the breast of Nila even like a huge cloud glorious with rain-bows and lightnings opened its discharge on a lofty mountain. The leader of the monkey-hosts was riddled through and through by these shafts; he was unable to move his limbs; and he stood there with his limbs tottering under him with fatigue. Yet he recovered himself after a while, tore up another mountain covered with forests and hit Mahodara on the head with frightful speed. Like unto a mountain on which fell the *vajra* of Indra did Mahodara fall upon the earth bereft of life with broken limbs and hardly recognisable. Trisiras beheld his uncle thus done to death and bending his mighty bow pierced Anjaneya with his arrow. The son of Vayu was enraged thereat and sent a huge mountain against the *rakshasa* which he broke to pieces by his arrows. Then the son of Ravana felt himself hit all over by huge trees. Yet Trisiras managed to meet them on their way to him and broke them to bits and roared lustily. Maruti leapt upon him all

on a sudden and like a lion ripping open the skull of an elephant in rut, he hit and tore at the heads of the horses that drew the car with his keen nails. Even as the lord of destruction sends forth on the last day, the dreadful night of havoc, Trisiras threw a *sakti* at Maruti. It came against him like a fiery meteor in broad day light and none could stay its course; but that monkey-hero sprang up and caught it lightly and broke it to pieces. His mighty roar of joy was taken up by the monkey-hosts who echoed it like surcharged clouds when they beheld that terrible *sakti* shattered to pieces. Then Trisiras drew his sharp sword and brought it down upon the broad breast of Maruti, but the monkey-lord minded it not and struck at the *rakshasa* with all his might. The weapons fell from his nerveless hands; he fell on the earth bereft of his senses and everything it holds dear. Thereupon Maruti tore the sword from his hands and roared mightily, at which the *rakshasas* trembled in affright. That brought back Trisiras to his senses, and he hit Maruti on his breast in mad despair. It served but to enrage him the more; he sprang upon the *rakshasa*, gripped his crowned heads and even as Visvarupa, the son of Tvashta, had his three heads shorn off by the *vajra* of Indra did that son of Ravana meet his death with his very sword that crashed through his three heads. Like unto souls that fall down from their heaven-seats in the shape of stars when their merit has been worked out, did those heads burden the earth, blazing like fire and glaring with rage like huge mountains. The monkeys shouted for joy thereat; the earth quacked in affright; and the *rakshasas* took to flight all over the field. Mahaparsva beheld the deaths of the four *rakshasa* heroes, Trisiras, Mahodara, Devantaka and Narantaka; he snatched a huge mace fashioned of hard iron and leapt forth to battle. It was decorated with golden bands, and smeared with flesh and blood. Iravata, Mahapadma, Sarvabhauma and other lordly elephants that bear the earth lightly on their heads quaked in affright at the sight of it; It was steeped in the torrents of blood from the foes that fell before it. It was fashioned with beauty and skill; it vomited flames and sparks; red garlands decked it all over; and it blazed like the fire of universal destruction and shed its lustre and might on Mahaparsva himself as he fell on his foes. He troubled it mightily. Thereat Rishaba the monkey-hero leapt down upon the *rakshasa* hordes and faced Mahaparsva. The *rakshasa* hit him on the breast with his mace

hard as *vajra* and backed with all his mad fury. The terrific blow clove his chest; he shook in helplessness and lost his senses for a while. Then recovering himself with a mighty effort he rushed upon the *rakshasa* to snatch the mace from his hands. And with that weapon he put the *rakshasa*-troops to flight all over the field; and followed it up by bringing down the devoted head of Mahaparsva, having whirled it round and round. Struck by his own weapon, the *rakshasa* fell upon the earth like a mountain hit by the *vajra*; his teeth and eyes fell out of his head. Thus did Mahaparsva, the brother of Ravana, meet his death. Then the *rakshasa*-host like a mighty ocean threw away their weapons and fled in mad terror to save their lives.

CHAPTER 71

DEATH OF ATIKAYA



TIKAYA of boundless lustre saw with a sore heart his terrible *rakshasa*-warriors that sorely agitated; his brothers like unto Indra in valour were no more; his uncles, renowned heroes of the *rakshasa*-world, met their fate; and his wrath was something to see and he blazed thereat. Mountainous of bulk, the holy terror of the gods and the *danavas* fortified by powerful boons won from Brahma, he rode upon his car. Refulgent with the radiance of countless suns, blazing together and adorned with crown, armour, and ear-rings, he swung lightly his ponderous bow and roared and shouted his name and deeds of valour, while the quarters trembled in affright. The hearts of the monkeys turned to water at those lion-like roars and the dreadful twang of his bow. The monkeys were obsessed with the notion that Kumbhakarna, came back from the dead (such was the huge bulk of Atikaya) and clasped one another in their mad terror. Like unto Mahavishnu when he took to stride over the three worlds in three steps, his sight made the monkey-heroes filled with senseless terror and they hid themselves wherever they could find shelter. Some sought the protection of Rama, the Lord of the countless worlds. Raghava beheld from afar Atikaya, who sat on his car like one mountain upon another, roaring like

the clouds on the day of destruction; wonder overcame him as he beheld the bulk of radiance and courage of the *rakshasa*. He calmed the fears of the monkeys and said to Vibhishana who stood by, "Who is that mighty bowman on his car, drawn by countless steeds; huge is his bulk like unto a mountain; and his eyes are tawney. Like unto Lord Mahadeva among his household guards of *bhutas* (elementals), I see around him shining in their lustre sharp tridents, spears and javelins. Many a weapon known as *sakti* illuminates his car like unto the tongues of death or the chain lightnings flashing through clouds. Even as rainbows grace lofty clouds are his bows ranged neatly in his car all round ready strung and decked with gold. Who is that carman, the hero that resembles the Lord of Day in his splendour? The battle-field is brightened by his radiance. I see the planet Rahu at the end of his banner. The quarters are lighted up by his arrows, resembling the rays of the noon day sun. He wields a bow like unto a rainbow with three graceful curves hard as adamant and beautifully adorned with gold. Its twang puts to shame the roars of mighty clouds. Four drivers are in charge of the four horses that are yoked to the car gay with gold and flags. Two keen swords are ready to hang on either side. They are about four spans round the hilt; and their length is ten such measures. Red garlands grace his shoulders; black of hue to see; his mouth is dreadful to see even like unto that of death. And he gives one the idea of the Lord of Day in the midst of cloud-banks. His mighty arms decked with ornaments and clasps of gold resemble the peaks of the mount Himalaya. His eyes are graceful and charming; and his face shining with ear-rings, resembles the moon in her full, in the midst of the stars of the Punarvasu constellation. The monkeys one and all flee when they behold him. Who is he?

And to him Vibhishana, "He is the son of Ravana himself, the younger brother of Kubera and the lord of the *rakshasas*, graced with his ten heads. Of frightful deeds and boundless energy, he is the heroic son of the Lord of Lanka. Like unto his father on the battle-field, he is ever reverent and humble with the great and the wise. He is adept of the adepts in the science of warfare. He is matchless in the management of elephants and horses, a perfect fencer and bowmen; endowed with peerless skill and ability in council and the practical application of the four means (alliance,

persuasions, intrigue, and war). Lanka rests in peace, depending on the strength and valour of his arms. There is nothing he does not know in the matter of weapons human and divine or infernal. Countless are the foes that have fallen under him. He won the heart of Brahma himself by his stern *tapas* and has been blessed with weapons of rare and magic powers. Dhanyamali, the favourite of Ravana, is his mother. We know him as Atikaya. One of the boons he has from Brahma is that death comes not to him from the *asuras* themselves; that divine armour and car shining like the sun were given him on that occasion. Gods and *danavas*, countless in number have fled before him. He is the matchless *rakshasa*-hero who stayed the course of the *vajra* of Indra and the noose of Varuna by his mighty arrows. Wise and intelligent, he has curbed the pride and haughtiness of the gods and the *asuras*. We should defeat him before he consumes quite our monkey-hosts with the fire of the arrows”.

Meanwhile that *rakshasa*-hero made his way into the monkey-hosts; he waved his terrible bow aloft and roared continuously. Kumuda, Dvidida, Mainda, Sarabha and Nila rushed forth to give him battle with trees and peaks; In a moment the prince reduced them to splinters and pierced the monkeys before them with his arrows made of iron. And they were utterly powerless before him, their limbs cloven and their hearts weak under the arrowy shower. Like unto a lion in the flush of his youth and might, chasing before it herds of deer, that monkey-host was put to flight by that *rakshasa*-hero. But he never hit any one who did not seek a fight with him. He came to where Rama was and spoke in supreme haughtiness, “Here am I in my car with bow, arrow, and other weapons. It is beneath me to seek a fight with the ordinary ranks of your hero. If there is any warrior of name and fame and energy among you, let him stand upto me”.

Lakshmana was not the man to take it calmly; he sprang at his foe; bent his bow, strung it and twanged it so that the earth, the mountains, the sky, the oceans, the quarters, and the *rakshasas* trembled in affright. Atikaya heard it too, that terrible sound. And he of boundless lustre and strength was filled with wonder thereat. Then black wrath came upon him; and he snatched a keen shaft and cried, “Lakshmana, you are but a boy; you are strange to the

deeds of valour; go. It is not in you to aspire to measure swords with myself like unto the Lord of Death. Why? The Himalayas, the sky and the broad earth dreamed not of withstanding the course of the arrows from my hands. Why, rouse the fire of destruction that slumbers happily under its ashes? Cast your bow in despair and go back. Why seek your death at my hands to no purpose? Or, if you will have it otherwise and face me in fight, well, take your place. Cast away your life behind you and take the shortest road to the halls of death. See you my arrows that play havoc with the pride of my foes? Like unto the trident of Rudra, decked with molten gold, resembling mighty serpents and even as a lordly lion cleaves the head of an elephant in its fury and drinks deep of its blood, this arrow will bathe in your blood". And hissing in his wrath he fitted it to the string.

Lakshmana was lashed to wild ungovernable fury at the words of Atikaya in his anger and pride. Boundless of strength and lustre in himself he could not put up with it. And so he gave back word for word, pregnant with many a meaning ingrained in it." "Hear you *rakshasa* : Do you seek to achieve greatness but through words? Do you seek to become a hero solely through blowing your own trumpet? Wicked wretch! here I am ready to give you battle, bow in hand; put forth your bravest and best; a hero is he who speaks through his prowess and valour and manliness. You have come here in a mighty car furnished with every kind of weapon; and that shows you are here on business. Arrows or magic weapons, it matters not how you reveal yourself and your valour. Then I shear off your head with my keen shafts even as a mighty wind crashes down palm fruits. This day my arrows pierce through your vitals and drink deep and content of the blood flowing therefrom. Slight me not in that I am young. I am guilty indeed of that atrocious crime. But lay this conviction to your heart that it makes me more qualified to be your fact on the battle-field. Know you not that in the far past a boy by the name of Vamana (and he was Lord Vishnu incarnate) strode over the worlds three, in three, in three steps?" Thus spake Lakshmana with weighty reasons and pregnant meaning therein. It but served to enrage Atikaya the more; and he grasped a most powerful shaft. And then there came the hosts of the *vidyadhàras*, *bhutas*, *devas*, *daityas*, *maharshis*, and *guhyas*, to see that rare fight.

Atikaya bent his bow, strung it, fitted the arrow carefully and shot it at Lakshmana as if he would swallow the broad expanse of the sky itself.

Lakshmana beheld it coming at him like a serpent of cruel venom; and he cut it into two with an *ardhachandra* (crescent arrow). Then Atikaya shot five arrows which Lakshmana made short work of lightly, even before they neared him. Then he hit the *rakshasa* on the forehead with a carefully chosen shaft, keen and radiant. Like a mighty serpent making its way into the clefts of a mountain did it pierce through the head of the *rakshasa*, and caused a torrent of blood to stream from it. Like unto the cities of the three *asuras*, struck by the arrows of Lord Rudra, did Atikaya tremble with the agony thereof. Then he pulled himself up with a mighty effort and after deep thought and consideration of his future course of action, cried, "Lakshmana I grant that you are a foe worthy of my steel. I admire your skill. You are well up indeed in the science of archery". With that he yawned frightfully, grasped his arms tight and set himself up; he took his place in his car firmly and discharged a never ceasing shower of arrows, one, ten, hundred, and so forth. Decked with golden bands, they hid the sky aloft under a mighty sheet of radiance and were terrible indeed like the messengers of death. Lakshmana was in no way troubled and he cut them down lightly. Then Atikaya selected most carefully another shaft and sent it at his foe. It struck him just in the very centre of his breast; like an elephant in rut streaming all over, his body was bathed in the torrents of blood. But he tore it away from him. And choosing a very keen shaft, he chanted upon it the magic *mantra* of the Lord of Fire himself and discharged it upon Atikaya. But the *rakshasa* made it square and fair with the magic weapon of the Lord of day himself. They fought for a while in the sky aloft like mighty serpents. Then they fell upon the earth, a heap of ashes, destroying each other. Atikaya chose the *astra* known as *Ishika* which Lakshmana met by the *astra* of Indra. The *rakshasa* was frightful in his wrath thereat and shot the *astra* of Yama himself, the prince, who struck it down by the *astra* of the Lord of Air. Then a cloud of arrows hid the *rakshasa* from view, only to fall back blunted and broken from his armour of adamant. A thousand arrows of might fell upon Atikaya thereat and failed to make any impression upon him, thanks to the boon the *rakshasa* won from Lord Brahma himself.

It was then that Lord Vayu came to Lakshmana on the battle-field, and said, "This *rakshasa* has been blessed by the Lord Brahma with an armour that no weapon, human or divine, can make any impression upon. So it is the *Brahmastra* and none other that will be effective in his case". Then Lakshmana chose the arrow, of unchecked course and speed; he chanted over it the magic *mantra*, the Lord Brahma himself, and shot it at the *rakshasa* lord. Then the quarters, the sun, the moon, the planets, the sky and the earth quaked in terror. Decked with gold and gems, that *Brahmastra* came to Atikaya like unto the *vajra* of Indra or the rod of Yama or the blazing fire itself with resistless speed. The son of Ravana beheld it calmly and sent countless arrows keen and cruel. But it swallowed clean and drew near the prince with a mighty rush like the Lord Garuda himself. Even then he blenched not nor was he troubled in the least and hit with sword, club, axe, trident, and other weapons. But it made short work of them and cut down the head of Atikaya, the beloved son of Ravana, with its diadem of gold and gems. Like unto the lofty peak of the Himalayas crashing down under a mighty blow, did that head crash down on the earth shorn of its glory. Such of the *rakshasas* as were spared after the mighty destruction, cried aloud and wailed blind with hot tears. The *rakshasa*-hosts were wan of face, downhearted; weary and faint and sore with the blows of blocks, and trees and mountains, they were heartbroken at the death of their mighty chief. They cast away behind themselves the very thought of fight and victory and took their way to Lanka on the wings of fear and speed. But the countenances of the monkey-host was bright and blooming like unto a bank of lotuses when kissed from their sleep by the rays of the morning sun. They roared frightfully and sang the praises of Prince Lakshmana who slew out of hand that dreadful *rakshasa* that came upon them with frightful bulk of body and boundless strength and valour; for did he not give them a long lease of life and everything that it holds happy and dear.

CHAPTER 72

RAVANA IN DISTRESS


RAVANA heard that Atikaya met his death at the hands of Lakshmana. His heart gave way and he cried, "Alas, wonder of wonders! the best and the bravest of bowman, a past master in the use and management of every kind of weapon, the very sight of a foe inflamed him quite, Dhumraksha, Akampana, Prahasta, and Kumbhakarna, every one of them; and many a hero of heroes among the *rakshasas* have gone to their fate at the hands of their foes. Of mountainous bulk, steady, firm, unshaken, and fathomless like the very ocean itself, boundless of strength and valour; ever eager for battle. They never knew in their lives what it was to be foiled by the enemy; but victory over their opponents was a matter of daily occurrence to them. In the matter of the mystery of magic weapons they had no peer. My son, famed through the three worlds for his strength and valour bound Rama and Lakshmana. Indrajit won from the powers on high the magic bonds of serpents. *Devas, asuras, yakshas, gandharvas, and kinnaras* cannot escape it. And those bonds, the two boys managed to destroy and break; I know not whether it was through their own skill and might; or through the magic arts of illusion that casts a spell over the foes; or through the potent strength of occult herbs and plants and leaves. Every one of those whom I sent to battle, my *rakshasa*-heroes have met their death at the hands of monkeys, strong beyond imagination. But I see not around me one who could defeat Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishana or the monkey-warriors in battle. Wonderful indeed to think the might and power of that Rama, his innate strength and one cannot have any idea of what he wields through his magic weapons. When I come to think carefully over the fact that everyone of the *raksasas* I send against him has fallen a prey to him, I am forced to conclude that the man known as Raghava is none other than the Lord Narayana, the eternal one. Our fortress gates and doors in Lanka are ever closed through dire fear of him".

"*Rakshasas!* guard ever carefully invisible in yourselves at every place and corner of this Lanka. No one passes without my order

and without my knowledge into the *asoka* grove where I have placed Sita; and none goes out of it, likewise. I would have you that you be ever ready to go forth to fight, in the places assigned to you in Lanka itself. Never for a moment dream of under-rating your enemies, the monkeys. Are they ready for battle? Are they marching forth to it? Are they taking rest? Are they sunk in care and anxiety? All these things should be correctly ascertained and brought to me, every day in the morning, noon, evening, and at other times, as the necessity arises." Having thus issued his orders he saw that they were carried to the very letter. But anger and grief gripped him heavily and he took his way to his palace. Grief at the death of his sons, anger at the thought that he never knew what defeat was at any time of his life till then. This ate into his heart and deep sighs and fear broke forth from it.

CHAPTER 73

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA BOUND BY BRAHMASTRA

HEN the *rakshasa*-forces returned to Lanka from the battle-field and informed Ravana of the death of Devantaka, Trisiras, Atikaya and others. Hot tears of burning grief coursed down the cheeks of Ravana; he was clean dazed and knew not what to do, like one demented. His sons and brothers met with a dreadful fate. And he lost himself in anxiety and gloom of heart that surged like the sea lashed by violent storms. Then Indrajit the best and the bravest that ever came of *rakshasa* line, addressed himself to his father and cried, "Ruler of the *rakshasa*-world; here am I Indrajit, born of your loins. Here am I in the might of my strength and valour, then what call have you to grieve? Have you ever set your eyes upon him whom the arrows of Indrajit hit in battle and returned to tell the tale? Behold Rama and Lakshmana cloven through and through by my weapons, their limbs hacked to bits, lifeless, their bodies riddled all over with my keen arrows and stretched on the bare earth never more to trouble us. I, that forced Indra himself to cry for mercy, I have never been approached in battle thanks

to my innate might and thanks to the boons conferred upon me by high powers. Pay heed most carefully to the terrible vow I take upon myself. This very day will I pierce Rama and Lakshmana through and through without a space to put a needle in and that through my keen irresistible shafts. In the far past Lord Vishnu shone in his matchless radiance in the hall of sacrifice of the Emperor Bali. Even so shall Indra, Yama, Vishnu, Surya, the *sadyas*, the Asvin, Agni, the moon and every one behold my terrible valour and prowess that bring to play upon my foes." He roared and shouted his name and fame mightily.

Then he took reverent leave of his father; his energy and fiery enthusiasm was simply boundless. He took his seat on a lordly car drawn by countless mules and took his way to the battle-field. And in that car like unto the car of the sun in splendour and like unto and even excelling the speed of Vayu himself, did Indrajit, the son of Ravana, shine in his glory like unto the Lord of Day himself; and him followed many *rakshasa*-warriors in high spirits. They were bowmen, of matchless fame. Some on elephants; some on horses; they were armed with swords, trident, spear, axe, and other weapons. Conch, war drum, and other military music played all around; the *rakshasa*-world showered their blessings on him and marched along in his wake. Like unto the moon in its orb in the sky, seated in the shade of a huge white umbrella that put to shame the sheen of the conch or the moon, that son of Ravana, issued forth from the gates of Lanka. On either side there waved ever two *chamaras* with golden handles encrusted with gems. Why, the very town itself was irradiated by the splendour of Indrajit, even as the sky is illumined by the matchless splendour of Surya himself. He came to the battle-field, placed around his car his forces as guard over it, lit the holy fires, chanted mighty spells and offered food, parched rice, garlands and perfumes in it. On the four sides of the holy fire, the place of the sacred grass was taken by warlike weapons like *tomaras*. The sacrificial wood ordinarily used gave way to those made for that purpose out of the tree of Kali known as Vibhitaka. He was dressed in garments of deep scarlet; the instruments of sacrifice, spoons, ladles, and cups were made of block iron. Thus did he light the fire on the battle-ground; grasped the throat of a sheep of the purest black in colour, cut it and offered it as a welcome

sacrifice. The wood once offered was enough to set the sacred fire ablaze without the slightest touch of smoke and in full radiance and lustre. The flames lapped round in auspicious circles. The Lord of Fire took human shape and adorned with garland armlet, ear ring, and crown, received the offerings so devoutly made to him. Then did that *rakshasa*-hero offer into the fire the *astra* of Brahma, his bow, his car, and last himself and everything that belonged to him. Then the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars and the very expanse of heaven trembled in affright. Like unto the fire in splendour, or like unto Indra himself in valour, Indrajit vanished aloft in the sky above with his bow, arrows, sword, car, horses, and charioteer.


Then the *rakshasa*-warriors came forth from Lanka mounted on elephants, horses, or cars and fell upon the monkeys with their keen arrows, *tomaras*, swords, tridents and the like. Then that son of Ravana, fire flashing from his wrathful eyes, cried, "keep yourself calm and cool and unshaken; bring up all your spirit, all your energy and all your enthusiasm and make short work of these wretched monkeys." Then that *rakshasa*-army was filled with an overweening resolve to win at any cost; they roared and shouted and cried terribly and kept up an unceasing downpour of arrows upon the monkeys. Indrajit on his part and his *rakshasa*-warriors struck down large bodies of the monkeys with their shafts of various kinds *nalika*, *naracha* and the like, clubs, bars, tridents, and grew more and more furious. Then the other monkeys tore up trees, mountains and blocks and hemmed the *rakshasa*-prince. But Indrajit who never knew what it was to go back in battle, waxed wrath, and grew more and more in strength and lustre. With one arrow he struck down in huge bodies the monkeys, five, ten and fifteen at a stroke. The *rakshasas* shouted in joy thereat. The arrows shining with the lustre of the sun and bound with precious bands of gold clove the bodies of the monkeys; and powerless to bear the torture and agony their pride and haughtiness were destroyed; they lost their desire and eagerness for fight; and like unto the *asuras* routed in battle by the gods in the far past, did they take to flight in all directions. But some monkey-heroes resolved to deal death to Indrajit who shone like the sun in the full hallow of his rays through his arrows, fell upon him from all sides and kept up a dreadful fight with him. But they would never stand before him even for a moment. Their bodies hacked to pieces,

torrents of blood coursing down them, they were clean bereft of their senses and dazed and confused they took to flight as best as they could. Then they resolved to offer in the service of Lord Rama their strength, their power, their valour and their everything, even life itself, and so the monkey-heroes came back to the battle-field with blocks, mountains and trees in their hands. They closed round Indrajit and kept up a terrible deluge of stone over him. But he made short work of it in a moment and pierced the bodies of the monkey-hosts with his keen shafts, eighteen for Gandhamadana, nine for Nala, that was at a distance, seven for Mainda, and his vitals, five for Gaja, were quite enough. Beside himself with wrath like unto the Fire of Dissolution, he hit Jambavan with ten arrows, Nila with thirty, Sugriva, Rishabha, Angada, Dvidida and the other monkey-warriors with many a shaft, terrible of might, that he won as rare boons from various powers; they deprived the monkeys of their senses. He discharged most skilfully arrows that shone like the sun himself; and they fell on the monkey-hosts with the speed of thought and troubled them sore. Lashed by the ceaseless downpour, dazed and deluged with blood, that monkey-hosts were a source of boundless delight. Then he kept up the torrent of terrible shafts and weapons and caused his enemies unspeakable agony and torture. He plunged into the countless myriads of monkeys before him, leaving his troops far behind; invisible to all, his foes and like unto a surcharged cloud he let loose upon them his arrowy deluge. The monkeys were cloven in their bodies through the speed and force of the arrows; his magic arts of illusion kept them senseless and confusion. They howled most harshly; and like lofty mountains struck down by Indra they measured their length upon the earth covering it with their huge bulks. They but knew that the keen shafts fell upon them; but they could not have a sight of the *rakshasa*-hero that lay behind them. The prince hid from view all the quarters with arrows bright as so many suns; the sky and the earth were wiped out of sight. The best and bravest of the monkeys cried in despair and fear. Trident, *sakti*, axe, and other weapons blazing with sparks, and flames, his weapons were whirled aloft and brought down by the monkeys rendering them utterly motionless. Those arrows like unto tongues of fire went clean in their bodies and caused torrents of blood to burst. The monkeys, huge of bulk, gave the appearance of huge *simsupa* trees in full blossom. They clasped one another

in fear, cried harshly and fell upon the earth like some who looked above were hit on the eyes; some utterly powerless to escape the arrows fell upon one another. Hanuman, Sugriva, Angada, Gandhamadana, Jambavan, Sushena, Mainda, Vegadarsi, Dvividā, Nila, Gavaksha, Gaja, Gomukha, Kesari, Hariloman, Viddyud-damshtra, Suryamukha, Jyotirmukha, Dadhimukha, Pavakaksha, Nala, Kumuda, and the other heroes of fame and renown were struck down senseless with spear, javelin, trident and other weapons. Further Rama and Lakshmana too came in for their share and were hit under a cloud of arrows like unto the fierce rays of the sun.

Raghuvira of boundless courage heeded not the shower as if they were so many drops that fell on a lofty mountain. Lakshmana! "This *rakshasa*-prince bases his hopes on the *Brahmastra* won by hard *tapas*. That enables him to harass the monkey-troops and put them to rout; further he troubles us with his cruel shafts. Thanks to the boon granted by him by Brahma, this mighty hero keeps himself invisible in the sky and destroys our forces. And our heroes, how could they fight him knowing not where he is, how could they defeat him? You base yourself on your innate greatness and ability to foil that all powerful weapon; but it is no good. The Lord Brahma that is the ruling deity of it and endows it with such a potency, is of boundless strength and prowess even beyond the power of thought. So bear with it most patiently even as I do the force of his arrows with unshaken fortitude. He hides the quarters from view with his arrowy deluge. And our forces have lost their leaders and take to flight all over the field, shorn off their lustre. So let us cease to fight and lie on the ground senseless and in a swoon. Beholding which this *rakshasa* will go back to Lanka very quickly with the crown of victory on his brows. Having warned his brother thus they were sorely hit with the cloud of arrows shot by Indrajit and measured their length on the earth. Thereat, the foe of Indra, was besides himself with joy and roared long and lustily. Having thus tormented the monkey-hosts, Rama and Lakshmana, he went back to Lanka to carry himself the first news of that supreme victory of his.

RAMA AND LAKSHMANA LIBERATED FROM THE BRAHMASTRA

 AT the sight of Rama and Lakshmana struck by the *Brahmastra* and utterly powerless, Sugriva, Nila, Angada, Jambavan and the other monkey-heroes knew not what to do; their troops were sunk in despair, as if demented. Then Vibhishana of matchless intelligence, calmed the fears of the monkey-heroes with sweet words and pleasant. "Fear not; our protectors are struck down senseless; yet there is no call to grieve over it. It is only out of respect and reverence to the weapon of the Lord Brahma that they seemed bound by the *astra*. The *rakshasa*-prince won the heart of Brahma by matchless and hard *tapas*; and received in return this *astra* of unimpeded force. And Rama and Lakshmana keep themselves bound by its bonds, through their reverence to the grand sire; within the space of a *muhurta* they will be alright even as before. There is no call for you to be in the least anxious over this." Maruti agreed with him, since he was once under the same mighty influence and said, let us pass over those that have been slain among us till now, and bring courage and hope to the hearts of those that yet remain alive." He took Sugriva with him and scoured the battle-field in the darkness relieved by glowing torches.

Monkeys and *rakshasas* shorn of tails, hands, feet, fingers, necks, and other limbs were there. Others too deluged with blood; others that in their abject fear wallowed in their urine ordure; yet others lay there dead of mountainous bulk; and others who fell before the terrible weapons of the enemy. There was not space for one to move about. Sugriva, Angada, Nila, Sarabha, Gandhamadana, Gavaksha, Sushena, Vegadarsi, Ahuka, Mainda, Nala, Jyotirmukha, Dvidida, Panasa, and other monkey-warriors of fame lay there scattered all over as if they were reft of their lives. In the short space of two hours were sent to their doom some thing like sixty-seven crores of monkeys by that redoubted *rakshasa*-prince, behind whom were the boons granted him by Brahma. That vast

monkey-hosts like unto great ocean, were lashed to fury by the storms brought down upon them by the arrows of Indrajit and in that darkness and destruction did Maruti and Vibhishana seek Jambavan.

Old beyond words, riddled with arrows like unto a spent fire that son of Brahma came under the eyes of Vibhishana who said to him, "Alas; are you alive and free from death and danger at the hands of the keen shafts shot by the *rakshasas*? And to him did the monkey-warrior reply, "Lord of the *rakshasas*; of boundless might, know not where you were and it is only through your voice that I made you out. I am riddled with arrows and am not able to keep my senses together. Let that be. Is he alive and well and safe, that mighty Hanuman, born unto the Lord Vayu in that thrice fortunate lady Anjana?"

And this he spake with great difficulty unable to bring himself to it. And to him replied the *rakshasa*, "Sir, wonder! no enquiry or care about Rama or Lakshmana nor of His Majesty Sugriva, or prince Angada, whether they are alive or dead. Why so much attached and devoted to the son of Vayu?" Then said Jambavan, "Brave *rakshasa*, it is absolutely necessary that I should have news of Maruti. If he were alive we might take it that our armies are alive too, though they be destroyed utterly. If he were not alive we are dead, every one of us, though we are alive to all purposes. We can hope to live somewhat if he, the equal to the Lord of Air in strength and fierce of prowess like unto the Lord of Fire, is free from danger".

Then Hanuman touched the feet of Jambavan reverently bowed himself before him and gave out his name and antecedents. Jambavan thought on the tones of Maruti; and though himself sorely confused in mind and senses, he rejoiced greatly as if his vital breaths had come back to him. "Best and bravest of monkeys; come to me; it is upto you now to extend your protection over our dispirited forces. I see here none that is endowed with the requisite valour and courage therefor. You alone have it in you to render the greatest help to these. This is the time when you should put forth your strength and valour with the utmost. And I see no other that could do it

as well. Put away from Rama and Lakshmana the danger that has befallen them through the arrows of Indrajit and bring back joy and hope to the monkey-hosts. Take your course straight from here above the ocean through the sky; go far till you come to the Himalayas, the monarch of the mountains. Beyond that you find the mountain Rishabha with lofty peaks of gold and far beyond that the tops of mount Kailasa. Between these two there is the mountain of magic herbs of plants. It is the home of potent medicinal products; and blazes in radiance thereby even like unto the Lord of Fire. On the top of it there could be found the *Mritasanjivani*, *Visalyakarani*, *Sandhanakarani* and *Savarnakarani*, four medicines of boundless potency, irradiating all the quarters with their lustre. Bring them unto me and I restore life to the monkeys, we have lost them". (*Mritasanjivani* revives the dead; *Visalyakarani* then expells the arrows from the body and makes him neat; *Sandhanakarani* then makes a whole from the broken parts and the cloven; *Savarnakarani* finishes the work by restoring the natural colour and aspect of the body to the places wounded and scarred).

At these words of Jambavan the son of Vayu waxed in strength, and energy and courage even as the ocean when the roaring waters of the rivers fall into it from all lands. He stood on the top of the mount Trikuta and pressed it with his feet to give him the impetus and force to course through the sky; and it gave him the look of one mountain placed upon another. The mount could hardly bear the impact of his feet; it clove and sank into the earth. Its tops were shattered by his force and huge blocks rolled down from it, lapped in tongues of flames. Lofty trees crashed down its sides; blocks were ground to dust; and the monkeys could scarcely keep their stand on it as it shook and trembled mightily. Towers and turrets in Lanka and the houses near them fell in ruins. The huge fortress gates shook in affright. The whole extent of the capital seemed trembling in terror all through that night. With mountainous bulk did he spring from Trikuta mount; and the earth and the seas were troubled sore. Then he went up the mountain that bordered the capital of Ravana. It was lofty like unto the mountains Meru and Mandara; it was glad to look at with its water-falls, woods, creepers, lotus pools, caves, and beasts. It was the home of countless gods, *gandharvas*,

vidyadharas, *rishis*, and *apsarasas*, who lead a happy life there. Sixty *yojanas* was it in height and the dwellers thereon were struck with dread as they beheld his mighty form and fiery energy. He grew and grew apace; he opened his mouth wide like unto the horse *Badava* in the boundless waters. (It is a mythical volcano in the sea dangerous to approach and shaped like a horse). He roared lustily so that the *rakshasas* in the city dared not come out of their houses till he came back. All creatures in Lanka were filled with wonder and rendered motionless with fear. Then Maruti bowed himself in reverence, in thought before Sri Rama, and prayed to him that he should come back with his purpose accomplished and did a deed of valour wonderful to behold as a piece of humble service to his master. He waved aloft his mighty tail like unto a huge serpent of the mountains. He laid back his ears; he opened his mouth like unto the mare *Badava* in the sea; and he sprang into the sky with fearful speed. (Boundless energy was the result of the waving aloft of his tail; he restrained his *pranas* in his chest to enable him coursing through the sky and in consequence bent his back; the ears were folded that he might increase his strength infinitely; he opened his mouth wide, as a mark of intense concentration on the object he had in view). He carried with him in his frightful speed groves, glades, blocks and the very monkeys on that mountain. They were sorely beset by the speed of his hands and legs, followed him a long way and fell head-long into the waves as the speed lessened. He stretched his arms before him like unto huge serpents; the Lord Garuda shared with him in prowess; he seemed to drag in his wake the very quarters themselves, so fierce was the speed of his course; and thus he took his way to mount Meru the loftiest of the group. There is close to mount Kailasa a peak called Meru itself that belongs to the mountains Himalayas. Or we may take it that it is the Himalaya mountains in the direction of which the Meru reels itself aloft; or we might read it that he took his way along the northern quarter, where stands mount Meru; or it may mean the Himalaya mountains lofty even like Meru). He beheld on his way the fathomless deep, surging with mountainous waves and the monsters of the deep discoursing themselves therein. He sped along like the *chakra* shot from the hands of Mahavishnu, mountain, mountain-peaks, lakes, rivers, tanks, cities, countries, forests, passed under

him in rapid survey, as he proceeded lightly and without the least fatigue though keeping up a uniform speed like unto his father, the Lord of Air. The quarters were filled with the roar of his flight. He kept in mind the words of Jambavan. And lessened his speed gradually that he may not pass beyond the mountain of magic herbs.

In short time, the Himalayas came into view, cataracts, water-falls, torrents, caves, and peaks fleecy white like cloud-banks, woods of varied form and hue adorned it bravely. He beheld its peaks and sides dotted with holy resorts and the *rishis* of the heaven-world that dwells therein. The abode of the four-faced Brahma; mount Kailasa, the abode of Indra himself; the place where Rudra shoots his arrows in sport, the spot where Lord Hayagriva is adored, the place where fell the head of Brahma cut by Rudra himself the resting places appointed for the benefit of the *gramanis* that attend upon the sun every month of the year, the spot where Indra got his *vajra* from Brahma, the abode of Kubera, radiant like the sun itself, the place where Visvakarma tied the sun on his lathe to hew or shear off a portion of his rays to please the lady Chaya; the place appointed for the gods to offer worship to Brahma and have a sight of him, the place where the bow of Siva is kept, the way that leads to the under-worlds, the huge slab Himavatsaila near mount Kailasa, the mountain Rishabha covered with magic herbs, the mount Meru itself in the eastern quarter — all these he beheld on his way; and along with them the mountain of magic wands that shine at nights with blinding radiance. Filled with wonder, he went over it and searched for the plants and herbs he wanted.

Thousands of *yojanas* has he covered in his flight; he went from end to end over the mountain of magic herbs; and roared in his wrath of not being able to come upon them. For they hid themselves from view when they found there was one who would take them away from their place. Maruti could not put up with that indignity; fire flashed from his eyes and he cried to the Lord of the mountain, "You, there! you show no love or pity to Lord Rama and you think it proper and right to bar my way to the object I have in view. This moment will I reduce you to dust formless and thin with my bare arms". He took hold of that lofty mountain, and tore it up by the very roots along with the groves, beasts, ores, peaks, the tops, and



the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *siddhas*, *charanas*, and the other dwellers thereof. He passed his tail round its middle, tore it aloft and the gods and the *asuras* and all created beings trembling with affright and the hosts that crowd the heaven-worlds lauding him high, did he return with the speed of thought, like unto the Lord Garuda himself! Maruti shining in his radiance even as the Lord of Day, bore aloft in the path of the sun that potent mountain shining with the lustre of Surya himself. Then he looked like a rival sun facing the original one. Like unto the *chakra* in the hands of Mahavishnu, with its thousand points lapped in fierce flames, did Anjaneya shine with the huge mountain of magic herbs borne aloft.


The monkeys shouted themselves in joy when they beheld him and he, in his turn, for very success when he came near them. (It seems that the monkeys which were dead came back to life even while the magic mountain was far away, thanks to the potency of the very smell of the herbs thereon). The inhabitants of Lanka howled and cried, in terror, when they heard the monkeys' roar. Then Anjaneya came down upon mount Trikuta with the mountain of magic herbs held aloft. The monkey-heroes bent their heads low in reverence. Maruti clasped Vibhishana to his breast fondly. Rama and Lakshmana caught the perfume of the magic herbs thereon; the arrows of the weapons that pierced them fell out loosely; and they stood up free from all pain and discomfort. Those that were dead and those that were wounded were cured of their wounds and rose like strong men after a deep sleep. In fact their strength and valour and courage were increased immeasurably. From the time that the monkeys and the *rakshasas* began to fight at Lanka the dead among the *rakshasas* were thrown into the sea by the orders of Ravana. He wanted the list of the dead to be brought to him and he desired that others should not know it. This accounts for the fact that among those brought back to life by the magic herbs the *rakshasas* found no place. Then the son of Vayu carried back the mountain of magic herbs to its original place and returned to the side of Rama.

CHAPTER 75

LANKA IN FLAMES

THEN Sugriva, the ruler of the monkey-world acquainted Rama with his purpose and said to Anjaneya, "Kumbhakarna is no more; Atikaya and the other *rakshasa*-princes have been gathered to their forefathers. So we can expect that Ravana himself will come out to fight; and that we should not allow. The best and the bravest of our troops endowed with matchless speed should make their way into Lanka with flaming torches with them".

At this order of his the monkey-heroes took advantage of the sunset to prepare themselves to enter the city in the utter darkness of the first quarter of the night with flaming torches in their hands. From all sides they came at the same time, and drove away the guards before them. They set fire to towers, turrets, fortress gates, battlements, the houses thereon, roads, lanes, mansions, and everything they came across. Thousands of houses were reduced to ashes in a second. Palaces like unto mountains in extent fell down a flaming mass. The perfumes and the scents therein, sandal aloes and the like caught fire and the smell thereof on one side and the rank and poisonous fumes given out from living beings burnt to death on the other side were carried far and wide by the winds. Pearls, corals, gems, that adorn the houses, silks, blankets, vessels of gold and silver, weapons, the articles of use in the stalls of horses and the trappings thereof, the various paths of chariots and cars and the ornaments thereon, heroes, elephants, horses, armour shields, swords, bows, strings, arrows, *tomaras*, axes, *saktis*, and such like weapons, of offence and defence, sheep, goat, used to fashion fine and curiously wrought rugs, *chamaras*, bedsheets, counterpanes, tanned skins of tigers and deer, musk and other rare articles of use, residences decked with pearls and gem, heaps of weapons, curiously decorated houses, the abodes of wealthy *rakshasas*, armour fashioned of beaten gold, garlands, chaplets, all these were consumed to ashes in that conflagration.

 *Rakshasas* under the influence of drink with their eyes rolling madly about, others staggering under the heavy load they have taken

in others with their ladies coming behind them and holding their lord's garments, to steady their faltering steps, yet others with eyes flashing fire infuriated by the monkeys, others rudely disturbed in their amorous dalliance, others armed with clubs, tridents and other weapons, others at their meals, and drinks, others indulging in deep sleep in the company of their women on rare and costly beds, others with wildseyes of affright, others on the wings of speed seeking means of escape, others fleeing madly with their children on their shoulders all these were reduced to ashes by thousands. Their blood, flesh and fat went to gladden the heart of the god of Fire; and he leapt high many a time to enjoy. The city was adorned with skyscrapers, that barred the way and the course of the Lord of Day; of many a design were they and broad and spacious and finely fashioned every article of wealth and luxury and comfort found therein. Square, round, angular and many other mode were found therein. Windows of gold and silver encrusted with gems, seats and beds adorned with pearls, coral and precious stones, they were gay with the sweet music of peacocks, harems, and other rare birds as also with the melody of lute, flute, drum, and other instruments of music, like unto the seas with its rising waves were they in their splendour; all these were no where before the terrible fire. Doorsteps lapped by fierce flames, looked like rain-charged clouds, through which lashed chain lightnings, even as the peaks of lofty mountains crashing down under the impact of the *vajra* of Indra, some palaces caught fire and crashed down with a huge roar all at once. Ladies drowned in deep sleep, on lofty terraces, cast away their ornaments and shrieked and screamed in mad terror like unto the peaks of the Himalayas, flashing in their brilliance through the lustre of the magic herbs and plants thereon, the houses and the abodes, and the lofty palaces of Lanka met the eye everywhere in flames. Mansions were hid by roaring fires; and as the flames rolled on around them here and there they looked like *kimsuka* trees in full bloom. Elephants and horses, let loose from their stalls by the keepers thereof, gave one the idea of the last day of destruction when the oceans broke their bonds and the denizens of the deep ran in mad terror and confusion. In one place there was a horse that broke loose and ran in mad fright; and it was enough for an elephant to do likewise. In another place the rivers of the scene was enacted. The city of Lanka lapped in red flames was reflected in

the water of the sea around; and they took on the hue and colour of red and scarlet. In the space of one *muhurta*, that capital of Ravana set fire to by the monkeys looked like this earth wrapped in fire on the day when the worlds were burnt to atoms. Hid behind clouds of fire and smoke, the women were clean suffocated and their cries of pain and terror were carried ten *yojanas* beyond. Some *rakshasas* escaped in the burning houses with scorched limbs, and the monkeys were ready to meet them and despatch them to the worlds of Yama.

Monkeys and *rakshasas* cried and roared and howled dreadfully and the ten quarters, the seas, and the earth itself quaked in affright. Rama and Lakshmana, restored completely, their strength and lustre enhanced beyond limits, grasped their mighty bows with utter calm and assurance. Sri Rama strung his bow and twanged it so that the hearts of the *rakshasas* were turned to water. Even as the Lord Paramasiva shines with his bow Pinaka, in hand fashioned in consonance with the rules laid down in the *Vedas* therefor, did Sri Rama shine with his bow; the twang of their bows drowned the cries and shouts of the monkeys and the *rakshasas*. These three separate sounds shattered the ten quarters. The arrows discharged by the bow of Raghuvira crashed down the towers and turrets of Lanka; and they fell as masses of dust like unto the peaks of mount Kailasa. The arrows found their way into lofty mansions, terraces, and towers and palaces; the sight maddened the *rakshasas* to fight madly and with no loss of time. Their roars like unto the lions and the forests made the very night itself terrible beyond limit.

Sugriva issued his orders to the monkeys, 'Find your way to the ladies' quarters of Ravana; bar the passage that leads to the central portion thereof; and fight on bravely. He who lends not his ear to my commands, let him be slain out of hand. And his armies rushed forth with flaming torches and gathered round the gates of the ladies' apartment. Ravana was enraged beyond bound at this insult to him. He stretched his limbs with mad fury and the sound thereof made the ten quarters quake in fear. He looked like the very incarnation of the wrath that surrounds the limbs of Rudra on the day of universal destruction by fire. He despatched in hot haste Kumbha, Nikumbha, and countless *rakshasas*, to the battle-field;

and these were the mighty sons of Kumbhakarna himself. And there went with these, Yupaksha, Sonitaksha, Prajangha, Kampana, and other *rakshasa*-warriors and generals, "Go ye forth at once, make short work of the monkey-forces, and come back unto me on the wings of victory." These were the orders they bore on their heads. With shining weapons of offence and defence, shouting aloft with their war cries and deeds, of fame, in tones of thunder and cried, "this *rakshasa*-contingent dash forth from the city gates." Their natural lustre and splendour was heightened by the sheen of their ornaments; and the earth and the sky were bright with the lustre thereof. Meanwhile the moon rose on high as if to witness the coming fight. The moonlight and the star-light too were allied to the brilliance of the ornaments and weapons of the troops on both sides and it was enough to chase away utterly the darkness that lay on the sky and the earth. The light of the moon, the light of the ornaments, and the light of the flaming houses, exposed to view the forces of the monkeys and the *rakshasas* as if in the glare of mid-day. In the light of sky-clad palaces burning fiercely, the seas around that reached the under-worlds in their depths rose and rose with their rising billows; and it was a lovely sight to behold. Flags and banners waving idly in the wind and adorned with fish and many other device and design of a light pattern, swords, axes, tridents, clubs, javelins, harpoons, spears, and such like weapons, infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariotry in countless numbers, ornaments, gold and gems, the sweet chime of bells, the reflected light from the weapons and the armour of warriors who used them in many a wise, the flames bursting from the arrows set to the string and drawn to the ear, the breeze laden heavy with the perfume of scents, flowers and garlands and chaplets fashioned variously, rare drinks and liquors, warriors and heroes of frightful appearance, shouts and cries and roars issuing from both sides like unto the roar of the sea itself in their volume and force, thus and many a wise the *rakshasa*-host marched forth to the battle-field like unto the seas bursting their bounds. And the monkey-troops on the other hand were no less ready to meet them; they shouted it back no less mightily. Then they rushed forth with resistless speed and fell upon the *rakshasa*-troop even as moths fling themselves on the raging fire. The *rakshasas* shone hugely in the shine of the weapons that they whirled and flung in ceaselessly. The monkeys were clean and

mad utterly besides themselves. They leapt upon their foes and battered them with trees, mountains and adamantine fists. But the *rakshasas* were not behind in their attack and kept up a never ceasing shower of arrows and weapons that shore off the heads of the monkeys in countless numbers; thereat dreadful shouts of joy and triumph arose from the throats of the victorious *rakshasas*. But there were among them many who were bitten and torn by the monkeys in their ears, cloven heads, from the iron fists and limbs shattered by huge blocks; thus and many a wise did the *rakshasas* stretch their length in groups on the battle-field. Even so did crowds of monkeys crash down upon the earth thanks to the might and prowess and speed of the *rakshasas* themselves. There was one fighting madly with another; and there came upon him a third man who struck him down out of hand. There was one who was insulting another dreadfully; but there was a third party who drew his attention away by deeper insults. There was one who was taken to task by his foe for some breach of military etiquette and closed it up in biting him madly; but there was upon him a third one who bit him more cruelly.

"Give, there he gives, I do give, why do you torture me thus? "Strike not, flee not, stay" and such like shouts were heard all over the field. Their garments, loose on their arms dropping wisklessly from their hands, spear, trident, and axe, raised aloft to strike in their mad rush towards the enemy, that battle-field was dreadful to behold as the armies swayed here and there to and fro. The *rakshasas* beat down the monkeys in groups; and the monkeys returned the compliment with interest. Their hair loose, their garments all awry, banners cut down, flags broken, armour shattered, thus did the *rakshasa*-forces take to mad flight while the monkeys barred their way and fought wildly.

CHAPTER 76

DEATH OF KUMBHA

WHILE the two armies were fighting thus most dreadfully, Angada chose Kampana, the *rakshasa* for a duel; and the foe challenged him in return and struck him on the head with a mace with terrible driving force behind it. The son of Vali shook woefully and lost hold of his senses; yet he came to himself after a while and tore up a mountain peak and hit Kampana squarely on his breast. That was enough for the *rakshasa* who stretched his length upon the earth, a hideous corps with shattered breast.

Sonitaksha noticed it and drove his car against Angada without the slightest hesitation or fear and riddled him all through with keen shafts and other variety of missiles *kshura*, *ardhachandra*, *naracha*, *vatsadanta*, *karni*, *ardhanaracha*, and *vipata*; these drove at him like the fire of destruction on the day wrapped in fierce flames. This but enraged Angada the more; and he made short work of the bow, the arrows and the car of the *rakshasa*. But his foe made light of it and sprang into the air with sword and shield and came upon Angada with the speed of thought. Angada was ready for him; he snatched the sword from his hand and clove the shield on the *rakshasa* from left to right even as he was investing him with the sacred thread. That sword served his purpose quite well, when he chased the *rakshasa*-heroes and caused their hearts to tremble with his frequent lion-like roars.

Then Sonitaksha whirled a huge bar of iron, fashioned like a mace, lightly and sent it against Angada. But Prajangha and Yupaksha drove their cars against the son of Vali at the same time. Like unto the moon between the constellations of Visakha, did that monkey-hero shine between Prajangha and Sonitaksha. Mainda, and Dvidida, his uncles were there to render him help if necessary; and they were at his side on the look out for *rakshasa*-heroes worth their arms. They did not wait long; and there came against them *rakshasas* of mountainous bulk, countless might and spirit with sword, shield and clubs. Then there began a fierce fight between

the warriors of either side . The huge trees sent by the monkeys were cut down, lightly, by the sword of Prajangha. The trees and the rocks crashing down upon the cars and horses of the *rakshasas* were ground to dust by the arrows of Yupaksha. Sonitaksha on his part, broke down the huge trees thrown with mighty force by Mainda and Dvidida. Prajangha waved aloft a huge sword and rushed at Angada with deadly intent. The monkey waited calmly until his foe was within easy reach; he tore up a mighty *Asvakarna* and hit the *rakshasa* with all the force he could muster. Again he crashed his huge fist against the hand that held the sword; and it fell down from his powerless grasp. Prajangha noticed it and delivered a mighty blow at the forehead of the monkey-prince with his adamant fist; and Angada was hard put to it for a while, so terrific was the force of it. But he managed to grow in strength and spirit and with a mighty blow of the sword of the *rakshasa* himself, clove the head and sent it speeding along the ground.

Yupaksha shed hot tears of rage when he saw his father's brother done to death; he sprang down from his car and since his quiver was empty, he sprang upon Angada with his dreadful sword waving aloft. Dvidida hit him on his breast and dragged him down. Then Sonitaksha, mad with rage that his brother was in the grasp of the enemy, put all his might behind the terrible blow upon the chest of Dvidida with his huge mace. The monkey was no weakling; yet he was confused for a while. Noticing that the *rakshasa* was about to deliver another blow with his club, he snatched it from his hand most skilfully. Meanwhile Mainda hit Yupaksha on the breast a dreadful blow. These warriors fought most fiercely, now dragging the enemy down to the earth and anon sending them whirling aloft in the sky. Dvidida tore at the face of Sonitaksha, dragged him down and ground him upon the earth. Mainda clasped Yupaksha with his arms and brought him down likewise. Thereat the *rakshasa*-host was filled with mad terror, lost heart, and ran to where the sons of Kumbhakarna were stationed.

Kumbha calmed their fears somewhat; he took note of the slain *rakshasa*-warriors; the monkeys were chasing their enemies without let or stay; he rushed at the monkey-forces and performed wondrous deeds of valour.

He bent his bow, strung it and kept up an unceasing shower of arrows upon his enemy with carefully selected shafts like unto the serpents of doom. His mighty bow to which were fitted arrows of matchless potency, resembled the rainbow in the sky radiant with chain lightnings and the straight *Iravata*. (The lightnings were the bowstring, *Iravata* was the mighty arrow, the rainbow was the bow itself. *Iravata* was straight in shape while the rainbow, the bow of Indra was semi-circular. *Iravata* appears along with the bow of Indra when danger and destruction on a large scale hangs over the country). Thus did he bend his bow and draw the string right to his ear. He selected an arrow decked with gold bands and eagle's feathers and sent it against the foe. The monkey trembled sore in his limbs, staggered for a while, and crashed upon the earth like a mountain-peak hurled from aloft. Thereat Mainda tore up a huge block of stone and sent it at Kumbha; but the *rakshasa*-warrior reduced it to dust by five arrows; and with another potent shaft he pierced in the breast of Mainda; And the monkey-hero measured his length on the broad earth in a dead faint, his vital centres cloven horribly.

Angada beheld his uncles struck down thus, and sprang upon Kumbha, who stayed his course by five arrows fashioned of black iron, and with another three of the kind he kept him there motionless even as an elephant driver checks his mount by his goad. Then he pierced them all over with other arrows fleet as the mind and unchecked in their course. That son of Vali made light of it; he was in no way affected thereby and kept up an unceasing torrent of trees, peaks, and mountains on the devoted head of Kumbha. And the son of Kumbhakarna ground them to dust through his arrows. Noticing that Angada was about to spring upon him, he hit him between the eyebrows with two dreadful shafts like unto the hunters frightened and turned back elephants at night with blazing torches. Torrents of blood rolled down the face of that son of Vali and blinded his sight. With one hand he shaded his eyes and tore up a huge tree that grew near with the other hand, clasped it tight to his breast and shoulders and sent it hurling against Kumbha with all his bodily might behind it. Beholding the huge tree come at him like the banner of Indra or the mount Mandara, Kumbha cut it to pieces with seven arrows and pierced Angada in the bargain.

That redoubtable hero of the monkey-world was sore beset thereby and fainted away. The sight was too much for some of his friends as he lay there like a huge steamer sinking under the terrible impact of winds and waves.

They ran to Rama and cried, "Lord! Angada, whom the enemies dare not dream of approaching, is now struck down by them". And Rama said to the heroes around him. "Speed there too and render Angada the help that he stands in need of". And they mad with fury gathered round Kumbha. Jambavan, Sushena, and Vegadarsi, shot angry flames from their eyes; they tore up trees and mountains, and sprang at the *rakshasa*. Like unto a huge mountain barring the way of a roaring cataract he stayed them by his arrowy downpour. Even as the ocean never exceeds its limits, those monkey-heroes of renown could not pass on through this arrowy wall that blocked them.

The ruler of the monkey-world, Sugriva put behind him the son of his brother, sprang upon Kumbha, and roared like a mighty lion when he catches sight of a huge elephant in rut roaming on a mountain slope. Then he tore up many huge trees and hit Kumbha therewith. Seeing them come against himself, blotting out the earth and the sky, Kumbha made short work of it by his keen arrows, and cleared the clouded atmosphere and the bits and fragments fell down on the earth on all sides like unto spiked clubs known as Sataghnis. But Sugriva was in no way disturbed by it, and put up with that arrowy sheet for a while. Then he charged Kumbha, snatched away his bow and broke it to pieces. He followed it up and spoke to Kumbha who stood there like unto an elephant with his tusks broken and cried. "Mighty *rakshasa*! who came into the world before Nikumbha! wonderful indeed are your valour, martial training, skill, humility, the unchecked flight of your arrows, and you are qualified to stand by the side of Ravana in every way. Prahlada, Bali, Vritra, and others fell before Indra and Kubera and Varuna; and you stand on the same level. You and you alone take after your father Kumbhakarna in strength. If you take your stand on the battle-field with your bow bent and strung and twanged, the very gods dare not draw near you like unto cares that keep away from one who holds his senses under perfect control."

“Most wise and keen of intellect! display your skill and might in battle; let my heart rejoice thereat. Your father Kumbhakarna thanks to his natural strength and courage, and your uncle Ravana thanks to the wonderful boons he secured, foiled many a time the *devas* and the *asuras*. But I count you as the equal of Indrajit himself as a bowman; and like unto Ravana himself in fame, you shine among the *rakshasas* as the brightest jewel through your strength and valour. All creatures are to lose themselves in wonder and surprise when they behold the fight between us two, like unto what came about between Indra and Sambara, the *asura*. I am sure you did place to your record today feats of valour impossible unto others. You displayed your skill in the matter of weapons, human and divine. You hurled down monkey-warriors of dreadful prowess, but you have fought with many braves and are naturally tired. So I will not draw upon myself the blame of the world, for slaying when you are at a disadvantage. So I let you go. Take rest for a while and I will do likewise. Then I will give you a taste of my polity”.


Sugriva, put upon him the cruellest disgrace possible in words that bore upon the surface esteem and honour. But Kumbha was not the man to put up with it lightly; it but added fuel to the flame. (It was like unto a stream of ghee falling into a flaming fire). His splendour and wrath grew apace. Then he cast his mighty arms around Sugriva and crushed him within them. Like unto two elephants in rut fighting for mastery these warriors breathed heavily now and then; they twined themselves round them and drew and pulled. Smoke and flames rushed out of their faces through the dreadful strain they suffered. Why, the very ocean itself was sorely agitated with mountainous billows. The solid earth gave way under the dreadful impact of their feet. Sugriva raised above his head Kumbha, the *rakshasa* and shot him aloft with the cry, “I send you on a visit to the ocean depths, free of charge”. (Ramanuja, the commmentator, makes a remark. Lanka on the Trikuta was one hundred *yojanas* from the sea; and Sugriva must be mighty beyond compare to shoot the huge *rakshasa* across the island of Lanka right into the sea beyond).

The briny deep sent up its waters all around and overflowed itself at the impact of the body of Kumbha, even as if the huge mountains

Vindhya and Mandara were cast into the waters at once. But Kumbha came out lightly and hit Sugriva on his broad chest with his fist like unto the *vajra* of Indra. The ruler of the monkey-world emitted torrents of blood from a shattered chest. The fist of Kumbha was stayed somewhat by the bony framework thereof, even as the lofty peak of Meru hit by the *vajra* of Indra. There arose from the body of Sugriva frequent sheets of flame, thanks to the dreadful force of the blow. Yet Sugriva was mighty beyond compare; and so he made light of it. Clenching his fist hard like unto the Lord of Day in the full splendour of his noon-day glory, he waved it aloft and brought it down with indescribable force at the huge chest of Kumbha. The *rakshasa* was sore beset thereby; his senses were in a whirl; like unto a spent-fire Kumbha measured his length upon the broad earth. He looked like the planet Mars, falling down headlong from the sky with his blazing rays. Sugriva's blow shattered the chest of Kumbha; and when he fell headlong, he resembled the sun himself under the mightier influence of the Lord Rudra Himself. Thus did the Lord of the monkey-world bring the death of Kumbha, the bravest of the brave *rakshasas*; the earth and the mountains and forests therein trembled in affright and mighty fear held the *rakshasas* under its grip.

CHAPTER 77

DEATH OF NIKUMBHA

HEN Kumbha, his brother met his fate at the hands of Sugriva, Nikumbha blazed as if he would reduce to ashes everything before him and rushed at Sugriva, the king. He snatched an iron bolt huge as a mountain; its hold bore the marks of the fingers of its owner and besides the sandal paste and scarlet powder; garlands and chaplets graced it. Bands of gold, gems, and pearls decorated it. Frightful to look at like the rod of Yama itself, it chased away the fear from the hearts of the *rakshasas* and infused boundless spirit and energy into them.

Like unto Indra's banner it was but a light reed in the dreadful grip of the *rakshasa*, who whirled it above his head and roared lustily


out of his huge mouth, causing the waters to cry out in dread agony. It gave him the appearance of huge cloud-bank illumined with chained lightnings and rainbows, roaring lustily; garlands of gold graced his shoulders. Quaint armlets covered his arms; rings of gold and gem were pendent from his ears; and the dreadful bolt blazed in his grasp. The tip of this weapon broke the boundary walls of the kingdom of Vayu. He blazed like a smokeless flame. Alakapuri with its bright mansions of the *gandharvas*, Amaravati rich with the huge palaces of the *devas*, Asvini and the other constellations, Mercury, Venus and the other planets, were forced to bend themselves to change their course under the mighty wind raised by the whirling aloft of the weapon of Nikumbha. Resplendent with the splendour of that bolt, unable to be approached by his foes, Nikumbha, the fire of dissolution, began its work of destruction among the monkey-forces. The *rakshasas* and the monkeys stood motionless through fear. "Prajangha and other mighty warriors like him met their fate at the hands of these monkeys; then what call had you, puny creatures, to take your place in the battle-field". Afraid of this remark from Nikumbha, the *rakshasas* were filled with a new fear. But Anjaneya alone opposed him, with his broad chest, ready for anything that might come from the enemy. And he brought down the mighty bolt, whirling it above his head with his arms that gave one the idea of a rival bolt itself and hit Maruti on his chest; and he, the monkey-hero, was the last word on strength, valour and courage. And his breast was adamant all through, so it broke to pieces upon it, the mighty weapon; and like unto a flame meteor from the sky it fell down on the earth; even as a huge mountain feels the influence of an earthquake did the son of Vayu tremble a bit under the mighty blow. Then he clenched his fist fiercely and hit straight and true at the breast of Nikumbha with all his force and speed he could lay behind it. Then the skin of the body of the *rakshasa* was torn to ribbons; torrents of blood coursed down all over it; and from it arose lightnings past count.

Nikumbha recovered himself very soon and crushed Hanuman in his mighty grasp. Thereat the inhabitants of Lanka cried, frightfully, "Hanuman, the mighty is now in the grip of our Nikumbha and helpless prisoner at that". Nikumbha himself bore him aloft towards Lanka; but Maruti struck him down with his fist

and freed himself. Then he threw him on the ground and pounded him severely upon it; yet he sprang aloft in the sky and came down with a mighty force upon the monkey; then he crushed between his arms the head of the *rakshasa* and roaring lustily, he broke his neck. The monkey-hosts rejoiced mightily and roared like lions when they saw Nikumbha, the mighty, down to death; the very quarters trembled thereat. The earth shook to her roots; the sky clove in twain; and the *rakshasa*-host were in the grip of mad terror. Thereat Makaraksha rushed forth to have it out with Rama.

CHAPTER 78

MAKARAKSHA GOES OUT TO FIGHT


 HE news of the death of Nikumbha and Kumbha made Ravana blaze forth in his wrath like unto the God of Fire. He clean forgot himself with anger and grief and cried out to Makaraksha, the son of Khara, "speed hence to the battle-field with all that you need in the way of troops; come back with victory over Rama and Lakshmana who have been driven out to the dark forests." Thereat Makaraksha was immensely delighted; his supreme confidence in his strength and courage made him accept the trust. He went round Ravana in reverence, touched his feet and ordered the commander of the *rakshasa*-forces that stood by to get his chariot ready and his troops to follow it. His orders were obeyed at once; and Makaraksha went round his chariot in reverence, seated himself therein and ordered his driver to take him at once to where his foes were. Then he cried out to his attendants and guards, "March forth before me all of you and begin the fight. His Majesty has ordered me to slay Rama and Lakshmana. My arrowy shower, tridents and other weapons shall, in no time, consume to ashes the brothers Rama and Lakshmana, Sugriva and his monkey-hordes like unto a forest conflagration, when it spread itself over dried wood in summer." The *rakshasas* felt themselves mightily cheered and uplifted by his brave words and marched forth to battle.

Able to take any from at will; long curved and gleaming tusks; tawny eyes, mountainous bulk, unkempt mops of hair at the

mercy of wind and rain, blaring forth like mad elephants; they entered the field of battle, while the earth shook under their tread. The din of conch, war drum and other martial music being brought over thousands of spots, war cries, shouts, slogans, lion roars, --- all met in one vast confusion and deafened the ear. Then the whip suddenly fell and slipped from the hands of the charioteer; the flag-staff on it crashed down for no reason whatever. The steeds moved with pain and difficulty quite unable to put forth their train evolutions and graceful. Their faces were wan and their eyes, blind with hot tears. A cruel wind and dust drove along as the wicked *rakshasas* marched forth to battle. These unlucky signs and evil portents made no impression whatever upon the *rakshasas*, so blind were they in their pride and haughtiness and conceit. Like unto cloud-banks or elephants, or wild cattle in hue, their bodies bearing the marks of many an honourable wound in countless battles, eager to meet their foe, they roared and shouted and cried on all sides every one trying to be the first to fall upon the monkey-host.

CHAPTER 79

DEATH OF MAKARAKSHA

 ON their side the monkey-commanders beheld Makaraksha coming against them and stood ready to give him a warm welcome. Then there began a terrible fight between the monkeys and the *rakshasas* like unto the one between the gods and the demons in the far past. Trees, tridents, blocks, and bolts were freely exchanged without any concern or mercy. Yet others favoured the sword, the club, the bar, *sakti*, *tomara*, and heavy truncheons. The arrowy shower from the bow of Makaraksha brought dire terror into the hearts of the monkeys; they were clean bereft of their senses and scattered themselves all over the field. Thereat the *rakshasas* roared and cried and shouted their joy of victory. Then Sri Rama bent his bow and stemmed the advancing *rakshasa*-hordes with a never ceasing stream of arrows. Makaraksha was mad with wrath thereat and cried "Rama, stay where you are, I will even fight with you. The arrows from my redoubtable bow are sure to drink your life-breaths. You blew my sire in the forest of Dandaka; and I mean

to clear the account overdue. The very sight of you fills me with boundless wrath. A raging fire burns me up quite when I think that you escaped coming within my view that day. Well, like unto the forest-beasts seeking their own death at the hand of the hungry lion, you have of your own accord sought my presence; I am really fortunate in that my long deferred hopes are to be realised today. You have to make a speedy and sure journey to the worlds of death, on the wings of my shafts. The *rakshasa*-heroes done to death till now by you will give you a place by their side and you will have a happy time of it. Why waste words over it. This is my advice to you. Let us fight today now and here on this battle-field with magic weapons, clubs, or bare hands or with any other mode of battle and let all created beings stand witness to it."

Rama laughed in derision, and said, "Hear you *rakshasa*!" waste no time in blowing your own trumpet. These boasts of valour and prowess become you not. No warrior ever succeeded in defeating his foe through a shower of empty words. True it is that your father Khara, Dushana and Trisiras, and their fourteen thousand warriors of renown met their deaths at the hands of my arrows in the forest of Dandaka. And today I go to add you to the number; vultures and crows with sharp claws and beaks will share your carcass, with jackals and have a glorious time of it.

Makaraksha was not one to brook such an insult; and he hid Rama under a cloud of arrows in reply. Raghava met them even before they came near and cut them down with his cruel shafts. The twang of their bows was heard all over the field like the rumbling thunder of huge cloud-banks. *Devas*, *danavas*, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, and *uragas* stood above them in the sky to witness that wonderful sight. Their bodies were clean riddled with their arrows; they were not behind hand of each other in cutting down the shafts of them. The quarters and the earth itself were hid behind the arrowy shower and nothing could be made out.

Then Rama waxed to wrath, broke the bow of Makaraksha, shot through the charioteer with ten Narachas and smashed the car and the horses. Thereat the *rakshasa* leapt from it lightly on the earth. He grasped a frightful trident *blazing* like the fire of the day

of destruction and whirled it over his head and sent it at Raghava. The prince met it half way with three arrows and cut it down; and it fell from the sky into bits and fragments on all sides like blazing meteors. The hosts of the heaven-world ranged along the sky, shouted their joy and praise of the valour of Rama. "Well done, well done." Makaraksha was inflamed all the more; he clenched his fist and sprang upon Rama crying, stay, stay. Run not. Raghuvira in turn laughed lightly and sent the magic weapon of the god of fire at the *rakshasa*. His heart was cloven into two thereby and his life-breaths left his body. The *rakshasas* were struck with mad fear at the arrows of Rama, and tried to escape from it within the wall of Lanka.

Thus did the son of Khara measure his length on the earth, like a lofty mountain smashed with the *vajra* of Indra. And the sight filled Rama with boundless joy. (As discussed before, one view makes this battle take place on the morning of the tenth day of the fortnight. The other view puts it thus. Akampana and Prahasta were slain that morning; Rama broke the crown of Ravana; Kumbhakarna was roused and met his death in battle. The afternoon beheld Rama and Lakshmana bound by the *astra* of Brahma; they were freed from it that night; Lanka was set fire to. Kumbha, Nikumbha, Yupaksha, Sonitaksha, Kampana, Prajangha and Makaraksha, fell before their enemies).

CHAPTER 80

INDRAJIT GOES OUT TO FIGHT

RAVANA was informed of the death of Makaraksha and it only added fuel to the fire of his wrath. He ground his teeth and thought for a while what steps he should take next; and at last he despatched Indrajit to the battle-field. "Best and bravest of *rakshasas*! Rama and Lakshmana are endowed with boundless valour and prowess, and it is for you to defeat them. No one can equal you in might whether you fight, face or unseen. Even Indra of matchless valour, was forced to flee before you. And what are puny mortals in your sight?."

Indrajit accepted with humble reverence the task laid upon him by Ravana; he performed the necessary rites and ceremonies over the sacred fire built on the battle-field. *Rakshasa* ladies hurriedly brought red turbans, for the priests to wear. (The *Sruti* lays it down that in such a ceremony as this, the priests should wear head-dresses of scarlet). The sacred grass spread around the fire became powerful weapons of attack known as *tomaras*; the scared wood offered in the fire were then fashioned of the tree known as *Vibhitaka*; the priests wore garments of dark red; the spoons, cups and ladles were made of black iron. The *rakshasa*-prince built up the fire according to the rules laid down in the Books; he caught hold of a black sheep, cut his throat and poured the blood into the fire as an oblation. Once lit, the fire shone with lustre without the slightest touch of smoke; and Indrajit rejoiced thereat, since it promised victory to him that day. The god of fire took mortal shape, like molten gold in hue, and with flames waving gracefully from right to left, received the offerings made. Having thus gladdened the hearts of the Lord of Fire and the *devas*, *danavas* and the *rakshasas*, Indrajit got into his car and was lost to sight in the sky above. Four horses were yoked to it. A mighty bow and keen arrows adorned its sides. It was made of solid gold. Figures of beasts and moons adorned it. Its flag encrusted with gold and gems shone with the lustre of fire. Under the wonderful protection of the *astra* of Brahma, brilliant as a hundred suns, Indrajit was possessed of illimitable strength and prowess so that his foes dared not draw near. He issued forth from the gates of Lanka, and made offerings into the fire to the accompaniment of *rakshasa* spells. (These were dear to the heart of the god Nirriti). He rendered himself invisible and cried, "I slay in battle this day, Rama and Lakshmana, falsely disguised as hermits, and will lay the trophy of victory at the feet of my father. This day witnesses the extinction of the monkey-creation from the face of the earth; the hearts of his Majesty and the *rakshasa*-world will rejoice thereat".

He flashed across the field of battle and waxed wroth at the sight of Rama and Lakshmana dealing destruction, as their arrows fell like showers from their bows bent and drawn to their ear looking like three-headed serpents. (The mighty shoulders of the princes and their lofty heads justify this description and attest the high and divine

character of the princes). "These are verily the objects of my attack today". He drew his bow to the ear and riddled them with his arrowy shower. The princes saw that an invisible one was attacking them from the sky above; they in their turn fitted keen arrows to their bows and pronounced spells of wonderful might. They covered the sky above with their resistless arrows and hit him thereby; but their force and brightness touched him not. The magic of the *rakshasa* spread a cloud of darkness, smoke and mist over the sky and hid the quarters from view. They could perceive nothing, neither his form nor the twang of his bow or the rolling of his car. In that utter darkness, his arrows alone fell upon them irresistibly without let or hindrance. Wonderful boons had he secured through his hard and terrible penance; he was beside himself with wrath; and he pierced Rama in every limb with shafts brilliant as the sun. Like unto a mountain side worn out by streams, the princes were pierced with *narachas* and in turn sent against him arrows bound with gold. They flew fast across the sky as birds, went clean through him and fell on the earth, bathed in his blood. And the princes cut down the arrows of the *rakshasa* with many a *bhalla* (a warlike weapon). They marked the place where these came from and despatched mighty arrows in that direction. But Indrajit spread himself all over the sky with the speed of thought and ceaselessly hit Rama and Lakshmana with keen arrows causing them untold pain and trouble. Bristling all over with his arrows, blood streaming down their bodies, they looked like lofty *kimsuka* trees in full bloom. No one could make out the form, the bow and arrows or the course of the *rakshasa*-prince. He was like the Lord of Day hidden under cloud-banks. Monkeys were struck down in hundreds and thousands and slumbered on the earth.

Thereat Lakshmana was clean beside himself with wrath and cried, "Brother mine, allow me to clear the earth of the entire *rakshasa*-brood in an instant with the *astra* of Brahma". And to him replied Raghuvira, "Boy, not so. The folly and guilt of one is not reason enough to deal death to the entire *rakshasa*-race. There are many here who do not fight; many have taken cover; many raise their hands and appeal for protection; many take to their heels; and many are careless of their own safety. To slay them is against law and justice. Bend your might on the death of this foe alone. Let

us send against him magic weapons of utmost speed. This wretched *rakshasa* has by his magic arts made himself and his car invisible. The *vanara*-chiefs will not let him escape with life, once they see him. My arrows will reach him and destroy him wherever he may be. He may enter the bowels of the earth; he may fly into the skies; he may take refuge in the worlds below or the heavens above. Yet my arrows will consume him and lay him on the battle a miserable corpse''. And he thought of the means for bringing about the death of that cruel *rakshasa*.

CHAPTER 81

THE ILLUSORY SITA

INDRAJIT was aware of Rama's resolve and came back to Lanka straight from the battle-field. He thought over the unfortunate death of Kumbhakarna and other countless *rakshasa*-heroes; his eyes were bloodshot with wrath; and radiant, he came out through the western gate surrounded by countless *rakshasas*. The son of Ravana who could strike terror into the hearts of gods and *asuras*, found Rama and Lakshmana ready to give battle to him. Hence he brought into use his magic art of illusion to help him. (He wished to conduct a rite in the grove of Nikumbhila and win magic weapons that no foe could withstand. Till then Rama and Lakshmana should be kept busy fighting so that they might not interfere with his preparations. And to that end he utilised the arts of illusion. He could not approach the princes, since they were blazing in their wrath. Besides them, there was only Hanuman who was acquainted with the form and features of Sita. As for Vibhishana that illusion could not deceive him. He desired to practise it upon Maruti and came out through the western gate, where the monkey-hero had taken his stand. And Rama and Lakshmana were not able to perceive him there). He placed beside him on his car a form like Sita's and began to kill her in the very midst of the *rakshasa*-forces.

He wanted to cloud the senses and the intellect of the monkey-hordes and drew near them with the false Sita. And they fell upon him from all sides with rocks, and trees. Anjaneya led them with

a huge mountain peak and there he beheld in front of him in the car of Indrajit, the lady Sita herself. She was wan and heavy-eyed with grief, her hair braided carelessly in one plait. Her garment was covered with dust and dirt; her form was emaciated with fasting and her limbs were dim and dark. She was a miserable sight to see as she sat there and Maruti was startled thereat. He gazed upon her intently for a while and decided that she was the lady Sita; for, had he not met her and spoke to her only a little while before. Her fear and agony, as she lay helpless in the hands of the *rakshasa*, brought burning tears into the eyes of the monkey-hero and his heart grew weak. He said to himself, "What is the purpose of this wicked *rakshasa* in bringing here on his car the lady Sita?" Then he rushed at the car of the prince followed by many a mighty monkey. His foe was beside himself with rage thereat; blood suffused his eyes and they blazed like baleful fires as he drew his sword and catching Sita by her hair, struck her again and again before the eyes of the monkeys. And she cried and wailed again and again, "Rama! Rama!". Hanuman beheld this unspeakable outrage offered to her who was dearer to Rama than his very life; to her who was the embodiment of womanly excellence and purity. The wretch drew her here and there by the hair of her head. What could he do? Hanuman's heart was broken; wrath overcame him and with streaming eyes, he cried. "*Rakshasa!* Are you seeking the shortest road to the darkest hell? How dare you lay hands on the hair of the beloved of Rama? You boast of your descent from Brahmarshis; yet your low *rakshasa* nature has not left from you. Fie! upon your meanness and foul habits! Monster of cruelty! base wretch! miserable sinner! the lowest and the most abandoned wretch in all worlds would not soil his fingers with such a deed. Mercy and tenderness are utterly unknown to you. This lady here is a prey to sorrow and misfortune; house, home, kingdom, friends, and husband all these she has lost. What crime has she done to deserve such treatment at your hands, such a cruel death? Verily, I say unto you, your death treads close upon the heels of hers. This single act of yours is enough for me to annihilate you. The hell destined for those who lay violent hands on women is yours for ever". And followed by the monkey-generals, he rushed at Indrajit, but *rakshasa*-heroes of terrible prowess barred the way. In his turn Indrajit spread terror and confusion in the monkey-hosts by his

dreadful shower of arrows and said to Anjaneya, "I know full well, for whom you are here Sugriva, yourself and Rama. It is for Janaki. But this Janaki shall fall by my sword before your very eyes. Then will come the turn of Rama, Lakshmana and yourself, Sugriva and Vibhishana. You condemn the slaughter of women. But everything is fair in war. Nothing should be neglected that could bring loss and destruction upon one's foes". And with his keen sword he cut the illusory Sita from right to left; the bloody cut looked like a sacred thread thrown over her. Soon she fell on the earth, covered with blood and crying "alas! alas!" Then Indrajit turned to Hanuman and said, "Now look here, my wrath has preyed on the wife of Rama. Sita is dead. All that you have done and all that you do, hereafter is utter waste". And he roared and shouted for very joy. The monkeys near were struck with confusion and stood there helpless, unable to approach the *rakshasa*-prince in the midst of his *rakshasa*-warriors.

Thus did that wicked *rakshasa* slay the figure of lady Sita and his joy thereat was boundless. On the other hand the monkeys lost heart and fled from the battle-field.

CHAPTER 82

THE NIKUMBHILA YAGA

HEARING the proud words of Indrajit, which fell upon the ears of the monkeys like Indra's thunderbolt they fled in all directions. Anjaneya beheld them low-spirited, haggard and in the grip of mad fear and cried, "Friends, what makes you lose your heart and you take to flight from the battle-field? Your prowess and valour, where are they? Does it become you to turn your backs to the enemy? Are you not warriors, one and all and come of noble descent? I shall go before you and you may follow me in safety". Thus did he put cheer and courage into their hearts; and they in turn were filled with energy and enthusiasm and armed with trees and rocks followed him joyfully with dreadful roar. Like unto fire wrapped in flames, did Anjaneya fall upon the *rakshasa*-host in mad fury dealing death and destruction all around. Even like Lord

Yama destroying all beings, on the day of dissolution, Hanuman clean forgot himself, in wrath and grief and hurled a huge block of stone on the car of Indrajit. But the charioteer beheld it in time and skilfully took the car far away. So the huge rock failed to smash the car, the driver and the horses and fell upon the earth making a deep depression, and countless *rakshasas* were smashed to pulp beneath it. Then the monkeys fell upon the *rakshasa*-prince in a body, and kept up an incessant downpour of rocks and trees; they slew many a *rakshasa*-warrior and roared variously in their joy. Dreadful *rakshasas* past count rolled there on the battle-field, struck down by large and lofty trees. Indrajit beheld his forces thus destroyed and hit the monkey-generals with his keen shafts and brought fear and confusion among the enemy's troops while his followers sent countless monkeys to their death with their tridents, swords and bars.

In another part of the battle-field, Hanuman gave a good account of himself as he annihilated the *rakshasa*-heroes with trees, peaks, and blocks of stone. He barred the way of the *rakshasa*-army and cried out to his monkeys, "Let us go back; what have we to gain by defeating this *rakshasa*? We counted our lives cheap enough, if they could be of any service to Rama and bring joy unto his heart. She for whom, we fought and killed, she, the lady Sita, was slain right before our eyes. Let us take news of this to Rama and Lakshmana and abide by their orders". Then he turned away from the field of battle with all the monkeys after him and sought the place where Rama had stationed himself.

But Indrajit saw that his purpose had been achieved, and crying "Now is my chance", and hastened to the grove Nikumbhila. He built up the sacred fire and offered into it flesh and blood. The fire that sprang therefrom was like into the setting sun. Indrajit, a past master in such mysteries, offered unto the fire the oblations that would bring him and his *rakshasas* fame and prosperity. And there stood around him many *rakshasas* who were experts in such rites and ceremonies.

LAKSHMANA CONSOLES RAMA

RAGHUVIRA heard the huge roar that arose from the battle between the monkeys and the *rakshasas* and said to Jambavan that stood by, "Friend! Hanuman is busy with some wonderful act of valour; what else could be this terrible roar of deadly missiles crashing in furious fight? So go out with your troop to help him". Jambavan did so and took his way to the western gate. Half way he met Hanuman at the head of a very large body of monkeys breathing hard with their incredible exertions. Maruti, in his turn, caught sight of that huge army of bears coming towards him dark and dreadful like dense clouds in winter. He even made them turn back and come with him where Rama was and with grief uncontrollable cried out. "We were engaged in hot fight; and right before our eyes did Indrajit slay the lady Sita with his sword as she was screaming and shouting for help. From that moment I am bereft of my senses and came here only to bring you this sad news."

No sooner did these words fall upon his ear then Raghuvira fainted and crashed down upon the earth like a huge tree. When the godlike Raghava fell down all on a sudden, the monkey-lords gathered round him and sprinkled over him cool water, rich with the perfume of lotus and lily. It looked as if a deluge of water fell and extinguished the flaming fire. Lakshmana clasped him to his breast; and sore stricken as he was himself with grief, sought to console Sri Rama with words charged with sound reason and deep wisdom.

(He desired to console Rama and bring him back to himself, from his deep despair at the news of the death of Sita. So he criticised mercilessly the nature and value of right and wrong. He asserted that the wisdom of the elders would have us rely mainly upon our own strength and valour). "You ever seek to tread the path of righteousness by carrying out the commands of your father. Kaikeyi and Dasaratha have wrested from your hand the crown that was within its grasp. Yet your heart is not in the least clouded thereby.

Your senses are under perfect control. Righteousness and justice are utterly powerless to save you from calamities. Why? Simply because they are idle words useful only in arguments, unreal like the horns of the hare. And injustice and sin are equally unreal and useless. Why? They have not been able to prevent the *rakshasa* Ravana from enjoying everything his heart could desire; I warned you long ago that it is utterly useless to take upon yourself the accomplishment of your father's commands. Let me prove to you how right and wrong are not supported by authority. Now what is authority? They are canons that are applied to the ordinary life of men. What are they? Is it direct perception, inference, or the word of the scripture? Let us take perception first. All things animate and inanimate are within the range of our five senses; but right and wrong are not; so this canon of perception does not help us, not in the least. (Tirtha has it that in the last *sloka*, Lakshmana argued that *karma* could not be supported by inference because happiness and glory were not the part of Rama who practised righteousness. And now he proves it again through the canon of perception). Even as the entire creation, movable and immovable, is open to the test of perception, *dharma* too should be open to the test. For we should sense it as we do the objects of creation; we do not. Then there arises the question to answer — why should righteous men like you be marked down for trouble and calamity? And why should wicked wretches like Ravana revel in glory and pleasure? (We are not justified in saying that right and wrong do not exist, on the bare ground that they are not open to perception. There are many things that our senses cannot grasp, but which exist for all that. Now though right and wrong may not be grasped by our senses, yet their effects must be within the reach of our knowledge and experience. Now it cannot be said that happiness is our portion at present; hence, the absense of the effect (happiness) proves the absence of the cause itself — *karma* (Tirtha).

I shall prove to you that right and wrong are not supported by the canon of inference. If wrong was true and real then Ravana who is wedded to it should have for his portion the darkest hell. Similarly if *dharma* was true and real then men like you who are ever wedded to it, should never experience calamities. The world hails you as the soul of virtue and justice; if so pain and sorrow

should never find a place in your life. Likewise happiness and glory should never find a place in the life of Ravana whom the worlds condemn as a monster of wickedness. That is why I say that the case of *dharma* has no ground of reason to stand on. (Govindaraja says that the canon of inference fails here). Righteousness that you guard so carefully pays you back sorrow and misery as the reward of unrighteousness. On the other hand unrighteousness that Ravana clings to, pays him back with happiness and glory, as the reward of righteousness. Further, *dharma* and *adharma* not only fail to bring to their votaries the results that they should — namely, happiness and misery, but they reward their followers with the very opposite results. Am I wrong then in thinking that they have no existence whatever? You may say that we have seen examples of *dharma* bringing us happiness and *adharma* bringing us misery. Then *dharma* should bring peace and happiness that is its legitimate result, to you of all men because your thoughts and words and deeds ever centre round it. And Ravana should reach the depths of misery, since his heart ever twines itself round unrighteousness. But we see that he pursues unrighteousness and waxes in fame and glory, wealth and happiness; while righteous souls see no end to their misery. That is why I assert that righteousness does not bring happiness, nor wrong doing misery.

Further *dharma* and *adharma* cannot find a place in our scriptures. It may be true that sinners reap misery; and righteous men are rewarded with happiness. But this misery and this happiness have but a brief existence; after three seconds they perish utterly. How can this transient *dharma* bring prosperity to anyone, or this transient *adharma* bring misery to any one? *Dharma* and *adharma*, have but a momentary existence as they are put into practice. Then they are incapable of producing results that should in the nature of things follow after a time. When the *Vedas* say, “stones float”, it is nothing more than a figure of speech. Even so vedic texts about *dharma* and *adharma* are only figures of speech. You may say that it matters not if acts do not exist beyond the moment. For, the gods worshipped through these acts may reward us with the very appropriate results. One goes through misery by that power or brings misery to another by the same means; if so grief and sorrow, the results of that sin follows

that god. And he who reaps the results has no part in it. Even so are happiness and pleasure, the results of *dharma*.

You may say that *dharma* and *adharma* are but other names for the Lord himself who is worshipped by virtuous acts and offended by wicked deeds. Then it is the lord that brings about and distributes happiness and misery. And he who reaps those results has no hand in it. You may say, "A king who owns no master formulates a rule of action out of pure frolic. He rewards those who obey and punishes those that break it. Similarly, the Lord rewards those that follow faithfully the laws he has sanctioned; and punishes heavily those that do not obey him and act perversely". Let me ask you, "Does He do so to please himself or others?" Then he who has no desire for anything, whose desires have all been realised, the perfect one who has nothing more to achieve. He has no ground for action of any kind. He will lay himself open to the charge of making one the four-faced Brahma and another a beggar; and this means partiality. You may reply, "Partiality never finds a place in one who brings into manifestation souls according to their previous acts. Why, can he not easily impel souls to confine themselves to the path of virtue? He who knows everything cannot stain himself with this blot. Why not you go further and charge him with utter mercilessness? Let us say that he gives them the judgment to do acts of virtue and wise, consistent with their deeds in former births through the stream of *karma*, coming down from beginning — less time. Well, the acts of previous lives give one the impetus to do similar acts in this life too. The very same reason impels him to do acts of virtue in coming births. Thus one should consistently commit himself to a life of virtue or vice all through and reap the results thereof all through in the shape of pleasure and pain. But it is not so in the world; there is no rhyme, no reason in what takes place here.

Let us say that the power that brings about the results of action is what is known as *apurva*, which is generated by the action itself. Well, that power is not to be seen by inference or direct perception; and the highest good of man cannot be the outcome of that force. If there is any such thing as *dharma*, no sorrow or calamity can touch you, who are its life and soul. But you are now in the grip

of unbearable misery. So there is no such thing as law of *karma*. And there is no room for the element *apurva*, since its results are not manifest. How do we say that the cause does not exist simply because we do not sense the results? Then we should posit the non-existence of objects beyond the reach of the senses. Even though we do not come by the results patently, we can infer the cause if there exists any of the auxiliaries. Now, *dharma* which is the chief cause and manliness, the auxiliary one and its absence counts for the absence of happiness too. *Dharma* cannot produce results independently of any other power; it is not able to do anything by itself. Happiness must be the outcome of something else that endows it with the power. So I think that there is no call to practise primarily that *dharma* is spasmodic, weak and unable by itself to give one happiness. In the achievement of any object, *dharma* is but an accessory to manliness; so it is open to us to lay aside *dharma* and devote the same energy to the development of manliness. You may say, "though *dharma* in general is subject to the above defects, the particular *dharma* of keeping one's promise should at all costs be practised". Well, you hold that it is *dharma* to keep one's word. But our father was the first to go against that *dharma*. He promised to make you the prince and the heir. Did he do so? Then he was the first to run his back upon *dharma*. Though you are his first born and endowed with all divine excellences, he doomed you to a life of misery in the dreadful forests and drove you forth from the kingdom without a spark of pity. It is but just that he should be placed in confinement and in chains. Ought we not to deal punishment to those that swerve from *dharma* as it is enjoined in the scriptures? You, who promised to carry out the word of your father, why did you not do so? He proclaimed before the people assembled that he would crown you; That was a father's promise; and his exiling you to the woods was also a father's promise. Why then did you choose to disregard the first and carry out the second. It seems that you did not guard truth well and justly.

Even if *dharma* and *adharma* exist, a king should not pursue either blindly or without discrimination. Great men have ever held that one should practise both according to the results desired and consistent with the changing times. If it is the rule that one should practise *dharma* alone all along, why did Indra slay Visvarupa first

and then perform sacrifices to free himself from the sin. Was it not enough if he just performed sacrifices. If it is the law that one should indulge in *adharma* all along consistently, then Indra need not have slain Visvarupa and performed sacrifices later on; it is quite enough that he just slew him. It is said that Indra, Varuna, Parjanya, Yama and Isana belong to the warrior-caste among the *devatas*. So Indra a *kshatriya*, has practised *dharma* and *adharma* according to the changing times. If one should practise either exclusively and all the time, he is sure to be ruined. So they should be taken in hand as befits the changing times and practised together. I have not the least doubt on this matter. (Lakshmana argues that there is no authority for existence of *dharma* and *adharma*. Even if there was any, he says that they are not primary causes. Now he tries to prove that Rama did not choose the path of *dharma*). Now wealth is absolutely necessary for the proper practice of *dharma* and you gave it up, when you threw away the kingdom that was within your grasp. Then how could you hope to carry out your *dharma*? Rivers flow from mountain tops; and you protect your people and take from them a sixth of their earning, which goes to meet the expenses of charity, rituals and similar action. As the water of streams disappear in summer, even so the acts of those who are poor and weak are ineffective. If you forgo wealth, it means not only inability to carry out your *dharma*. Sin follows upon it too. If you turn your back upon wealth and luxury, to which you have been accustomed from your birth, you will drive to acquire riches through unfair means; for you cannot in the nature of things forego what you have been used to and that leads to sin. A rich man is sought after by friends; kinsmen gather round him; he is considered a learned man. Verily a rich man alone is a man; a poor man is like a weak woman. A rich man is valiant; he has brains; he is a hero endowed with all excellences and one who casts away wealth rejects all the perfections mentioned above and seeks the opposite. I cannot for the life of me see what excellence you were after, when you threw away with both hands the kingdom that was yours by right, and betook yourself to the dark and dreary woods. Success crowns him who utilised his wealth to acquire virtue and realise his wishes. He who having thrown away his wealth, moves heaven and earth to acquire new wealth, but wastes his efforts. Nay, virtue and the fulfilment of desires are not the only outcome of well-spent wealth. Delight, satisfaction,

pride, virtue, anger, self-control and peace all are lit up by wealth. The highest gain hereafter is not the only result of wealth; nay it brings to us every kind of happiness here also. And you have it not. Happiness comes not to those who slight wealth when it seeks them and follow *dharma* alone. Just as one does not see the sun and the planets, when the sky is covered with rain-clouds I do not see in you the wealth from which comes happiness. Behold the miseries that have befallen you who put away the kingdom that was the root of all good and greatness and followed obstinately the duty of carrying out the promise made by your father. She who is dearer to you than your very life, Janaki, has been carried away by the *rakshasas*. My valour and strength will today undo the evil that Indrajit has done to us. Best and bravest of the Raghus awake and arise. I will pay him in his own coin and chase away your sorrow. Why do you not remind yourself that you were omniscient Supreme. How can grief and confusion have any part in you? How could they arise in you? Soul of virtue! untouched by sin! Here am I, born to no other purpose than to carry out your least wishes and commands. I but follow you as your very shadow, with the sole hope of such service. The sight of Janaki, the beloved daughter of Janaka, the knower of Brahman, being put to death by this wicked Indrajit has filled me with anger. My shafts will make short work of Lanka, its armies and Ravana himself, my grief and anger that made me use the weapon of logic against *dharma* and *adharma*. Now I await your orders to put forth my strength and valour."

CHAPTER 84

HOW TO SLAY INDRAJIT

THUS, did Lakshmana, out of his boundless love for Rama seek to console and hearten him. (This suggests that the arguments put forward by Lakshmana were but the result of his brotherly love and not real). Vibhishana arrayed the army in appropriate positions and came to where Rama stood with his four ministers armed to the teeth following him even as an elephant-herd follows the leader. He saw Raghava sunk in the depths of grief and the monkeys gathered round him with streaming eyes. Raghuvira, the best and

the noblest of the Ikshvakus, was confused in mind as he said to himself, "Alas! my foe has shattered all my hopes even when I am alive and caused me eternal grief and shame." This thought weighed him down and he lay with his head on the lap of Lakshmana. The sight broke Vibhishana's heart and plunged him into grief unspeakable; and he cried, "Wonder of wonders! how can this be?". Lakshmana noted the features of Vibhishana and glanced at Sugriva and the other monkeys; blinding tears choked his words as he told the *rakshasa* briefly what happened. "Hanuman told us that Sita was fully murdered by Indrajit; and from that moment he is even as you see him, clouded in his mind".

Vibhishana broke in and cried, "I guess the truth of all this. What Hanuman described to you so pathetically can never happen. The ocean must be dry and parched before this may come about. I know how the wicked heart of Ravana yearns towards Sita. He will never harm a hair of her head. I entreated him many times to restore her and he turned a deaf ear to all my words. Sweet words, gifts and separation from her own people all these have been powerless to tempt Sita. How can his mighty magic art and his brute force prevail against her. Indrajit has gone to the grove of Nikumbhila to perform a magic rite; to guard himself from interference he has thus thrown an illusion over the monkeys. Hence cast away from you this causeless grief; we should be there with our troops before he concludes the rite. The entire monkey-host loses heart when they see you grieving thus. Rest here and have no care. Send Lakshmana with the monkey-heroes. He will with his keen shafts, force Indrajit to come away from the rite ere it is finished. Then it would be easy thing to kill him. The feathered arrows of your brother shall drink the heart blood of the *rakshasa*. There is none in the whole of Lanka today who can meet us in fight after Indrajit is gone. When he is immersed in his rite, the monkeys will fall upon him and spoil it. And then will ring the hour of his doom, even according to the word of Brahma. As Indra hurls his thunderbolt, despatch Lakshmana this very moment to slay the *rakshasas* out of hand. Delay not; destroy your foe now. Command Lakshmana to slay Indrajit even as Indra orders the death of the leader of the *asuras*. But should Indrajit be allowed to complete his rite, he will vanish from sight beyond

the reach of *devas* and *asuras*. And then all of them banded together cannot hope to stand against him.

CHAPTER 85

LAKSHMANA GOES FORTH TO BATTLE


RAGHUVIRA was confused of mind and could not at once grasp what Vibhishana meant. Then he took heart, turned to the *rakshasa* standing by and said, "Ruler of the *rakshasa*-world! I wish to hear once more if you please, your well-meant advice". Vibhishana answered, "Lord, I carried out your orders and arrayed our armies and placed them under the respective generals. I have to bring to your notice another important fact. Your causeless grief weighs heavily on the monkeys. So cast off your grief, put heart into us and bring down the pride of the *rakshasas*. Take unto yourself clearness of mind and resistless energy. For, should we not get back the lady Sita? Should we not destroy, root and branch, the wicked *rakshasas*? Listen then to my humble suggestion. Let Lakshmana go forth with his armies to Nikumbhila and slay in battle Indrajit before he completes his dreadful magic rite. Let him bend his redoubtable bow and draw the string to his ear; let his irresistible shafts, like unto the serpents of doom, cleave his heart and drink his life-breaths. He has won the heart of Brahma by his dreadful *tapas* and got from him the magic weapon, Brahmasiras, the car and the horses that takes him to wherever he wants to go. Now he has gone with his troops to Nikumbhila. Should he issue forth, with his magic rite completed, there is not the shadow of a doubt that our lives are in his hands. But Brahma has pronounced his words. He who would slay you on your course and fight you before you reach Nikumbhila, or before you complete your magic invocations will be the death of you". So his death has been foreordained thus. Send Lakshmana on this mission. Rest certain that the death of Indrajit means the end of Ravana himself and his hosts.

Thereat, Rama said unto his friend, "Full well do I know his magic might. He got from Brahma his *astra*, must be of rare intellect, powers of illusion and might of arms. It is easy for him to strike

down the embattled array of the gods with their ruler at their head. Like unto the sun behind serried cloud-banks he ranges the skies in his car; and then no one can have a sight of his movements." Full well did he know the magic might of the foe. Lakshmana was a famous hero, doubtless, but he was about to fight no less a person than the wicked Indrajit. So he said to his brother, "Child! take with you the armies of Sugriva and of Jambavan; take also Maruti and other noble heroes to fight that *rakshasa* who is endowed with unparalleled powers of illusion. Vibhishana too has high intellectual powers, knows well the ways, habits and haunts of the *rakshasas*. He goes with you along with his ministers".

Lakshmana lost no time. He grasped his bow, donned his armour, fastened the quiver on his back and slung his sword at his side. Then he reverently touched the feet of Rama and said, "Brother, the shafts that go forth from my bow today shall cleave the heart of Indrajit and like the swans spreading over a lotus pool, cover the length and breadth of Lanka". He started on his mission blazing in heroic splendour. Rama clasped him fondly to his breast, gave him his blessing, spoke over him potent charms to keep away danger and harm from him on the field of battle and to ensure his safe return. Lakshmana, thereupon took his way to the battle-field with Vibhishana, his ministers, the monkey-hosts, Jambavan, Anjaneya and other heroes, until he came in sight of the armies of Indrajit. The magic might of Indrajit was known to him full well; so he took his stand at a place where he could fight with him before he entered Nikumbhila, even as Brahma has laid it down of old. He made his way into the *rakshasa*-force, dreadful to behold with his flags, banners, cars and weapons, himself brilliant like the sun piercing dense darkness.

INDRAJIT BEGINS HIS FIGHT


HEN Vibhishana turned to Lakshmana and offered his advice conducive to the glory and well-being of Rama and Lakshmana and to the utter destruction of the *rakshasas*. "Let our monkeys make short work of these *rakshasas*, dark like rain-clouds. Chase them away and you will come upon the hiding place of Indrajit. Your shafts must lay them low before he completes the rite. Rid this earth of this wicked *rakshasas*, the enemy of *dharma*, the mighty magician, the monster of cruelty, who strikes terror into the hearts of all beings". Lakshmana lost no time. He bent his bow, strung it and covered Indrajit and his armies with a shower of arrows terrible as bolts from the blue. Bears and monkeys slew the *rakshasas* with boulders, trees, teeth and claws. The *rakshasas* cut and pierced the monkeys with arrows, swords, *sakti*, *tomara* and other weapons. The fight between the two armies was terrible to behold. Lanka shook to its foundations. The sky was hidden from him by arrows, trees and rocks. Indrajit came to know that *rakshasa*-force was being destroyed and put to flight by the bears and the monkeys, and thus he was obliged to come out before the rite was completed, in order to protect his followers. In mad fury he strode forth out of the dark grove. His eyes and face were red with anger. He ascended his car, black of hue like cloud-banks with the horses ready to start. His eyes and face red and distorted with fury. Waving his bow aloft he rushed at his foes like Yama intent upon the destruction of all creation. The *rakshasa*-warriors that were sunk in despair till now caught sight of him in his car and rallied back to give fight to Lakshmana. Then Anjaneya tore up a lofty tree, huge like a mountain and struck down the *rakshasas* in masses. At once thousands and thousands of *rakshasas* hit him on all sides with sharp tridents, *saktis*, swords, chills, wheels, spiked iron maces, iron bars, battle axes and the like as well as with fists and hands hard as thunderbolts. It enraged them more, when he crashed down the *rakshasas* about him even as a lordly elephant makes short work of tender plantain trees. Indrajit beheld with wonder the monkey-

hero who worked havoc among his troops thus playfully without being in the least worse for it. He knew full well from of old, his prowess and strength. Anxiety seized his heart, and he said to his driver "Take my car to where that monkey is; if we are negligent now, our entire force will be destroyed." His orders were obeyed and Indrajit approached Maruti and hit him on the head with all his weapons at his command, but the son of Vayu broke them to bits and roared in fury. "You fool fight me fair and square, if you call yourself a hero. Know you not how your father fared at my hands? Do you stand up to me in battle and hope to return alive? Come, let us wrestle. If you can meet my attack I shall acclaim you, as the bravest of the *rakshasas*".

Then Indrajit bent his bow and placed arrows on the strings for slaying Hanuman. Vibhishana noticed it and warned Lakshmana, "This wicked *rakshasa* that vanquished Indra seeks to slay Maruti from his car. Cleave now his cart and drink his life-breaths; let your shafts be terrible indeed". Lakshmana said he would do it and beheld from afar that *rakshasa*, seated in his car, mountainous in bulk and roaring out frightfully.

CHAPTER 87

INDRAJIT AND VIBHISHANA

 WHEN Vibhishana took the mighty bowman, Lakshmana, and entering the grove pointed out to him the hall of sacrifice, his heart filled with joy. There he beheld a mighty banian tree black as a rain-cloud shutting from view the earth and the sky. Vibhishana said : "Indrajit proposes to offer sacrifice here to the elements to propitiate them and hopes to go forth invisible and fight unseen binding his foes with powerful arrows. Even before he comes here, your arrows must destroy him, his chariot, his horses and the driver".

Lakshmana, agreed and stood ready with bow bent and arrow fitted to the string. Meanwhile he saw the *rakshasa* seated covered with armour and bow in hand, his huge car blazing like fire and

gaily decked with martial flags. Lakshmana hailed him and cried "Mighty hero of the Pulastya race! They say that you have never known defeat, I call you now to fight. Here is a chance to show your strength, skill and valour". Thereat Indrajit looked at Vibhishana standing near and cried insultingly, "You traitor! you were born here in Lanka, my father's brother, my own uncle! And yet, you dared to betray me, your son as it were. Nothing is precious to you neither kith nor kin neither friend nor clan; you have given up all restraint, respect, reverence and duty. Unfortunate wretch! I pity you. You are fated to turn your back on your own people and to serve the foes. Good men will spit upon you in disgust. Your mean mind does not see the difference between leading a happy peaceful life, among one's own people and hanging on low-bred strangers. Even if one's enemy is endowed with all excellences and one's own people are without them, it is nobler for me to stand loyal to one's kith and kin. A stranger is a stranger at the best. A traitor is exploited and treated well so long as he serves the stranger's purpose. But once he has helped to destroy his kin, the same fate overtakes him. You have spoiled my rite. You have brought Lakshmana here. This heartless cruelty is possible only for you, my kinsman".

And to him replied Vibhishana, "Why do you boast thus bravely as if you knew not my nature and life? Well, you are the first born of Ravana and inherit all his vices. Have some regard for me as uncle, and stop this rude talk. True, I was born a *rakshasa*, but I have no part in their cruel deeds and I have chosen to tread the path of virtue. My heart hates unrighteousness and cruel deeds. You blame me for turning my back on you. But why did your father pierce my heart with harsh words and drive me out of Lanka? Where then was his feeling of kinship and brotherly love? Further, my heart was filled with disgust by his evil deeds and I had to leave his side. Even as one casts away a serpent that binds itself round one's hand, I had to spurn him who had turned his back on *dharma* and was devoted to sinful deeds. How can one find happiness by injuring others, covetousness and abduction of women? As one flees from a house on fire, one should run far away from such an evil life. To lay one's hand on others' goods or others' women, and entertain unjust suspicion of one's friends, this is the shortest and the surest

path to destruction. To slay a sage, to court the enmity of the gods, inordinate pride, anger, hate, envy of others' property — these sins throw all excellences into the shade even as cloud-banks blot out a mountain from view. My brother and your father, Ravana, is endowed with many a noble excellence; yet, I had to leave him, because of his vices. Death hangs over you, your father and indeed over all Lanka. You are a boy; you were born wicked; you never sat at the feet of holy men; you are puffed up with pride. The noose of death is round your neck and your end is near. Speak as your wicked heart impels you. You are in the grip of fate and yet you make fun of me. Well, try and come to this banian tree. You sought the enmity of Rama and Lakshmana and yet you hope to escape death. Now stand up against Lakshmana in fight; soon you will enter the halls of Yama and be his bondsman. Put forth your utmost might. Use your weapons and magic arts without stint. Give up all hope of escaping the arrows of Lakshmana and returning to Lanka.

CHAPTER 88

FIGHT BETWEEN LAKSHMANA AND INDRAJIT

INDRAJIT danced in mad fury at the words of Vibhishana. Like the God of Death, he sat in his car which was gaily decked and drawn by black horses. He looked carefully round at the swords, bows, arrows, and other weapons all placed within his easy reach. Turning his looks at the enemies' forces, he beheld Lakshmana, standing there before him in martial attire. Seated on the shoulders of Anjaneya, Lakshmana shone like the sun rising on the Eastern hill. (So Maruti was tawny and Lakshmana golden-hued like the sun). Then Indrajit turned to Vibhishana, Lakshmana, and the monkey-heroes and cried, "Behold my prowess this day. Famous heroes are you all, but my arrows will consume you to ashes like unto sparks of fire falling upon bales of cotton. I will cleave your limbs with the trident, sword and other weapons and despatch you to the halls of Yama. Like roaring rain-clouds, I will let loose on you a shower of arrows; then if there be any one bold enough among

you let him stand against me. That night in battle with my arrows hard as *vajra*. I struck down Rama and Lakshmana who fell down in a faint. Have you so soon forgotten it? Or are you ready to a journey to the land of Yama? The hour of destruction is upon you, else you would never court a fight with me, hissing in fury like the serpent of doom". Lakshmana laughed in disdain and said, "You speak charmingly of things that you can never dream of doing. A man of sense speaks after, not before, doing mighty deeds. You will never achieve your purpose of defeating your foes. But you waste your time in vain talk, living in a fool's paradise. You are here on the battle-field; yet, you hide yourself from view and range the skies. This is the work of a thief, not a hero. Here I stand right before your arrows. Come and stand before me. Then I shall know your worth. Why chatter empty words?"

Thereat Indrajit grasped his bow and shot out arrows of cruel venom. Hissing like serpents of doom, they dived deep into the limbs of Lakshmana. Covered all over with blood, Lakshmana blazed in martial lustre and shone like a flame without smoke. Indrajit was glad of his own prowess and skill. Roaring like thunder he cried, "My arrows shall this day torture you and drink up your life breaths; jackals, eagles and vultures will crowd round your corpse and eat your flesh. And wicked Rama will be a witness. Meanest of *kshatriyas*! base mortal! boundless is your devotion to Rama, is it not? This day will you roll on the ground, a headless corpse, with broken bow, and shattered armour; and verily he will stand by helpless".


Lakshmana spoke in pregnant and reasoned words "Oh, foolish and wicked one! you are valiant only in words. Put them away. You are always doing cruel deeds. These words are to no purpose. Let me judge of your might by your deeds. What is the use of speech without action? Let me behold your deeds if you would have me believe your boasts. Now, look here, I shall slay you out of hand without indulging in angry and haughty speech". He drew the string to his ear and shot five sharp arrows at the enemy's heart. Like unto blazing serpents they buried themselves with resistless speed into the heart of Indrajit and shone like the rays of the sun. The *rakshasa* was but roused to greatest fury and hit Lakshmana with three arrows that did not miss their mark.

Then they fought a terrible battle, each keen on vanquishing the other. Unequalled in strength and skill, the two heroes fought with each other like two huge planets in the sky. Fearless like Indra and Vritra of old, firm and irresistible, they fought like two lordly lions. They kept up a ceaseless downpour of arrows without stay or stint. They roared like huge cloud-banks and hid each other under a deluge of arrows. Even as Indra and the *asura* Sambara fought in ancient days the two valiant heroes with increasing fury and energy, displayed their martial training and skill.

CHAPTER 89

FIGHT BETWEEN

INDRAJIT AND LAKSHMANA — (*Continued*)

HEN Lakshmana hissing with fury like a lordly serpent despatched a powerful arrow at his foe. The *rakshasa* was taken aback at the sound of the twang and his face turned pale as he gazed on Lakshmana. Vibhishana who noted his pallor and the martial ardour that filled Lakshmana, cried "I see many signs that this foe of yours is tired and weak. Rush forward now and slay him speedily".

And Lakshmana lost no time in fitting to his string flame-like arrows and despatching them against Indrajit. He was dazed, his senses were confused; and like a man struck with a thunderbolt he sat there for the space of a *muhurta* knowing not what to do. But, unshaken in fortitude he recovered soon. His eyes fell upon Lakshmana who stood before him shouting for very joy; his eyes were blood-shot and he cried, 'Have you so soon forgotten the lesson that I taught you in the first fight between us, when you and your brother writhed in agony on the ground? Have you yet no idea of my prowess? Call back to your mind how you and your monkey-hosts were struck down senseless by my arrows, mighty and as thunderbolts. Or have you chosen a short cut to the halls of Yama? Have you come here to fight me yearning to go there? I thought you had come to your senses, having had some idea of my valour and martial skill. If you have forgotten, I shall refresh your memory

today. Stay fight carefully." And therewith he hit Lakshmana with seven arrows, Anjaneya with ten, and Vibhishana with many more, since he had revealed his secrets.

But Lakshmana laughed lightly saying to himself, This is but child's play". He despatched arrows of frightful might as he cried, "*Rakshasa!* I have never seen a warrior behave on the field as you do. Those intent upon victory will not shoot such puny shafts. Your arrows hurt me not in the least. Why, they are very pleasant and agreeable." And he followed the words with another deluge of arrows. The golden armour of Indrajit was riven thereby, and it was scattered over the ground, even as stars falling from the sky. His body was riddled with *narachas* which looked like trees hiding a mountain from view. Beside himself with fury, he shot a thousand arrows at Lakshmana; and broke into splinters his divine armour.

Thus did they exchange warlike compliments. They breathed hard, their bodies bristled with arrows and torrents of blood coursed down them, as they pierced and cut each other with sharp shafts. Veterans of thousand battles, of frightful valour, intent upon the death of each other the two shot through and through with arrows. With shattered armour and drenched in blood that flowed like mountain torrents, roaring loud enough to terrify the hearts of all, they looked like black thunder-clouds from which there fell a ceaseless shower of arrows. Long did they fight thus and yet they knew neither fatigue nor a weakening or ardour. They used many weapons and magic instruments and covered the earth and the sky with a canopy of arrows. None excelled them in the art of magic weapons; they kept it up tirelessly, ceaselessly, skilfully, and with wonderful lightness of hand and keenness of eye, never once failed to hit the mark; verily it was a battle that was terrible to behold. Like unto bolts from the blue, the twang of their bows fell upon the ears of every one, like clouds roaring in exuberance; the earth and the sky echoed to their war-like roars, and terrible bursts of laughter. Keenly intent on each other their bodies shone all over with *narachas* decked with golden bands from which torrents of blood rushed forth. The shafts passed through them and buried themselves in the earth smeared with blood. Some of the arrows clashed against one another in the sky. Some broke or cut down

their opponents. Like unto bundles of sacred grass burnt to ashes by the flaming *Garhapatya* and *Ahavaniya* fires, their arrows burst into flames. Their bodies, covered with dreadful wounds, resembled the *salmali* and the *kimsuka* trees, leafless but covered with red blossoms.

They vowed to slay each other and fought long and dreadfully. Though they ceased not, yet, they felt not the slightest touch of fatigue. Arrows were imbedded in their bodies and made them look like mountains paved with thick woods. Hidden by arrows, drenched with blood, their limbs resembled fires surrounded by lambent flames. Thus they fought on long and skilfully. Yet their martial ardour was not quenched and their arms were not weary. Then approaching Lakshmana who was fighting with unshaken courage and uncontrollable energy, Vibhishana came near and spoke to him sweet words of love and comfort.

CHAPTER 90

INDRAJIT LOSES HIS CAR

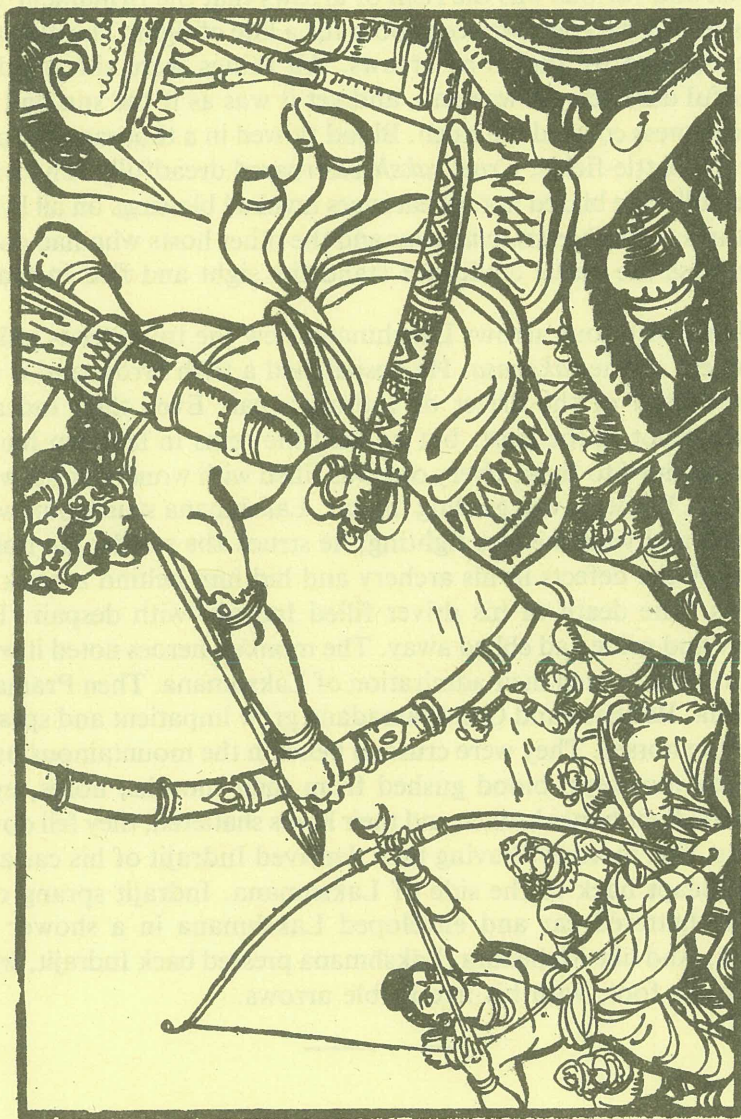
IKE two lordly elephants in rut, each intent on slaying the other, they fought with mounting fury. Beholding this, Vibhishana spread terror among the *rakshasas* by his keen arrows. Even as the *vajra* of Indra clove the mountain and cut off their wings, they clove the bodies of the *rakshasas*. His ministers were busy cutting down the *rakshasa*-heroes with such weapons as swords and tridents. Surrounded by his ministers, looked like a lordly elephant-leader surrounded by elephants in ruts. (He came there as a spectator; then he wanted to take part in the fight. Yet he held back for a while, unable to decide which of the two warriors was stronger. Seeing that they were well-balanced he wanted to be of service to Rama and joined the fight). Ready-witted and skilful of speech, the *rakshasa*-prince, knew that it was time for him to put heart into the monkey-heroes and he cried "Friends! Ravana has no one else to lean on but this *rakshasa*; nor has he another army to send up. Then why stay your hands? If he should die, take it that all the *rakshasa*-warriors are all dead and gone, except Ravana. Prahasta,

Nikumbha, Kumbha, Kumbhakarna, Dhumraksha, Samhradi, Vikata, Nighna, Tapanā, Adhuma, Praghosa, Jangha, Prajangha, Agniketu, Rasmiketu, Vidyujjihva, Dvijihva, Suryasatru, Akampana, Suparsva, Chakramali, Jambumali, Mahamali, Agniprabha, Suptaghna, Yajnakopa, Vajradamshttra, Kampana, Devantaka, Narantaka and the others, are they of the ordinary crowd? In strength, valour, prowess, and warlike skill, have they their equal? Have we not slain them all in battle? He who has crossed the ocean, with the aid of his powerful arms, can he not mind walk over a hoof-mark filled with water. And we have slain them in fair fight. There remain none but these for you to fight with and put to rout. The *rakshasas* who came out against us with hearts swollen with pride, did any of them return to Lanka? He is my brother's son and as such it ill-becomes me to take his life. Even if for the sake of my Lord Rama I put away mercy from my heart and am ready to slay the son of my brother, hot tears blind my eyes. Let the mighty hero Lakshmana curb his pride. His followers will fall under the hands of our monkeys". Thus heartened by Vibhishana, the monkeys rent the sky with shouts of joy, waved their tails aloft, and crying like peacocks at the sight of rain-clouds, slapped their shoulders and thighs and dashed their tails upon the ground in mad fury. Jambavan, that shone in the midst of that group of the monkey-horde, slew the *rakshasas* out of hand with blocks, claws and teeth; and they in turn, struck him on all sides fearlessly with arrows and keen weapons. Even like the terrible fights of old between the *devas* and *asuras*, did the long and tireless battle rage between *rakshasas* and monkeys. Then Anjaneya tore up a huge tree and slew many thousand *rakshasas* with it.

Indrajit fought with his uncle for a while and turned towards Lakshmana. They were clean hid behind the shower of arrows. Like unto the sun and the moon blotted from view behind banks of clouds when the rains set in, they were invisible behind the canopy of arrows shot by them. They drew the shafts from quivers; they set them on the strings; they grasped the bows firmly; they shot the arrows therefrom drawing the bow-strings to the very ear. Fine was their foot work, right and left, front and back. They took careful aim. But all this was utterly beyond the sight of the spectators, so quick were their movements. The sky was hid from view by the arrowy


showers; one could not make out another in the darkness. It was impossible to say whether Lakshmana hit Indrajit or the other way. So fast and furious was the rush of arrows that the firmament was one sheet of darkness without room for a line of light. The quarters were blocked by flights of arrows. All things were shrouded in dreadful darkness. It was day, and yet it was as if the sun had set and darkness covered the earth. Blood flowed in a thousand streams over the battle-fields. Cruel *rakshasas* roared dreadfully. The wind stood still. Fire blazed not. Great sages invoked blessings on all living creatures. *Gandharvas*, *charanas* and the other hosts who had come to witness the battle could not stand the sight and fled in fear.

Then with four arrows Lakshmana slew the four steeds yoked to the car of the *rakshasa*. He despatched a fifth arrow and it cut off the head of the driver of Indrajit's car. Even then Indrajit blenched not in the least, but he held the reins in his own hands and continued to fight. Every one was filled with wonder at his war-like skill. While he was guiding the car, Lakshmana struck him with arrows; and while he was fighting, he struck the steeds. He noted carefully the defects in his archery and hid him behind a bank of arrows. The death of his driver filled Indrajit with despair. His energy and pride had ebbed away. The monkey-heroes noted it with delight and shouted their admiration of Lakshmana. Then Pramati, Sarabha, Rabhasa and Gandhamadana grew impatient and sprang upon the horses. They were crushed beneath the mountainous bulk of those monkeys; blood gushed from their mouths, noses, eyes and ears; their bones broken and their limbs shattered, they fell down lifeless. The monkeys having thus deprived Indrajit of his car and horses leapt back to the side of Lakshmana. Indrajit sprang out of his shattered car and enveloped Lakshmana in a shower of arrows. And like Mahendra, Lakshmana pressed back Indrajit, who fought on foot, with his irresistible arrows.



CHAPTER 91

THE SLAYING OF INDRAJIT

 HIS horses having been killed, Indrajit fought on foot. He was beside himself with wrath and blazed like fire. The heroes, redoubtable bowmen as they were, fought like two elephants or bulls in the forest each intent upon worsting the other and their followers went with them wherever they went, unable to take their eyes off from the heroes. Then Indrajit praised his men and cheered them up, "Friends, in this darkness, we cannot make out friend or foe. I will cover with a cloud the minds of the monkeys and slip away. Keep fighting, so that they might not notice my absence. I shall go and fetch another car. No one should know of my visit to Lanka. Be careful". Saying this he left the field and soon came back in another car decked with gold; and in it was carefully arranged every warlike instrument. Mighty steeds were yoked to it, and the driver was devoted to him, and ever ready with fruitful advice. There was nothing that he did not know about horses, being a master of the mysteries of their heart. (The nature, the quality and ways of horses form a separate branch of knowledge which enables one to utilise them in any way he likes).

Seeing Indrajit come back upon another car, the monkeys and Vibhishana were mightily surprised and lauded his intelligence and agility. The *rakshasa* consumed as it were the monkey-generals in the fire of his wrath and pierced them with hundreds and thousands of arrows. He bent his bow in a circle and set up an arrowy wall which prevented the monkeys from taking to their heels and turned their steps towards the world of death. Despite their prowess they now lost heart and sought shelter with Lakshmana even as all created beings seek shelter with Brahma. In his turn, Lakshmana blazed in the radiance of his martial ardour and displayed his skill and agility by breaking the bow of Indrajit. In an instant Indrajit strung another bow, but Lakshmana cut it with three arrows and pierced his body with five arrows. They passed clean through him and entered the earth like huge serpents fiery red. Indrajit had his armour

riven to bits; he vomited gouts of blood; yet he eased himself in another armour, took up a fresh bow firmly strung and kept up most skilfully a never ceasing stream of arrows, even like Indra sending down fierce rain. But Lakshmana blenched not and displayed his deftness by keeping the shower away from him; and all wondered thereat. Then he uttered a charm that increased the speed of the arrows and hit each of his foes with three arrows and their leader himself with many more. The *rakshasa* thus harassed by the mighty Lakshmana, struck back at him with many a shaft which the prince cut down before they reached him. Lakshmana wound it up by cutting off the head of the driver with a keen shaft (*Bhalla*) and made it fall at the feet of his master. Being perfectly trained the horses pulled the car as usual and displayed many curves and steps in their courses none the worse for the absence of their driver. This enraged Lakshmana who made them tremble with many a shaft. Indrajit in his turn blazed with wrath and sent ten arrows against Lakshmana. They fell upon him like the *vajra* of Indra and shattered his armour. He donned another; whereat Indrajit said to himself "There is no breaking this", and he showed his skill by striking the prince on his forehead with three arrows. Lakshmana shone like a mountain with three lofty peaks. It pained him sore and he hit back Indrajit on his face with five keen shafts. They were both heroes armed with strong and matchless bows. Their prowess put terror into the hearts of others. They struck each other ceaselessly with sharp arrows. Their limbs drenched in blood looked like *kimsuka* trees in full bloom. Each intent on defeating his foe, neither left in the other's body any space untouched by arrows. Then Indrajit in mad fury struck Vibhishana's face with three arrows. He clove the monkey-leaders with one arrow each. Thereat Vibhishana brought his club down on the horses of Indrajit and killed them. Then Indrajit leapt down lightly from his car and whirled the weapon *sakti* and sent it against Vibhishana, his uncle; but Lakshmana cut it down into ten pieces with his keen arrow. Vibhishana hit the son of Ravana on his broad chest with five arrows hard like *vajra*. They passed through his body and came out like serpents fiery red.

Then the *rakshasa* resolved to slay his uncle, took up an arrow given him of old by Maya with his blessings. Lakshmana saw him

place it on the string and took up an arrow presented to him in his dream by Kubera. It was impossible for anyone to foil it. Indra or the *devas* and the *asuras* combined could not stand against it. The combatants endowed with boundless strength drew their bows to their ears with their arms, hard and strong, like the weapon *parigha* and the twang was like the cry of the Krauncha bird. The two shafts deftly placed upon the strings most shone with boundless lustre. Shot from their bows they dashed against each other in the sky and fell on the earth like two mighty planets crashing into dust and ashes; The impact resulted in a terrible blaze of fire mixed with smoke. The sight filled the warriors with anger and shame. Lakshmana, beside himself with wrath shot the *astra* of the Lord Varuna, and Indrajit met it with the *astra* of Rudra. Then Indrajit sped the *astra* of the Lord of Fire, fierce enough to consume all creations, but Lakshmana with the *astra* of the Lord of Day quenched its spirit and fire. Then the son of Ravana bent on the destruction of his foe, sent against him the *astra* of the *asuras*; and from it blazing tridents, chills, swords, battle axes and iron bars emerged. That *astra* which none could stem and which could destroy all foes was rendered useless by the *astra* of Mahesvara that was shot by Lakshmana of mighty radiance. The denizens of the sky ranged themselves round Lakshmana as the combatants fought with gruesome fierceness. Hosts of the heaven-world gathered to witness the struggle while the monkeys and *rakshasas* fought with dreadful shouts and cries. The *rishis*, the *pitrus*, the gods, the *gandharvas* and *uragas* with Indra at their head, showered blessings on Lakshmana. They encouraged him and extended their protection over him. Then Lakshmana placed another arrow upon the string. It was the mighty *astra* of Indra himself. It was like unto the God of Fire capable of consuming all creation. Adorned with beautiful eagle feathers, endowed with every excellence that an *astra* could have, worked over most skilfully with gold patterns, it was capable of destroying the bodies of its foes. None could stay it. None could stand its force. The heart of the *rakshasas* quaked at the very sight of it. It was charged with venom like the serpent of Time; the hosts of heaven held it in reverence. With its help Indra in the far past, defeated the *danavas* in the great fight between the *devas* and the *asuras*. That *astra* of Indra, that knew no defeat till then, did Lakshmana, the best and bravest of men, fit into his mighty bow;

he drew the string to the ear, as he blazed in his wrath even like unto the God of Death that destroys the worlds and he uttered words of wondrous might to accomplish his purpose. "If it is true that Sri Rama has come down as the son of Dasaratha, if it is true that Rama is the very embodiment of *dharma*, if it is true that Rama never goes back upon truth, and if it is equally true that he is matchless in prowess then Oh! *astra* of Indra! slay this Indrajit, the son of Ravana, that stands before me". He then spoke the spells pertaining to the *astra* of Indra, set it on the string and shot it with the intent of slaying Indrajit. It failed not, it severed the head of Indrajit with its head-dress, crown, ear-rings and other ornaments and flung it on the ground. As the huge head of Indrajit lay on the ground with the blood gushing out in torrents it looked as if it were fashioned of gold. Thus did the son of Ravana meet his death at the hands of Lakshmana. His bow was broken and his armour cloven and he died in warlike array. Even as the gods rejoiced when the *asura* Vritra was slain by Indra, the entire host of monkeys and Vibhishana revelled in joy and rent the skies with shouts of victory. On high, gods and *rishis*, *gandharvas* and *apsarasas*, lauded the hero Lakshmana. Indrajit was dead; and the victorious monkeys put to rout and scattered in all directions his armies lightly. They were senseless with fear and raced towards Lanka casting away their weapons. Some took refuge in the city itself. Some flung themselves into the sea, some ran up the heights of mountains. When Indrajit, the mighty hero lay dead on the battle-field, none of the many thousands of the *rakshasas*, who had been there, could now be seen. Even as the sun vanishes from view when it sets, his troops sought shelter all over the land now that their master was no more. And he measured his length on the earth, a headless corpse, with his limbs sprawling like the sun bereft of his rays, or a fire quenched. The death of the *rakshasa*-prince lifted the weight of sorrow and misery that lay heavy on the world; and it shone once more in the utter fearlessness of any foe. The Lord of Day himself whose lustre was dimmed through fear of the *rakshasas*, shone in the fullness of splendour. Indra and the *deva*-hosts were beside themselves with joy now that the monster of wickedness had been destroyed. The gods beat the drums of heaven. The *apsarasas* danced in high glee. The *gandharvas* sang melodiously. The hosts of heaven rained flowers upon Lakshmana and lauded him variously.

The waters and the quarters shorn clear and stainless, since he, who held the worlds in abject terror, was dead. All rejoicing, — the *devas*, the *gandharvas* and the *danavas* gathered together and cried “Now indeed may the brahmins go about without fear or anxiety”, Vibhishana, Hanuman, Jambavan and the other monkey-lords cried, “Lakshmana! victory, to thee, for ever,” and they could not praise him enough. The monkeys gathered around him and roared ceaselessly. They slapped their shoulders, brandished aloft their tails and brought them down against the earth. They sang their deeds of valour; they embraced one another in the fullness of joy. They kept up a perpetual roar, “May your arms be ever crowned with success”. The dear friends of Lakshmana, the very gods on high, were delighted beyond measure by his wonderful exploit which others can never dream of accomplishing. (The news was spread by the *charanas*, but they could not believe it. What they heard was incredible and they came to the field to assure themselves of the truth of it. And the sight which met their eyes struck them with amazement).

CHAPTER 92

RAMA PRAISES LAKSHMANA

LAKSHMANA, drenched with blood and pierced with arrows, was highly pleased at laying low the mighty Indrajit who had vanquished Indra, the king of the gods, and had held him captive. Then he went towards the place where Raghava and Sugriva were. Jambavan and Hanuman helped him as he was fatigued. And the other monkeys followed them. He prostrated himself at the feet of Raghuvira, gave out his name and ancestry and like Brihaspati by the side of Indra, standing by the side of his brother narrated the events of the day — how he fought a dreadful fight with Indrajit and slew him. He faltered in his speech through fatigue, as it were. (In fact Lakshmana was a stranger to pain or weariness. He had to play his part in the world and that is why Valmiki says ‘as it were’). But Vibhishana was not content with this short narration of Lakshmana and repeated the tale in greater detail. Raghunatha of boundless might was beside himself with delight when he heard

of the death of Indrajit at the hands of Lakshmana. "Lakshmana! Excellent! well have you done the work that had to be done. Boundless is my joy. Indrajit dead, the destruction of all our foes is certain". He smelt the crown of his head; but Lakshmana withdrew and stood apart ashamed that his valiant brother, the prince of heroes, should make much of a trifle and praise him out of measure. Raghunatha drew to himself his dear brother riddled with shafts, made him sit on his lap, and clasped him fondly to his breast and gazed at him long and lovingly. Noting that the boy was wounded all over with arrows, that his body was bathed in blood and he was breathing hard through fatigue, Raghunatha was deeply grieved and sighed heavily deep sighs in his turn. Then he smelt his head again, passed his hands over his body and consoled the prince "Boy you perform deeds of valour impossible for others; and you have this day wrought a deed that none have dared, to dream of till now and that has brought happiness and safety to all the worlds. You cut off the right hand of Ravana. The cruel *rakshasa*, Indrajit, was his sole stay and support. Vibhishana and Hanuman too have done mighty deeds in battle today. You all fought hard with that *rakshasa*-hero unceasingly for three days — on the eleventh, twelfth and the thirteenth days of the fortnight. Today I can boldly say that my foes are no more. When Ravana hears the death of his son he will come out against me with all his forces, unconquered till now. He will rush forth to battle, maddened with grief at the death of his son. I will hem him round with our monkey-hosts. I will slay him out of hand. What do I lack so long as you are by my side to carry out my wishes? You have slain him who had vanquished the mighty Indra himself. I hold already in my hands Sita and this earth".

He praised his brother in noble words and clasped him again to his breast. Then he turned to Sushena and said "You are skilful and wise. My dear brother is sore wounded with arrows; free him from pain and make him whole again. Vibhishana and the other monkey-heroes too are grievously hurt with arrows and weapons. It is up to you to give them back their strength and valour". So Sushena made Lakshmana inhale potent drugs. The arrows that had entered his body slipped out themselves. Pain fell away from him and his wounds were healed. Vibhishana and the other monkeys

were properly attended to. Lakshmana was his own self again, strong, healthy, and cheerful. Rama, Sugriva, and Vibhishana rejoiced thereat. Rama could not praise enough the wonderful feat of Lakshmana that day. And the monkey-lords too danced with joy at the news of the death of Indrajit.

CHAPTER 93

A FATHER'S GRIEF

THIS ministers brought Ravana news of the death of Indrajit in battle, after they had assured themselves of the truth of it personally. (Ravana had strong doubts about the safety of Indrajit even when he knew that the sacrifice in the Nikumbhila grove was interrupted). "Your Majesty! your son, dear to your heart beyond measure, Indrajit, unparalleled in radiance and splendour, him has Lakshmana slain in battle this day, thanks to the counsel and help of Vibhishana. A mighty warrior was he, our prince; defeat was a thing unknown to him till now. He worsted Indra, and bound him in chains; and he was a worthy son of your majesty in every way. He fought long and hard with a foeman equal to him in every respect. Lakshmana had a very dreadful time of it; but at last, Indrajit fell before the *astra* of his enemy and is now enthroned in the worlds above."

The words of his ministers, conveying the terrible news of the death of Indrajit in battle, wrung from him a terrible cry, 'Ha and he fell down in a swoon, like an uprooted tree. After a long time he came back to his senses. Yet he was dazed and lamented piteously. "Alas! the joy of my heart! the light of my eyes! matchless hero! best and bravest of our race! Victor over Mahendra, the ruler of the gods! and was it so fated that you should lose your life at the hands of Lakshmana? Your arrows winged with wrath used to cleave the lord of Death and the peaks of mount Mandara. This Lakshmana, what is he before you? Now for the first time, I respect Yama now that you are in his power. They say that the halls of the heaven-world are open to him, who gives up his life in the service of his master. Warriors on earth and gods above pray eagerly for

such an end. Hence I should not grieve because you have won the heaven of noble warriors. This day will bring to the gods, the rulers of earth and the *rishis* deep and happy slumber now that they have heard the news of the death of Indrajit. But, alas for me, the world is empty now, these three worlds, are all empty, this earth and its mountains and forests. My Indrajit, the soul of my soul is no more. The lamentation of your wives in their palaces will pierce my ears and heart like the cries of elephants in mountain caves over their lost lord and mate. This *rakshasa*-kingdom, boundless and peerless, was yours, you were the heir apparent to it; this Lanka, these *rakshasas*, your mother Mandodari, your beloved queen and myself, your fond father, all these you have left behind and betaken yourself where I know not. It would be in the fitness of things that I should precede you to the halls of death. You should perform my funeral rites. But you are dead and I am left to perform your obsequies. Strange verily are the ways of Fate. Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, and the other monkeys are alive and hearty. You have not fulfilled my vow, you have not avenged me. You have left us all helpless and you have gone where I know not". Thus and in many ways did the matchless Lord of Lanka, grieve.

Ravana was by his nature furious; grief at the death of his son heightened his anger beyond measure; and he shone like the sun that blazed forth on a scorching summer day. He knit his brows and looked like the huge billows that team with monsters on the day of dissolution. Even like the *asura* Vritra of old, he belched out smoke and flames. The *rakshasa*-hero overwhelmed by grief and anger took counsel with himself and concluded that it was best for him to slay Janaki. His eyes of fiery red grew redder yet with wrath and blazed more dreadfully terrible to behold. He swooned as it were with the fire of his wrath and none dared look at his face blazing like Rudra's, in the height of his fury. From his eyes fell not tears but burning flames and boiling oil. He ground his teeth and the noise was like that of countless mills driven furiously by the *danavas* pouring into them huge heaps of sesamum. Wherever he turned in his fury, like the fire of universal dissolution, the *rakshasas* quaked with terror and vanished from view. None dared to come within the range of his sight, as he stared round in his anger, as if he would swallow all creations, animate and inanimate.

He noted that his troops and followers were terror-struck and had no heart for fighting. Hence he spoke to them words of cheer and encouragement. "Thousands of years have I spent in stern austerities and at the end of every millennium, I have pleased the heart of Lord Brahma. Thanks to the might of my *tapasya* and to the grace of the grand sire, I have nothing to fear from the *devas* and *asuras*. Brahma has given me an armour of gold, brilliant like the noonday sun. It was proof against *vajras* and *saktis*, when I fought with the *devas* and *asuras*. And who can stand against me when, wearing this armour, I enter the field in my car? The very lord of the gods, Indra himself, armed with his *vajra*, dare not face me. And I have the bow and arrows, that I won from Lord Brahma through my *tapas*. With these very weapons, I defeated the gods and the *asuras* in times past. And today I shall take them out to the sound of martial instruments, and send forth to slay Rama and Lakshmana".

The *rakshasa*-hero, beside himself with grief and wrath at the death of his son, took counsel with himself and decided that it was good for him to slay Sita. With bloodshot eyes and dreadful looks and aching heart, he glanced at the *rakshasas* round him and cried, piteously "Friends! my boy intended to deceive Rama and Lakshmana and he slew before their eyes a Sita fashioned by magic. Today I shall really and truly kill her. Yes! I shall torture and slay Janaki, she who leans for support upon those puny *kshatriyas*; and so find some relief for my grief and anger. Even thus he thundered; and then he drew his sword keen and shining with undimmed lustre, like unto a fiery black serpent, and his senses distracted with wrath, he took his way to where Sita was, his ministers and wives following him. The *rakshasas* were highly pleased thereat; they fell upon one another's shoulders and roared for very joy. "This day surely Rama and Lakshmana will die at the mere sight of our Lord and Master. Has he not struck down in his wrath the regents of the four quarters and every foe that came in his way? He is the only one who brings home and enjoys the best of objects in all the three worlds. He has no peer in strength and prowess". Meanwhile Ravana ran towards where Sita was in the *asoka* grove. Like the planet Mars rushing forth to clutch the star Rohini, the Lord of Lanka, intent upon slaying Sita, rushed out despite all that his well-meaning friends could do to stop him.

Guarded most carefully by *rakshasa*-women, Sita saw Ravana rushing towards her with drawn sword and angry looks and his many friends running after him to turn him from his course. Greatly grieved, she cried. "Alas! this wretch is upon me with drawn sword and wild with fury, I cannot escape death at his hands. Helpless am I, even though the mighty warriors, Rama and Lakshmana, are there to protect me. Many times this monster entreated me to be his wife and enjoy the pleasures of this world with him. But I whose thoughts dwelt for ever on the lord of my heart, paid no heed to his words and dismissed him with insults. So he has given up of all hope of winning me over. "What is not to be mine shall be for no one else." — This thought drives him on to slay me in his anger and grief. Could it be that those lords of men, Rama and Lakshmana, fought with him for me, and met their death at his hands? Fie upon me, whose black sin has brought them to their death, or could it be that this cruel *rakshasa* seeks to vent his wrath upon me, since he cannot prevail against Rama and Lakshmana and grief for the loss of his son has made him mad? Alas! Why did I reject the well-meant advice of Anjaneya, fool that I was? If I had allowed him to carry me on his back I should, by now, be sitting in happiness on the lap of my husband. And I would not face this horror. The lady Kausalya has no other son than Rama; he is her only stay and support; and if she heard that Raghuvira had fallen in battle, she would die of a broken heart. Most piteously would she cry and grieve, dwelling on his glorious birth, his boyhood and youth, his noble conduct and virtue and his strong championship of truth. She would lament the perversity of fate that makes her perform the funeral rites of her son; and abandoning hopes of comfort and happiness and in utter confusion and madness, she would leap into the blazing fire or into deep waters, and so meet her end. And that Manthara deserves richly the direct fate that could be devised; she who was at the root of all this misery. The wicked hunchback should be burnt alive!" Like the lady Rohini in the cruel grip of the planet Mars, and far away from her Lord, the Moon, did the lady Sita grieve and lament piteously.

Ravana caught sight of her and rushed towards her like a whirlwind. One of his ministers, Suparsva by name, of keen intellect and noble character, was highly resourceful. He addressed himself

to Ravana, who ran along like a mad elephant that none could stop, and said, "Your Majesty! This is strange indeed! You have won for yourself the unique name of Dasagriva, (He hints that one with ten heads should have ten times the wisdom of an ordinary man). You are the brother of Kubera, the Lord of the quarters; and he is the good friend of the Lord Paramasiva, your chosen deity. Forgetting all this and forgetting too your ancestry, your name and fame, your wisdom and virtue, why do you seek the murdering of a woman? Why yield thus to rage? Your mind was ever inclined towards the study of the *Vedas*, the arts and sciences, observances, purificatory baths and the discharge of prescribed duties. What drives you now to the foul murder of a woman? Does this act become you, the Lord of the *rakshasa*-world, who should set an example to others of righteous conduct? Be sure that the lady Sita, of matchless beauty, will come to your side in good time. You and we, your followers, we should now turn our wrath against that Rama. This is the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight. I pray you go forth to battle now. Surrounded by your armies issue from the gates of Lanka on the new moon day. Who in the worlds above and below, can approach you in valour and judgment? Cased in shining armour, equipped with mighty weapons and seated in your wondrous car, go forth to the battle-field; bend your bow, destroy Rama and Lakshmana. Then the lady Sita is yours to enjoy as you like".

The words of Suparsva, virtuous and expedient, found favour with Ravana. He turned his back upon the *asoka* grove and took his way to the audience hall and took counsel with his friends on the steps to be taken.

CHAPTER 94

THE MULABALA

RAVANA came to the hall of audience and even in his grief and dejection seated himself on the throne like an angry he-lion. He sought counsel with himself for a long time. Weak with sorrow and with his body wan and faded, that left him pale, he turned to his generals and said with folded hands of request, "Every one of you must now go forth into the battle-field, surrounded by your troops, horses and chariots, elephants and foot soldiers. Let Rama and Rama alone be your quarry. Hack him to pieces with your weapons which should descend on him like thick rain from monsoon clouds. If you fail, I myself shall deal the death-blow to him as he lies there in the presence of you all, his body riddled with your arrows". Thus commanded, the *rakshasas* drove to the battle-field in mountain-like chariots, and on mighty elephants, and horses. (It is not a fault that he requested them. He was indeed the ruler of the *rakshasas* but his prayer added drilling force to his words).

With bolt, broadsword, axe, rapier and other weapons the *rakshasas* attacked the monkeys; and they returned the blows by bringing down upon the *rakshasas* huge trees, and mountain crags. From bright dawn to sunset did that dreadful battle rage between them. Neither the *rakshasas* nor the monkeys would stay their hands or draw back an inch. Red dust rose high and hid the troops from view. But soon torrents of blood like mountain streams brought down the dust. Elephants and chariots were the two banks of the roaring flood; the horses disported themselves in it; flags and pennons were the trees that lined the banks; the crowding carcasses were the rafts that crossed the stream. The monkeys, wet with this torrent, leapt here and there and broke the flags, armour, chariots and horses of the *rakshasas*. They tore with claws and bit with teeth the head and hair, the ears and noses of their enemies. As a huge tree, bends down under the weight of innumerable birds, one *rakshasa* was borne down by hundreds of monkey-heroes. The *rakshasas*, mighty like mountains, dealt out death among the

monkeys with chills, swords, axes, spears, javelins and other weapons. Sore beset by those night-rangers, the monkeys sought refuge with Rama in whose shadow the worlds rest in peace. Raghunatha grasped his mighty bow, bent and strung it, and pierced the hearts of the huge *rakshasas*, so that they dared not draw near him. How could the clouds come near the noon-day sun in all his glory? The *rakshasas* were dazed and terror-struck by the wondrous deeds of valour wrought by Rama. In fact they could not raise their eyes and behold Sri Rama who put to rout the boundless *rakshasa*-host and burnt down their most redoubtable car-warriors. Can any one set eyes on the tornado that brings crashing down the tall trees of the forest? Its work of destruction is all that we see. The *rakshasas* were cloven in their limbs; they were maimed and torn; they were scorched by the fire of arrows; their bones were broken; they lay dying and dead. But none could catch a glimpse of Rama who moved in their midst, fast and furious. Have we ever set eyes on the soul that animate our bodies, fashioned of the five elements? We infer its presence by the experience of the five senses. Even so only the *rakshasas* felt arrows of Rama striking them, but himself, they could not see.

“It is he that strikes down the elephants; it is he that shatters the cars; it is he that slays the horses; it is he that slaughters our soldiers”. Thus, each *rakshasa* mistook another for Rama and they killed one another. It was all the work of the *gandharva astra*, shot by the mighty warrior. Hence they could not catch a glimpse of Rama, who made short work of their forces. Now, they beheld him everywhere; there were thousands of Rama on the battle-field, bow in hand. The *rakshasas* took the forms of Rama himself. It was but the abject terror of the *rakshasas* and not the magic power of the *astra* that made them mistake one another for Rama. “Ravana! my fear grows upon me and I behold thousands of Ramas wherever I turn my eyes”. These were the very words of Maricha. Rama faced his foes on all sides, whirling round and shooting deadly shafts. Only the tip of his gold-decked *kodanda* was visible to the *rakshasas*. They saw a burning wheel of fire as Raghuvira sped round with the speed of thought. When a boy whirls round a glowing brand, what meets the eye is but a blazing circle of light. Rama, facing his foes on all sides with incredible speed, gave one the


appearance of being everywhere only the tip of his bow was visible and not himself. It was verily the *chakra* of Mahavishnu; his body, at the centre was the hub; his strength of arm was its radiance; the arrows that winged their way from it were the spokes; the bow itself was the rim of the wheel; the twang of the bow and the sound of impact of the string and the hand were the roar of the flames that shot from the *chakra*; his prowess was the eye of the intellect, the sheen of his body was the lustre radiating from it; and the might of the divine weapons was its boundary, sending the *rakshasas* by thousands to the house of death with bow in hand looked like the *chakra* on the day of dissolution. In the space of the eighth part of a day did Sri Rama manage to destroy all by himself 10,000 *anikas* of cars, 18,000 *anikas* of elephants, 10,000 *anikas* of cavalry and their riders, and 2 lakhs of *anikas* of infantry. (one *anika* or *chamu* consists of 729 cars, 729 elephants, 2187 horses and 3645 infantry). This comes to something like 729, followed by 5 zeros, cars, 131220000 elephants, 102060000 horses, and 1458000000 infantry annihilated within $3\frac{3}{4}$ *naligas*. But we infer that there were higher armies, of the ordinary type. It is said that a *kabandha* (headless corpse) dances on the bloody torrent when an incredible number of troops, are swept away from the field. One crore of such dancers take the field, when one of the bells that grace the mighty bow of Rama twinkled once. Now they say that all the bells in the group rang incessantly for a period of one *yama* ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a day).

Elephants and horses slain, cars smashed and foot-soldiers destroyed, that huge *rakshasa*-host, shorn of pride ran towards Lanka. Elephants, horses, chariots, *rakshasa* and *vanara*-heroes lay there in mountainous piles. The field was like the playground of Lord Rudra in the height of his wrath on the day of dissolution. *Devas*, *gandharvas*, *siddhas* and sages sang the praise of Rama, shouting "Well-done! well-done!" But he turned to Sugriva, Vibhishana, Jambavan, Hanuman, Mainda, Dvidida and the rest that stood by his side and said "I have the power of wielding this *gandharva astra*. So has the lord Paramasiva at the hour of destruction. Do not think that I used magic to destroy in a second countless *rakshasa*-hordes. It was only the potency of the *astra*". Thus did Sri Rama, like Indra the ruler of the gods in strength and valour, make short work of the *rakshasa*-forces. His mastery and

skill in wielding weapons, human and divine, was immeasurable. The heavenly hosts, sang his glory with over-flowing hearts.

CHAPTER 95

THE LAMENT OF RAKSHASIS

 AT the sight of the destruction of many thousand horses, horsemen, chariots with lofty pennons, and well-armed warriors, all wrought by the sharp arrows of Rama, the other *rakshasas* were dazed and distracted. Countless *rakshasa* women entered the battle-field, and wailed piteously over their husbands, sons or other kinsmen.

“Alas! Rama is the god of love to the God of Love; soft and delicate of limb, yet, unequalled in strength, he seeks but the welfare of all beings. Why did our Surpanakha set her heart upon this perfect person of matchless radiance, endowed with countless excellences? How she hoped to possess that mighty one when her own form and features are old, ugly and frightful to look at? Is she not huge of waist, wrinkled all over, with a white matted hair? She has not even one virtue to relieve her thousand vices. It is but justice to slay her so deformed and ugly. Sri Rama with face and features like the full-moon, and Surpanakha of dreadful looks are they not poles apart? A *rakshasa*-woman goes against nature when she sets her heart upon a man and she has perpetrated this black sin which everyone hates and condemns and ridicules. As a result Khara, Dushana, Trisiras, and other *rakshasa*-lords and 14000 of their best and bravest have perished. Maricha is no more. All the *rakshasa*-heroes of Lanka and their followers are now gathered to their ancestors, without a single exception. She lost her heart to Rama and wished to possess him a most unnatural desire. That was why Ravana made an enemy of Sri Rama, and carried away Sita; thus incurring the relentless wrath of Rama.

“Viradha, who set his heart upon Sita, was sent to his doom by a single shaft of Rama. Was this not enough to show his strength and valour? Never will Dasagriva, possess Sita. Khara and Dushana


and their clan, where are they? And is that not enough for us? Again, Kabandha with his arms one *yojana* long, fell before the arrows of Rama, — was this not enough? Vali, the king of monkeys was huge of bulk like mount Meru. He was the son of Indra, ruler of the gods and strong beyond measure. He could not stand before the first arrow shot from the bow of Rama. We needed no further evidence of Rama's strength. Sugriva was a trembling refugee on mount Risyamuka bowed down with despair. And yet when Rama came to his help, the exile was installed as the undisputed lord of the monkeys. What more do we need?

Vibhishana offered counsel, consonant with right and justice and tending towards the well-being of the *rakshasa*-race, but our Ravana possessed of an evil spirit turned a deaf ear to it. Had he taken it to heart, would this Lanka of ours stretch thus a burning ground infested with dogs, jackals, corpses, and evil spirits? Kumbhakarna, mighty beyond measure, was slain by Rama. Was this not enough to bring Ravana to reason? Atikaya, the unconquered hero, and Indrajit, the very incarnation of strength and valour, fell before Lakshmana. Was this not enough to turn the heart of Ravana towards wise counsels? Wherever we turn, from every house, we hear wails, and shrieks, "Alas!.. My son has been torn away from my side! My brother that came before me into the world is now no more! My Lord and husband is now but a name and memory. Single-handed, Rama has covered this field of battle with mountainous heaps of slain elephants, horses, chariots and *rakshasa*-heroes. He is no puny mortal, this Rama, we know not who he is — the lord Rudra or the Lord Mahavishnu or the great Indra, who paid for his seat on high with one hundred sacrifices, or the very Lord of Death himself come down in mortal guise to take us to his dark and dreadful world. Our heroes and warriors are now no more; we have lost all hope or desire of life. We see no end to our terror. We are left here to wail and grieve. Our Ravana has ten heads; a mighty warrior is he who has won wonderful powers from Brahma. And yet he is utterly ignorant that dreadful destruction awaits him. Should one stand against Rama, none can come between him and death, neither the *devas*, nor *gandharvas*, nor *pisachas*. Witness the good omens that attend Rama and the dark portents that dog Ravana in every battle till now. Ravana secured

the favour of Lord Brahma through stern and dreadful observances and the word has gone forth that he has nothing to fear at the hands of the *devas*, *danavas* and *rakshasas*; but foolishly forgot to include human beings in the list. And from among them comes forth dreadful danger to all of us and to Ravana too. The *devas* were in the grip of Ravana's tyranny and prayed to Lord Brahma with terrible vows and austerities. He was pleased and with their welfare at his heart, he said, "From today, the *danavas* and *rakshasas* will ever walk surrounded by a cloud of fear". The gods with Indra at their head, offered worship to Lord Mahadeva, on his Bull. He too spoke from his heart and said, Ye! *devas*! in the far past, lord Mahavishnu gave you the *amrita* to share among you; and the *danavas* suffered the pangs of dreadful hunger and thirst. Even so there will go down into the mortal world a woman, Sita by name, to bring destruction on the *rakshasas* and their Lord. Wicked of deed and thought, that wretch will meet his fate through her". This put heart into the *devas*. Is there one who could say, "Fear not; take refuge in me" to created beings on the day of dissolution, when the lord of destruction comes to end an aeon? And is there one who could offer protection from Rama's arrows? The forest-fire closes round the she-elephants as they quake in terror and confusion. Even, so to us in the grip of mighty fear, no one comes to stretch a helping hand. Rama, whom the *rakshasa*-world has cause to fear, with none to save them, this the very Rama has afforded shelter to the intelligent Vibhishana, for whom this is the dawn of a bright new day". Even thus did the *rakshasa* women embrace one another and cry aloud in terror.

CHAPTER 96

RAVANA GOES FORTH TO BATTLE

 S the *rakshasa*-women sent up their lamentations from every house, Ravana listened and heaved burning sighs. He was sunk in anxious thought. His mind dwelt on his grief and disgrace. Maddened by fury he was dreadful to behold. Fire flashed from his bloodshot eyes. He hit his lips and waxed in wrath, like the blazing fire of dissolution; the very *rakshasas* quaked in terror at the sight. His look seemed to burn those around him; his tongue faltered through the fear that clutched his heart. And he called unto him Mahodara, Mahaparsva, and Virupaksha, his counsellors, and cried, "All our forces, order them to go forth to the field of battle this instant!" And his orders were carried out immediately. After performing the auspicious rites that were laid down on such occasions, they led their armed hosts to the battle-field. (Mahodara and Mahaparsva who were slain before were brothers of Ravana. Matta and Pramatta were the other names they bore). They came to Ravana, bowed to him over clasped hands and said "Victory, victory ever", and stood expectant. Ravana turned towards them and laughed with a peal-like thunder. He had scant respect for his foes, as he cried, "Like unto the divine Adityas, who destroy the worlds, at the end of long ages, my arrows, will issue from my bow and the place where Rama, Lakshmana, and their monkey-hosts stand will know them no more. My friends and kin, Khara, Kumbhakarna, Prahasta, Indrajit, and the other *rakshasa*-heroes will rejoice mightily this day."

"My arrows, like clouds, will hide from view the earth, the sky, the quarters, the rivers, and the seas. This day will I offer as a prey to my arrows the monkey-generals and their serried ranks. This day, my bow, will send out arrows like the billows of the ocean and my car move with the speed of mind, destroying the armies of monkeys. Their faces with the hue of lotus-pollen, will be the blossoming lotus flowers; their serried ranks will be lotus pools; and I shall be the lordly elephant in rut, descending into the waters and stirring


them to the depths. This day the heads of the monkey-generals will be riddled by my shafts and look like lotus flowers with their stems sticking out. I will stem the speed of those warriors with my arrows, every one of which will torture to death a hundred heroes. This day, my people will wipe off their tears for the loss of husbands, sons, and brothers. I will avenge their death a million-fold. This day will I cover the earth with the cloven bodies of monkeys. This day jackals, vultures and other beasts and birds of prey, will have a surfeit of the flesh provided by my arrows. Let my chariot be got ready at once. Bring me my bow. All the *rakshasas* that are yet alive, let them come with me”.

Mahaparsva, the general, hearing these words of Ravana, turned towards the leaders of the hosts and said “Let our troops be ready to march forth”. And the leaders lost no time in collecting them from their houses. Frightful of mien and form, the *rakshasas* stood ready for battle within a short space, armed with sword, broad sword, trident, club, bar, wheel axe and spiked mace and roaring dreadfully. And then a general brought round the car of Ravana, drawn by eight horses, furnished with every weapon, and handled by the most skilful driver. Ravana took his seat in that radiant chariot, and surrounded by countless *rakshasas*, he set out to fight. The earth quacked as if it would crack beneath his strength and majesty. Mahaparsva, Mahodara, and Virupaksha followed in their cars the earth with the speed of their cars and the sky with their war cries bent on achieving victory. Glancing back at his forces, Ravana bow in hand, radiant, like Yama, who starts forth on the day of dissolution to destroy all created beings, passed the northern gate where Rama and Lakshmana stood. Then the sun grew dim; darkness hung over the quarters; birds gave forth ghastly cries; the earth trembled in affright; the clouds rained blood; the horses stumbled on their way. A vulture sat on the top of Ravana’s flag; Jackals howled hideously. The left arm and eye of Ravana throbbed. His face grew pale and his voice faltered. Thus were seen portents foretelling the defeat and death of Ravana. Meteors fell from the sky with a noise of thunder. Vultures and crows cried ominously. But he paid not the slightest heed to these omens and signs; caught in the noose of death he was bewildered in mind and went forth to battle, seeking his own death.

Hearing the noise of chariots, the monkey-hosts prepared themselves for battle. Then the *rakshasas* and monkeys challenged one another, declared their names and deeds of valour and fought dreadfully, each intent on victory. Ravana mad with fury destroyed without mercy crowds of monkeys with his arrows decked with gold. Some had their heads severed, some had their hearts pierced; some lost their ears; some had their flanks cut away; some were struck down breathless; some had their heads shattered and others had their eye-balls torn out. The lord of Lanka rolled his eyes fearfully and wherever he turned his car, the monkey-warriors took to their heels in utter confusion, unable to withstand the force of his arrows.

CHAPTER 97

THE DEATH OF VIRUPAKSHA

 HUS maimed and mangled the monkey-warriors, covered the battle-field. Like moths that cannot draw near a blazing fire, they could not stand before the flaming arrows discharged single-handed by Ravana. Like elephants scorched by a forest-fire they were tortured by his keen arrows, and took to their heels with piteous cries. Like a strong wind scattering the clouds, his shafts drove the monkey-hordes before them. Thus throwing the monkeys into disorder he drew near to where Rama stood.


Then Sugriva placed Sushena over the monkeys to guard and rally them back and himself decided to give fight to Ravana. He was free from care now that he had entrusted his armies to Sushena, who was his equal in might. He tore up a huge tree and prepared to oppose Ravana. The monkeys stood on both sides and behind him, armed with huge crags and trees. Roaring frightfully, he crashed down many a *rakshasa*-hero as he passed along. (When the king marches forth to fight his servants follow him to gather back his weapons discharged by him). Even as the gales on the day of dissolution uproot and bring down tall trees, the onrush of Sugriva scattered the *rakshasas* all round.

Even as the clouds pour down on the birds a deluge of hail, Sugriva kept up a never-ceasing shower of rocks upon the *rakshasas*

And they fell down where they stood, with shattered heads, like unto hills uprooted. Virupaksha could not endure this pitiable sight of his armies perishing on all sides with hideous groans; He shouted out his own name and sprang from his car right on the back of a lofty elephant. He faced the monkeys, stemmed their course, grieved them sore by his keen shafts and put cheer into the hearts of his troops and rallied them. Pierced all over with his arrows, Sugriva was beside himself with wrath and decided to slay him. He tore up by the roots a huge tree and flung it full in the face of the elephant on which the *rakshasa* was mounted. Unable to stand the terrific blow, it retreated a bow's length and lay down on the ground shrieking loud. The *rakshasa* leapt from its back and equipped with sword and ox-hide shield, faced Sugriva. The monkeys tore up a crag, dark and huge like a cloud-bank and hurled it against Virupaksha. But the *rakshasa* withdrawing a little eluded it. Soon he brought down his sword upon Sugriva. The monkey-hero stood for a while, as if unconscious; then he sprang at his enemy with clenched fists and planted them right upon the broad chest of the *rakshasa*, who however made light of it and clove the armour of Sugriva, and kicked him aside. The lord of the monkey-world, leapt back at him and hit him with the sound and fury of thunder; he was beside himself with anger and shame. He watched his foe most carefully, caught him when he was off his guard and dealt a mighty blow on his forehead. The *rakshasa* measured his length on the earth with a broken head and blood streamed from his mouth. The monkeys shouted in joy at the sight of the famous *rakshasa*-hero writhing in mortal agony, his eye-balls bulging, and blood and foam issuing from his mouth. The two armies fought long and dreadfully, like two mighty oceans over-flowing their shores. When Virupaksha of mighty prowess, fell at the hands of the lord of the monkeys, the armies on either side, resembled Ganga in full flood, and one overflowing with terror and the other with joy.

CHAPTER 98

THE DEATH OF MAHODARA

 HE two armies thinned gradually like two large lakes drying up by the summer heat. When the ruler of the *rakshasas* saw his forces annihilated and Virupaksha done to death, his wrath mounted high. As the monkeys bit and tore his forces he was filled with grief and he thought, "Was it fated that I should behold even this?"

Then, turning to Mahodara standing by, he said, "Best of heroes! it is on you I now depend to defeat the foe. Destroy the *vanara*-forces and demonstrate your prowess as well as your loyalty and the gratitude to your Master who has trusted you and done you so many favours. Fight with care and your utmost skill."


"To hear is to obey" replied Mahodara and he was lost in the monkey-hordes even as a moth falls into a flame. In deference to the words of Ravana and fired by his inherent valour, he slew the monkeys in thousands. But they gave a good account of themselves, bringing down the *rakshasas* with huge rocks uprooted. Mahodara blazed with wrath and cut off the heads and feet of the monkeys with his bright arrows decked with gold. Some fled to the corners of the field. Some took refuge with Sugriva. The lord of the monkeys, seeing his forces routed by Mahodara, rushed forward with a huge boulder and brought it down upon the foe. But the *rakshasa*, without blenching, cut it down with his arrows. It fell down in a cloud of splinters like unto a band of vultures scattered by terror. Sugriva felt small; anger over-mastered him; he tore up a lofty oak and flung it against the *rakshasa* who broke it to pieces with his arrows. Sugriva snatched an iron bolt that lay there, whirled it above his head and brought it down with tremendous force on the horses of Mahodara. The warrior leapt down lightly and grasped his club. They roared and with club and bolt clashed against each other, like two bulls or like dark rain-clouds charged with lightning. Then Mahodara hit Sugriva with his club blazing like the sun; Sugriva stopped it with his bolt. Both the weapons were broken to

bits. Then Sugriva snatched an iron bar that lay near, whirled it aloft and aimed it at Mahodara. He met it with another club and the two weapons crashed into a huge shower of broken bits.

The two heroes fought long and fiercely with their bare fists, like two fires fed with oblations of butter. Weapons they had none. Matchless in strength and lustre, they punched, they slapped and they shouted. They fell down, they leapt aloft, they struck at each other. They threw each other down. Thus did the two heroes fight on until their arms were wearied. Then Mahodara sprang at Sugriva, arming himself quickly with sword and shield. The monkey followed his example and met him square and fair. Their bodies quivered with hate, as they roared mightily and chased each other around. Their energy grew apace, as they displayed everything that they knew about the science and art of warfare. They ran about and turned right and left, each intent on victory. Then Mahodara clove the shield of Sugriva most skilfully; and while he was drawing out his sword, Sugriva saw his chance and cut off the gaily ornamented head of Mahodara. At this sight his armies took to their heels in confusion. Sugriva and his monkeys proclaimed their victory. Ravana blazed in his wrath and Raghava rejoiced. The *rakshasas* hid themselves here and there with wan faces, and broken hearts. Like unto Surya in the full radiance of the noon did Surya's son Sugriva, bring down Mahodara of mountainous bulk, thus earning for himself, boundless fame. And he on his part, radiant with victory, was praised by the hosts of gods and *yakshas*, by the *siddhas* and created beings on earth.

CHAPTER 99

THE DEATH OF MAHAPARSAVA

 HE loss of Mahodara roused Mahaparsva to uncontrollable fury, and his arrows destroyed the forces of Angada. His shafts cut off the heads of the monkeys from their bodies, like a strong gale flowing down the ripe fruits of a palm tree. Some had their sides cloven; some had their arms shorn off; Mahaparsva kept up a never-ceasing downpour of arrows that made the hearts of the monkeys faint; they lost all ardour for battle and grew confused and desperate.

Angada could not brook the pitiable plight of his forces harassed thus by the foe. He increased his speed as the tides of the ocean rise and swell during the conjunctions of the fortnight. He snatched a *parigha* fashioned of iron, gleaming like the rays of the sun and brought it down upon Mahaparsva. The blow was strong enough to hurl the *rakshasa* down senseless, from his car, and his driver with him. Then Jambavan, like a mountain of inky blackness sprang from his place among his troops and smashed to dust the car and the horses of the *rakshasa*. After an hour, Mahaparsva came back to his senses and beset Angada sorely with his arrows. Jambavan was pierced in his chest with three arrows and Gavaksha was cloven by many. Angry at the agony they suffered, Angada whirled aloft with both hands a dreadful *parigha* and threw it with immense force at his foe, charged with angry speed, the weapon smashed the enemy's bow, arrows and head dress. Then Angada leapt upon him and gave him a tremendous slap on his face. But it roused further the wrath of the *rakshasa*. He snatched with his hand a huge battle-axe and whirling it round and round, sent it against Angada. It blazed in splendour being polished everyday with potent oils; it was hard like a huge mountain and none could stay or break it; it fell with dreadful force on the left shoulder of the monkey-hero, who lightly foiled it with his huge fist; and relentless as the *vajra* of Indra he struck Mahaparsva fair and square on his breast. Now Angada was the equal of his father, Vali, in strength and valour, he noted

the vital spot of his enemy and hit at the very heart of Mahaparsva with unerring aim and the *rakshasa* fell down and died instantaneously, his heart smashed to a pulp. The forces that followed him were sore beset. Ravana was beside himself with wrath. Indra and the gods that ranged the skies shouted with delight and enthusiasm; the monkeys roared like lions at the victory achieved, and their combined sound entered the houses, ports and towers of Lanka. The sound roused the ruler of the *rakshasas* to mad fury and he hastened back to the battle-field.

CHAPTER 100

RAMA AND RAVANA

MAHODARA, Mahaparsva and Virupaksha the brave of heroes in the land were now no more; Ravana turned to his driver and cried wildly. "Rama and Lakshmana will I slay today, ease my heart of grief for the death of my ministers and counsellors, and avenge the insult offered to besieging my capital. Rama, the lofty tree has its blossom and fruit in Sita, its huge branches are the leading monkey-heroes, Sugriva, Jambavan, Kumuda, Nila, Mainda, Dvidida, Angada, Gandhamadana, Hanuman, and Sushena and today that tree shall fall under my hand". Thus did he roar and march against Raghava, the ten quarters groaning under the speed of his car. The broad earth quaked thereat with its rivers, mountains, forests, beasts, and birds. He discharged a dreadful *Tamasa astra* at the monkeys, who fell heaps on all sides. The dust raised by their fleet was fearful to see. The weapon, fashioned of old by Brahma himself, was beyond the power of the monkeys to withstand. At the sight of his armies helpless before the arrows of Ravana, Rama himself turned up to offer battle.

The *rakshasa*-hero, having scattered the monkeys before him beheld Rama standing in front. (Valmiki suggests that Rama was beyond the power of any enemy to foil; his matchless beauty and grace drew every one to him irresistibly; no heart could harbour any feeling of hate against him; it was the birth-right of one and all to find boundless joy and delight in his presence. But Ravana

was wicked of heart. It was not given to him to bathe in the Supernal beauty of Rama heightened by his mighty bow that resembled a graceful whirl in the waters of immortality). No foe could ever dream of worsting him. He stood there in the battle-field with his brother Lakshmana by his side, like unto Mahavishnu and Devendra. He bent gracefully over his huge bow that looked like the lofty Meru. His eyes were red and broad, were like the petals of a blown red lotus. His arms stretched down to his knees. He could strike down the pride of his enemies. Strength and radiance were embodied in him. For help at need, he had Lakshmana himself, who was Adishesha in mortal guise. Beholding the monkeys fleeing in mad terror and Ravana drawing near him, he was delighted. Grasping his bow in the middle, he bent it, strung it, and twanged it with a sound that caused the earth to quake. The two armies fell down in senseless faint at the shower of Ravana's arrows and the twang of Rama's bow. Ravana himself looked like Rahu near the Sun and the Moon, as he stood in the path of the arrows of Rama and Lakshmana (Rahu approaches the Sun and Moon on the new moon day. The comparison stops here. It does not mean that their lustre dimmed at his sight). Then Lakshmana desired to engage the Lord of Lanka first. He bent his bow and shot at the enemy sharp arrows blazing like flames. But Ravana's arrows met them in the sky one to one, three to three, ten to ten, and so on. He displayed his skill and deftness of hand; and finding that the arrows of Lakshmana troubled him not, he made light of the prince, passed him by and faced Raghuvira, who stood there like mount Meru.

With eyes red with wrath he hid Rama behind a never-ceasing arrowy shower. Raghava cut them down by his *Bhallas* (curved arrows), and they fell on the ground like furious, ghastly serpents. Then they struck each other with various keen shafts. Right and left, round and round, did they display their skill in foot work. Neither drew back, but each returned for what he received. All beings trembled at heart, when they beheld the fight wondering whether Yama and Rudra were at war as it were. As rain-clouds cover the sky, lit up by flashes of lightning, even so, did their arrows hide the sky from view and only the fiery arrows lit up the scene. It looked as if the showers of arrows were windows in the firmament. The arrows were furnished with beautiful joints, sharp points, and

decked with eagle feathers and endowed with enormous speed. In fact the two heroes by their arrowy downpour hid from sight earth and sky and caused utter darkness to descend. It was as if rain-clouds spread over the sky after the sunset. The battle between them each intent upon the death of the other resembled that between Indra and the *asura*, Vritra of yore. Never before had there been such a fight. Never had Ravana thought even in dream that he would face such a foe, Matchless bowmen, both of them matchless in the mastery of weapons, matchless too in their knowledge of the secrets of *astras*, they displayed every step and device known to men or gods. Even as the waves bank up in the direction of the wind their arrows piled up into a mountain wherever they went.

Then Ravana, matchless archer as he was, hit Rama on the forehead with a string of three arrows. Emitted from the fearful bow, the arrows descended on his head like the petals of a blue lily and lay there lightly, causing him no pain. Then Rama bent his bow and shot from it arrows winged with the *mantra* of Rudra. They hit Ravana's armour which was like a huge cloud-bank but made no impression on it and gave him no discomfort. Then Raghunanadana picked out some arrows, spoke over them the *mantras* of rare *astras* and struck Ravana square on his forehead with them, but they were foiled and cloven by many shafts, from Ravana's bow. Hissing like five-headed serpents, these shafts ran into the earth. Thus the lord of Lanka met the *astra* of Raghava and in his turn sent against Rama an *astra* of *asuras*, which was dreadful to behold. From it there came out lions, tigers, vultures, eagles, crows, jackals, wolves, five-headed serpents, snakes, mules, boars, dogs, hens, crocodiles, black serpents and the like. (These were but arrows with such heads. Raghuvira, shining with energy, discharged the *astra* of Agni and from it sprang countless arrows with heads of blazing fire, sun, moon, half moon, meteors, planets, constellations, fire brands, and lightnings. The missile of Ravana was beaten by that of Rama and fell down from the sky, in fragments). Thereat, Sugriva and his warriors praised Rama highly and roared for very joy; and the son of Dasaratha was glad.

LAKSHMANA STRUCK DOWN BY SAKTI

RAVANA'S rage rose high when he found his rare *astra* was wasted and he took another which was fashioned by the *asura* Maya and whose presiding god was Rudra. Exceedingly radiant it was. When he flung it at Raghava, tridents, maces, bars, bows, bolts, and many other weapons, hard like adamant and lapped in flames, issued from it with the speed of roaring winds at the ending of the worlds. Raghava, who knew the mystery of all rare *astras*, was glad to see it. His radiance and splendour grew apace; and he met the missile of the foe by the *astra* of the *gandharva*. Then Ravana shot the *astra* of Surya and from it sprang forth bright wheels, that spread over the sky and paved all quarters with suns and moons. But Rama destroyed them all by a continuous discharge of arrows. Then Ravana shot Rama through and through in every limb with ten choice shafts. But the resplendent prince stood unperturbed and in his return pierced every limb of his foe with his arrows.

While Rama took rest for a while, Lakshmana who had first met Ravana in fight and held back since the *rakshasa* was having it with Rama, came up now and with seven select arrows cut down the flag on Ravana's car (it bore a human head) and along with it the head of the driver himself gaily adorned with ear-rings. Then with five keen arrows he cut to bits the bow of Ravana shaped like the trunk of an elephant. Meanwhile Vibhishana joined the fray and brought his dreadful club on the horses yoked to the car that resembled black cloud-banks or dark mountains. Ravana leapt from the useless vehicle, rushed upon Vibhishana in uncontrollable wrath and struck him with a *sakti* (weapon), dreadful like the thunderbolt, but Lakshmana cut it to bits with three shafts as it drew near; and the monkeys shouted loud. The *sakti* adorned with garlands of gold, fell down in three bits lapped in flames like a blazing meteor. The eyes of Ravana shot sparks of fire out of pure wrath and he took up another mighty *sakti*. It was worshipped with sandal and frankincense and other rare perfumes; even Yama dared not draw

near it; it was blazing with radiance and dreadful to behold like the bolt of Indra; it had behind it the full force and power of Ravana. Lakshmana beheld it coming against Vibhishana, to drink of his life-breaths. "Should this touch Vibhishana, he cannot survive" thought Lakshmana and thrusting Vibhishana aside, he stood forward, and with a shower of arrows prevented Ravana from discharging the *sakti*. Foiled in his purpose of slaying Vibhishana, Ravana cried out in anger; "Wretch you stood between Vibhishana, and his death this day. But you will pay for that folly; this *sakti* will take your life instead. Behold this weapon fattened with the lives of many a foe and still bespattered with their blood. It will now cleave your heart and bring me your life. And charged with fury, he hurled the *sakti* at Lakshmana. From its eight golden bells it gave out mighty music. Maya had fashioned it with his magic arts. It has never been known to fail and its very nature is to destroy those against whom it is sent. It brightened up the space around as it sped towards Lakshmana. The *rakshasa* roared with joy being certain that Lakshmana would not escape. With terrible speed and thundering like the *vajra* of Indra, it approached Lakshmana. Then Rama blessed Lakshmana, "May all be well with you" and he said to the *sakti* "you shall not slay Lakshmana; you shall go back empty". The *sakti* shot with fury by Ravana fell like a serpent of doom on the broad chest of Lakshmana, who faced it without a tremor. It sank deep into the body of the prince with all the strength and force that Ravana had put behind it, when he whirled it aloft. It was lapped in fierce flames like the tongue of a great serpent. It clove the heart of Lakshmana and struck him down to the earth.

Rama who stood by, was sore grieved because of his immense love for Lakshmana. Despite his strength and glory, he could not endure this sight. He thought for a while what he should do, and stood there with streaming eyes and blazing with anger like the fire of dissolution. Soon he mastered himself; he decided that it was no time for grief and that he should take his heart on taking the life of Ravana and engaged himself in a terrible fight with him. The pitiable sight of Lakshmana called back to him the memory of the abduction of Sita. The prince lay there like a stricken serpent with his heart cloven by the *sakti* and his body bathed in blood. "This Ravana shall never escape his doom at my hands" said he. Ravana

himself kept up a shower of arrows so that the monkey-chiefs could not take out the *sakti* and break it and Lakshmana lay pinned to the earth. But Rama drew out the dreadful weapon with ease, passed his hands over it and broke it to bits. Then Ravana riddled with arrows the entire body of Rama and all his vital spots. But Rama not heeding it, clasped Lakshmana to his heart and said to Sugriva and Hanuman''. Take good care of Lakshmana here like the *Chataka* birds that await eagerly the welcome rains at the end of summer. I have been waiting for destroying this sinful wretch; Now the time has come. Now shall I put forth my prowess and cut down his ten heads within a *muhurta* (48 minutes). Rama or Ravana will lie dead. I gave up the crown which was within my grasp. I exiled myself to the dark forest of Dandaka. I was a wanderer for many a year. Sita was taken from me. I fought with the dark *rakshasas*. The thought of all this caused me unbearable grief like the horrors of hell. But today, with the death of Ravana I shall forget it all. It was for this that I drew after me these monkey-hosts so far away from their homes, that I slew Vali, that I installed Sugriva in his place and that I crossed the pathless waters, building a bridge over it. It was all on account of this *rakshasa* who now stands before me. Shall he go back alive ? As well could one escape with life from the coils of a serpent whose very look is death. All of you, sit at ease on these mounds and look at our fight. The worlds, above and below, *gandharvas*, *siddhas*, *charanas* and *rishis* know full well that Rama has no equal in valour and prowess. He brings joy and peace to the hearts of all. (He means that this was the purpose of his descent). This day will be a day of rejoicing for all time to come. All created beings, animate and otherwise, gods and mortals, will behold and acclaim the wonderful battle of today''.

Saying this, he struck the *rakshasa* with sharp arrows decked with gold. Ravana poured on Rama, blazing *narachas* and chills like rain-clouds emptying themselves in torrents. The clash of the arrows they shot against each other was dreadful to hear. They fell broken from the sky with flaming points down to the earth. The twang of their bows struck terror in the hearts of all creatures. Like a huge cloud-bank lashed by the storm, Ravana was sore beset by the arrows of Rama and unable to stand, fled in fear from the field.

CHAPTER 102

LAKSHMANA RECOVERS

SEEING Lakshmana lying on the earth, struck down by the *sakti* of Ravana and bathed in blood, Rama kept on a dreadful fight with the *rakshasas* and discharged a never ceasing shower of arrows; yet he called Sushena and said, "Lakshmana, the prince of warriors, has been struck down by the *sakti* of Ravana. He writhes in agony like a serpent; and my heart grows heavy, for, dearer unto me than life is he, my Lakshmana. When he is bathed in blood, how shall I fight the enemy, my mind all distracted? Endowed with every excellence, this prince of valour delights in battle; he was born my brother; he followed me here, secure in my protection; and should he pass away, what joy would I have in life? Life would be a sore burden unto me. My valour ebbs away from me, as if ashamed. My bow slips from my hands, I cannot choose or hold my arrows; my eyes are blinded with hot tears. Just as in a dream one tries to escape a terrible danger by running, but his feet are clogged with lead and would not move; even so, black care weighs me down. It seems best to let go my life".

Thus did Raghuvara grieve and lament, beholding Lakshmana, hit in his vitals and breathing hard from intense pain. Anger and grief mastered him, he let go his hold on his senses and cried, "When Lakshmana, the breath of my life, rolls on the earth in dirt and dust, what have I to do with battle, throne or life itself? I am all bewildered, when my dear brother lies stricken. My senses, mind and intellect, are one with him. I am but a living corpse. Wives are easy to get anywhere in the world; and so are other kith and kin, yet I know of no land where a brother could be got". Grief clouded Rama's senses; he heaved dēep and made piteous signs, He fell on the ground by the side of his brother. Then Sushena, the monkey-chief, essayed to calm him.

"Lord! Lakshmana, endowed with every auspicious mark, is not dead ; his face is pleasing to look at. He preserves his natural hue, his splendour has not waned, he yet radiates lustre; and his

hands are red like lotuses; his eyes are clear. There are not the marks of death. They signify length of years, I say he is not dead; he lives. His heart beats evenly. He is like one in deep and peaceful sleep with arms and legs stretched wide. Doubt not! he lives and will live on”.

And, he called Anjaneya that stood near by, and cried “Son of Vayu”, find quickly your way to the mountain of medicinal herbs. Jambavan has given you a clear idea of the location and features. Fetch me, from its southern peak, the potent medicines known as *Visalyakarani*, *Savarnakarani*, *Sandhanakarani*, and *Sanjivini*. I shall see that Lakshmana recovers from his fainting fit and is once more his bold brave self.”

Anjaneya made his way straight through the sky to the mountain of magic herbs, but could not find out the plants that he should fetch. “If I go back to Sushena for fuller details, it is but waste of time and my purpose will be foiled. It is best to transport the peak itself and place it before Sushena. He has told me that the herbs grow here and it must be true since my heart and mind are clear”. Thinking thus, he coiled his tail thrice round the southern peak and gave three mighty pulls at it. It came away, with all its birds and beasts, rivers and forests, and he returned as quickly as he went, playing lightly with the huge crest on his head. And he descended in the midst of his friends, like a dark rain-cloud making its way gently to the earth.

He rested for a while. Then depositing the peak before Sushena, he said “Pity, I could not identify the particular medicines you wanted. But they are all here, in this peak that I have brought.” (During the battle with Indrajit, Sushena, the doctor, wanted to treat Lakshmana and the wounded monkeys and he took care to stock a good quantity of remedies. Why then would he direct Maruti to go again to bring them? It cannot be that he had exhausted them over Lakshmana, Vibhishana and others. Again Maruti was no fool. His memory was wonderful. It was only a few days earlier that he had fetched the herbs for Sushena and took it back again. Then how could he say that he could not lay his hands on the herbs and that his heart and mind were not clear? So his tearing up the peak

itself cannot be explained consistently-Ramanuja). (But there was no reference to the remedy being stocked after use as observed by the commentator').

Sushena praised Maruti highly and gathered whatever medicinal herbs he wanted from the peak. The monkeys and the *rakshasas* were struck with wonder at the rare feat of Maruti, that even the gods could not perform. Then Sushena washed these herbs clean, prepared them skilfully and caused Lakshmana to inhale them. The arrows dropped away from his body; his wounds were healed, his pain gone, and the prince sprang from the ground with all his original strength and valour. The monkeys shouted 'good, good' and acclaimed Sushena. Raghuvira called Lakshmana unto himself and fondly clasped him to his heart, his eyes blinded with tears of joy". Best and bravest of heroes! Great merit must I have laid up before to see you come back from the halls of death. What have I to do with Sita or victory or life itself, if you were taken away from me?

Lakshmana was pained by these words and spoke in faltering accents, "Brother mine! these words do not become you. Your valour cannot go fruitless. You have given the pledge that you would slay Ravana and seat Vibhishana on his throne. Why should you speak thus like a weakling and a non-entity? Embodiment of virtue, pure and unsullied! the good and the great do not go back on their word, but make it good at any cost. It is unjust that for my sake you should relax your keenness for recovering Sita and winning victory. Slay Ravana and fulfil your word. No foe that crosses your path can survive. The elephant that has been seen by the sharp-teethed lion roaring in rage, can it hope to escape? This wicked wretch must be quickly despatched before the sun sets. If you should ever fulfil your word, if you should slay Ravana in battle, if you should ever recover lady Sita, pray, do now quickly what I beg you to do.

RAMA IN THE CHARIOT OF INDRA

LISTENING to Lakshmana's words, Raghunatha bent his bow and shot dreadful arrows at Ravana. The *rakshasa* took another car, rushed at Rama like Rahu after the sun, and struck him with frightful arrows like the bolt of Indra, seated as he was on his car. Raghunatha clove the ten-headed giant with flaming arrow. The Lord of the heaven-world sent down his car to Rama at the request of the *devas*, the *gandharvas*, and *danavas*, who decided that it was not fair that Rama should fight on foot against a foe seated in a chariot. Indra's chariot was decked with gold; and with its countless golden bells twingled sweetly. It was radiant like the morning sun. Noble steeds adorned with gems and shining like the sun were yoked to it.


It had golden windows and white chowries, a huge golden flag towered aloft gracefully. Matali, the driver of Indra, drove it to where Rama was and spoke from his seat with folded hands holding a whip. "Lord! the ruler of the heavenly world has sent you this chariot anxious that you should defeat Ravana. Doom of the *rakshasa*-world of measureless lustre and matchless strength! pray, accept this mighty bow, this excellent armour blazing like fire, these arrows radiant like the sun and this keen sword. Take your place on this chariot and bring down Ravana, having me as the charioteer like Indra, the great, routed the *danavas*. And it is my good fortune to do the same service for you this day when you slay Ravana. Rama went round the car reverently, saluted it and seated himself on it, illuminating the whole world like the full moon.

Wonderful beyond belief was the battle that followed between Rama and Ravana. The hair stood on end on the bodies of those that beheld it and dark fear gripped their hearts. Rama, a past master in the secrets of the most potent *astras*, met the *astras* of Ravana by others of the same kind — *gandharva*, *daiva*, and the like. Infuriated, Ravana discharged the *rakshasa-astra* from his bow, from which shot out gold bound arrows that coiled themselves round

Rama, like dreadful venomous serpents and caused him pain, with their mouths aflame. Arrows blazing like Vasuki, Karkotaka and other great *nagas*, hid the quarters. Then Rama sent against them the *Garudastra* from which the arrows flew out and spread all over like fiery eagles and destroyed the serpents. They had the power of taking any shape at will. Ravana found his *astras* foiled, one after another and in his blind fury he riddled Rama with arrowy showers and also troubled Matali with keen shafts. With one arrow he cut down the banner of gold that waved aloft; and he sorely beset the horses of divine breed that drove the car. *Devas*, *danavas*, *gandharvas*, and *charanas* were filled with sorrow at that wonderful feat of his. And so were the *siddhas*, sages, monkey-chiefs and Vibhishana, when they saw Rama being harassed by the foe. All grieved to see the full moon, Rama, in the grip of Rahu, in the shape of Ravana.

The planet Mercury (Budha) overpowered the constellation Rohini, the beloved wife of the Moon. Prajapati was the presiding deity of it. It betokened danger to all the worlds. The waves of the sea, enveloped in smoke, seemed to rise and lash the sun. The lord of the day was dimmed in lustre. It grew black like a sword and was a headless corpse seen in it. A comet laid its grasp on the sun. The planet Mars stood over against the constellation Visakha, the guardian of the Kosala kings, and the Asvins were its presiding deities. And there was Ravana to complete the scene, huge in bulk like the Mainaka mountain, with his ten heads and twenty arms; the bow he wielded was like a mountain itself. Sri Rama, pressed by him, found no time to set his arrows on the bow and then against him. Then he reminded himself of what he should do; his brows were bent in a dreadful frown, and his angry red eyes seemed ready to burn up all creation.

RAVANA DISCHARGES HIS TRIDENT

T the sight of Raghuvira, the wise one, thus enraged, all creatures quaked in terror, unable to lift their eyes to him. The earth shook to its foundations. The mountains tottered with all their forests and beasts, like lions and tigers. The oceans rose. The birds cried harshly. Rumbling dreadfully the clouds overspread the four quarters of the sky. The anger of Rama and the dreadful portents struck terror into the hearts of all creatures. Ravana too was afraid.

The heavens above were crowded with the cars of the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *uragas*, *garudas*, *danavas*, *daityas*, and *rishis*, all eager to have a sight of the wonderful battle between the two renowned heroes which was destructive like the final dissolution. The fight between the two with strange weapons and ghastly *astras* heightened the eagerness and fear of those that witnessed it. Then, the heavenly hosts out of love for Rama, repeatedly blessed him, saying "Raghunandana! may you defeat Ravana". On the other hand, the *asuras* blessed Ravana, saying "Ten-headed Lord! slay Rama", out of their fondness for him. (True, that Ravana oppressed the *devas* and the *asuras* alike; but the *asuras*, prayed for victory to Ravana. Should Rama win the day, it would add immensely to the strength and power of their enemies, the *devas*).

While the onlookers were, fanning the flame thus, Ravana set his heart upon the death of Rama and grasped in mad fury a weapon of rare powers. Then he bethought himself, "Shall I use this now or keep it till a more dangerous occasion arises". It was hard like the *vajra* of Indra. Its roar was terrible. It was covered with iron spikes like unto lofty mountain peaks. It was enough to destroy the foes. Sharp were its points like the fire of dissolution enveloped in smoke. It threw into shade the trident of the Lord Rudra himself; enemies dared not draw near. It was quite enough to cut and hack and cleave the bodies of all creatures; and make them die in agony and terror. Ravana, blazed in his wrath as he grasped the trident by the middle, lifted it above his head and roared like thunder;

and his *rakshasa*-warriors stood around him in wonder, with eyes red with anger, and mountainous of bulk, the sound of his roars, from their deep and powerful throats, the *rakshasa*-hosts were filled with irrepressible joy and exclaimed : "Rama is no more". The sky and the earth and the quarters, quacked in fear. All creatures were bereft of their senses at the tremendous roars of that wicked one. The waters of the seas were sorely troubled. Ravana^a waved the trident aloft and roared more frightfully "Rama! See you this trident. The *vajra* of Indra itself makes no show by its side. I throw this at you, out of the unspeakable wrath in my heart. You and your brother to help you will be no more in a moment. Many a *rakshasa* here has fallen by your hands. Are you not eager for a fight? This day you will die at my hands and rise to the high worlds. This day I will slay you and place you on the same level as my dead *rakshasas*. Stay, stay; let me allow this trident to drink your life-breaths" and he shot it at Rama. Wrapped in flames and lightnings, it came on with a deafening noise from the eight gold bells on it. Raghuvira bent his bow, and stayed its course like unto Indra, putting out the fires of dissolution with his blinding rains, but they were no where to be seen, consumed as they were like moths in a fire. Rama was filled with unspeakable wrath when he saw that his arrows were reduced to ashes, by the power of the trident, he grasped a *sakti* that was given to him by Indra, through Matali the driver; he held it aloft and waved it with a frightful speed. Whirled with the boundless strength and force that Rama put in his arms, the gold bells on it chimed sweetly. The sky blazed with the splendour of that weapon even as it was paved with meteors, at the end of long ages. It dashed against the weapons of Ravana, drained it of its strength and its lustre, and reduced it to a blinding shower of dust. Then Rama shot his arrows with rare quickness and struck at the horses yoked in the *rakshasa*'s car; and they were endowed with the speed of the wind. Ravana was hit on his face and breast and cloven. His limbs were pierced through and through and rained torrents of blood. The hero resembled an *asoka* tree in bloom. Thus wounded sore all over his body and bathed in bloods, he lost heart in the very thick of the fight. But he recovered himself and was possessed of immeasurable fury.

RAVANA'S CHARIOTEER DRIVES AWAY THE CHARIOT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

B EING thus afflicted by the angry Rama, Ravana, who generally applauds the valour of the enemy in the battle-field, became furious. With eyes becoming red on account of wrath, controlling his breath, the valorous Ravana, struck Rama with extreme rage at that great battle. Ravana pierced the body of Rama with thousands of sharp shafts, as if a cloud fills the tank with bounteous showers of water from the sky. Being thus struck with a shower of the enemy, Kakutstha did not shake even a little. Will the great Meru ever tremble? He obstructed the shower of shafts with suitable shafts and remained unperturbed in the battle, just as obstructing the rays of the sun with an umbrella. Then the enraged *rakshasa* struck Rama on the chest quickly with thousands of shafts. Then the brother of Lakshmana being bathed in blood, appeared to be a *kimsuka* tree in the forest abound with flowers. Furious on account of the wounds made by those shafts, Rama, radiant like the sun at the time of deluge, discharged powerful shafts. Both of them were not able to perceive each other in the darkness caused by their swift discharge of arrows.


Then Rama was much enraged and spoke harsh words to Ravana, "You vile *rakshasa*! you carried away my unprotected wife from the Janasthana without my knowledge. Hence you are not valorous. You think that you are brave after quickly carrying away Vaidehi staying alone in the great forest separated from her husband. After having taken her, a woman unguarded forcibly away, after doing this wicked act, you think that you are brave. The violator of etiquettes! the shameless one! One who has discarded virtuous conduct! Having invited death out of pride and arrogance, you rejoice that you are valorous. You have indeed done a great and praiseworthy act, you brother of Kubera, with your mighty army. You will now reap the fruit of your vile act done out of pride and arrogance. Oh vile one! You think that you are a great warrior.

You never feel ashamed in abducting Sita like a thief. Had you laid your hands forcibly on Sita in my presence you would have reached the place of Khara, being struck by my arrows. It is a good thing that you have come under my purview, you vile one! I will despatch you to the abode of Yama, with my sharp arrows. Let the wild beasts make a feast of your head with the radiant pendants, cut down by my arrows and rolling on the dust. Ravana! May the vultures pounce on your chest, fallen on the ground, and drink the blood and quench their thirst. May the birds pull out the intestines from your lifeless body pierced by my shafts, just as the Garuda does the serpents''.

Rama, the conqueror of his foes, spoke to Ravana thus and showered a rain of arrows on Ravana, who was nearby. The strength of Rama's weapons, his valour, strength and joy doubled as he thought of killing his foe. All the weapons became manifest to him, the omniscient, On account of great joy, all the weapons became readily manifest in his hands.

Noticing the auspicious indications on his own person, Rama, the destroyer of the *rakshasas*, again struck at Ravana with redoubled vigour. Ravana became broken-hearted being struck by the shower of stones of the monkeys and the shower of arrows of Raghava. He neither bent his bow; nor discharged his arrows; nor attempted to obstruct the missiles of Rama. He lost control over the senses and became broken-hearted. The missiles discharged by him had no power to do even a little harm to the enemy. The charioteer noticed Ravana suffering as one heading towards death, slowly drove the chariot away from the battle-field, perturbed not in the least.

RAVANA'S CHARIOT COMES BACK

 HE thought came to Ravana, "Why I was even now fighting the foe; how is it that I fainted? His eyes, glowed red with wrath; impelled by resistless fate, he vented it upon his innocent driver. You fool! Did you take it into your head that I lost my vigour and might and manliness? Did you conclude that strength and lustre had waned away and that I was a coward, to turn my back on the field of battle? My arts of magic, have they become nothing? My divine weapons, have they taken to flight? You dared to follow your own counsel, and make little of me, as of no worth. Without knowing my purpose, you brought me away from the field of battle. You have blackened my face in the presence of the enemy. Till now, I have been endowed with matchless fame, valour, splendour and steadfastness, as one who never turned his back in battle. All this earned during long ages and with unremitting effort, you have ruined in a second, mean wretch! My enemy is no ordinary man. He is famed as a mighty hero; I sought to make his heart rejoice with my valour.

You know full well, that my ardour for battle is boundless; yet you have made me for all time a mark for the finger of scorn, as a coward and a weakling, and that in the presence of my hated foe. When I think of what you did, that instead of keeping my car before the enemy, you brought it here, I am forced to conclude that you have been bought over by him. No friend or well-wisher of mine would have acted thus. This is the act of a deadly enemy. Your action has been utterly wrong. Now, turn back the car and take me to the battle-field before my enemy seeks me out here. If you call yourself my friend, if your memory keeps count of the favours you have received from me, do not disgrace me in the right presence of my opponents." Thus did he foolishly accuse his driver, who but sought his safety and well-being.

But that *rakshasa* was no fool; he was wise beyond his years; he knew full well the nature of his master; and he respectfully spoke

words of good counsel. "Fear has no part in me. My mind and senses are clear and strong. Foes have not won me over. Negligence, unfriendliness, ingratitude — these are foreign to me; I but seek your well-being and good name I seek to preserve them; my heart went out to you in friendship and impelled me to do what I did. I thought you would approve it. I know now it was distasteful to you. Your prosperity was my sole concern. It ill-becomes you to cast aspersion on me, as if I had come of a lineage unknown to name and fame, and as if I were mean of heart and wicked of nature. Fast falling like a river from a lofty height I turned away your car from the field of battle. True, but listen to my reason. After doing mighty deeds of valour today you were a little tired, your face was dim. Your heart was cheerless. I knew it. The horses too were tired with hard work all the day. Like cattle lashed by a fierce downpour, they were weak and exhausted with the heat of the sun. Again, I noted signs inauspicious to us. A driver of the car, if he is worth anything, should carefully note times and places, as well as signs, auspicious and otherwise. Marks of cheerfulness or sorrow of joy, despair, in the face of the master, the waxing or waning of energy and strength he should note, the level of the field high or low, the favourable moment for fight, the strength and weakness of the foe, noting all these he should know when to advance, where to stand up, when to draw back and when to pass by. I observed that my master and these horses were utterly worn out. I knew that, unless they recovered, defeat and disgrace was certain at the hands of the foe. I therefore took it upon myself to take the car away from the field. I would not have you think that it was my wish or a pleasure to me to do so. It was but my love and respect for you, and no other motive, that made me act as I did. I am ever at your service. Else, how can I hope to repay what I have received at your hands".

Ravana was mightily pleased at these words. He praised his wisdom and solicitude. Eager to renew the fight, he cried, "Driver, take back this car to where Rama is and that with the speed of thought. Ravana does not leave the field of battle with his foe alive". He rewarded the driver with the priceless ornament he wore upon his arm. And the driver lost no time in bringing the car right before Rama.

AGASTYA IMPARTS THE ADITYAHRIDAYA TO RAMA

MAHARSHI Agastya was one of those that came there with the *deva* host to witness the wonderful battle between Rama and Ravana, He observed that Ravana was fatigued after a hard fight but faced Rama once again with boundless anger; he also noted that Rama himself was sunk in thought how to overcome Ravana without revealing his supreme divinity. So he drew near Raghuvira and addressed him. (Tirtha remarks thus : Ravana was sore beset by the arrows of Rama; his driver took him away from the battle-field; the sun rose in the heavens; Rama himself was somewhat tired after the long fight, and was revolving within himself as to how to bring the *rakshasa* to his doom. Then Ravana came there on his car eager to renew the fight. *Maharishi* Agastya noted it and said, "Raghupati you will overcome Ravana even now; be not anxious. But you will do well to increase your infirm prowess by worshipping the sun-god through the *Adityahridaya*". And he descended from above to impart the *mantra*).

"Rama! Rama! of boundless valour! have you forgotten your matchless deeds of heroism? I will impart to you a secret, eternal as the *Vedas*. Listen to this hymn of praise known as the *Adityahridaya*. It will gladden the heart of the Sun God; boundless is the merit gained by those who recite it; Our foes will perish; victory will be ours. The power of this *mantra* knows no waning. It brings in its wake all good things and purifies us of all former sins. Dispelling every sin committed till now, bodily illness and mental care, it lengthens the span of one's natural life. Utter, my child, this mighty hymn of praise. You will gain the strength to vanquish your foes. The Supreme Lord present in the heart of the Sun, is also the inner ruler who sits in our heart and directs everything. The *sruti* runs thus : "He who abides in the sun, he who guides the sun,"; "He who resides in the heart of Aditya and in the self runs the mind".

The god whom you should meditate upon is golden-rayed; he has risen high in the sky. He is the Lord of all the gods, their soul that holds them all within himself. (The *sruti* declares: "Beyond this, beyond the heavens and the worlds above, beyond this universe, beyond everything manifest, is the light that illuminates the higher worlds. Day and night he gives light to the worlds. It is his splendour that lights up the sun, the moon, the fire and the rest). He protects the worlds through the sunshine, rain and dew; so praise him through this *Adityahridaya*. (The *sruti* has it — "The sun, the moon, the stars, the lightning illuminate not that spot, why speak of the Lord of Fire. All these are made to shine but through his splendour and depend upon him. Next he gives a reason why he alone should be adored when there are other mighty presences. All of them are contained in him).

He is the soul verily of all the *devas*. (The *sruti* tells us that "the sun is the soul of the Universe and the support", "He is at the heart of all gods"). He is endowed with the power of crushing foes; he protects the worlds through his rays. (He extends his light and favour over the ever-liberated ones and endows them with their very essence of being. They enjoy that existence through his eternal wish. Ever dear to the heart of the Lord, they are eternal; this is the comment of Tirtha). He protects through his ray the *devas*, the *asuras* and all other created beings. (We have the Vedic texts "The offerings duly made in the fire reach the Lord Aditya; and he sends down the rain; and from it, we have food; and from it we have the whole creation". The *Gita* tells us, "win the favour of the Gods through *yagas* and they will bestow their favour for you through the rains they send").

"He is verily the Supreme One, whom the yogis meditate upon in their hearts", the golden-hued Purusha in the centre of the solar orb, the four-faced Brahma, Mahavishnu, Paramasiva, Subrahmanya, the nine Prajapatis, Mahendra, Kubera, the god Mrityu, Yama, Soma, Varuna, the Pitris, the *vasus*, the *sadhyas*, the Asvins, the Maruts, Manu, Vayu, Agni and other gods hold Him in their hearts as the inner ruler. "He is verily the inner ruler of you, and me and other beings" says Brahma to Siva. He is Upendra, in whom Vishnu took birth. He is Siva according to the text. He is Brahma.

He is Siva. He is Hari. He is Indra. He is Subrahmanya. He is Skanda, who drains away the energy of foes. He is the Prajapati, as the text runs, "that moves in the womb of the Universe". He is Mahendra, according to the *Veda*, "they sought Indra in the highest *akasa*". "Indra became very firm through his might". He is endowed with power, greatness and potency by his very nature. It is he that gives us food and wealth; hence he is Kubera, though he brings about the results of our actions only. He is time, because the *sruti* tells us, "I bow unto the spirit of time that makes little of time itself". Again the *Brahmasutra* has it that he is the eater of all since he destroys all creation, animate and inanimate. Parasara tells us that the Lord knows no beginning as He is the spirit of time. He is Yama, because he judges all creatures and dispenses the results of their actions. Manu tells us "the King Yama, the son of Surya abides in your heart.". He is Soma, because he keeps the waters of immortality ever fresh and flowing. "Soma moves as the wind. He brightens up the intellect of creatures; he creates the *akasa*". So we have it that he is the seed and root of all created beings.

Varuna : (The Lord of Waters; a *smriti* has it that the word *ap* denotes men and waters. The two are the abode of one who is therefore named Narayana. The vedic text says, "he brought out the waters in the beginning; so he is the lord of all the objects denoted by the word *ap*".

Pitris : They are Agnishvattas, Barhishadas, Apyapas, Somapas, Sukalins, and the like.

Vasus : they are eight in number: Dhruva, Tara, Soma, Apas, Vaisvanara, Anila, Pratyusha and Prabhava; or according to a vedic text "Agni, the earth, Vayu, the middle world, the sun, *akasa*, the moon and the stars", are the *Vasus*.

Sadhyas : Manu, Mantra, Pranada, Chetayana, Viddhi, Jaya, Naya, Hamsa, Narayana, Prabhava, Vidhu, Viryavan (twelve in number); they are meant for multiplying the beings in the world, the *mantras* form their body; "They are born in the *manvantaras* as the sons of Dharma", says the *Vayupurana*.

Asvins : born of the sun and his wife Samjna when she took the form of a mare.

Marut : So named because they never die. They are 51 in number, beginning with Sukrajyoti according to *Vayupurana*.

Manu : The *Veda* says, "There is no other but he who thinks". The root *man* means to think.

Vayu : He causes everything to smell sweet according to the *sruti* text. All acts, all desires and all scents, all tastes, are verily He.

Agni : distributes to the gods the offerings made in the *yagas*. *Yagas*, *yajnas*, tank, well and such like public benefits are brought about with his cooperation, likewise he supports the worlds so far created and those that are still being fashioned. He is like the axis round which the world revolves. He is verily Agni, he is verily Vayu, he is verily Surya, he is verily Chandra — *sruti*.

He is verily the cause of all beings functioning ("If this *akasa* exists not in its form of happiness, who can dare to breath, who can dare to live?" - *sruti* - He brings about the spring and the other seasons (The *Vishnusahasranama* has the word *ritu* as one of the names of the Lord). According to the text, "not an atom moves except through him", he abides in all beings as their inner ruler and brings about all acts. The *sruti* tells us "He enters the heart of beings and causes to act". He is the means of attaining the highest wisdom. (They who ever centre their thoughts on me and adore with love are endowed by me with *jnanayoga*; and that lands them on to me — *Gita*).

Till now I have instructed you in the form and qualities of the god whom you have to worship through this hymn of praise. Now, I shall teach you the hymn itself known as *Adityahridaya*. You took birth as Aditi's son; you brought into being this Universe; impelled by you all creatures act; you range through the skies for the good of the world. Through showers of rain you nourish all beings. Lustrous are your rays. You are golden-hued; you shine in boundless splendour. You created the golden world of Brahma; you create the day.

Black horses draw his car; many thousands are his rays. One single horse named Sapta draws him, so the *sruti* says. Extremely

bright, he puts to flight the darkness; from him proceeds all happiness, he annihilates all forms; and again he recreates them by being reborn in the Universe that lay dead; he shines for ever.

He is within the golden universe; (Manu says that the egg is golden in hue like a million suns). He is the home of coolness for those who are scorched by the three fires that torment the flesh; He burns everything; He lights up every-thing; he is extolled by all; by day he holds the fire within himself; (the *sruti* says that when the sun rises, the Lord of fire takes his place by him in his car). Born as the son of Aditi, he is the protector of Purandara; he withdraws himself in the evening; he dispels the mist; he is the lord of the firmament. He has the strength to shelter Rahu and shake off his hold (the sun is praised in the forenoon with the hymns of the *Rigveda*; and at midday with the hymns of the *Yajurveda*; and at sunset with the hymns of the *Samaveda*; thus does he traverse the heavens with the three *Vedas* in attendance-*Sruti*). He is the cause of the rains; he is the friend of the ocean where the waters rest. During his southern passage, his path is over the Vindhya. He floats in the sky like a boat. He is the home of heat; he is spherical in shape; he is the destroyer of foes; he is yellow when he rises, he makes all things glow with heat at noon; he brings out and teaches sciences like grammar; (the *Sruti* says that there is nothing that he knows not). He rules the world. (Mighty in his lustre; overcomes all enemies). His love encompasses all beings; (He causes them to rejoice). From him all creatures derive their life. He is the sovereign of the stars and planets (The heavens, the sky and the sun, moon and the stars, the quarters, the earth and the vast oceans, all these are held together for work and use through the energy of Vasudeva-*Vishnusahasranama*; It is he that establishes the universe). He is brighter than all the other radiant gods (since the *sruti* tells us "he, through whom the sun receives his radiance and shines"; he is the son of our sun). Indra, Dhata, Bhaga, Pushan, Mitra, Varuna, Aryama, Archis, Vivasvan, Tvashta, Savita and Vishnu are his twelve forms. He is the centre of these twelve globes). And to you, thus manifest, do I bow in reverence.

(Aditya : The *upanishad* says, "He receives everything into himself. So he is named Aditya". That is why he makes all matter manifest.

Savita : He is the source from which springs the entire universe or he is its ruler.

Surya : He impels all beings to act; he is Paramatman. "He is in all beings as their ruler, he is the inner ruler of all beings" — *sruti*.

Khaga : The vedic text tells us, "he shines in the highest *akasa* as the ruler of these worlds".

Pushan : He has the universe under his protection.

Gabhastiman : He is eternally associated with Lakshmi who is all-pervading. "Even as Mahavishnu so is Mahalakshmi, all-pervading." *Vishnupurana*.

Suparna: This is another reading of Suvarna. He is the Paramatman according to the *sruti*. Two birds are there of fine plumage, ever uniting and residing upon the same tree.

Tapana : Himself sound asleep, he consumes his foes by his energy.

Hiranyaretas : The *Manusmriti* tells us, 'He evolved at first as Prakriti in the form of waters and therein did he let his energy pervade. It turned itself into this Brahmanda, golden in hue like millions of suns. So he is the golden germ or the seed that evolves this Brahmanda.

Divakara : He dispels the darkness of ignorance in all beings and lets in the light of knowledge.

Haridasva : He rides upon the Garuda, lovely to view.

Sahasrarchi : He is endowed with countless perfection.

Saptasapti: This hints at the Kalki Avatara.

Marichiman : He carries with him the weapons, conch, the disc and the mace to destroy his foes.

Timironmathana : He wards off all obstacles in the way of the dawn of wisdom consistently with the *sruti* text. He abides in the hearts of all and is the dearest friend destroying their ill-fortune and grief.

Sambhu : The *sruti*, "He spreads joy and happiness all round", tells us that he has eyes everywhere.

Tvashta : The Parasurama Avatara is hinted at here as it means that he cleared the earth of *Kshatriyas*, the warrior clans thrice seven times.

Amsuman : The *sruti* tells us 'Narayana pervades everything in and out'.

Hiranyagarbha : He contains in himself all these worlds and the *Sruti* has it that, "the Hiranyagarbha was the only one at the beginning".

Tapana : He causes danger and grief to those that are the foes of his dependents.

Bhaskara : It was he that fashioned the worlds whereby one can come into contact with all things directly.

Agnigarbha : The *sruti* tells us that Rudra came from Narayana. So he has in his womb the Rudra that is the fire of dissolution.

Sankha : He is boundless bliss-incarnate.

Sisiranasana : He destroys the mist and cold as the sun.

Vyomanatha : As the Tamasa Ahankara he evolves the Akasa Tatva; the Akasa springs from the Atman (*sruti*).

Tamobhedi : He destroys the darkness of ignorance in the heart of his devotees.

Samparaga : He is the end and finality of all *Vedas*. The *Gita* tells us, "I am He that is known throughout as the *Vedas*". Again the *Bhagavatapurana* says that Krishna the Paramatman is the eternal *Dharma* as taught by those that have mastered the inner mysteries of the *Vedas* and have realised in its entirety the nature and constitution of Brahman.

Ghanavrishti : He pours down like the rains the results of all actions. The *Gita* tells us, "I receive all *yajnas*, and I am the lord thereof."

Apammitra : I recline on the vast sheet of waters during the period of dissolution; the *sruti* tells us, "he is the one whom the wise ones behold in the midst of the oceans".

Vindyavithi : He leads the soul quickly and easily through the *nadi* known as the Sushumna, that is hard to pass along at the time of the departure of the *jiva* from the body. It is he that rewards us with liberation. He leads these *jivas* to the presence of Brahman. It is through his grace and his presence in the heart that the soul leaves this body through the *nadi* Sushumna which is the one after the hundred such that rises from the heart.

Atapi : It is he that plans and revolves the evolutions of these worlds. The *sruti* tells us that his meditation takes the form of wisdom.

Mandali : he is adorned with the jewel Kaustubha.

Mrityu : He is the dweller in the God Mrityu, as the *sruti* has it.

Pingala : Though great and mighty beyond compare, he is endowed with divine trait of extreme affability that shows itself in his moving so freely and on equal terms with the souls that set themselves up through ignorance against him.

(Sarvatapana : He destroys this universe in an instant).

Salutations unto you enthroned on the eastern mountain of sunrise; Salutations to you enthroned on the Western mountain of sunset. Salutations to you the lord of the globes of light and ruler of the day (This hints that he is the ruler of the liberated ones shining in their lustres). Salutations to you who confers success on your devotees and bestows all good; to you who is drawn by black horses. Salutations to you of resistless prowess: You destroy bodily and mental ills of those that adore you and bless them with everything good and holy. You ride on the shoulders of Hanuman; (this hints at the *avatara* as Rama). Salutations to you who contains in himself countless millions of souls. You are Aditya in manifestation (the *Gita* says, "it is my essence known as the *jivas* in their world"). You are harsh and severe to those that seek you not. You impell all beings towards their actions. You travel through two thousand *yojanas* in half a second.

And unto you go forth my salutations. I bow unto you who are above Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, the Lords of manifestation, function, and involution. You are the Supreme Brahman itself. You are the sun manifest. You proclaim as Aditya, your boundless light and glory; you withdraw into yourself the entire universe; and to you I bow in reverence as Rudra on the occasion (The *sruti* tells us "this Aditya is verily Brahmins. The Lord Janardana himself takes the names and forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, that function as the fashioner, the conductor, and the destroyer of worlds - *smriti*. To him the Brahmins, and the Kshatriyas are food, says, the *sruti*. The terrible form he takes on when destroying his foes hints at his *avatara* as Narasimha. I salute you, who dispels darkness; you deal death to the enemies of those who take refuge in you, you chase away mist and dew; the form that you assume is boundless; you are destroyer of ungrateful men. Your radiance and splendour is something peculiar and apart; you are the Lord of everything that blazes and shines. You are of the colour of molten gold. You distribute to the gods their share of offerings as the Lord Agni; You are the maker of all the worlds. You remove the darkness of ignorance; you are mercy incarnate; you are the inner ruler of all beings and the witness of their merits and sins (From the name Sarvadevatmaka, "the soul of all the Gods" upto Lokasakshi, "the witness of everything" are the *mantras* numbering 108 contained in this praise known as *Adityahridaya*. Having thus instructed Rama, the *rishi* again praises the Supreme Lord, who is the presiding deity thereof).

"He destroys the worlds on the day of the great dissolution and brings it again into being. He is the protector of everything and causes the waters to dry up. It is he that burns up everything. It is he that brings us the rains through his rays. It is he that is ever awake and alert as the inner ruler of all beings when they are withdrawn into the state of Sushupti, dreamless sleep. He is the fire sacrifice and the fruit thereof. (He enables men to conduct these rites. He takes unto himself the rites and gives them the rewards thereof). It is he that should be known by all beings; It is he that is adored by *yajna*, *yaga* and such like ceremonies. He is the presiding deity of all worldly acts. He brings their results as the Lord of all. As this Aditya is all powerful and all mighty. Raghava! If

a man would meditate upon the god and sing his praise in times of danger and difficulty, in lonely forest, in moments of impending fear, nothing happens to him amiss. So concentrate your thoughts and adore with devotion this God of Gods, this Lord of the boundless universe. This hymn of praise, *Adityahridaya*, recited three times brings you victory in battle. This very moment will you slay Ravana". Having thus instructed Rama, the *Maharishi* Agastya went back to his place.

Raghava, of matchless radiance, cast away his weariness of heart. He listened to it and kept it in memory most gladly with senses and mind well under control. He purified himself, sipped the holy water thrice, recited the *mantras* duly with his soul and heart centred upon Aditya; boundless joy filled his heart. His valour and splendour grew apace. He took a good look at Ravana who faced him; his heart danced with joy and delight; and he decided within himself to slay his foe in battle and put his heart in the work.

The Lord of the Day cast a look of supreme affection at Rama, who praised him there. He was supremely pleased at his devotion and the praise; his hair stood on end as he said "This lord of the *rakshasas* has met his fate". With this blessing he addressed himself to Rama from his place among the gods on high and said "Rama lose no time in sending Ravana to his doom". (The sun came down from his orb to have a better view of the battle and stood in the sky near to the place taken by Rama in the battlefield and blessed him with the fruit of his devotional hymn). But later on we find that Brahma, Rudra and Indra and others proclaim with one voice that Rama was the Lord Narayana himself and so he is greater than the greatest, the Lord Vishnu. But here we find that the sun is described as being endowed with all such perfections. The solution to this problem is — In the *Chandogyopanishad* we find that Aditya is the presiding deity of the Madhuvidya; however, it is the inner ruler of the sun, the Supreme Lord that should be adored thereby; he is verily the objective thereof as the *Maharishi* Vedavyasa teaches us in the *Brahmasutras*. So this praise has as its objective deity the Supreme Lord that is the inner ruler of Aditya himself. This story of Rama teaches us from the beginning to the end that the Lord Narayana is the Supreme One.

RAVANA MEETS WITH EVIL PORTENTS



HEN driver of Ravana brought his car swiftly to the place. It filled the hearts of the foes with terror; it looked like floating clouds, palaces and cities in the sky; its flags and banners scraped the heavens above: Horses adorned with garlands of gold and of noble breed were yoked to it. It was plentifully supplied with bows, arrows, armours, swords, shields, maces, and other weapons; it was gaily decked with streamers and pennons; it gave one the idea that it swallowed the entire firmament; its tread caused the earth to quake. It was quite capable by itself of destroying the enemies' hosts and causing joy and delight to wax in the hearts of its own men. (Varahamihira in his *Samhita* tells us that if there appeared in the sky palaces, mansions, courts, towers of varied shapes and colours and adorned with banners, garlands and chaplets, it is given the name of the city of *gandharvas*. Terrible battle between kings attended with destruction of countless elephants, horses, cars, and infantry is the concomitant of this portent). Raghuvira noted that the car of the *rakshasa* ruler drove at him with frightful speed, while the earth and the quarters trembled in affright. Drawn by jet-black horses with baleful lustre, adorned with a flag like unto lambent lightning, it caught the attention of Rama; weapons like unto those of Indra himself shone therein, as it drew near like rain-clouds spreading themselves over the sky. Then he grasped his bow, ready, strong, and brilliant as the crescent moon; and twanged it so that the thunder resembled the shattering of mountains by Indra's bolt. Then he turned to Matali and said, *Behold, Ravana comes upon us in his car with frightful speed; he drives on the wrong side and it is a sure sign that he seeks his death in this battle; so take the car carefully right in front of him; I would destroy him today and his car like unto a storm at the wake of fleeting clouds. Drive on with enthusiasm; take no chances; do not be disturbed in thought or look; hold the reins steadily and with care. In fact it is entirely un-called for that I should give you directions when you have driven the car of Indra. But I have set myself to fight with undivided

attention a most mighty foe and it is why I remind you of this. Do not take it that I instruct you in things that you know not". Matali was mightily pleased thereat. He drove his car on the wrong side of Ravana's conveyance and hid him behind the cloud of dust raised by the wheels. That caused Ravana to blaze with wrath. He rolled his eyes frightfully and gave Rama before him a hot time of it with his shafts. Raghava was not behind-hand in fury; he grasped most valiantly the bow sent him by Indra and the arrows blazing like the sun.

Then both stood up to one another, intent upon a mortal fight, like two lions in their prime. *Devas, gandharvas, siddhas*, and *maharshis* prayed for the death of Ravana and gathered there to behold the dreadful fight. Then there were seen ill-omens indicating the death of Ravana and the victory of Raghava. Clouds rained blood on the car of the *rakshasa*, whirlwinds raged keen and fiercely revolved on the wrong side. Huge vultures, banded themselves above and followed his car. (The *Sakunarnava* tells us that birds of ill-omen like the vulture, circle over the head of him upon whom death has laid its hand). Lanka and the land around was bathed in blood-red sunset and looked like a sheet of fire at night. Meteors, comets, and thunders indicated the impending fate of Ravana. The *rakshasas* quaked in terror; dreadful earthquakes followed the steps of Ravana. His men were powerless to use their weapons, as if someone threw them back. The rays of the sun lit up the body of Ravana, red, white, and black in hue like unto mountain slopes lined with ores of varied colours. Jackals vomited flames and looked inauspiciously with their gaze on the face of Ravana; eagles and vultures cried most frightfully, a strong wind beat against him and blinded him with the dust. His armies were afflicted all over, by thunderbolts, roaring dreadfully, but without any clouds in sight. All directions were covered with dust and darkness and the sky itself was hid from view. *Sarikas* (birds) fought ceaselessly in groups and came towards the car with frightful cries. The horses shed tears; and from the quarters arose sparks of fire. Thus were seen ill-omens betokening the approach of the death of Ravana. Likewise there were seen good omens indicating the coming victory of Rama. His heart was gladdened thereat mightily and he concluded that Ravana was dead.

Raghava, an adept in the science of omens, noted carefully the good and the evil signs beneficial to himself and unlucky to Ravana; his hair stood on end with joy. Boundless delight filled his heart and he displayed supreme valour and prowess in the fight.

CHAPTER 109

RAMA AND RAVANA

THEN Rama and Ravana took their seats on divine cars and carried on a dreadful fight that caused all beings to quake with terror. The contending forces themselves stood motionless eager to watch the fight, with their arms idle. When the heroes began the fight in earnest all lost themselves in following it and were filled with boundless surprise. Those that were about to discharge their weapons stood there motionless. Wonder caused them to forbore themselves and they forgot to strike or defend. They fixed their gaze on their leaders and resembled painted figures on the canvass with unwinking eyes. The warriors themselves watched very carefully the signs, cast away fear and then fought on with clear brains and willing hands while uncontrollable anger drove them on. "I should win" said Raghupati to himself, "I should die a glorious death" said Ravana to himself. They plucked up courage from danger and displayed everything they knew in that fight.

Then Ravana shot some rare arrows at the banner on the car of Raghava. But they were prevented from touching it by the protective power attached to the car and fell on the earth away from it. Rama was wroth thereat and wanted to pay him in his own coin. He bent his bow and shot a keen shaft at the banner on the car of Ravana; like unto a lordly serpent it was blazing in its radiance and was impossible to stay; it failed not in its purpose and brought down the banner of the *rakshasa*. Ravana was lapped all over in flames as it were by his mad fury and looked as if he would consume everything. That mighty one lashed by indescribable wrath shot many a keen arrow and hit the horses yoked to the car of Indra. But they were horses of heavenly breed, they blenched not, nor

moved a hair's breadth; in fact the shafts were comfortable and soothing to them as if they were lotus stalks. Thereat Ravana brought down another deluge of arrows through the might of his magic. Then from his arrows sprung maces, bolts, wheels, pestles, mountain peaks, trees, tridents and axes. All creatures shook with fear as the downpour kept on with frightful speed and dreadful roar. Thus did he hide from view the car of Raghava; but he made short work of the shower. This made Ravana to give rest for a while to the car and turned his attack on the monkey-host incessantly, with uniform energy and spirit. With unabated courage, did Raghunatha return the attack and pave the earth, the sky, and the quarters. He noted that Ravana set his heart in his work, warlike fury mastered him, and he was waxing visibly. So he laughed lightly, strung his bow, and set up a ceaseless deluge of arrows, one, ten, hundred and thousand in number. In his turn Ravana displayed the same skill and covered the firmament above with his arrows leaving no pin-point space. These arrowy downpours hid the light of the firmament from view and presented another sky. Every arrow hit its mark or they dashed against one another and fell on the ground. Thus did Rama and Ravana carry on coursing now right, now left, filling the sky till it struggled for breath. The horses that drew the cars did not escape the attention of the heroes. Their anger grew and grew; their martial spirit kept pace. The beholders trembled in affright and their hairs stood on end as these mighty heroes kept up the fight, unwearied with keen shafts. Ravana was filled with uncontrollable wrath at Raghupati, who brought down the banner on his car.

RAVANA'S HEADS SHORN OFF



ALL beings stood in confusion and surprise as they beheld this remarkable battle between the two. The cars themselves dashed against each other with frightful speed. The drivers caught the contagion and kept up a mortal fight using their vehicles as weapons. Turning back right and left, round, and round they coursed with the speed of lightning, displayed every trick and mode and feint they knew and it was dreadful to behold. None could follow the course when Rama hit Ravana and fell back or when Ravana returned the compliment with the speed of thought. Like huge cloud-banks during the rains did the cars pour forth a ceaseless torrent of weapons and rang in the sky that was to them the field of battle. Having thus given a taste of their mastery of the vehicles, they stood up against each other again. Wheel and wheel, yoke and yoke, axle and axle, horses and horses clashed together with dreadful impact.

Rama bent his bow and hit the horses of Ravana with four shafts and hurled them back. Ravana wroth beyond words, hit Rama with keen shafts that passed clean through him. But this afflicted him not in the least. Though Ravana put all his force behind it, his face did not turn pale, Ravana then turned his attention to Matali, the driver of Indra, and shot dreadful arrows like unto *vajras*. They passed through his body, but caused him no pain nor clouded his brain, Rama cared little for his enemy's attacks on him. But this deliberate side-shot at his driver maddened him and at the same time filled him with shame. So he set his heart on his work and caused Ravana to seek refuge from the arrowy torrent; twenty, thirty, sixty, hundred, thousand, with countless arrows did Rama hit the car of the Ravana unremittingly. Ravana did not draw back but kept up a never ending attack against Rama with club, bar, bolt, and spear.

The battle that followed was even more terrible and ghastly. The seven seas were stirred up through the sounds of the arrowy deluge and of the maces, bars, bolts, and other weapons hurled through

the air ceaselessly. The very inhabitants of the lower worlds, the *pannagas*, *danavas*, and the rest suffered extreme distress. The earth, the mountains, the forests and the woods shook to their foundation; the sun grew dim; air stood still. Then the *devas*, the *gandharvas*, the *siddhas*, *kinnaras* and *uragas* cried, "This is wonderful beyond belief; neither of the two shows any signs of weariness". They were mightily anxious whether Rama would win, would chop off his head and pierce his vitals. The *devarshis* kept up a ceaseless prayer and recitations, "May good be with the cows, may the worlds be not destroyed, may Rama defeat Ravana in the battle" and thus they kept watchful eyes on the fight. *Gandharvas* and *apsaras* came there in groups, beheld that marvellous fight and cried, "The sky has nothing to compare it with except the sky; the ocean has nothing to compare it with except the oceans. Even so, the battle between Rama and Ravana can only be compared with the battle between Rama and Ravana".


Then the best and bravest of the Raghu race took up an arrow named Kshura, set it on the string and sent it at Ravana with terrible wrath; and he brought down the head of the *rakshasa*-ruler with the crown and ear-rings that graced it. The three worlds gazed at it with all their souls. But the next moment here was another head at the same place, identical with it. Rama cut away that too with one of his keen shafts. But there was another in its place at once. Raghava kept up this game with arrows like unto the bolts of Indra and one hundred and one heads lay on the earth. One cannot be distinguished from the other in size, colour, shape, lustre or ornaments. And there was no knowing the path to the destruction of the *rakshasa* nor the end of his long life with this successive decapitation. The arrows of Rama were athirst during long years to drink the blood of the *rakshasa*'s heart and it was but to fulfil their wishes. (We should note that Ravana appeared during the fight with only a single head and a pair of arms. That is why Valmiki tells us that he lay on the earth with two arms outspread adorned with rare ornaments — Govindaraja. But we have it again that Dasagriva towers aloft in the battle-field like the mountain Mainaka with ten heads and twenty arms, brandishing mighty bows. We might explain it that it was the main head that was so often cut off-Tirtha). Then Rama felt rather anxious and said to himself "There is nothing

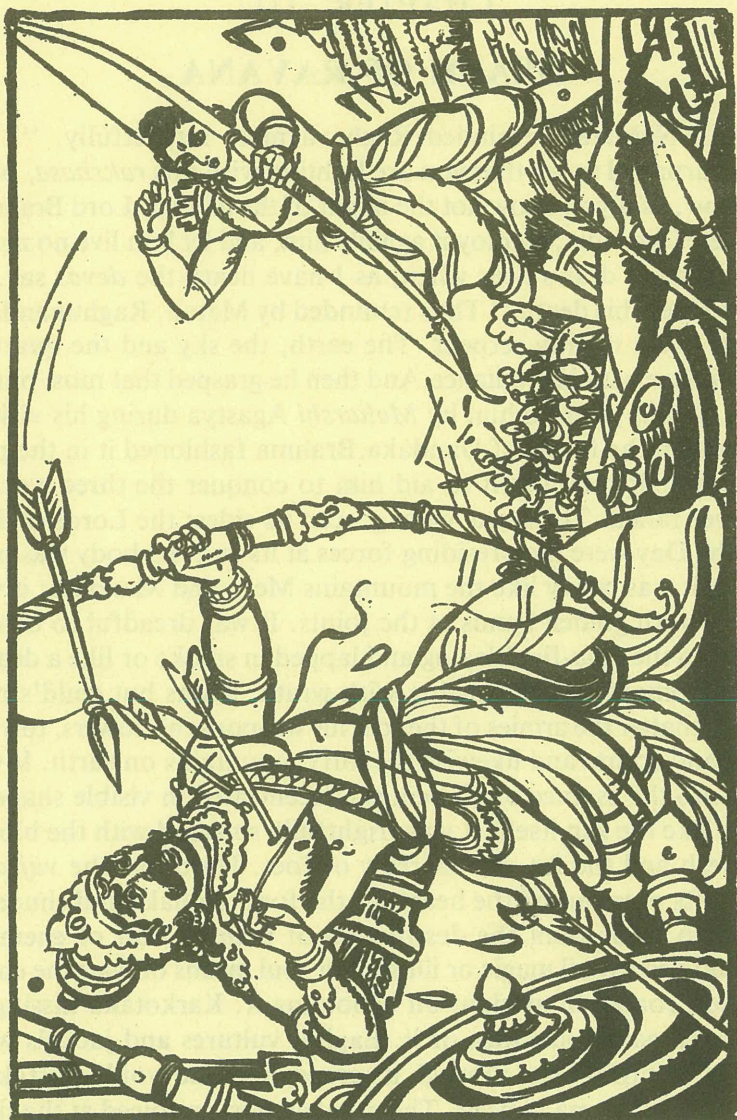
I know not about the qualities of human and divine weapons: I have mastered the secrets of discharging them effectively and dealing death to the foe. These are the arrows that brought down Maricha. These are the arrows that sent Khara, Dushana and their clan to meet their fates; that drank the life blood of Viradha in the forest of Dandaka — that cut down Kabandha in the Krauncha forest — these have never failed me till now in battle. But they are utterly powerless against this Ravana. Then he planted in the broad chest of Ravana many a mighty arrow with great care. In his turn Ravana gave no peace to Rama with a ceaseless attack with maces, bars and other weapons.

The heroes were on the Trikuta hill at the beginning of the fight. But in the ardour of battle they forgot themselves and ranged over the earth and the sky and on the mountain peaks. *Devas, danavas, yakshas, pisachas, nagas and the rakshasas* were eager to witness the dreadful fight kept up ceaselessly through that long night. (There are two readings meaning respectively — seven nights and days and that night long through. Hanuman burnt down Lanka on the fourth day of the fortnight in the month of Phalguna; Rama reached the ocean shores on the fullmoon day. He kept up a fast and meditation on the first, the second and the third days following. He went up to Mount Suvela on the eighth, the battle began on the ninth; so we might take it that the battle between Rama and Ravana lasted seven days and nights. This has already been discussed on the occasion of dealing with the sleep of Kumbhakarna). Not one hour, not one moment in the day or in the night did the battle slacken or cease between Rama and Ravana. Matali who followed with his soul the changing aspects of the fight was surprised to see that Raghuvira did not get better of his foe visibly. Most wise, intelligent, he spoke to Rama now that the moment for it had come.

CHAPTER 111

DEATH OF RAVANA

HEN Matali reminded Raghava most respectfully, "I am surprised to see that you are fighting with this *rakshasa*, blow for blow, as if you know not the might of the *astra* of Lord Brahma. Prince of warriors; employ it against him, and let him live no more. The moment draws near when, as I have heard the *devas* say, he should meet his death." Thus reminded by Matali, Raghunandana hissed like a mighty serpent. The earth, the sky and the quarters were ablaze with his radiance. And then he grasped that most potent *astra*. It was given to him by *Maharshi* Agastya during his visit to the sage in the forest of Dandaka. Brahma fashioned it in the past for Indra. It was meant to aid him to conquer the three worlds. It never failed. The Lord Vayu graced its sides; the Lords of Fire and the Day were the presiding forces at its end. Its body was pure *akasa*; it was heavy like the mountains Meru and Mandara; it was decked with golden bands at the joints. It was dreadful to behold like unto the *kala*-fire blazing and lapped in smoke or like a deadly and venomous serpent hissing with wrath; it was but child's play to it to shatter the armies of the foe, his weapons, his towers, turrets, gates and courts and likewise the lofty mountains on earth. It was like unto the essence of all beings concentrated in visible shape; it shone like the sun itself; it was frightfully smeared with the blood, the flesh and the fat, the marrow of foes. Hard like the *vajra* of Indra, its roar caused the hearts of the foes to quake and shudder, it had to its account the destruction of many a host of enemies. It could destroy all magic or illusion or foul means of war; the entire creation roared in affright on beholding it. Karkotaka hissing in his wrath gave some idea of it. Eagles, vultures and jackals were sure of plentiful feast through its grace; and one would mistake it for the Lord Yama himself. The monkey-hosts rejoiced at the sight of it. The *rakshasas* were filled with despair. It was the king of all *astras*; the feathers of the very Lord Garuda winged it. It warded off fear from the hearts of the kings of the Ikshvaku race. It made short work of the fame of foes. It was the source of boundless joy



to him that owned it. The mighty Rama chanted over it the *mantras* laid down for the purpose in the *Vedas*, and set it on the string. Then all beings trembled with fear; the earth tottered to its roots. Raghuvira was beside himself with wrath like unto Lord Rudra on the day of Dissolution; he bent his mighty bow, drew the string to his ear and shot it most carefully that it may cleave the heart and vitals of his foe.

He put behind it the strength and force of his arms, like unto the *vajra* of Indra; like unto the *vajra* itself none can ward it; and like the Lord Yama, that brings all things to their destruction, it fell on the broad chest of Ravana. Shot with irresistible speed and force, that shaft clove the heart of the wicked Ravana, and destroyed the body. It drank up the life-breaths of the *rakshasa* in a moment and wet with his blood made its way into the earth. Thus did it slay Ravana. Shining with his blood on it, it effected its purpose and came back to its place in the quiver of Rama with supreme respect and reverence. The bow and the arrows fell from the hands of Ravana. Thus lost to life and unable to save himself, like unto the Asura Vritra, felled down by the *vajra* of Indra, that ruler of the *rakshasa*-world of boundless lustre and power fell on the earth from his car, a lifeless corpse. Those of the *rakshasas* that were alive beheld it; there was none to lead them; they were in the grip of fear unspeakable; and they sought safety and refuge in all directions. The monkeys made the earth and the sky tremble with their shouts of joy at the death of Ravana and the victory of Rama. They chased the retreating *rakshasas* with trees and mountains. The *rakshasas* were clean dazed with fear, with none to look upto, they hid themselves all through Lanka with wan faces and streaming eyes. On the otherside the monkeys were equally beside themselves with extreme joy. Their forms grew in bulk with the consciousness of victory; and they kept up shouts and cries and roars, repeating the news of the death of Ravana and the victory of Rama. War drums of the heaven world thundered in the sky. A cool and pleasant breeze blew, heavy with perfume. Flowers rained from the sky. Raghava and his car were clean hid by that rare and sweet deluge. The hosts of the heaven worlds praised Rama most joyfully, crying "Good! Good!". The death of Ravana, who held the worlds in mortal terror caused the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *siddhas*, and *charanas*

to be delirious with joy. Raghava gladdened the hearts of Sugriva and Angada; with his victory over the *rakshasa*-ruler, they had realised their utmost hopes. (They were waiting to return somewhat the benefits they had received from Rama; and they rejoiced to see that their efforts were crowned with success). Then the hosts of heaven cast away their fears and rejoiced. The quarters were clear and light; the sky shone spotlessly. The earth shook not; the winds blew not fierce but soft and pleasant. Lakshmana, Vibhishana, Sugriva, Jambavan and the other friends of Raghava revelled in boundless delight at the success of the arms of Rama and offered due worship to him, who shone with the radiance of victory. Ramabhadra slew his foe and made his word good. He shone with blinding splendour in the midst of his friends and armies like unto Mahendra adored by the hosts of Heaven.

CHAPTER 112

THE LAMENT OF VIBHISHANA

Vibhishana beheld his brother Ravana defeated by Rama, and lying on the ground a lifeless corpse; and cried and wailed out of uncontrollable grief. "Peerless Lord of boundless prowess! feared far and near through the worlds! master of every science and art! adept in the mysteries of kingship! You used to take your rest on the beds of swan feathers covered with fragrant flowers divested of their stalks; has it come to this that you quit your hold upon life on the rough bare earth like a fallen thing? Your arms are spread awry, that resemble the trunks of elephants, and adorned with diverse ornaments of rare make; your crown has fallen away from your brows. Was it in your fate to lie here, all unseemly and still, as if the Lord of Day had fallen headlong from his place on high? My words to you spoken on that day have now come true. Lust and pride maddened your brain and you made light of my well-meant counsel. Prahasta, Indrajit, Kumbhakarna, Atikaya, Narantaka and the other *rakshasa*-heroes, not to speak of your own self made light of that dead whose result has now come to you,

not to be set aside. Alas! you were the last word in the science of polity, you were *dharma* incarnate; you were the head and heart of strength and valour; you were worthy of all praise; and you have met your fate today. And those excellences are now adrift with no one to dwell in. This Lord has to his account Agnihotras; and the Lord of Day that gives life and light to the worlds, has this day fallen head long from his place on high. The Queen of Night has sunk in blind darkness shorn of her rays. The Lord of fire, is now a dull cloud. Energy and enthusiasm are now idle and listless. All these and much more have come true, now that the famed Lord of Lanka, the gem on the crown of warriors is no more and a lifeless corpse measuring his length on the bare earth.

Lo! Ravana, the best and the bravest of the *rakshasa*-world, is worsted by his foe and rolls in the dust. A mighty huge tree is uprooted and spread on the ground by a terrible whirl-wind. The mighty *rakshasa* is the tree and Rama is the whirl-wind. Valour is the root of that great tree, *tapas* is its strength, cheer is its flower, and courage is its tender leaves. Ravana, the mad elephant, lies mauled by Rama, the lion. The tusks are his fame, the hind part is his heredity, the limbs are his anger and the trunk is his favour. The ten-headed Ravana is the fire that has been put out by Rama the cloud. Valour and cheerfulness are the flames, the breath is the smoke, the strength is the heat. The mighty and valorous bull of a Ravana has been killed by Raghuvira, the tiger. The *rakshasas* are the tails and horns of the bull”.

Thus did Vibhishana, unable to bear the sorrow, wail the death of Ravana in words, reasonable and appropriate. Hearing him thus wail, Rama said “Friend! he was valorous and dreadful in battle, had unbounded cheer and optimism. Do not think that he has been vanquished in battle as an ordinary weakling. Rest assured that he died after performing valorous deeds, praiseworthy in every respect. No need to weep for those who are true Kshatriyas and have lost their lives in battle, fighting with all their valour and desirous of reaching heaven by death in battle true and straight. Dead though they be, they live eternally in name and fame, Ravana was very intelligent; had conquered the three worlds, the *devas* and Indra. He had ascended to the *Virasvarga* and has won everlasting fame.

This is not the time to feel for his end, an end which has to be reached by one and all by the passage of time. We have not heard of any one who has been always successful in battle. A true warrior is either killed or kills his foes in battle. To kill or to be killed in fight is an universal *dharma*. Our ancients have praised and lauded high the death of a warrior in battle. Kshatriyas have accepted this. I therefore opine that the death of a Kshatriya in battle, after he has fought valiantly without ever turning his back to his foe should never be wailed. You will therefore understand this truth and knowing that every thing born has to die, proceed to think of the steps to be taken hereafter.”

Addressed thus by Sri Rama, descendant of the line of Ikshvakus and the *avatara* of *Dharma* and fame, Vibhishana, with sorrow unabated, spoke thus about the rites to be performed for his brother. “*Devas* and Indra together could not defeat Ravana in battle. That great hero was killed in battle by facing you, even as the ocean waves die out on the shores. He has numberless charitable deeds to his credit. He has worshipped the *devas* and masters with all the might of his heart. He has enjoyed all the pleasures in life. He has favoured all his followers. He had endowed his friends with riches and prosperity. He has avenged himself many a time on his foes. He has performed the Agnihotra ceaselessly. He is mighty of *tapas*, well-versed in the *Vedas*, has accomplished Vedic rites according to the standard rules and regulations, I await your orders to perform his last rites, worthy of a true warrior without an equal, great in the path of *dharma*, famous in the performance of Agnihotra, to enable him to attain the noblest salvation in the worlds beyond. His brothers, his sons and his nearest kith and kin are all dead and gone. I am the only surviving member of his family and the duty of performing the last ceremonies devolves therefore on me”.

Raghuvira heard Vibhishana's piteous and humble prayer and ordered the last rites to be performed. “Vibhishana! we should not abandon the last rites due to him, though there was enmity between you and him. It would not be proper. All enmity should end with death. It is not justice to continue to bear ill-will towards one who is dead. We came here to redeem Sita. That object has been achieved. Obsequies due for Ravana should be paid. He is your brother. You

are a great friend of mine and therefore your brother is a brother to me also. If you refuse to do the last ceremonies because he was evil-minded, I shall not hesitate to do the rites myself. Anyone of the brothers has the authority to do the last ceremonies.’”

CHAPTER 113


LAMENT OF LADIES IN THE HAREM

MEANWHILE, the news that Ravana was killed by Rama reached the royal ladies and they were plunged in the depth of grief. With hair dishevelled and robes and ornaments falling off, they rushed out of the harem. Caring not for the words of any one, they rolled on the ground and wept bitterly, even as a cow that has lost her calf. Followed by the *rakshasas* they entered the battle-field through the Northern gate in quest of their lord and husband. “Ha! Our King! Ha! our Lord! they cried, and cast their searching glances all round on the field filled with headless trunks. Left unprotected by the death of their lord, like the she-elephants of the forests that have lost their mates, they cried bitterly and wept with tears streaming down their cheeks. After a long while they saw their lord of mighty prowess and limitless splendour lying prostrate on the ground like a black mountain. Finding their lord’s body lying on the bare dusty ground, they fell on it like rootless creepers and fainted. One of them out of her regard and devotion to him wept aloud and embraced him; one placed the feet of Ravana on her head and wept; one clung to his neck and cried; one took his arms, placed them on herself and rolled on the ground; one swooned looking intently on his face; one placed his head on her lap and cried aloud, her tears falling on his face even as the dew drops on the lotus. Thus they wept and cried for long, rolled on the ground and beat their breasts, having lost the king of the *rakshasas*, who was their lord, mate, husband and king. “Alas! you made Indra tremble even in his slumber. The destroyer of all creations, Yama himself, went underground afraid of you. Vanquished by you, Kubera, your brother, the favourite friend of Paramasiva, lost his Pushpaka car to you. The *gandharvas*, *rishis*, and the *devas* trembled at the

mere mention of your name! Has it come to this that you of such name and fame should now lie thus on the battle-field? You had no need to dread the *asuras*, the *danavas*, the *daityas* and the hosts of *devas*. How did you meet with death at the hands of mere mortals! You, who could not be killed by the most powerful *deva*, *danava*, *yaksha* and *gandharva*-hosts, were you destined to die at the hands of a man, who had not even a chariot and had to stand on the ground! All the created beings of the three worlds could not trouble you. How have you yielded today to an ordinary mortal who has no name or a place of his own?" Thus they wailed and mourned their Lord, praising his prowess, greatness and valour.

"Alas! not minding the advice of friends who had your welfare at heart you brought Sita here. Thereby you sought your own death. You have brought about the eradication of the *rakshasa*-race. You and we and all our kinsfolk have perished. Your brother, Vibhishana, did he not on many an occasion entreat you to restore Sita? Rejecting his counsel, you drove him out of Lanka with harsh and cruel words. What else have you achieved but to drive your good fortune and bring destruction on yourself? Had you sent back Sita even then, would such a fate have overtaken us? Would the *rakshasa*-line have been swept away like this? Vibhishana would have been mightily pleased. Rama, his friend, would have become the friend of the *rakshasas*. This widowhood would not have befallen us. Your enemies, the *devas*, would not then have danced with joy, as they do now. You, the *rakshasas* and ourselves earned our destruction even at the time when Sita was forcibly brought here with tears in her eyes, fear and sorrow in her heart. Ha! Chief of the *rakshasas*! What is the use of blaming you! Created beings cannot have things happening according to their own wish. Fate is the only cause of all that happens. One's death is first ordained by Fate and then only one meets with death outwardly at the hands of one's enemy. It has been destined that countless *rakshasas* and *vanaras* and yourself should die in this great battle. What is the use of possessing riches, power and prowess enough to subdue others? Can all these avail against Fate?" Thus did the ladies of Ravana wail woefully like the *krauncha* bird that has lost her mate.

THE LAMENT OF MANDODARI

S the wives of Ravana were weeping for their lord, Mandodari, the chief, among them looked long at the body of her husband and moaned deeply. She knew full well that the true warrior, who meets with death fighting fearlessly in battle without turning his back is rewarded with the highest bliss. But she grieved bitterly with shame that her lord was vanquished and killed by a mere man, who was no equal to him. Beholding the king of Lanka lying low slain by Rama, whose exploits were countless and unimaginable, the desolate Mandodari mourned helplessly : “Oh king of kings! Wonder of wonders! Kubera, the friend of your family deity Mahadeva, is your brother. Before your angered self can the *maharshis*, the *gandharvas*, the *siddhas*, *charanas*, the guardians of the regions and all those that live in the three worlds, including Indra himself stand? All the world knows this. Have not the *charanas*, in fear of you fled? This too the world knows. How then did this man roaming about in the forest kill you? Is it not shameful that this has happened to you? Oh mightiest of the *rakshasas*! How did this mere man, a wandering ascetic who lives on roots and fruits and wears matted locks and deer skin and the bark of trees, how did such a man vanquish you who had mastered all the three worlds with your valour, power and riches? How did he kill you, whose prowess none could withstand? Your city of Lanka is surrounded on all sides by the ocean, built on the top of the Chitrakuta hill, guarded by the mighty *rakshasas* day and night; and none can penetrate into it. I cannot believe what they say that Rama overpowered you, mighty, skilled and fully armed as you were.

“Whose exploit then could this be? This is not a thing to be accomplished by a mere man. That Rama was no man was clear to me even then when it was reported at Janasthana he killed single-handed and in a short space of time, Khara, Dushana, Trisiras and a host of other *rakshasas*. I was deeply perturbed when I heard that an ordinary monkey pierced through the defences of Lanka,

which had been impregnable even to the gods, killed many *rakshasa*-heroes and destroyed the city. When the mighty *vanaras* built the dam across the ocean, I knew Rama was no mortal. Perhaps the God of Death himself came as Rama, luring you to your destruction by creating an illusory Sita with unequalled beauty and charm. Could it be that Indra, the king of the Gods, who had been vanquished and disgraced by you, came in this disguise to kill you? No it could not be for he knows how weak he is, face to face with you."

"Truly this is He that has the well-being of all in His Heart, the Paramatma, He who is without beginning, middle and end, mighty beyond the mightiest, the creator greater than the *devas* and the lord Brahmadeva; this is Mahavishnu, the valorous, who carried the conch, the disc, and the mace, who has Srivatsa on his breast, the protector of all the Universe, who is never separated from Mahalakshmi; really Rama the mortal man, is the incarnation of Sriman Narayana, the Lord of all Lords and worlds. Surrounded by gods in the shape of monkeys to serve Him, He the resplendent One has killed you with all your followers for the good of all creatures."

"Once you had mastered the senses and kept them under your control. Then all the three worlds were subject to your sway. The senses, waiting for an opportunity for revenge have now ruined you. You paid no heed to my repeated entreaties not to make an enemy of Rama. Now you see the result of it. You cannot now blame me, for I had warned you and you knew everything. Lord of *rakshasas*! Wherefore this infatuation for Sita! Your riches have gone; friends, relatives, sons and subjects have been wiped out; even you are now lying dead. What good did you achieve? Sita is greater than Arundhati in chastity; greater is her devotion to her husband than that of Rohini. She is like a mother to you; was it then becoming of you to have yielded to your wicked will and attempted to force her. You may ask "Why did she not kill me if she were such a chaste woman?" The answer is that she is mother of Mother Earth in patience; she is the wealth of Mahalakshmi, the Goddess of Plenty; her love for her husband has no bounds; she was not born out of the womb; and her charm and beauty are faultless and perfect. She

was living in the friendless forest infested with wild beasts. You assumed the garb of an ascetic and with the aid of Maricha, drew by deceit Rama and Lakshmana away from her, and you carried away by force while she was trembling with fear. You did forget me, your own wife, equally beautiful, intelligent and perfect in every respect. The reason for this was not my imperfection but your own clouded mind. Using force against that purest of women, you brought on yourself your own ruin. All this has happened because of my misfortune. If you were not destroyed at the very moment of laying hands on her, my lord, it was because even Agni could not touch you."

"There is no doubt that the evil-doer reaps the fruits when the time is ripe. He who does good gains happiness, he who does evil misery. Vibhishana always trod the path of the righteous, sought refuge with Raghava, the embodiment of *dharma*; he therefore secured happiness, longevity, and the kingdom of Lanka. You were evil-minded, gave up *dharma*, and pursued *adharma*; evil deeds were your achievements, and you wronged Rama deeply. Friendless and kinless, your kingdom lost and killed in battle you lie on the field, covered with dust. Crows, jackals and vultures will feed on your body."

"Many women, far lovelier than Sita, are awaiting your favour sure. But you were caught in the coils of love and you in your folly could not understand it. Neither by birth, nor by charm, neither by accomplishment nor by skill is Sita my equal; but you could not see it because of your senseless passion. Death comes to all through something or other. In your case, Sita was the messenger of death when you brought from afar and with great difficulty. For ten months Sita was kept well-protected even as a child in the womb, and the issue that came out was your death. Thus far has Sita suffered by separation from her lord, henceforth her trials are over and in the company of her lord once again she will be happy. I have enjoyed all the rarest pleasures of life. But now, losing my sons and widowed by your death, I am plunged in the ocean of sorrow."

"With unparalleled riches, adorned with rare ornaments, clothes and perfumed with the finest scents, I have sported with you on

the hill tops of Kailasa, Mandara, and Meru and in the woods of Nandana. I have traversed many countries and beheld their wonders with you in the Pushpaka car. Having lost you, I have lost all that pleasure and happiness. I am left wondering at the difference between what I was then and what I am now. How inconstant is the fortune of kings! Who could trust it?"

"Ah! King of kings! How beautiful was your face when you played with me in the drinking halls. Your face, with brows bent as the bow of Manmatha, with its high nose, with the red lips resembling the moon in charms, the sun in its splendour, the lotus in beauty, with the eyes sparkling in intoxication, adorned with a variety of sweet-smelling and beautiful garlands of flowers, breathed in enchanting smiles and speaking sweet words — that face now stands before me; alas! with its beauty bespoiled with Rama's arrows; smeared with clotted blood and flesh and laden, with dust, its brightness is no more. My Lord! What shall I do? Your death has left me a helpless woman. I never thought that I would be such an unlucky wretch".

"You may say 'This today is like a bubble in water, a flash of lightning'. 'Alas! I am the daughter of Maya, the king of the *danavas*; I was wedded to the mighty Lord of the *rakshasas*; my son, Indrajit, was the conqueror and captor of Indra, the king of gods. In what am I wanting? Who is equal to me, can troubles and difficulties assail me?' I was filled with the pride of such thoughts. I was sure that my protectors — invincible father, husband and son could subdue the most powerful enemies with their strength and valour. With such protectors, I did not fear, that misery and sorrow would ever overcome me. How then did this peril from men approach us at all?

"Your body bedecked with brilliant jewels and garlands, shining like the lofty *Indranila* hill, pleasing in sport and overwhelming in its power on the field of battle, used to delight my eyes like rain-bearing clouds pierced by lightning. That same body now lies cleft by sharp arrows; like the quills of the porcupine, the arrows of Rama have covered the vital spots in your body and have torn up the skin and flesh and made a mass of disfigurement. Though I was not

fortunate enough to speak with you and hear your words, I thought I could at least embrace you and so I came here. Lo! these cursed arrows of Rama stand between me and my wish and I cannot touch your body. What gruesome sin have I committed that I should see your dead body thus and covered with dust, stretched on the field of battle, torn to pieces, dark with clotted blood like a mountain shattered by the thunderbolt of Indra.

“Can death assail even you! That you would die, even as others do, was to me unreal as a dream. But that dream has now proved true. How did Rama slay you? You are death of Death, a favourite devotee of Paramasiva, the Vanquisher of the lord of Death. All the riches and power in the three worlds were yours to enjoy; the entire universe trembled at your prowess, you conquered the guardians of the quarters. The mount Kailasa, the abode of Sankara, was shaken by your strength; the pride of the proudest was put down by your valour; you were famous through the display of innumerable exploits; you struck terror into every creature. Your voice made all those that heard it quake and cry. You spoke majestic words with courage in the face of your enemies. You were a patron to your kindred friends and dependants. Your prowess in battle was indeed terrible. You killed countless *yakshas*, *danavas* and *asuras*. Innumerable were the sacrifices that you spoiled. You broke the rules of *dharma*. You carried away forcibly the daughters of the *devas*, *asuras* and men. You brought sorrow to the womenfolk of your enemies. You were the unquestioned leader of your own people. You practised witchcraft in battle. You were the protector of the island city of Lanka. You were the doer of terrible deeds. Through you we enjoyed the boundless pleasures of love. You were the first jewel among chariot-warriors. Such a lord and husband, now lies dead, slain by Rama. And yet I am alive. Is my body made of stone? Through boons he had obtained protection from all beings except men and he died, killed by the hands of a man. I did no penance and I secured no boons. Even Rama, who killed my lord, could not kill me. Against me his arrows are powerless. You who slept in luxurious bed which others could not even dream of, how you sleep on this bare earth, red with blood and covered with dust, smelling foul with corpses, surrounded by howling dogs and screaming vultures. The arrows that severed the head of my dear

son Indrajit, pierced my heart and filled it with grief. Yet I survived, because of the thought that you atleast were left to me. Today, the arrow that destroyed you have brought to me the end of my life. I do not grieve for the death of kith and kin, so long as I had you, but now having lost you, I have lost all other things and must sink for ever in the sea of sorrows.

“You have ascended to the Heaven of heroes, which is difficult for one to reach. Could you not take me with you instead of leaving me here desolate and grief-stricken? Separate from you, how can I live on? How can you, my lord, endure separation from me? While I am wailing and wretched here, could you not speak to me a word of comfort? Or are you angry with me because I have come out of the women’s apartments and walked through the city gates exposing myself to public view?

“Even the Sun and Moon dare not set eyes on your women. The wind dare not blow them up. But now these women have cast aside their veils and are here mourning you in the presence of all. Why are you not angry with them? Why do you not console them? These tender women are in an agony of desolation, deprived for ever of the joys they had known in your company. They are all born of high parentage, chaste, devoted to *dharma*, rejoicing in the service of elders, and they have all been widowed. Could it be that today their curses are taking effect — the curses they uttered when you forcibly carried them away after killing their husbands, kith and kin. It is said that tears of chaste women do not fall in vain. Your fate has proved that the saying is true. Your splendour pervades the three worlds. You were famous as a noble warrior. How then could you descend so low as to steal a woman? You ordered Maricha to entice Rama and Lakshmana away from their *asrama* in the guise of a deer and then you carried away Sita. Does not this reveal your cowardice? Never before had I known you troubled by fear in battle. This was itself a sign that your good fortune had left you and that your end was near.

“Well has it been said that when great ones do mean acts evil is sure to befall them. Vibhishana, your brother is a seer of the past, present and future. He is truthful and high souled. When he saw

that you had brought Sita, he heaved a sigh of sorrow and said, "Alas! the destruction of our family is come". But consumed by passion, you disregarded his warning and his words have come true. You have brought ruin on the *rakshasa*- race. Was it destined this should be so? I need not grieve for you whose manifold powers has brought you fame. I must grieve only for myself in my separation from you. All your dependents are now left forlorn. Being a woman my mind is distracted and I lament in this manner. You have gone your way followed by your good and evil deeds separated as I am from you. You would not listen to the salutary advice of your friends, well-wishers and brothers. Did not Vibhishana counsel you many times, with sound reasons in accordance with the *sastras*, and with sweet and gentle words? Did you follow his counsel, which would have brought you glory? The advice of Maricha, Kumbhakarna and Maya, my father, also was rejected by you in your pride of your action."

"Looking like the blue rain-cloud, with well-shaped limbs draped in silk, you lie on the bare ground covered with blood sprawling as if you were in deep slumber. Can you not speak a word of comfort to me in my pitiest plight! Are you not born of the family of Mali, Sumali and Malyavan, soliders of great valour and skill, who never turned their back in battle? Could you not raise your eyes and look at me? Arise, Arise. You have lain too long. Never before have you been thus disgraced. The sun, who used to be afraid of you shines without fear on Lanka. With your *parigha*, mighty as the *vajra* of Indra, you had slain countless foes. It shone like the sun; it was adorned with chains of gold; it was highly honoured by you. And behold, here it lies shattered to pieces by the arrows of Rama. Is this battle-field your lady-love that you should embrace it and as for me, you seem to hate me and will not speak to me. Having lost you and suffering such pain and grief why does not wretched heart break into a thousand pieces."

Thus did Mandodari lament, with tears, streaming from her eyes and her heart longing for her husband. Atlast she fell into a swoon. She shone like a lightning flash in the rain-cloud of the evening sky, as she lay there on the breast of Ravana, exhausted by her sorrow. The other wives of Ravana lifted her up, and consoled her saying,


“Lady! Childhood, boyhood, youth and old age are all transitory. The fortunes of kings are unstable. You know all this”. Hearing these words, she sobbed and cried aloud while tears bathed her body.

Then Rama said to Vibhishana, “Perform the last rites for your brother and send these women back to Lanka”. Vibhishana, reflected for a while on all that had gone before and resolved to abide by Rama’s well-considered and final decision. However he pleaded with Rama : “Lord! He discarded the path of *dharma*. He was cruel, merciless and false. He carried away the wives of others. My mind does not consent to my performing his last rites. He did nothing but evil to all creatures. Though the world thought him to be my brother, he was in fact my enemy. He was entitled to honour from me only as an elder. It is not proper for me to honour him who by his evil deeds struck terror into all the worlds. The world will be unnatural if I refuse to perform his obsequies, but when they think of his crimes, they will approve of my conduct.

When Rama the foremost of the masters of *dharma* heard the wise Vibhishana speaking thus frankly the thoughts of his mind, he understood Vibhishana’s real meaning and being greatly pleased said, “This victory I owe to you. I am therefore bound to do whatever you wish. I should tell you what is best for you.” It is also my wish that you should perform the obsequies of Ravana. It is also good for you. Lord of the *rakshasas*! Ravana was born of the *rakhasa*-race. He pursued unrighteousness. He swerved from truth. Even so, powerful and glorious he never retreated in battle. Indra and the *devas* were vanquished by him many times, so have I heard. He was indeed a great soul and endowed with limitless courage. The whole world shook in terror before him. You may ask ‘Though he was endowed with all these qualities, still he was my foe’. How can I perform his funeral rites? But I say, ‘Death should put an end to all enmity and anger’. Let not these bitter feelings survive his death. Perform his obsequies. He is as much my kinsman as yours. You know well the mysteries of *dharma*. Do for him the rites prescribed. And you will gain matchless fame as one, who performed without rancour the obsequies of his wicked enemy.

Listening to Rama's words, Vibhishana sent back the ladies to Lanka and commenced quickly the rites due to one who had performed many sacrifices. The priests piled up sandalwood logs and sprinkled on them fragrant scents. As laid down in the *Vedas*, they spread on it skin of the 'Ranku' deer. The ceremonies such as *Pitrumedha-samskara* were duly gone through. The fire-place was set up in the south-east. The fires were lit in the west, east and south; ghee and curds from the sacrificial vessels were sprinkled on the funeral pyre. A cart for bringing the Soma king was placed at the foot; a mortar to hull paddy used in sacrifices was placed between the thighs; the other wooden vessels were placed in their respective positions as detailed in the *Sastras*. Very near the pyre a clean goat was sacrificed. The Fire-god was invoked and twigs dipped in ghee were placed on the four sides. (This is the '*Paristaranikam*' according to Govindaraja; but Tirtha has it as "*Anustaranikam*" — According to this a beautiful and perfect cow is killed and its skin smeared with ghee is spread over the body). The body of Ravana was adorned with precious scents, garlands and clothes with tears in their eyes. Vibhishana and other *rakshasas* scattered fried grain over the pyre. Chanting Vedic Mantras, Vibhishana set fire to it. Then he bathed and with water dripping from his clothes, he offered sesamum and *durva* grass with water and then water alone for the dead. After bowing low before the pyre, he consoled the ladies again and sent them back to Lanka. When the ladies had entered the city, Vibhishana came back to Rama and stood before him with reverence. Rama was happy in the company of Sugriva, Lakshmana and the army of monkeys, having destroyed his enemies, even as Indra had destroyed Vritra.

THE INSTALLATION OF VIBHISHANA

 HE *devas*, *gandharvas* and *danavas*, having witnessed the death of Ravana, their inveterate foe, ascended their cars and proceeded to their abodes speaking joyously on the way of the ghastly death of Ravana, the prowess of Rama, the wonderful battle waged by the *vanaras*, the sane counsel of Sugriva, the valour of Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, and the love that bound the two brothers together. Rama sent back the effulgent car of Indra and bade farewell to Matali with affection. The charioteer of Indra took leave of Rama and sped to his heavenly abode. Then Raghava affectionately embraced by Sugriva and welcomed by *vanara*-chiefs, reminded by Lakshmana, proceeded to the place where the army had encamped.

Turning to Lakshmana standing by his side, resplendent with glory and valour, Rama said to him, "Child! Our Vibhishana loves and reveres me; he has given us immense help; take him to Lanka and install him on the throne with due ceremony. I have long been looking forward to this coronation of Vibhishana as the ruler of Lanka ("He loves me", denotes the duty of a friend; "he reverences me" shows the act of a devotee; "he rendered immense help", indicates the death of Ravana as the main purpose; "the looking forward" is the result of the Lord's wish to kill Ravana and reward Vibhishana, who sought refuge with him).

"I shall carry out your orders", said Lakshmana overjoyed and directed the monkeys whose speed was like that of thought, to fetch holy waters from the seas in gold pitchers. Straightaway the monkey-heroes brought holy water from the four oceans. Then installing Vibhishana on a high seat, Lakshmana gave him ritual bath with water from a pitcher. The monkey-chiefs poured holy water from the other pitchers on Vibhishana. Thus, according to the behest of Rama, Lakshmana crowned Vibhishana, of pure mind, as the lord and ruler of Lanka in the manner prescribed by the *Vedas*, while all the monkey and *rakshasa*-hosts looked on with joy Lakshmana

with Vibhishana and others entered the city only after Rama gave the order. Vibhishana was 'pure-minded'; and he accepted the kingdom of Lanka only because he would not disobey the wish of the Lord. Service to his Lord was the aim of his life. The ministers of Vibhishana and his *rakshasa*-friends greatly rejoiced at his coronation. Having accepted the kingdom from Rama, arranged the welfare of his subjects and consoled the families who had lost their kith and kin in the battle, returned to where Rama was. Then the citizens presented Vibhishana auspicious grains, sweets and flowers as a token of their love and devotion to him. Vibhishana in turn placed all these auspicious gifts at the feet of Rama and Lakshmana. Seeing that the object of Vibhishana was achieved and that he was feeling mightily pleased, Rama accepted the presents just to satisfy Vibhishana.

Then Rama turned to Hanuman, who was standing mountain-like with folded palms and said "Oh Son of Vayu", Take permission from Vibhishana and proceed to the City of Lanka. With his consent, enter the women's apartment and find out Sita. Give her the joyous news of our victory. Tell her that we are all well, myself, Lakshmana and Sugriva. Tell her also that I have killed Ravana. Bring back to me her reply on hearing these happy tidings".

CHAPTER 116

DISCUSSION BETWEEN SITA AND ANJANEYA

SO ordered by Rama, the *rakshasas* guided the steps of Maruti into Lanka. He came upon the lady Sita in the women's apartments of Ravana. She was covered with dust all over; it was long since she had a bath. She sat in the *asoka* grove under a tree, listless and despairing, in the midst of dreadful *rakshasis* like unto Rohini in the grip of the planet, Mercury. He drew near, announced himself, saluted her with reverence and stood before her with his body, speech and mind stilled. He folded his palms and then covered his mouth with his hand as a mark of obedience. She beheld him there, the mighty son of Anjana; surprised thereat, she sat silent and still, and knew not what to think or do. Then she looked at

him more carefully. His light and happy looks made her happy too. Maruti noted her face, blossoming with joy at his presence there. He proceeded to give her in detail the message of Rama. "Lady! Raghuvira, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishana and all the monkey-hosts fare well. Ravana, the worst foe we had, is now no more. We have achieved our purpose here. They asked me to convey to you the good news of their well-being. Rama laid Ravana low in battle, thanks to the help of Vibhishana, the tireless efforts of the monkey-hosts, the keen dexterity of Lakshmana, Sri Rama is now happy, since his wishes have been realised. He ordered me to inquire of your well-being and says : 'Janaki! I bring you good and joyful news. Ravana is no more, he who was so cruel to you. I shall do what will give you a special pleasure. You have been long away from me. I will take you with me back to Ayodhya. No one knows better than you the secret of devoted wifehood.

All my efforts and they were not slight — to overcome Ravana, would have borne no fruit, if you had not kept your hold on life. So it is but the outcome of my good fortune that you managed to live on with unfaltering trust and love. You were in the grip of untold misery and fear all these terrible months. You had no assurance of my coming over here to take you back. Ravana begged, entreated, derided, flattered you and spoke ill of me. Nay, he threatened your life. Yet you never submitted to his will, but placed your trust and affection in me. Care, misery and anxiety have left me never to return. Victory, unclouded and complete, has crowned me. Ravana is dead; and he was the last of our foes. This Lanka is ours to dispose off. I vowed to rescue you from the hands of the foe. I was anxious to make it good. I went without sleep or food and have realised my purpose today. I constructed a bridge over the waters. Feel no anxiety that you are in the house of Ravana. Lanka and its riches and magnificence are Vibhishana's. So grieve not! Feel yourself at home. Vibhishana will be here very soon to pay his respects to you. And this is Rama's message to you."

So spake Maruti. And Sita, with her face like the full moon in her joy, rose in haste and stood there mute, not knowing what to do. And Maruti noting it replied, "Lady! why do you not speak to me? What occupies your thoughts?" Sita, the jewel of chaste

and loyal womanhood, was immensely pleased. "Your words shook me with joy!" she said, "The news of the victory of my lord swept me off my feet for a while. I was beside myself with joy and could find no words. My afflicted heart is now at ease, and dances with delight, as the waters of immortality soaked it. I racked my brains for reply, to him who brought me this glad tidings. Child! I find nothing in all this broad earth to make a fitting return for all the joy and benefit I have received at your hands. Gold, silver, gems, and everything that these worlds hold would be but a weak and pitiable reward."

Raising his folded palms above his head, Hanuman stood before her in meek humility and said, "Noblest of women! You ever seek and pray for the good and the well-being and victory of your lord! Mere hearing of these words of yours, full of affection, is reward enough for me; I do not deserve such thanks at all. Who else but you can ever speak like this to me? Your reply is significant. You said, 'I find no ideas to couch the reply. 'This conveys the gracious thought of your boundless affection. It only lays bare what your heart feels towards me. My ears are blessed to hear it; and my heart is filled with joy as if you had given me as reward the most precious things in this world. The numerous heaps of gems, the lordship over the three worlds — all these pale into insignificance before your words. All of them which you were pleased to mention are already at my command. What are they by the side of the boundless joy which my heart feels when I behold Raghuvira in the majestic effulgence of his victory over the terrible ogre Ravana?'"

The daughter of Janaka made a fitting reply extremely happy and auspicious. "Anjaneya! your words are free from the defects usually found in speech. They are blessed with every kind of excellence; they flood the heart with joy the moment they fall upon the ears; they reveal the intellect behind, adorned with the eight kinds of perfection; and who else but yourself can speak so well. (To grasp clearly the thoughts that lie behind the words of another, to imprint them on the tablets of our memory, to recall them when there is need, to speak them to others in appropriate articulation, to divine the thoughts of another, to give a quick reply, to prove the inner sense of words and to grasp the real nature and qualities of objects



these eight are the marks of such intellect). In addition to your matchless excellence as a speaker, you stand high in the glory of your mental and moral equipment. The daring son of Lord Vayu! you are ahead of him in the matter of enlivening all beings and gladdening their hearts. You are the fountain-source of that grand law of life that enfold all creation with its matchless compassion and mercy. Indefatigable exertion, perennial joy, and delight in the battle-field, the wisdom of the ages, strength of body, valour, skill, power to overcome, patience and tolerance, forgiveness towards those that offend us, mighty effort, unshaken courage, noble modesty and many other excellent qualities, cluster round you and glory in your lustre. Do not harbour the thought that I flatter you with fancied excellences.”

Hanuman was not in the least elated by these words. On the other hand, he stood before lady Sita with his folded palms on his head in reverence and said, “Mother! these *rakshasis* here are dreadful to look at, cruel by nature, fierce in looks and merciless in acts; their words make our hearts quake with terror. Now, your lord is your god; you have been cruelly torn away from his arms; Ravana has imprisoned you here, in this *Asoka* grove; and unspeakable misery has been your lot. Then these creatures reviled you, scolded you, frightened you, put you to shame, pained your ears with unseemly words, rushed at you as if to kill you – and I was an impotent witness to all of it all. No one else but I has a right to be enraged at these devils, no one had a chance to witness it Rama, Lakshmana, Vibhishana, Sugriva and the other monkey-lords. So my heart hankers at dealing death unto all of them; and it is an utterly uncontrollable, consuming desire. I pray you give me leave. This is the boon I seek of you. This shall be the reward to bestow on me. I would beat them till my hands ache. I would pound them with my knees. I would tear them to pieces; I would crush their ears and noses, pull out their hair by the roots, tear them to ribbons with my claws, smash their cheeks and jaws, jump down upon them from a great height, smash them on the ground and kill them with my fists. Are these not the demons that were guilty of boundless cruelty and torture beyond description? So I wish to put them to death with countless means of torture. This is absolutely necessary; have these not been guilty of heinous offence?”

Patience, mercy and other noble qualities were the cause of the peerless fame of Sita, the World Mother. She gave a reply worthy of the highest *dharma*; "Bravest of the monkey-race! these are the servants of the king; hence dependent; bound to obey his slightest commands; liable to cruel punishment if they disobey. Should one feel offended by the acts of these slaves of Ravana? Why waste your breath upon these? I must have wrought evil in some past birth and have reaped the result in this birth in the shape of these miseries. I reap what I sowed; why blame them? It was destined that I should suffer thus and these are but the instruments. I have thought all this before, reached this conclusion and reconciled myself to it. I was powerless then to prevent this suffering. I cannot bear to see others suffer; and how can I see these suffer. Compassion held my hands back then; it does so even now. Were I minded to kill them, could I not have consumed them to ashes then and there? Do I need your help for this? If these *rakshasis* treated me cruelly, it was by the orders of Ravana. Now that he is dead, it is far from their thoughts to trouble me now. Even if these were independent and offended me of their own accord, it is upto us to bear with them.

Once upon a time, a hunter was hotly chased by a tiger (very closely) and he saved himself by climbing up a lofty tree that stood welcomingly near. But lo; there was a huge grizzly bear sitting on its branches; the man, in utter despair, threw himself on the mercy of the hairy monster and cried, "I place my life in your hands. Do with me as you will." 'Fear not' replied the bear "The tiger shall not come at you". Later on, the hunter was overcome with sleep and the bear allowed him to rest his head on its lap. Then, the tiger called out to the bear and said, "Friend, we are of the same kind; we live in the forest. We have our joys and sorrows in common. But, this is a man, a hunter by profession and our sworn enemy; he makes his living by killing us; he is not of our kith nor kin; we have nothing in common with him. The moment he is safe from my clutches, he will forget everything that he owes you and will return your kindness by seeking to kill you. Throw him down to me. We will share him.

Then, the bear, out of the generosity of his nature, sternly replied, "Enough of this. What treachery and baseness? He who

seeks me out and craves my protection is my honoured guest. If I should place myself on a level with you and traitorously hand him over to your tender mercies, the finger of scorn would be ever pointed at me as a monster of wickedness, as a wretch that betrayed him that sought shelter with me. Nay, the Holy books say that an eternity of nameless woe in the deepest and the darkest hells is the portion of such ingrates. Soil my ears no more with such foulness."

Soon after, the hunter awoke, and the bear, feeling tired and sleepy, laid his head on his lap and fell into a profound slumber. Then, the tiger called out to him and said, "Fool! you sought to escape me, didn't you? A nice person have you pitched upon to protect you. May be you belong to the same species; may be you live together; may be he is your dear friend. Idiot that you are! Know you not that he is a deadlier enemy to you than myself. You have played into his hands nicely and placed your head between his jaws. He only waits for me to leave this place to crush your poor bones to powder. Now, be wise and take heed in time. Throw him down to me while he is heavy with sleep. It matters very little to me whether you or he goes to relieve my pangs of hunger. Look sharp and neither of us will be worse for it".

Alas! Man, frail man, listened to the words of the tempter and fell. Distrust of the noble bear grew upon him apace and without a pang of regret he threw him down to the tiger. But beneficent providence slept not; the bear awoke as it fell and by an instinctive moment, caught at a branch and swung himself upto his seat. Then horrible fear came over the traitor and he gave himself up for lost. But, the noble beast read his heart like an open book and said to him with a smile, "Good man! Fear not. Far be it from me to ever seek to remember what you might have been inweighed to do; and far be it from me to seek to go back upon my plighted word".

At once, the wily tiger turned the situation to his advantage and cried out, "Friend Bruin! See you not that I was a true prophet? Now, it needs no ghost to tell you that your protege is a demon of ingratitude, If you have not taken leave of your senses, you will at once throw him down to me."

And to him spake back the bear, "It is in the nature of things for fire to scorch, for water to drown, for scorpions to sting, for cobras to kill. A wicked heart ever asserts itself but no one who walks the path of righteousness ever dreams of taking offence at it. He would not place himself on the same level by seeking to pay back ingratitude with injury. To me my life is as naught, when placed against my plighted word. Truth is the brightest jewel that ever shines on the head of the righteous." He closed his ears to every argument that the tiger used to drag him away from his purpose and watched over the safety of the hunter that livelong night until the tiger slunk away from the spot in sheer despair.

Now, Anjaneya! you would be the last to advise me how to behave less nobly than the beast. He who does us good is entitled to our love, to our gratitude, even to the fullest, is it not? But, equally so, if not more, is he who seeks to harm us. It is no great boast that we return good for good; but to return good for evil is something worth doing.

Now, take this view of the case, if every being in the universe were to sin and go against the good law, then, sin is no name for it. Now, can you point out to me any one who has not sinned? If so, he is welcome to judge the others and punish them. Let him that is pure, let him that is perfect, sit in judgment over the guilty. It is my honest conviction that the wide world holds none such. All have broken the sweet harmony of nature or will; all deserve to be judged and punished; and then, it is no crime and it is no punishment. Hence, I say unto you "THERE IS NO EVIL IN THE WORLD; THERE IS NO EVIL-DOER, NAY, NOT ONE."

My Lord and Master, whom all hold as the Ideal Man, the Soul of Perfection, is the first offender and the worst — even he to whose service you have dedicated yourself. The meanest and the most insignificant creature on earth seeks to protect with his life, if necessary, its mate, who looks upto it for help, for guidance and for safety. It defends her life, her honour and her happiness with its last breath. Behold! Sri Rama is a man, the crown of creation; nay, more, he is a brave warrior, and the descendant of a long line of heroes; the blood of the Ikshvakus runs in his veins. And here,

he has chosen to swallow an insult, even the deadliest, put up on him by a *rakshasa*. He calls me his wife; he took my hand into his before the bright God of Fire, swore for all time to love, to cherish and to protect me; I am, as he says, dearer to him than life; I put my trust in his manhood, in his might, in his nobility and followed him to the trackless wilds; and there came vile *rakshasa*, a monster of iniquity, laid violent hands upon me, and bore me away to his island-lair. Hours, days, weeks, months have gone by; and still my lord comes not; his patience or cowardice is something unspeakable. Is it human? Is it manly? Is it warrior-like? Is it kingly? Was I wrong in saying that he is the first and the worst of offenders? Go, mete out just punishment to him first and foremost.

You come next. Sugriva's servant and messenger you are; his word is or should be a law unto you; it is not for you to transgress it nor to exceed it. He who does not do what his master bids him is as much guilty as he who does what his master bids him not. Now, verily speaking, were your master's commands to seek me out and take back the news to him? Or, were you given orders to go further to destroy this *asoka* grove, to slay the warriors of Ravana, and set fire to his capital? You are a traitor unto your master. You are a criminal of no mean order, Go, mete out justice and punishment to yourself before you speak of others.

Last, but not the least, I who discourse so wisely to you, am a great offender. The daughter of a race of warriors, spouse of the greatest hero of all time, I live in the breath of my fair name and chastity; I should know no other god but my husband; and never, even in my wildest dreams, should the shadow of another man darken my heart. I should have put away this frail body the moment that the sin-soiled hands of the *rakshasa* polluted it by touch. That is or should have been my *dharma*. But I turned my face away from it; two five-month periods have gone by; and yet you see me clinging to this hated life like the most abandoned woman. Go mete out justice due and stern punishment to me, ere proceed further.

Now, sit in honest judgment over Sri Rama, yourself and me. Time enough to think of how you should deal with the poor *rakshasis*."

(In the discussion over the acceptance of Vibhishana's surrender, Rama related the story of the dove to Sugriva; Sita here relates to Hanuman the story of the bear to point a moral. This sloka is famous as Sita's declaration of Faith in the doctrine of refuge). "Whether these *rakshasis* are guilty as you think, whether they are innocent as I think, why should I apply my mind to it. If they are guilty much the better. A dirty man has the pressing need of a bath. These came to us only because they are sinners. Good men and virtuous have no need of us. Their very merit saves them. So, my hope is that these are sinners. You may say, 'One should not punish those that deserve it not; and one should deal condign punishment to those that deserve it. Now, this duty of justice is not honoured in practice by you. 'Do you know that if a sinner seeks refuge of us, he deserves our help most? This is a special application of the law, but it appeals not to you; a special application overcomes the ordinary one. It matters not even if these seek our death; they certainly deserve our protection. Men of large heart and pure soul offer it. You are merely a monkey; you are of the lineage that leaps from tree to tree; you ilk-race desire only what it has aspired many times before; so I am not in the least surprised at this thought of yours. Let us dismiss the question of weighing the merits and demerits of these poor creatures. It is not a safe procedure. Looking at the misery and terror they are confronted with, it will melt the heart of adamant.

"The *rakshasas* take shapes and forms at will, cruelty is the badge of their race; torturing others is supreme delight to them; so, it is no wonder that they commit sins. Yet, one should do them no harm."

Hanuman with his penetrating intellect, avidly grasped the principle that lay behind her words. She was the mother of the Universe, famed for her unbounded mercy. She was the fitting mate of the Supreme Lord. So he said, "Mother, you are no other than the honoured help-mate of Raghunatha; the principle of giving refuge which he relentlessly practises is rendered doubly glorious by your good self. All the fame that crowns him comes through you, does it not? You are the fit companion of his. So permit me to leave; and send a reply to Raghava through me. I shall go back to him."

And to him said Janaki "Best of the monkey-race! I yearn to see and pay my obeisance to my lord and husband". Those words magnified the resplendent lustre of Anjaneya and he cried, "Mother! the face of Sri Rama, like the shining full moon brings the peace and sweetness of immortality to the heart of the onlooker. You are to be blessed with the sight of his divine face, as he abides there in the company of Lakshmana. He is effulgently radiant with the triumphant victory over his foes, and in the company of his friends, Sugriva, Vibhishana and others. You are to behold him even as Indrani beholds Indra". Immediately the form of Sita shone with magnificent splendour like Mahalakshmi herself; and Anjaneya sped back with alacrity to the presence of Rama.

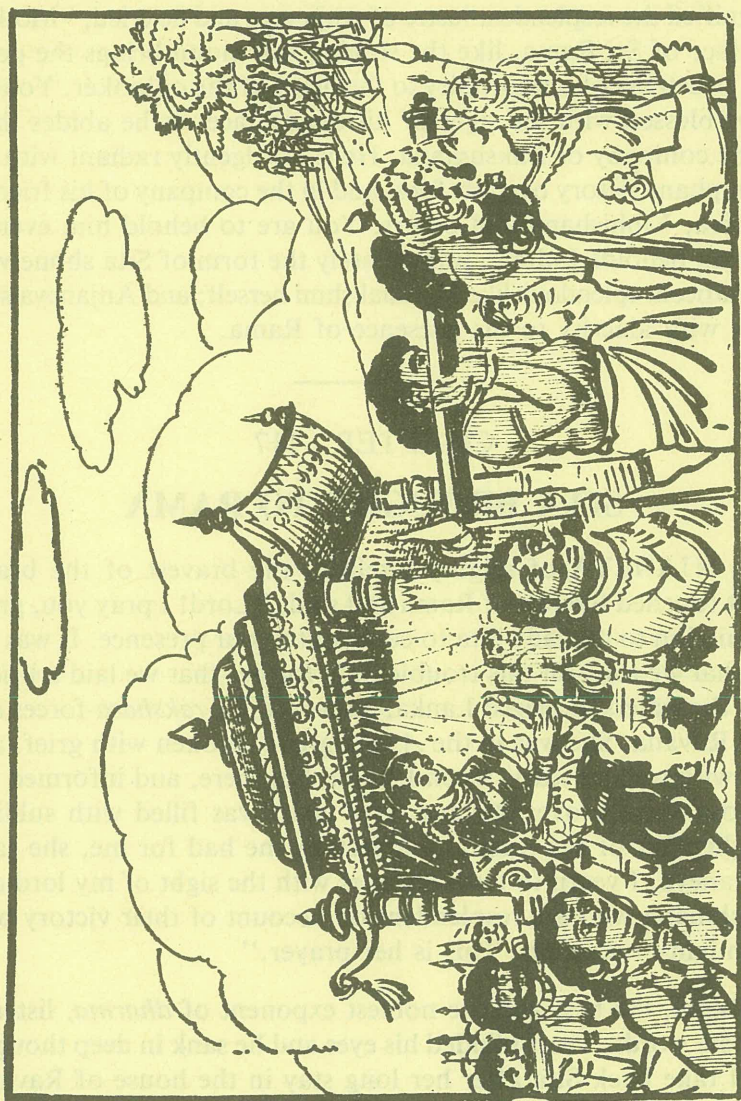
CHAPTER 117

SITA BROUGHT TO RAMA



NJANEYA of mighty intellect, the bravest of the brave, touched the feet of Rama and said, "Lord! I pray you, grant permission to the lady Sita to come unto your presence. It was for her that we took all this trouble; it is for her that we laid a bridge over the waters, besieged Lanka, destroyed the *rakshasa*-forces and slew Ravana. She was in the *Asoka* grove, broken with grief, and dim with welling tears, when I found her there, and informed her of your victory over Ravana. Her heart was filled with sublime delight. Out of the trust and affection she had for me, she said, 'Anjaneya, I yearn to feast my eyes with the sight of my lord and Lakshmana who are resplendent on account of their victory over the mighty *rakshasas*. This is her prayer.'"

Rama, the best and the noblest exponent of *dharma*, listened to these words. Tears blinded his eyes and he sank in deep thought. "If I take back Sita after her long stay in the house of Ravana, I shall be the object of the world's derision for all time. And if I should put away Janaki, innocent and pure, the blackest sin will be mine. How to get over this dilemma? I have to wound again the bleeding heart of Sita, who has already suffered untold misery". He sighed hot and deep, and fixed his looks on the earth. Then



he turned to Vibhishana who was all eagerness to lead the lady Sita to Rama and said, "Bring Sita here quickly. Let her have an auspicious bath and wear all her decorations. (It would be unjust and cruel to pierce her heart with merciless words in the forlorn wretchedness she was in. Hence his directions. Again, Rama was not going to put her away. He was intent that her immaculate purity and noble loyalty should be vindicated to the world thro' Brahma and other gods. It was but meet that she should be brought there with all honours. Should he accept her back as she was, the evil-minded world would cast doubts on her innocence and say, 'Lo! Look at this impropriety. Lady Sita is endowed with peerless beauty. Ravana heheld her in her splendour; he lost his heart to her and carried her away by force to his palace. Ten months has she stayed with him, the terror of the worlds. And would he have been quiescent and left her in peace?' I have come down into the mortal world to establish law and order. Others would take a leaf out of my book and I, the lord of men, know fully well that she is utterly pure and spotless. But to clear her before the world and ward off suspicion and calumny, I shall speak to her harshly; make her pass through the ordeal of fire; get Brahma and the other *devas* to proclaim her greatness; and also to declare and glorify before the world my Supreme Divinity then. And take back Sita to myself in answer to their prayers". This was the idea in the mind of Rama).

Thus Vibhishana ran hot-foot to the ladies' apartments and sent respectful word through his women to Sita : "Mother I entreat you to take an auspicious bath and cover yourself with matchless perfumes and ornaments. There is a meet conveyance for you. Your lord desires to see you." And to him replied Sita, "Child! nay, not so. It is good that I stand in his presence even as I am". But Vibhishana said, "May I submit that it is good and proper that you do as your lord and king wishes?" Then the lady Sita to whom her husband was her god and devotion to him was a vow, said "Let it be even so".

Then Sita took an auspicious bath; the *rakshasa*-girls decorated her with priceless ornaments and garments; she was borne on a palanquin blazing like the noon-day sun; it was adorned with fine hangings; *rakshasa*-warriors guarded her on all sides armed to the


teeth; and thus she was led to the presence of Rama. Rama knew she was there. Yet he was plunged in deep thought. Vibhishana drew near and said, "Lord! as ordered by you I have led the lady Sita here". Raghunandana was filled with happiness at these words. "After all these efforts, I have slain Ravana and it has been given to me to see Sita again." But his face grew anxious at the thought : "She was in the palace of Ravana all this time. I know not how the world will view it." So he mustered up anger in order to speak harsh words to her. Then he planned his future procedure; he made it appear that he was sad; and said unto Vibhishana standing by, "Lord of the *rakshasa*, my dear boy, your heart ever prays for my victory and well-being. Let Vaidehi come soon. Then Vibhishana pushed back the crowds that pressed forward. The palace-guards used their canes freely on the *rakshasas*, bears and monkeys to keep them at a distance. Then there arose a loud uproar like a storm in the sea.

Thereat, Sri Rama whose natural affection toward his monkey-friends could not bear the sight, stayed them brusquely and turned to Vibhishana, the wise one, with looks that shot baleful fires, and cried, "Thou, *rakshasa*! you clean forgot that you are in my presence. You dare to lay brutal hands on these. Enough, enough; stop. Whom did you take these for? They are mine, they are dear to me as my life itself. Do you think that ladies are best guarded and protected by houses, garments, curtains, courts, and driving back of crowds and such like royal honours and attentions? Lo! their impeccable conduct is their best armour. Stone walls are no protection; it is the pure and spotless heart that keeps one away from danger in times of unusual trouble. When those dear to us go away from this world when danger hangs over the kingdom on the battle-field, in the *svayamvara* hall, on the holy sacrificial ground and during the marriage ceremony, all the sundry can look at women and it is no stain to them. This lady has now come on the battle-field; unusual trouble is drawing night unto her. Moreover, she is by my side. There is no harm in her being seen by all. So lead her here and be quick at it. Let her behold me in the midst of my friends who have joyfully given up their lives for me. All these have passed through untold danger and difficulty. They have come here leaving their house and home behind them. They have suffered much at

the hands of these cruel *rakshasas* and all this to what purpose? To put away trouble and sorrow from this lady and keep her from death, is it not? And so, these with me stand to her in the place of a father. What harm is there in a father seeing his child?" Vibhishana shook with fear at these words and he proceeded to lead Sita near Rama most reverently. Lakshmana and Anjaneya listened to the words of Raghava and said themselves with deep sorrow, "Verily this is unexpected, unthought of, a bolt from the blue. We have seen with our own eyes the grief of Raghava at having been torn from the side of Sita. He was about to annihilate countless worlds for her sake and now his words are strange indeed. They indicate his aversion to her as if he cared not for her in the least".

Then Sita was overpowered with shame and shrunk within herself; "Alas! after all these months, after all these dangers and troubles, I was blessed enough to behold my lord and husband; I had hardly beheld him when lo! at the very outset these words winged with wrath fall upon me like the thunderbolt". She felt aghast to appear before other men. So she hid her face with the aid of her garment and slowly drew near Rama and could only say, choked with emotions, "Aryaputra, my lord and husband". Her eyes were blind hot with tears as she gave vent to her grief. She had never till then beheld her husband like this. He stood there crowned with boundless fame, having come out victorious from a dreadful fight. The Goddess of Victory smiled upon him sweetly. His martial radiance illuminated all around. She was filled with boundless wonder and surprise at this unexpected change of attitude. She had despaired of ever being happy; honour and life were a dream of the past; husband, kith and kin and bright fame were things beyond recall. Then there had come over her heart limitless joy, for danger, difficulty and grief were but mist before the rising sun. Her lord and husband was her guard. Her love and devotion were beyond description. Hence, she lifted up her eyes to his face of divine loveliness. Like unto the full moon at her rising, his face was red with wrath. Like unto the spotless radiant moon the next moment (will disturb it). Sita stole a glance upon the face and features of her dear lord from whom she was torn away for long. She forgot all her sufferings and sorrows, all her miseries and troubles.

RAMA IS WROTH WITH SITA

 AT the sight of Sita, who cast her eyes on the earth out of coyness as she stood by him, Rama's anger blazed forth, "Lady I have worsted my foes in battle. I reduced to ashes their capital. I have taken ample revenge. I have done everything that a Kshatriya-hero should do to wipe off the blot upon his fair name. You may fondly imagine that all this was to get you back. But it is utterly baseless. My efforts have been crowned with success. Ravana has been punished enough for his offence to me. I have wiped off the face of the earth the insult he hurled upon me; and his breed along with it. I have displayed my valour in the face of the countless worlds. My word has been proved true; and care and anxiety have left from me. Ravana brought you away when you were helpless and he fickle of mind; human effort has healed the injury brought by destiny. The aims of life are not attained by him, who takes lying down, the disgrace put upon him and exerts not his valour and prowess to the utmost. He is an insignificant creature. The wonderful leap of Hanuman over these waters, the destruction of Lanka, and the amazing needs of valour on the battle-field, have borne fruit today; as also the labours of Vibhishana who sought my side in preference to that of his wicked brother". The words of Raghuvira startled her; her eyes looked troubled with fear, like a delicate fawn hemmed in by tigers. The lady Sita wept out her heart in torrent of tears.

Like unto a blazing fire fed with further oblations of ghee, Rama's wrath blazed all the more fiercely. His brows were knit. He brooked not that Sita should stand before him. He looked at her out of the corner of his eyes and pierced her heart with cruel words in the very hearing of the monkeys and the *rakshasas*. I have done utmost everything that one should do to clear himself of the blot laid upon him by another. In the far past, Ilvala, the *asura* made the south inaccessible for all creatures. Then the *Maharshi* Agastya of divine wisdom slew him and rescued the region from his tyranny; even so, I have recovered you from the enemy that

carried you away. I crossed safe the ocean of battles, thanks to the valour of my friends. But do not delude yourself with the fond thought that all this was for you. I come of the spotless line of Ikshvaku. Peerless am I in fame; it behoves me to discharge my duty as a Kshatriya; I should wash myself white off the black ill-fame cast upon me. You dwelt in the house of Ravana, the wicked one; hence your life there is open to suspicion. A man with the sore eye cannot stand a bright light and I do not brook your standing before me. It pains me much (The simile is infinitely suggestive; the blame falls upon the diseased eye and not upon the light. The cloud hangs heavy over the heart of Rama and not upon the lady Sita). Do not stand in my presence. I have no use for you. The wide world is open to you. You have my leave to go your way; Know you of any one coming of a lofty line, endowed with matchless valour and fame, nay, calling himself a man, know you of any one who would take back unto himself his wedded wife that stayed for ten long months in the house of another, an impotent victim of his strength and power? Ravana carried you away on his lap. He devoured you with his burning looks of lust. Come of the unsullied line of Ikshvakus, should I take you back now, the meanest creature that crawls on the face of the earth would cry in derision and scorn. Fie! Fie! I recovered you from the enemy only to safeguard the tradition of my line and self-respect and it has brought me high credit. My heart has no place for you, not the least. Do not take it that I am moved by anger to fling these words at you. Go where you will. This is my carefully and calmly considered decision. Our elders have it that a woman should never be left to herself; so you may abide wherever you like with those who are your children — with Lakshmana, Bharata, Satrugna, Sugriva, Vibhishana, and the like. You are endowed with matchless beauty; you steal the hearts of those who behold you; and Ravana bore you away out of his love for you and kept you in his apartments for ten months. You were completely in his power. Is it in the nature of things that he would not have bent you to his will?

By divine providence, it was given to Sita to behold again Raghava, dearer to her than her very life, torn from her arms for ten long months, — he who was to bless her with his presence and love after the dark spell of despair. She fondly looked forward to

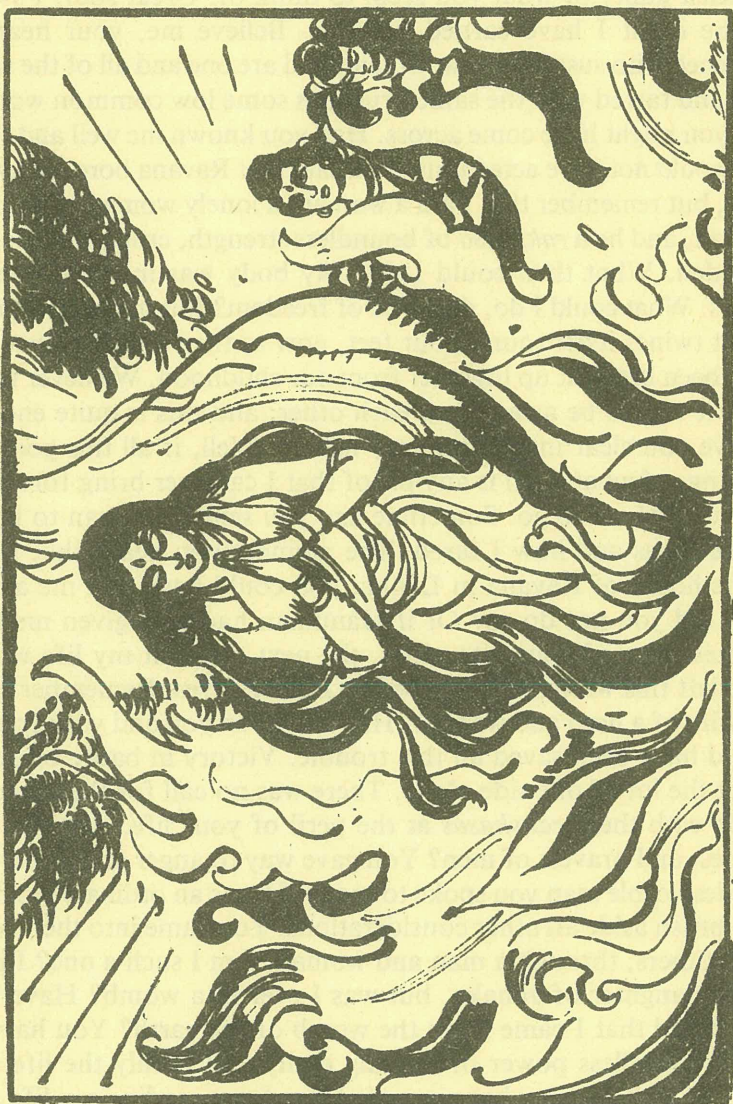
seeing the end of her grief and misery; for his words, sweet and charming, led her to believe that his love for her was still the same. Like the bolt from the blue, there fell upon her ears these words cruel and deadly that she was fated to hear. The thought forced torrents of tears from her and she was crushed by grief like unto a young plantain trampled by a mad elephant.

CHAPTER 119

SITA PASSES THROUGH FIRE

RAGHUNANDANA expressed himself thus stingingly or mordantly and harshly enough to make the hairs of the heaven bristle up. Sita was plunged in boundless grief. He who spoke thus was her beloved husband bound to protect her in every way; loving and dear to her even as her very life till that moment. He had never spoken to her without a smile and look of intense love; he had spoken harsh word to her. The parents and brothers of Rama treated her even more affectionately than they did her husband. Her father, the ruler of Mithila had brought her up with infinite love and delicacy, having been given to him by providence after long years of barrenness. She never knew even the shadow of another man beside her husband; and here she was brought before millions and millions of monkeys and *rakshasas* gathered on the battle-field. The words of her husband and their ruler pierced her heart and put disgrace upon her, before their very eyes, the cruel words and their crueller suspicion. Shame gripped her heart; her form shrunk within itself; her head was bowed with grief; her heart was broken with that unheard of calumny and she stood there for a while as if demented, while burning tears rushed from her bleary eyes. Then she wiped her eyes and struggled hard with heavy sorrow to express herself briefly and to the point. "Lord! do these words become you? Am I to have my ears pained with them? They are very harsh and spiteful to hear. You have clean forgot your noble lineage, scintillating fame and immaculate character; you have likewise no thought of my lineage, the manner of my coming into this world, my stainless name and fame, and my unsullied life. But you have uttered words that befit more a nameless and homeless vagrant

speaking to some nameless and homeless woman. You pass in the world as the prince of heroes. Is this worthy of you? I am not in the least guilty of what you seem to think of. Great soul! I swear by the merit I have earned till now. Believe me, your heart is darkened with suspicion that womankind are one and all of the same type and tarred with the same brush, as some low common woman that you might have come across. Had you known me well and truly you would not have acted thus. You said that Ravana bore me away. True, but remember that I am a woman, a lonely woman, a helpless woman, and he a *rakshasa* of boundless strength, cruel, armed, and attended. What then could I do? My body was in the power of others. What could I do, deprived of freedom? But my heart is mine and it twines itself round your feet, now as then and for ever. We have been brought up together from our childhood. We never knew what it was to be away from each other; and this is quite enough to give you clear insight into my nature. Well, if all this goes for nothing, of what avail is any proof that I can ever bring forward? I have nowhere to go. Sometime ago you sent Hanuman to know where I was and how I fared. The moment you heard that I was in the house of Ravana in Lanka, you could have cast me away. Why did you not do so? Or if Hanuman had ever given me that slightest hint of your intentions, the next moment my life would have left this wretched body before his very eyes. Remember I am the wife of a hero and warrior. Had I done so you and your friends would have been saved all this trouble. Victory in battle or death is not the lot of one side alone. There was no call for the dreadful battle with these *rakshasas* at the peril of your life. Are you not the best and bravest of men? You gave way to anger and like a low and despicable man you spoke to me as if I was an ordinary woman. You brush aside all other considerations. You came into the world, as all others, through a man and woman. Am I such a one? I pass as the daughter of Janaka, but was I ever in a womb? Have you ever heard that I came from the womb of the earth? You have in you a boundless power of reading easily and keenly the life and heart of men. Then what prevented you from reading my life and conduct? You were a mere boy when you clasped my hand in wedlock and I too was a girl. And now you have called into question the promise I made to you then. You have clean forgot my devotion to you, the purity of my life and all that made me



dear to you.” Thus did she entreat Raghuvira her hot tears choking her words.

Then she beheld Lakshmana standing by with a wry face, dazed with anxiety and at a loss what to do, and she said “Lakshmana! I know well your boundless affection and devotion to your mother Sumitra. Do you remember her last words to you as we were leaving Ayodhya? “Hold Rama as your very father, Dasaratha”. You have made them good, day and night, loyally. Now, it is for you to make good another injunction of your mother. “Hold, the daughter of Janaka as your mother as myself.” She said so. Did she not? You will not fail her, nor will you fail me. Now I stand before you in her place. I see no other remedy for my sufferings. I alone should end them. Please build up a pile of logs; set fire to it. My very husband has made me an object of scorn and that most unjustly. I shall have nothing to do with this body even for a second. He has cast suspicion on my conduct. My goodness of heart and life have failed to please him any more. He has put me away in the very presence of these counsellors, monkeys and *rakshasas*. I have nowhere to lay my head except the blazing couch of fire.”

Lakshmana, stricken to the heart, glanced at the face of Rama for orders. He was always ready by nature and valiant enough to annihilate those who dreamt of evil to lady Sita. But what could he do when his brother Rama himself tortured her so? Against whom could he direct his anger? Janaki, who was a mother unto him, ordered him to build the pyre, yet he questioned Rama out of the corner of his eyes for his orders. He read the consent by many a sign and hint and hastened to obey Sita. Then Janaki went round Rama reverently and slowly, as he stood there with down-cast look and she drew near the fire blazing aloft, as if in angry protest. He hung his head in utter shame! ‘I call upon her to give me a proof, of her innocence without any reason for my suspecting spotless loyalty and devotion!’ This thought would come upon him should he lift up his eyes to the face of Sita. Enough that I have been away from her arms so long. If she were alive, I can atleast have the consolation of having a distant view of her. I can atleast have the solace of her being well and happy’. He could never bring himself to see her die. That is why he dared not hold up his head. On the

other hand, Sita walked slowly. "He may not look at me, yet enough for me to be by his side. Let me have as much of his company as possible by my delay". Or she might have said to herself, "Rama is the soul of compassion and the seeker of the good of all beings. He radiates joy and happiness all round. He is famed as the dispeller of grief and woe. May he be tested on my devotion and firmness. Very soon will he treat me with his accustomed kindness and love. It is a huge mistake to precipitate matters and throw away my life". Or she might have thought, "Lakshmana, Hanuman, and Vibhishana, dear unto Rama, know my heart and life as cleanly as my Lord himself, and they would not put up with this injustice. They will argue him out of his ill-considered decision. Let me wait a while". Mentally she saluted in reverence the gods, the brahmins, and spoke with folded hands. "Lord of fire, you are the eternal witness of the good and evil to all beings. If it is true that my heart never enshrined any other but Rama, even for a second, at anytime or in any place or under any circumstances, guard me in every way. If it is true that Raghava holds me guilty, me that am utterly innocent and loyal, guard me in every way then, thou eternal witness of all the worlds. If it is true that my heart ever seeks in deed, word and thought Raghava, the knower of all *dharma*, and Raghava alone, as sole refuge, then guard me in every way. If it is true that I am known as clean and noble of life to the sun, the moon, the wind, the fire, the day and the night, the twilights, the earth and everything, thereon, guard me in every way, thou witness to all the world." She paced round the fire in reverence, cast away all attachment to her body and entered the fire. All there were struck with terror, and stood dazed, trembling and not knowing what to do. The daughter of King Janaka, lovely and radiant as molten gold, adorned with the choicest ornaments and garments, entered the blazing fire, that pierced the heavens, before the very eyes of all. The three worlds beheld her entering the fire, even as the offering of ghee known as the *vasordhara* in a holy sacrifice. The women screamed and shrieked, Ha, Ha, Alas! It tortured the hearts of all the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *danavas*, *siddhas*, *sadhyas* and the other hosts of the three worlds to see the lady Janaki cast her life away into the fire while she was born to enjoy everything that the worlds could offer. Verily, it was as if a goddess of the heavenly world was hurled down by a curse to the depths of hell. The *rakshasas* and the monkeys filled

the air with excited cries of horror and protest. (Some hold that Sita's sufferings from the time that she met Ravana to this moment were only as a penalty of her harsh and baseless accusation of the ever-devoted Lakshmana. But the real Sita disappeared into the sacrificial fire before Ravana came there. So it was the illusory Sita that passed into the fire to give place to the genuine Sita that came out of it to the side of Rama — this is another view of the question).

CHAPTER 120

RAMA PRAISED BY THE DEVAS

RAMA, could not but listen to the words of one and all there; grief overcame him for a moment and he repented deeply of his imprudent act. Being as it were, *Dharma* incarnate, he was bound to exemplify it in his life and lead others on his path; hence he would not take back Sita as she was. But on the other hand he was the soul of boundless mercy. He had to torture the heart of Sita, a woman, his beloved wife, and without the slightest shadow of a proof. Her heart was broken under the weight of grief, misery and persecution, and to add to it, he had inflicted cruel injury on her. These thoughts overcame him quite and hot tears started swelling in his eyes. Then, Kubera, Yama, Indra, Varuna, Mahadeva, Brahma, the fashioner of the worlds, came in their cars resplendent as the noonday sun to Lanka, where Rama was. Adorned with choice ornaments and garments, they one and all lifted their hands above their heads and addressed themselves to Rama, who stood before them in humble reverence, and with clasped hands, "Lord, you are this Brahma here, the evolver of the countless worlds. You are wisdom embodied; all-knowing; and yet you have chosen to slight and neglect the lady Sita, as if you were ordinary mortal. Could you allow or abet or witness her passing through fire? Higher than the highest, higher than Brahma and others here, why do you keep yourself unknowing of your real self. Of yore, in past *kalpa*, as the Vasu Rithadhama and the lord of all creatures, you were the first fashioner of three worlds (the creator of everything upto the ruler of the Brahmanda, the over-soul of all and everything). You are the eighth among the Rudras, the fifth among the *sadhyas*, you

contain in your cosmic form the Asvins as your ears, the sun and the moon as your eyes, and you stood as one, at the beginning and at the end of manifestation. All-knowing, all powerful, over-lord of all, you put a slight upon the lady Sita, the daughter of Janaka, the knower of brahman, and she came into the world without the touch of the father and mother. Of the eight aspects of Rudra (Bhava, Sarva, Isana, Rudra, Pasupati, Ugra, Bhima, and Mahadeva) you are the last. Manas, Anumanta, Prana, Chetayana, Viryavan, Siddhi, Jaya, Maya, Hamsa, Narayana, Prabhavan and Vidhi — among these 12 *sadhyas*, he is Viryavan — *Vayupurana*. The word Asvinika indicates that he is the root cause of the Universe).

The Lord of the countless worlds, the joy and delight of all beings he who impels all to discharge their duties, he heard the regents of the quarters render him ordinary praise. It was not enough. The Lord Brahma, who is adored by one and all, must give expression to his greatness in the world. So thought Sri Rama and to give all there an idea that he was ever at the service of those devoted to him, he said “Gods of the heavenly world! I am born as the son of King Dasaratha: my name is Rama. I am but a man among men (this should be understood to mean — In the highest world Srivaikuntha, I express myself in my eternal state, in the fullness and beauty of the divine form and attributes. Yet, that pleases me not. I prefer to be born as a man among men, and be one of you. Again they have named me Rama. And that name is ever dear to me. Again boundless is my joy at being born into the world as the son of the illustrious king Dasaratha”). Who am I? To whom do I belong? What is my purpose here? Open my eyes to these points. (“Sugriva and others do not know that I am Vishnu come down among men. Reveal unto them my inner self that they may believe me. It is pleasing to be known as the Prince of Ayodhya. All wise as you are speak to these clearly and as you have understood my Supreme self”). The Lord ever desires to hide the mystery of his being. He is both to open the eyes of others to behold him as he is. But now that the purpose of his coming down was accomplished, with the death of Ravana, he permitted the unfolding of the mystery). Brahma heard him and he, the best, of the knowers of Supreme Brahman, said to all there “Lord Rama of unfailing valour! hear me speak words of utter truth. You abide in the primal

matter (Nara) and the individual souls, and you are named Narayana, the inner ruler thereof. (The *sruti* tells us that “in the beginning there was Narayana and none other, neither Brahma nor Isvara nor this earth and sky”). This is a reply to the argument “the evolution of the Universe does not fit in with him who has no desire to fulfil). You evolve, preserve, and involve the entire Universe as it were child’s play to you; (Yet, even a child has some object in view; it follows, that even the perfect one has to engage himself in action. Having thus praised the Lord by the extraordinary divine names that pertain to His supreme state, he proceeds to describe the next stage of manifestation as Purushaprakiti — Lakshminarayana). You are ever associated with Lakshmi; the *chakra* or disc is your weapon; you pervade everything; you are the primal manifestation, you are the Boar with a single horn; (that Boar lifted up the great mountains with one of his tusks. Then the Gods exclaimed, “Lord! let this one - horned aspect of yours, continue for ever. From that time Madhava became the one-horned Boar” — *Skandapurana*. “Goddess of earth! Krishna with a thousand arms and in the guise of a Boar, brought you up from the waters of dissolution” — *Sruti*).

You are the destroyer of Madhu, Kaitabha and the other *asuras* of yore as also Sisupala, Dantavakra and the others to come. Your forms are eternal. (“Gargi! This is that which the brahmins speak of as *akshara-Sruti*. The knowers of Brahman hold it as *akshara* and the origin of all beings). You are Brahman. (It grows and causes other things to grow. Hence it is known as *Parabrahman - Sruti*). *Origin, manifestation, change, growth, decrease and disintegration touch it not; hence it is satya*; He is ever present at the beginning, the middle and the end of countless Universes; hence it is *Nitya*; He is *Dharma* that brings everything good and auspicious down to the world. He has his forces in all quarters; hence He is Visvakshena, the leader of the hosts everywhere. You give at one and the same time the four aims of life; and hence you are four-armed. The bow, *Sarnga*, that you wield, is the spirit of time with which you are ever ready to protect your devotees. Your divine form and beauty is enough to steal away the hearts of all. You are *Purusha*, as abiding in the heart-cave of all beings. (“They behold the *Purusha* as reclining in the cave of the heart-*Sruti*) (I am here

before everything — hence my name *Purusha - Sruti*) (That *Purusha* pervades all the Universe - *Sruti*). You are the Purushottama (“All beings are known as *kshara*; the *kutastha* is named *akshara*; but I am above these two; I pervade this Universe and protect it . I am its ruler, eternal; and this is known in the world and in the *Vedas* as the Purushottama. *Gita-15*). You are the protector of those that seek you and there is none to cross your path. The sword *Nandaka* that you wear is the symbol of divine wisdom. You are named Vishnu as pervading everything. You extend your protection then and there over him, that deserves your grace, The root *krish* denotes the earth; and the letter ‘*na*’ stands for happiness. So you are the Parabrahman itself with the name of Krishna, the giver of supreme happiness to all the worlds. You are the stay and support of everything. You are the leader of the Divine host; you are the dispenser of the fruit of actions, to all beings. When it is said that the gods protect all creatures, it does not mean that they tend them like cattle. “They give the highest intellect and reason to those whom they desire to protect”. So he is the guide of all beings with regard to their intellect, patience and control of the senses. You are the source of this Universe and the place of its disintegration. (Krishna is the source and origin of all beings — They are absorbed in him — *Sruti*). You come down into the world as the next born to Indra. You slew the *asura*, Madhu, that made away with the *Vedas*. Your wealth and lordship is boundless. You are the lord of Lords. From your naval springs the lotus. That is the place of Universal evolution. You destroyed your foes in battles. They praise you as endowed with wisdom, power and compassion and the like excellences, that impel every one to seek your protection. This is the surest way to secure your favour and protection. (It confers supreme good on everyone that seeks Him. It is the most efficient means to win the Lord’s help). You are the *Samaveda* embodied with its thousand branches (“Of the *Vedas*, I am the *Sama - Gita 10*).

You impel in various ways all beings to discharge their *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya* and ordinary duties. You are the witness to all acts. You are the Fashioner of the three worlds, the Fashioner too of myself and the other Gods; you know no over-lord. (The *Sruti* tells us that there is no Isvara over him). He graciously blesses with bliss like unto his own, the *muktas* and the ever-liberated ones

(*Nityasuris*). Towards their safeguarding, He manifests himself before them. You are sacrifice, *Vashatkara* and *Omkara*; as laid down in the *Sruti* "Vishnu is verily *yajna* embodied." You are the sacrificer, the chief figure in the sacrificial hall, you are the priest, the animal immolated, the cooked food offered, the ghee, the spoon, the ladle, instruments used therein; you are Indra and the gods invoked therein.

(Brahman is the offering, Brahman is the cooked food; is the fire, is the priest; meditating upon Brahman at all times, the celebrant attains Brahman — Gita 4-24). *Asravaya, Astusraushat, Yaja, Ye Yajamahe, Vashat, Vaushat* — you are adored by these seventeen letters. The single letter Om is Parabrahman — as from the *Sruti*).


You deserve to be adorned by the highest *Tapas*. The *devas* are ignorant of your origin of your disappearance, your inner nature, your relation to the *Vedas* and those that follow it. Your glory is great. You manifest specially in the Brahmins and cows, and generally in all creatures, quarters, the sky, the mountains and the worlds. Countless are your heads, eyes, and feet (*Purushasuktam*). Hari and Lakshmi are your consorts (*Purushasuktam*). You bear up great mountains, the earth and the other great elements; as the tortoise, you are the substratum of everything. At the last day when this earth vanishes into nothing, you contain in yourself the three worlds and everything thereon. You recline on the ocean of milk in the state of yogic sleep on Sesha, your serpent-bed. Markandeya and the other *rishis* are blessed to behold it; (Tirtha takes it that this is the Sankarshana manifestation known as Ananta). According to this vedic text, "the other Gods are the members of his body, I am your heart and Sarasvati your tongue."

The Gods are to Paraprahman like unto the hairs that arise from the body. The closing of your eyes is night, the opening thereof is the day; the *Vedas* are the breath of your nostrils. There is nothing anywhere of which you are not the Antaryami (inner ruler) (The *sruti* tells us that the breath of this Great Being is the *Rik*, and the *Yajus* and the *Saman* and the *Atharva-vedas*). The cosmic form the lord is here described.

The *Vedas* are the means of imparting to the worlds the knowledge of the path of action and detachment. ("You are the inner ruler of everything, conscious, or unconscious"). The entire universe forms your body. All functions, are carried on therein because of the fixity of your command; and all attributes and qualities thereof are yours too. The earth is your firmness embodied. (The *Vishnupurana* tells us that reverence has to be made to you, who is the earth embodied and who holds up everything through the might of your firmness). The fire is but your wrath; the moon is but your grace; and the mole Srivatsa on your breast is the same too. In the far past, you placed in bonds, Bali, the great *asura* and gave the three worlds to Mahendra as ruler; then the three worlds were measured by you in three steps. The lady Sita is but Mahalakshmi come down on earth and you are Mahavishnu. You took your place in the world of men to slay Ravana, the terror of the worlds; for you are the lord of all beings, and it is upto you, to bring to them lasting good. Your very nature and form consist in destroying wrong and establishing right. You gave ear unto our prayers, to rid the earth of Ravana and his *rakshasa*-brood. The purpose of your descent over, we pray you to come back to your seat on high. "Lord! resistless are your might, valour and prowess and ever fruitful. One never went back with empty hand from your presence. (It is hinted that this is the very purpose of the lord, walking among men).

Those that seek you with undivided devotion at all times and in all places, in thought, word and deed, seeing in you, the eternal one, the ancient god of gods, the ageless *Purusha*, and the Purushottama, the highest of the three *Purushas* - reap a golden harvest of joy and happiness and usefulness during their stay here, and have their fondest wishes achieved hereafter. Devotion unto you, is the highest of every kind of *Tapas*, to bring them to your feet. While those that are unable to do so, have but to recite the above hymn of praise with pious heart; and they have come among men for the last time. This hymn of praise is Vedic, eternal, knowing no beginning and hence of boundless potency".

SITA COMES OUT OF THE FIRE

 HE Lord of Fire listened to the happy and auspicious words of the grandsire, Brahma, cast away the logs of wood from the pyre and rose out of it in human form with Janaki in his lap. The lady Sita blazed in splendour like the morning sun. She was adorned with ornaments of molten gold. Her black and graceful curls added more lustre to her face. She shone forth in her strings and garlands of unfading flowers. In the same form in which she passed into the fire she came out stainless and with pure bright heart. The lord of fire bore her in his arms and handed her unto Rama; and being the witness to the actions and words and thoughts of all beings, he cried, "Lord." This is the very same lady Sita that passed into my flames. She knows not the slightest shadow of sin. You know full well that the lady Sita, dear unto you is stainless. But in the thought that your conduct should not be blamed in the least, you made her pass through fire. Matchless among those who establish virtue and the law! This lady was never known to address or lift her eyes towards or even to bestow a thought upon any man but yourself. She is the perfect exponent of the highest wifely virtues. (This places out of court the contention that the illusory Sita passed into the fire and the original Sita came out of it). Then how was it that Ravana took her away against her will? He was a *rakshasa*, matchless in strength and valour. There was none by her side to protect her. It was a lonely forest untrodden by the steps of human beings. Unable to take care of herself, grieved and weighed down, by your being away from her, she fell into the hands of another, and Ravana bore her to his ladies' apartments. There frightful *rakshasis* guarded her day and night. Not even for a moment did she look in thought to anyone other than you to save her; her thoughts were ever centred on you. Her mind, heart and intelligence were ever with you. She never wasted even a look at Ravana, though he and his brood threatened and tempted her ever so strongly. Their words never entered her ears nor did any chance idea of him darken her thoughts. Her heart is utterly pure. No speck of sin has any

part in her being. Take her from me. Do not gainsay me and place my commands thereunto.

Thereat the heart of Rama was filled with boundless joy. The best and wisest of speakers, he grasped the import that lay behind the words of the lord of Fire. The embodiment of right and law, he said to himself, "It was not in vain that I put away Sita. The worlds above and below now know full well her greatness." Tears of remorse and sorrow coursed down his cheek, as he thought of the unmerited injury he had done her. He never forsook righteousness under any circumstances. In the power of protecting those who sought his shelter, there was none to approach him. His lustre and radiance was boundless, now that Janaki was by his side once more. He turned to Agni and said "The three worlds, know full well, that sin and Sita are as poles apart. Of spotless purity she is, yet the world's opinion is not to be slighted. She is herself able to cleanse the worlds of all impurity. Yet, she has stayed in the house of Ravana for a long time. "Rama is a boy. Being a slave to his love for her he has taken her back without any test of her purity. And it is no wonder for is he not the son of Dasaratha, who sacrificed his eldest son and the noblest to the whim of a woman, Kaikeyi, and sent him in to the woods. Such will be the talk of the world. Now this Sita is the daughter of Janaka, the ruler of Mithila, and knower of Brahman. She was born without human contact. There is no call, to speak of her conduct. She is ever devoted to me, she knows my heart, and anticipates my wishes; full well do I know that her thoughts have been ever centred on me alone. I was unconcerned as it were, when she passed into the fire, only to convince the three worlds, to reveal her real greatness and to set an example to others. Were the oceans ever known to overflow their limits? Ever guarded by the fire of her chastity and her innate radiance, she could not be approached by Ravana even in his dream. Her broad and lovely eyes were formed but to rain down sweet compassion and boundless wealth. But the slightest touch of wrath in them is quite enough to burn to ashes the countless worlds. Ravana fell a slave to the wonderful charm and beauty of Sita. Can a stranger dare to lift his eyes to her? Hence he was powerless to draw near her even in thought. Wicked he was and cruel; yet would any one clasp to his breast the blazing fire? His strength and prowess

and wickedness made no impression upon her. She is not the one to be lured by his wealth or greatness or glory. As the rays of the sun can never be parted from him Janaki can never be away from my side. Is she not the one to share with me my boundless greatness and glory that is eternal, and beyond thought and speech. Fortune, wealth, happiness and auspiciousness flow from her gracious looks. The countless worlds, are filled with her splendour and purity. Is it ever possible for a great man to put away fame from him? Even so, I can never put her away from me. You are all my best of friends and held in great reverence by one and all. You are my best well-wishers. Good indeed is what you say beneficial to me. So it is but proper and necessary that I should obey your command”.

These words filled with joy the countless gods, monkeys, and the *rakshasas* and they rent the skies with his praise. Then Raghuvira took Sita to his side and his heart was full of joy. The soul of supreme bliss without the slightest taint of grief; the mightiest of the mighty; yet, he was the servant of *dharma* and did all this but to set an example to the world.

CHAPTER 122

RAMA AND DASARATHA

MAHADEVA then said to himself “Brahma praised Rama to come to his seat on high, now that the gods have achieved their purpose. But I know that Rama’s wish is to reestablish *dharma* that had been seriously deranged and confused. So he turned to Rama and said “Lovely of eyes even as the red lotus! Adorned with the conch, the disc, the mace, and the other divine weapons, radiant with the mole *Srivatsa* on your broad breast, Lord, who annihilates his foes, by a thought of his, it is quite expedient that you should have done this, the flower and glory of the line of Ikshvaku who ever fulfil the *dharma* of Kshatriyas. The darkness of *adharma*s had begun to hang heavy over the worlds. This day you have laid low in battle that ten-headed *rakshasa*; you have extended your shelter and protection to all beings; you have uprooted vice and planted virtue. Bharata is grieved sore. Kausalya, your mother, pines

with sorrow. Kaikeyi of no ordinary fame and Sumitra are eagerly expecting your return. It is to you to meet them and relieve their hearts of the burden of woe. You will be crowned as the ruler of Ayodhya; long gladden the hearts of your kith and kin, friends and subjects; rule over the land with justice; bring forth sons who will continue the Ikshvaku line and conduct many a horse-sacrifice; endow Brahmins with countless gifts; cover yourself with eternal fame and then come back to your throne of light. (The *Sruti* tells us that his eyes are like the petals of the lotus, kissed into wakefulness by the rays of the morning sun; and the *Smriti* speaks of *Purusha* with his eyes like the red lotus). (This attribute of Brahman hints that Vishnu who came down as Rama is the Parabrahman, that is as the end and aim of *Vedanta*. The reference to the heart of Vishnu tells us that he is ever to consort with Lakshmi. There is a justification for calling Kaikeyi as graced with no ordinary fame. Rama's exile to the woods, the grant of protection and refuge to the *Maharshis*, the favour and kindness shown to Sugriva, Vibhishana and Anjaneya, the slaughter of Ravana and the *rakshasas*, the conferring of peace and happiness on the worlds - all these are the outcome of her obstinate will and purpose. Sumitra who commanded her sons to accompany Rama to the forest was of prime use and importance in every one of the above acts and it is extremely necessary that Rama should lay his head at her feet. Mahadeva only repeats the words of Rama, who said before his coming down among man "I will remain upon earth as a king for eleven thousand years and go back to Vaikuntha"). Behold, your father Dasaratha has come down here in his car. He had your respect and reverence in the world of men; of boundless fame, it was given to him to have you as his son. He stays in the world of Indra, yourself and Lakshmana should salute your father who shines with extra-ordinary brilliance. (It was not possible for Rama to make out his father in his body of the God-world. Again he could not recognise him as he stood very near. So it was necessary to point him out).

Thereat Rama and Lakshmana bowed in salutation to Dasaratha who was in his celestial car. Blazing in his boundless radiance, adorned with magnificent garments and ornaments, he shone among the gods as his sons saluted him. Dasaratha too beheld his son dearer to him than life; boundless joy overcame him as he clasped him

to his breast fondly, seated him on his lap, caressed his head and said "Child Rama, the joys and delights of *svarga* are nothing in my eyes. It is nothing that the *Devarishis* pay me every attention possible. It is your absence alone that could not be made up. Believe me, as you would the sacred texts, my heart is even now cloven at the remembrance of the words of Kaikeyi that drove you to the woods. Would I forget it to the end of time? My eyes are blessed to behold you and Lakshmana. I had news of your well-being and sought consolation in it from my grief. The grief and ignorance that clouded my heart have been chased away by the sight of your face, even as the sun clears away the morning mists. You are to me the ideal son. In the far past, the *rishi* Kahola was raised to the worlds on high by his son Ashtavakra. Even so I was raised to this high seat among the gods solely through the might of your great self being born as my son. Kaikeyi and Mandara played sad havoc with the arrangement. I made for your coronation and sent you to the dark woods. I came to know later on that it was all a plan worked out by the gods. They desired to rid the worlds of Ravana and the *rakshasas*, and drew you away from the capital to the forests. There they caused Sita to be carried away. Rama! Kausalya is verily the most blessed in all the worlds; it is given her to see you enter the palace at Ayodhya, with victory on your arms, won from the dread field of battle, where your enemies lie dead. The people of Ayodhya are rich indeed in the merit they have laid by in the past; they would feast their eyes on the grand sight of your coronation as you are seated on the throne of the kings of the Ikshvaku line in the great hall at Ayodhya. Bharata's affection for you knows no bounds. Strong and mighty, yet, spotless in life, his foot never strays from the path of virtue; and you should grant his prayer to behold you once again. Noblest of men! I know full well that you are verily Mahavishnu who came down among men to rid the world of Ravana. I long to see you united with Bharata. You abode for twice seven years in the trackless forests with Sita and Lakshmana. Your exile is over, even as you passed your word to me. You slew Ravana and his dark brood and fulfilled the prayer of the gods; and their joy knows no bounds. You have indeed, achieved a feat impossible to others; and eternal and undying fame crowns your brows. Rule then this world for countless ages with Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrugna".

At this grand and mighty blessing, Raghuvira bowed low over folded hands, and said "Lord! I pray you extend your mercy and forgiveness to Kaikeyi and Bharata. I put you away from me for ever, you and your son Bharata was your terrible curse. May it cease to dog their steps". Then Dasaratha granted the request; and clasping fondly to his breast, Lakshmana who stood by in reverent affection, said "Child, you have gladdened my heart exceedingly by your devotion and loyalty to Rama and Sita. Rich is the harvest you have reaped as a reward for the most lofty *dharma*. It depends upon Rama to bless you with righteousness, broad fame, the joys of heaven, and greatness beyond measure. (It seems that Dasaratha was not aware of the divine nature of Lakshmana, as an essence of Vishnu). Let your life be one of long and perfect service to Rama. He is ever bent upon securing the highest good of all the worlds. These *siddhas* and *rishis*, the beings in all the three worlds, Indra and his gods, sing high his praise and offer him worship as the Lord Supreme. Brahma and others have opened my eyes to the great mystery that surrounds him. He is the inner ruler of all the gods; he takes on the form of fire and other gods and is worshipped in every kind of sacrifice. He is to be known only through the *Upanishads*; they know him not who lack devotion; he is free from all change and modification. In fact he is Paramatman himself, who has come among us as Rama. You have followed the path of righteousness in its most lofty reaches and you have won peerless fame in the battle-field. This is all due to your loyal and devoted service to Rama and Sita". Turning to Janaki, the king said "Rama acted as if he would speak to you harshly and put you away, simply to reveal to the worlds your greatness and purity. Harbour no thought of sorrow thereat. There is no need for me to instruct you regarding service to your husband. Yet, I must tell you that he is the god of gods for you". Thus did he instruct Janaki and his sons and went back to the world of Indra in his blazing car.

INDRA GRANTS BOONS TO RAMA

DASARATHA took his way back to the heavens. Then Indra mightily pleased with Raghava who stood there with folded hands said, "Rama! It was not in vain that we sought you in prayer during the sacrifice that Dasaratha conducted to beget a son. We are now free of every kind of fear from Ravana. Pray let us know what you will have from us in return". "Rama, Lakshmana and Sita saluted him reverently; and Rama replied". If I have found favour in your eyes, I pray you, accept my request, and make your word good. The *Vanaras* that have cheerfully cast away their lives for me in battle and passed on to the world of Yama should come back to life. They have turned their backs on their sons, parents and kin. They made light of death, intent on my well-being; let such have their fill of joys and delights through your grace. This is my earnest prayer. I long to behold my friends, the *vanaras* and bears, to be relieved of their wounds and free from pain. May they be restored to their former strength and valour; and may they lead a joyous and happy life. All through the year may their haunts abound with fruits and roots for them to feed upon; and may the rivers and lakes ever be full and fresh". And to him replied Mahendra, "Raghava! your request is no ordinary one. It means that I should fit once more the scattered limbs of many to their right places; it means that I should bring back here those that have gone over to other worlds. But my word holds good for ever. Those *vanaras* and bears that have fallen in this battle by the hands of the *rakshasas* and those that have lost their limbs, will be whole again free from pain, and rejoice in their strength and valour as if they woke up after a peaceful sleep. They will lead a happy life in the company of their friends, kith and kin. Their haunts will teem with flowers, fruits, and roots during all the seasons of the year. The rivers will be ever full with clear, sweet crystal waters". And then those that were wounded came back to life, whole and clean. Those that lost their limbs found them back again. Thus did the monkeys come back from the other world in millions; and the other monkeys

and *rakshasas* gazed at them in wonder and cried, "Strange! Wonderful!" and they could not gaze enough. Those that owed their rebirth to Rama, went round him in reverence and laid their heads at his feet.

Thus did Raghuvira effect his purpose and his heart was full of peace and joy. The gods lauded high the princes and said. "Make your way back from here to Ayodhya, Oh Rama! Give leave to the monkeys to go back to their haunts. Wipe away sorrow and grief from the heart of Sita. This gem of devotion and loyalty deserves it richly. Bharata and Satrughna have cast away behind them joy and comfort; they are observing the same stern vow as yourself. Their eyes are ever on the path that would bring you to them. Carry cheer and consolation to the hearts of the ladies Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. May your subjects, friends and kin bless their eyes with the sight of our coronation at Ayodhya; rule over them in peace and righteousness." Thus did they shower blessings on Rama, and take leave of him to go back to their worlds. Radiant as the Sun, with heart dancing in joy, Rama saluted the gods in reverence and directed Lakshmana to assign quarters to the *vanaras* and they on their side guarded thus by Rama and Lakshmana waxed in fame and glory through their victory over the *rakshasas* and rent the air with shouts and roars; it was verily a lovely night illuminated by the full-moon.

CHAPTER 124

VIBHISHANA ENTERTAINS RAMA

RAMA abode there that night with his armies. Next morning Vibhishana touched his feet and spoke with folded palms, "Victory be ever thine, Lord! I have arranged everything necessary to give humble welcome to my friends, the monkeys and bears. To Lakshmana and thyself too, clear crystal waters to bathe in, scents, perfumes, garlands and chaplets, clothes and ornaments, powders and pastes, await your convenience. These lovely ladies are experts in the art of decoration. They await your pleasure in the matter of baths, dress and ornaments. I pray accept these marks of love,

service and devotion from me and bless me out of your supreme grace." And to him replied Raghunatha, "Vibhishana, I believe that Sugriva and his heroic followers deserve these honours better. Bharata is eating his heart out to meet me. The soul of virtue, supremely worthy of enjoying comfort and peace, brought up in the lap of luxury, yet, mighty of arms and ever wedded to truth, he has vowed to me, "If I do not see you here back again, at the end of twice seven years, I will enter the fire and pass to the other world; and his words are never in vain. He has taken upon himself to observe a very stern vow only to see me back. What have I to do with baths or ornaments when that virtuous soul knows them not? Should I bring grief and sorrow to his heart even as Kaikeyi did? He rules over his people most righteously in the absence of King Dasaratha and myself. Banished from my presence for no fault of his, he subjects himself to hard and cruel penances only to see me back again. Is it meet that I should break my promise to him? I take my road to Ayodhya and will reach it soon through this route. Behold, it is far from here and I have no call to delay."

Then Vibhishana humbly submitted, "You need not waste a thought upon this. I will take you over there in a day. The son of the king, and the king yourself by right, you should enter Ayodhya with due honours, splendour and dignity. Ravana defeated Kubera in battle and took from him the car *Pushpaka*. It is radiant as the Sun. It can course anywhere at will; it has room enough for any number of travellers. I have to send it back to Kubera now that Ravana is dead. But I have not handed it over to Kubera when he came here with the gods. In it you can go back to Ayodhya as soon as you wish. Like the cloud sped by the storm, it flies with incredible swiftness; so you may rest in peace about the return to Ayodhya. Even though you would not have your bath here, I pray grace my humble abode with your lordly presence for at least two or three days. If it is in your heart to bless me, if you have discovered any good trait in me, if it is true that I bask in the radiance of your affection, then thyself, Lakshmana, and Sita should stay with me for a while. My heart yearns to entertain, to the utmost of my humble ability, thyself, thy retinue, and thy armies. No preparations are necessary. I have all things ready to the last detail. Accept my humble service, make me happy by enabling me to realise my life's

ambition, grant my heart's wishes, and then you are free to go back to Ayodhya. Do not take it then that I bother you in this way. I place my utter faith in the thought that my word will find favour in your eyes; you have already extended your love and affection to me and my own devotion and gratitude to you embolden me to take this liberty with you. Am I not your humble servant?"

Then Ramachandra made gracious reply to Vibhishana in the presence of the *rakshasas* and the monkeys. "Child! I take it that you have honoured me enough by your priceless aid, your valour in battle, and your matchless devotion. Far be it from my thoughts that I should not grant you your wishes. But my heart is eager to meet my dear brother Bharata without least delay. He put away the kingdom placed in his hands by my father; he sought me out at Chitrakuta and bowed at my feet entreating me to rule over the kingdom. He tries his very best to make me return to Ayodhya. But I could not act as he wished, him I must see at once. I must lay my head at the feet of the queens, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. I must meet my elders, my friends and kinsmen, their wives and children. Please therefore bring out the car *Pushpaka*. Now that I have completed my work here, I would linger no more. Delay would mean the passing of my dear Bharata, through fire to the worlds high. I am mightily honoured by the sentiments you have expressed and by your placing the car *Pushpaka* at my disposal. And so I take leave of you. Let not your heart grieve that I could not fulfil your wishes."

Then Vibhishana brought out the car *Pushpaka*. It was wonderfully decked in gold; platforms and halls inlaid with gems were found all over. It blazed in radiance and was splendidly decorated with snow-white banners and flags, golden lotuses and lofty storeys. It wafted sweet music from strings of bells on all sides and the large bells at corners. Garlands, chaplets and festoons, graced it everywhere, worked with pearls and gems and attached to the large windows. Lofty as the mountain Meru and spacious, it had many a curiously devised habitation; floors inlaid with gold, silver and crystal, priceless carpets and rugs over the countless seats and lounges, made one believe that he beheld in one spot the most valuable collection of the treasures of the three worlds. Nothing

could stay its course, for it was swift as thought. And Vibhishana brought out this heavenly car and appraised Rama thereof.

CHAPTER 125

VIBHISHANA ENTERTAINS THE MONKEY-LORDS

VIBHISHANA brought over the car Pushpaka at the orders of Rama and told him of it. He drew near him and spoke humbly with folded arms, "Lord! I await your orders". And in reply, Rama having already known that Lakshmana would approve of it and having taken deep thought himself, gave expression to his love and affection for those that looked upto him for everything. "Vibhishana! These monkeys here have covered themselves with glory through their wonderful deeds on the battle-field. So let them have enough of garments, ornaments, gems, and gold. With the help of these we have captured Lanka which till then was impregnable. These have fought with untold energy, and reckless of their lives. With boundless courage they never turned their backs to foe. They have done their work most admirably. They deserve everything that I could do to them. Give them their fill of wealth and gems in return for what they have risked for me. This is the only way to express your gratitude for the help they have rendered you. It is in your hands to reward them or put an insult upon them. If you entertain them as I tell you, they will be mightily pleased thereat. Do not forget that it is to them you owe this kingdom of Lanka. Grieve not that you have to spend a very large amount upon them. The world will speak highly of you, as one who never says 'nay' to those that seek your help; as one who secures friends at any cost, and is gifted with boundless tenderness and fame. I speak but what seems to be good for you; never take it as an order. If the armies are not properly rewarded, it would bring evil upon us. It matters not that one is their lord and master they would abandon him at a most critical moment in fight, if he torments them or is bad-tempered in his dealings with them and does not reward them amply and treat them with kindness and consideration, and in your case all this needs no stressing.


Vibhishana received the orders of Rama with respect and entertained the monkeys as became their status, ability, and valour, with gems, wealth, ornaments, and garments. Then Rama, Sita and Lakshmana ascended the car *Pushpaka*. Raghuvira placed Sita on his lap, and spoke to the monkeys and the *rakshasas*, "Vibhishana, Sugriva! best and bravest of monkeys! you have rendered me without stint every kind of help that one can hope for from one's friends. I give leave to all of you to go back to your favourite homes. Sugriva! you have discharged most faithfully the obligations of a friend with flaming heart and fear of wrong. Make your way back to Kishkindha with your armies. Vibhishana! rule with vigilance over this kingdom of Lanka, which I have placed in your hands. Do not, like Ravana, invade other kingdoms and torment their peoples. (It suggests that the guards placed in Janasthana by Ravana should be recalled to Lanka): Indra and the gods and *asuras* too dare not lift their eyes to you. I go back to Ayodhya, the capital of my father. You all, those that follow you, have my leave to go and I take leave of you in my turn" (There was no other woman about and Rama placed Sita on his lap. She bowed her head slightly at this act of tenderness done in the presence of all. Lakshmana stood behind Rama with the *kodanda* in his hand).

The monkeys, *rakshasas* and Vibhishana hastened to reply with folded palms, "Rama! we are eager beyond words to follow you to Ayodhya, you must take us with you, we will never be guilty of spoiling your gardens, tormenting your people and bringing havoc to your towns and woods; we will be most careful about how we behave there. We must feast our eyes and our hearts with the grand function of the coronation. We must lay our heads at the feet of the lady Kausalya, who is the fortunate mother of the best and noblest of sons; Then alone shall we reap the benefit of our countless births, and we long to behold the lords; Bharata and Satrughna, that came into the world with you and likewise the people over whom you rule. Then it will be time for us to go back to our place." Rama replied them "What more can my heart desire than to go with you to Ayodhya? You have taken to me as the life of your lives; you have borne for me untold trouble, danger, and privations, each and every one of you, find a place with me and this car *Pushpaka*; not a single soul should stay back. Vibhishana, you may come along

with your counsellors. Dear to me is my victory over Ravana and my meeting with Sita; to meet Bharata once more is dearer; but it is dearest to me to go back to Ayodhya with you." Then Sugriva and his monkeys, Vibhishana and his ministers got into the aerial car *Pushpaka*. It sprang into the air at the orders of Raghava and sped with the speed of thought. Seated on the car adorned with golden swan, Rama was lauded by the monkeys and *rakshasas* and his heart knew boundless peace and joy as he shone like Kubera, the regent of the quarters. Monkeys and *rakshasas* ranged freely and comfortably in it and had everything that their hearts could desire.

CHAPTER 126

RAMA POINTS OUT TO SITA THE RETURN ROUTE

 T the orders of Rama the *Pushpaka* sped on lightly, as if it were a huge cloud-bank lashed by storms. Then Raghunandana glanced all round carefully and pointed out to Sita seated on his lap, the various places of interest over which they passed on. Janaki was filled with joy at being reunited to her beloved lord and with her face beaming like the full-moon expressed supreme wonder and pleasure as she beheld them. "Look, yonder Lanka, on the crest of Trikuta, like unto the Kailasa Mountain. This was fashioned of yore by Visvakarma. Behold the battle-ground of *rakshasas* with ourselves, now hidden under layers of blood and flesh. Here countless monkeys and *rakshasas* found their ways to other worlds. Behold, there Ravana lies, a heap of ashes. Wonderful boons did he get from Brahma; he was the holy terror of all the worlds. He was the lord of the *rakshasa*-empire, and him did I slay to get you back. Here Kumbhakarna gave up his life-breaths and it was here that Nila did Prahasta to death and here Hanuman made short work of Dhumraksha. It was here that Vidyunmali fell under the hands of Sushena. Mark this spot where Lakshmana had a terrible fight with Indrajit and killed him. Angada took the life of Vikata and it was here monkey-heroes beyond count proved the death of

Virupaksha, Mahaparsva, Mahodara, Akampana and the other *rakshasa*-warriors. It was here that Mandodari, the chief queen of Ravana, and thousands of her rank wailed and lamented for him with streaming eyes and heartrending cries. It was here that we camped on the night of our crossing over to Lanka. Behold the bridge laid over the waters by Nala. It was for yourself that we passed through all this trouble. These lovely eyes were the cause of it all, were they not? Know you of any other who can achieve the same feat? Cast your eyes on the home of Varuna, the lord of the waters. There is no island here for tired feet to rest upon. The billows roar for ever. Look here, you find the mountain Mainaka with its crests of gold. Here did Hanuman rest for a while during his flight across the sea. Cast your eyes over our camping spots along the cause-way over the frightful ocean. Here you came upon the northern end of it. This spot is very very holy; the blackest of sins, fall away before it. Here did the Lord Mahadeva favour me before (a deal of controversy is indulged in by the commentators on this *sloka*, all out of sectarian intolerance. The natural meaning is as is given above. But Vaishnavite feeling would not admit that Vishnu took a favour from the hands of Siva. Hence they twist the stanza to read that it is the lord of ocean that is referred to; since there is no record of Rama receiving any assistance from Mahadeva in the matter of the laying of the cause-way. But the word Prabhu, 'Lord', is quite against the water king, whom no body would claim as above Sri Rama. If they object to the word being used in connection with Siva himself, why speak of a petty ruler whom Rama punishes for disobedience and threatens to exterminate. The *Ramayana* never goes on war-path against Mahadeva or takes a brief for Vishnu or Rama. Of course Govindaraja and his followers would have it so. They go so far as to reject the *Adityahridaya* of Agastya, simply because they would not have Rama (Vishnu) pray to the Sun god and take a favour from his hands, though the *Upanishads* tell us that it is He that dwells in the Solar Orb as its Highest Soul. Again they cannot deal in the same way with Rama asking a boon from Indra in the matter of the monkeys who are revived. If Valmiki makes no particular mention of any action of grace by Siva, it matters not. On more than one occasion, Valmiki relates events retrospectively). Vibhishana came and surrendered unto me a little to the north of this place. Look here! Here is

Kishkindha with its magnificent forests. This is the capital of Sugriva. Here is the place where Vali was vanquished and killed by me."

Pleased at the site of Kishkindha, Sita entreated Rama in haste, and out of love towards him "Lord! I pray that Tara, the wife of Sugriva, and the wives of the monkey-hosts may accompany us to Ayodhya." Rama said "Let it be so" and stopped the *vimana* in front of Kishkindha and spoke to Sugriva thus : "Sita desires that your wife and the wives of the monkey-lords should accompany us to Ayodhya. So bring them quickly". Immediately Sugriva sent for Tara from his palace and said "Janaki desires that you should go with her along with our women-folk. Rama too orders likewise. Let us all go to Ayodhya, see the wonders there and visit the queens of Dasaratha. Do no delay". Adorning herself with clothes and ornaments, she sent for the wives of the other monkeys and addressed them. "Our lord orders that we should all proceed to Ayodhya. You should obey this command even for my sake. Let us therefore go and see the wonders and greatness of Ayodhya, witness Sri Rama's entry into the capital, be present at his coronation and visit the queens of Dasaratha. Prepare to start quickly." Then all the women of Kishkindha adorning themselves with auspicious decorations and ornaments ascended the Pushpaka and bowed to lady Sita.


Then the car *Pushpaka* ascended (into) the sky and traversing through its regions approached the Rishyamuka Hill. Rama said "Sita, Look! There at Rishyamuka Hill, resplendent with creepers and roots like unto the cloud-banks lit up with lightning, I met Sugriva. I vowed here that I would kill Vali. And yonder appears the Pampa river with its wondrous woods. It was there that I suffered long and deeply your separation. On its banks, I was met and entertained by Sabari. Look here! This is the spot where I killed Kabandha with arms one hundred *yojanas* long. There you see the great banyan tree which was the abode of Jatayu, the great soul. It was there that the friend of my father fought Ravana and was killed by him while attempting to rescue you. We now see the *asrama* in Panchavati, where we lived. It was here that the *rakshasas*, Khara, Dushana and Trisiras were vanquished and killed in battle. Behold

the wonderful hut wherefrom the *rakshasa*-chief carried you away by force. The river Godavari is now within view with its sparkling waters; the abodes of the *Maharshis*, Agastya, Sutikshna, shining with the pure splendour of sanctity are now to be seen. Indra came to see the *Maharshi* Sarabhanga when we were halting there. Look at the spot where Viradha of mountainous bulk was laid low. Tapasvins are to be seen in the *asramas*. The *asrama* of *Maharshi* Atri, who shines like the lord of fire and the lord of day, is now within sight. It was here that Anasuya, the incarnation of chastity, offered you hospitality.

We are now in Chitrakuta. It was here that my dear brothers entreated me to return to Ayodhya. Near this spot are to be seen the Yamuna, with its beautiful forests and in their midst is the resplendent *asrama* of Bharadvaja. In the centre of the wondrous woods, Ganga courses purifying and sanctifying the places touched by her. Birds of brilliant and varied hue sport on its waters. Yonder appears Sringiberapura where Guha entertained us with pomp and splendour. Now appears Sarayu, the holy river. On its banks are to be seen the pillars of fame erected by the successive kings of Ikshvakus at the end of numberless *yagas* performed by them. Adorned with variegated flowers and shrubs, forests range far and wide along its two banks. Ayodhya, the capital of the kings of the Solar race, is now visible. We have returned with safety. Do obeisance to that holy city.

Thus addressed, all the monkeys, *rakshasas* and Vibhishana sprang high and saluted that holy and grand city and the birth place of Sri Raghuvira. The *vanaras* were delighted at the sight of the palaces shining resplendently, of many-storeyed mansions and of elephants and horses, magnificent to behold. The city was as wonderful as Amaravati, the capital of Indra.

RAMA AT THE HERMITAGE
OF BHARADVAJA

T the end of fourteen years on the fifth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Chitra, Rama and Lakshmana reached the hermitage of Bharadvaja and made their obeisance to the *rishi*. (It was on the same fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chitra that Rama, Lakshmana and Sita had started from Ayodhya. That night they had stayed on the banks of the Tamasa river; they had spent the sixth day at the Sringerapur, the seventh day under the banyan tree, the eighth day in the hermitage of Bharadvaja and the ninth day on the banks of the Yamuna. Learning through Guha's followers that Rama would reach Chitrakuta on the tenth day, Sumantra returned to Ayodhya that evening. That night Dasaratha passed away. On the eleventh day his body was immersed in a pot of oil. On the twelfth day messengers were sent to bring Bharata. They travelled on the thirteenth and fourteenth days and reached the capital of Kekaya on the night of the full-moon. On the first day of the dark fortnight, Bharata started for Ayodhya. Halting for seven nights enroute and travelling without a break on the eighth day, he entered the city of Ayodhya at sunrise on the ninth day. The funeral of Dasaratha was done on that day. On the following 12th and 13th days thereafter, that is on the fourth and fifth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Vaisakha, Bharata performed the obsequies for Dasaratha. According to the local custom, the immersion of the ashes was carried out on the sixth day. On the seventh day Bharata ordered the servants to lay roads in the forest. This work went on till the tenth day. On the eleventh day Bharata started in quest of Rama. That night he halted on the banks of the Ganga. On the twelfth day he stayed with Bharadvaja and on the thirteenth he met Rama. For three days, on the fourteenth, the full moon and the day following it, he stayed with Rama. On the second day of the dark fortnight of the month of Vaisakha he started back for Ayodhya and entered the city on the fourth day. On the fifth day

Rama left Chitrakuta, visited the sages Atri and others and came to Panchavati, where he spent thirteen years. In the fourteenth year in the month of Chitra, Sita was carried away by Ravana. In Vaisakha Rama met Sugriva, Vali was killed in Ashadha. In Asvayuja the monkey-army was assembled and in Phalguna Rama reached the seashore. On the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight the monkeys set fire to Lanka. On the new-moon day Ravana was killed. In the fifteenth year, on the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chitra, Ravana was cremated, Vibhishana was crowned on the second day, Sita was reunited to Rama and the Devas blessed them on the same day. Leaving Lanka on the third day, Rama reached Kishkindha on the fourth day. On the fifth day he arrived at the hermitage of Bharadvaja. On the sixth day he was at Nandigram, removed his matted locks and entered Ayodhya. On the seventh day Sri Ramachandra was crowned as King of Ayodhya in the most auspicious hour, the star of the day being Pushya).


Rama asked of Bharadvaja "Holy one! Is all well with those at Ayodhya and Kosala? Do all people live happily without famine, epidemics or floods? Does Bharata protect the people according to *dharma*? Do the queens live in sound health?" With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, Bharadvaja replied, "Bharata eagerly awaits your return every minute with matted hair and dust-laden body, the kingdom is ruled with your sandals before him. All the family are well. When I saw you last, you were clad in tree-bark and deer-skin and ready to enter the forest. Losing the kingdom that was yours by right, desiring only to obey your father, holding on to *dharma*, discarding all pleasures, you came here on foot accompanied by Lakshmana and Sita. I grieved to see you giving up everything in deference to Kaikeyi and living on roots and fruits like one that has fallen down from heaven after having enjoyed the fruits of former good deeds. And now I rejoice to see you back, your task accomplished, and your foe destroyed. Your victorious return to Ayodhya with friends and retainers makes me supremely happy. I know full well all the good and evil that befell you. Promising to protect the brahmins and the sages you killed Khara and the *rakshasas* at Janasthana; Maricha in the guise of a deer lured you away from your hut; Sita was carried away by Ravana. The death of Kabandha at your hands; the friendship of Sugriva

which you secured at Pampa; the killing of Vali; the search of the monkeys for Sita; the valourous deeds of Hanuman; the discovery of Sita; the building of the bridge by Nala; the burning of Lanka by the monkeys; the death in battle of Ravana, who had been the terror of all creatures, the destruction of his kith and kin and the army; the grant of boons to you by the blessed gods; all these have been known to me through my *tapas*. I too give you a boon now. Stay here for a day, accept my hospitality and depart for Ayodhya tomorrow”.

Rama bowed low in acceptance of his words. He decided to send Hanuman, to carry to Bharata the good tidings of his return, felt happy and prayed, “Great one! Let the trees on the path along which I and my friends go to Ayodhya be full of flowers and fruits dripping honey”. Bharadvaja said “Let it be so”. The trees on that road for a distance of three *yojanas* began to resemble those of heaven. Trees that had never borne fruits now had abundant of them, the trees and plants that had known no flowers now blossomed forthwith with sweet-smelling flowers; dried up trees revived and put forth tender shoots; honey began to stream out from the fruits and flowers. The monkeys in thousands were greatly pleased at the sight. They ate the fruits and drank the honey, sweet as nectar and rejoiced like the gods in heaven.

CHAPTER 128

RAMA SENDS MARUTI IN ADVANCE TO BHARATA

 HEN Raghava thinking of Ayodhya, called Maruti and spoke to him, “Go thou in haste to Ayodhya and find out if Kausalya and the other women of the palace are well. Meet Guha at Sringerapuram and greet him on my behalf. He will be mightily pleased to hear that I am now carefree and happy after having killed my enemies and achieved my purpose. Regardless of his caste, I consider him as a member of the royal family because of his devotion to me and my love towards him. He will acquaint you with the road to Ayodhya and tell you about Bharata. Tell Bharata that with Sita

and Lakshmana I am here, having returned safely and that I send him my good wishes.”

“Let him know now that my father’s task has been fulfilled. Let him hear from you of Ravana’s carrying away Sita, of my friendship with Sugriva, the killing of Vali, the search of the *vanaras* for Sita, your exploits in Lanka and your discovery of Sita, my meeting with the ocean god, the construction of the dam by Nala, the killing of Ravana and *rakshasas*, the granting of boons by Brahma, Varuna and Indra, Dasaratha’s appearance before me, thanks to the grace of Paramasiva and of my return here. As yesterday the period of fourteen years of my exile was completed, he may sacrifice himself in the fire, on failing to see me again. If you tell him the news of my arrival, the shock of joy might endanger his life. Tell him first that Vibhishana with his *rakshasas* and Sugriva with his monkeys have come along with me. Observe carefully his face to discover his real feelings towards me. Tell him, ‘Having killed his enemies, Rama has achieved unequalled fame; having fulfilled his mission, he has returned accompanied by powerful allies,’ and note his reactions and see whether his face changes. I must find out whether he will agree if I tell him, ‘You may rule this kingdom yourself.’ The reason why I wish to test him is this; who is the man that does not desire to possess a kingdom handed down by his ancestors endowed with many elephants, horses and chariots, and capable of giving all he wants? Would Bharata accept the kingdom out of joy and seeing me back after fourteen years? Would he reject the offer? If he has become attached to the kingdom, let him continue to rule as he has ruled for fourteen years in deference to my wishes. My father passed away without tasting the happiness of seeing me crowned. Let me, at least, feel happy to see Bharata crowned. Before I left Ayodhya I liked to witness Bharata’s coronation and tarried a while. But Kaikeyi mistook my action and thought that I was unwilling to give up the kingship and leave the country. If Bharata now seems inclined to cling to the power which he has enjoyed so long, return to me before we have advanced very far much nearer to Ayodhya and let me know. Otherwise, stay on with Bharata. (Rama knew full well the heart of Bharata. But following the rule of testing even one who is greatly devoted and loving, Rama feigned some doubt of Bharata’s

intentions. Fearing that his sudden appearance might lead to Bharata's suffering from an excess of joy, he sends Hanuman in advance to announce his return. Maruti, too, who understood the purpose of Rama, came back not with any report but with Bharata himself).

Hanuman in the guise of a man hastened to Ayodhya, even as Garuda rises aloft and flies through the sky after snatching up a great snake. Passing over the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, the valiant Hanuman arrived at Sringiberapura. Approaching Guha he spoke auspicious words, greatly pleased. "Friend! your beloved friend, the valiant Raghava, the greatest of the Ikshvaku clan, along with Lakshmana and Sita has sent me to tell you that he is well. Tonight he stays with Bharadvaja, and tomorrow he will be here."

Saying this, Hanuman leapt into the sky and flew over Ramatirtham, Valukini and Gomati. Seeing countless people and many flourishing villages, he flew with all speed and came upon the forests adjoining Nandigrama. There he saw women and children playing as the *devas* sport in Nandana, the garden of Indra. At Nandigrama on the outskirts of Ayodhya, he came upon Bharata wearing bark and deer skin, emaciated and with matted locks living like a hermit and anxiously looking in the direction of Rama's return. With his mind, senses and speech controlled intensely, concentrating on his inner self and glowing like a Brahmarishi, he looked after the people under the auspices of the sacred sandals. Assisted by able ministers and holy purohits, he was protecting the four castes against all perils. His ministers, the army chiefs and all others around him were all robed in the garb of *rishis* even as he. Born of Dasaratha the king, he was brought up on opulence; but he has discarded all pleasures, in strict obedience to *dharma*. When he is observing silently the austerities of the *rishis*, it is not right and proper for us to live in ease and pleasure, they thought.

With palms folded Hanuman approached Bharata and addressed him; "Lord! Raghunatha, the son of Dasaratha, who went to the Dandaka forest like a *rishi*, who promised to return after fourteen years and whose absence you have endured so long sends you his

greetings. I bring you good news. You will see Rama shortly. After killing Ravana and the *rakshasas*, rescuing Maithili and fulfilling his mission, he returns accompanied by many friends. Soon you will see Rama with Lakshmana and Sita who is reunited with Rama even as Sachi is with Indra'' (As Hanuman and Bharata were strangers, Hanuman did not salute Bharata. But as he joined his palms when he appeared before Bharata, it may be taken that he did obeisance to him. Or it may be that he thought that if he unnecessarily delayed the news of Rama's welfare by indulging in salutations Bharata might end his life; the news of Rama's return was more important than the usual courtesies, which could be attended to later. Or it may be that Maruti forgot, in his joy at seeing the devotion and greatness of Bharata, to salute him).

Hearing those words, Bharata was overjoyed. "When will my brother arrive? When can I see his comely face and when shall I bow at his lotus feet?" He fell in a faint. Recovering shortly, Bharata embraced Hanuman who had uttered such heartening words and bathed him in streaming tears of joy, (The mere tidings of Rama's return had such an effect on Bharata; what might not have happened if Rama himself had appeared suddenly? It was because he feared the consequences of such surprise that Rama had sent Hanuman in advance). Though you appear to be a man yet when I see your splendour, I wonder whether you are not a god. Whoever you are, you have come here out of pity for me and told me good news which has brought me back to life. Though I cannot reward you adequately let me do what little I can. Accept my presents joyously and bless me. Kindly accept a crore of cows, a hundred villages and sixteen maids to wed. They are well-born, beautiful beyond compare adorned with jewels and pure in thought and deed''.

Hearing thus the news of Rama's return, with mounting desire to see his brother, Bharata spoke again to Hanuman out of the fullness of his heart.

THE MESSAGE OF MARUTI TO BHARATA

“**F**RIEND! It is now many years since my lord went into the Dandaka forest. Now only have I good news of him. I find that the saying that even if one has to wait for a hundred years for happiness one finds it at last true. How did Raghava and the monkeys come to be friends, where and what for? Tell me.” (By this query Bharata appears to have learnt of Rama’s meeting with the monkeys in Kishkindha and their march to the South” — Govindaraja. Or possibly Hanuman, being addressed “Art thou god or man?”, had replied that he was a minister to Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, and the devotee of Rama).

Thus questioned, Hanuman was mightily pleased with the opportunity to describe the deeds of Rama and said, “Lord! You know how Rama was exiled as a result of the two boons to your mother by the king, how Dasaratha died of grief for the separation of his son; how messengers brought you back to Ayodhya; how you refused to accept the kingdom; how you, though fit to rule the earth, went to Chitrakuta and offered the kingdom to Rama and entreated him to return to Ayodhya; how he refused your request and how you returned with the sacred sandals” (Hanuman retraces the past step by step to infuse confidence in Bharata).

“Let me recount what happened after your return to Ayodhya. The birds, beasts and the sages in the wood were greatly disturbed by the sight of strangers and the movement of the army. Rama and Lakshmana therefore entered the Dandaka. While passing through that terrible forest filled with wild elephants, lions, and tigers there appeared before them Viradha, the *rakshasa*. He was killed and buried in a big pit. That evening they reached Sarabhanga’s hermitage. When the sage ascended to heaven, they paid their respects to all the *rishis* and went to live in Janasthana. While there, the *rakshasi* Surpanakha implored Rama to take her as his wife. Her ears and nose having been cut off by Lakshmana, she appealed

to her relatives, Khara and Dushana, for revenge. They used to molest the ascetics and defile sacrifices. They, with fourteen thousand *rakshasas*, attacked Rama. They were all killed within a *yama* (fourth part of a day) by Rama single-handed. Surpanakha then approached Ravana, who directed Maricha, disguised as a golden deer, to play before the *asrama* within sight of Sita. Seeing the lovely deer set with gems she said to Rama eagerly "Dear! This creature is very beautiful. Capture it for me. It will add to the charm and beauty of our abode." Then Rama carrying a bow, went a long way in pursuit of the deer and killed it. Maricha, before dying, cried out, simulating Rama's voice, "Ha! Lakshmana! Ha Sita!" Hearing the cry, and fearing some mishap to Rama, Sita sent out Lakshmana. At that time Ravana entered the hut and carried away Sita, as the planet Budha grabs Rohini. Jatayu, the eagle, Dasaratha's great friend, fought terrible battle with Ravana, trying to stop him. Wounding Jatayu mortally, Ravana resumed his journey through the sky. With Sugriva and other monkeys I was then seated on the Rishyamukha hill. All of us wondered when we saw a *rakshasa* dragging away a most beautiful lady, who was crying out, "Rama, Rama". Ravana then entered Lanka and placing Sita in his palace, tried, in many ways to mollify her and make her accede to his wishes. Sita however treated him as a speck of dust and with all her thoughts centred in Rama, ignored the *rakshasa* completely. Ravana then imprisoned her in the *asoka* grove with *rakshasis* to guard over her.

Having killed Maricha, Rama returned to his abode and finding that Sita was missing, he began to search for her. He grieved to see Jatayu mortally wounded; he heard from him what had happened to Sita; and when Jatayu died, Rama performed the cremation ceremonies for him. Searching for Sita thereafter, Rama and Lakshmana came to the banks of the Godavari and entered the greatest forests in the neighbourhood. There they found Kabandha the *rakshasa* and killed him. At his bidding the two went to Rishyamuka hill and met Sugriva there and Sugriva and he liked each other at first sight. Sugriva was then hiding in the Rishyamuka hill having been driven out of his kingdom by his brother Vali. As they told their stories to each other and saw how they could be mutually helpful, their friendship grew. Vali, the mighty, was then

killed by Rama, Sugriva was made the chief of the monkeys and ruler of their kingdom. Sugriva then vowed to find out Sita for Rama. A hundred million monkeys were sent in all directions to search for Sita. Of these, we who had been sent to the South lost a great deal of time in the Vindhya mountains. Then we heard from Sampati, the brother of Jatayu, that Sita was kept in custody in Lanka.

“When the *vanaras* that were with me were filled with dismay as to how to cross the ocean, I flew across the distance, of one hundred *yojanas*, and reached Lanka. There I beheld Sita in the *asoka vana*, wearing a single piece of cloth, alone, torn by grief, and with her thoughts centred on Rama. Approaching her and acquainting her with all that had happened, I gave her the ring sent by Rama as a token of recognition and then won her confidence. Having heard her reply and receiving the *Chudamani* (crest jewel), I recrossed the ocean and came back to the *vanaras* who were mightily pleased with the news. The reply of Sita was conveyed to Rama and the *Chudamani* was handed over to him. The news that Maithili was alive revived Rama even as a draught of nectar restores to life one who is almost dead.

Rama made up his mind to destroy his enemies like the sun destroying the universe during Pralaya. He came to the ocean shore with the monkey-armies and made Nala construct a bridge over the ocean. Crossing over he besieged Lanka. Prahasta was killed by Nila, Kumbhakarna and Ravana by Rama, and Indrajit by Lakshmana. Then Indra, Varuna, Yama, Paramasiva, Dasaratha and the *devarshis*, appeared before him and granted him various boons. The dead monkeys were restored to life. Accompanied by them all, he came back to Kishkindha in the *Pushpaka* car. Today he is with Bharadvaja in his hermitage on the banks of the Ganga. Tomorrow, when Pushya rises, he will be here”. Bharata, who with palms joined heard Hanuman speak thus, worshipped Rama mentally and said, “Anjaneya! After all, my heart’s desire is now fulfilled” and thus filled the heart of Hanuman with gladdening words.

THE REUNION OF THE BROTHERS

BHARATA, rejoicing at the news, spoke thus "Satrughna, let all the temples in the city be decorated with flowers and filled with incense. Let everyone in the city, the singers, story-tellers and messengers, the musicians, the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the leaders of the different castes, proceed with their ladies to meet Rama and behold his glorious face." Satrughna then bade workers, who did not care for wages as follows : "From here to the city of Ayodhya, make the ground level and sprinkle it with ice-cold water, sprinkle flowers and fried grain and fly banners and buntings in the streets. Every house should be beautified in all ways possible. Place on the thoroughfare garlands of various coloured flowers."

The women of the palace, and the ministers Dhrishti, Jayanta, Vijaya, Siddhartha, Arthasadhaka, Asoka, Mantrapala, Sumantra and others rode forth on elephants. The Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and the chiefs of the different orders and the women-folk of the warriors came out of their respective vehicles such as horses and cars. Countless warriors, cavalry men, charioteers, and foot-soldiers set out with their weapons. All the wives of Dasaratha with Kausalya, and Sumitra at their head and followed by Kaikeyi, left for Nandigramma in their carriages (Bharata neglected to send for Kaikeyi. So she appears to have come later to Nandigramma). The entire population of the City of Ayodhya, with none left behind came to Nandigramma. The earth reverberated with the sound of horse hoofs, chariot wheels, drums and trumpets. Followed by the chiefs of the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the headmen of villages with the ministers carrying offerings, with the sound of conch, trumpet, *vina*, drum and flute and with singers singing their song of praise, Bharata, with Rama's sandals held aloft above his head, set out from Nandigramma to meet Rama, while the white umbrella adorned with white garlands was

spread overhead and two fly-whisks set with gold fanned him. Emaciated by fasts, covered with dust, wearing bark and deer-skin, Bharata was overjoyed at his brother's coming. Looking around and not sighting Rama or his followers, he turned to Hanuman and said "I do not see the jewel of the line of Ikshvakus. Did you say he was coming, prompted by the irresponsibility of your kind? Even supporting Rama in some distance behind, where is the army of monkeys? As the monkeys can assume any form they please they should show themselves in some shape or other, even if they do not appear as monkeys." Hanuman replied, pointing out the cause of the delay, "Bharadvaja and Indra granted boons to Rama as a result of which the trees give an endless supply of fruits, flowers and honey. The monkeys are drinking the honey and enjoying themselves. Rama and the army were given a great feast by Bharadvaja. Their return is therefore delayed a little, I hear the happy noises made by the monkeys. They are now crossing the Gomati river. See the great cloud of dust rising up. They have now reached the Valukini. Methinks the monkeys are now resting among the palm trees eating their fruits. I can now see the *Pushpaka* bright as the moon in the sky it was the creation of Brahma and given as a gift to Kubera; it has the speed of thought; and Rama got it by killing Ravana and his followers."

As the car with Rama and Lakshmana accompanied by Sita, Sugriva and Vibhishana came within sight, young and old, women and children shouted for joy "Here comes our Rama". Getting down from their chariots, elephants, horses and other vehicles, the citizens saw him in the car shining like the full-moon. Bharata with folded palms and with ecstatic tears streaming down his eyes welcomed him. Rama, with a long and wide eye-lashes shone like Indra in that car created by Brahma. As Rama came and stood in front like the sun shining on Mount Meru, Bharata prostrated himself before him. Raising him up and seating him on his lap, Rama embraced Bharata with love and joy. Then Bharata embraced Lakshmana who prostrated before him. He then bowed low to Sita (Some think that Bharata protested against Lakshmana prostrating himself before him, when Rama the eldest was present. Since

Bharata bowed to Sita after Lakshmana offered his salutation it would appear that Sita was seated at a little distance away and in the midst of the *vanara*-women). Then Bharata embraced Sugriva, Jambavan, Angada, Mainda, Dvidida, Nila, Rishabha, Sushena, Nala, Gavaksha, Gandhamadana, Sarabha, Panasa and other monkey-heroes, all of whom had assumed the forms of men. They in turn greeted him. Then turning to Sugriva he said, "Thou art a brother to us four. To help is the mark of a friend, to injure that of an enemy". Then addressing Vibhishana with soft words to comfort him in his bereavement, he said "Friend! It was through your help that Rama, Lakshmana, and the monkeys accomplished this great task". Satrughna then saluted Rama, Lakshmana and Sita with great reverence. Then Rama coming over to where his mother was, prostrated himself before her, embraced her feet and said "Mother, you should not be angry with me for having gone to the forest without paying heed to your words. You have experienced misery on account of me. Pardon me for my lapses. This minute all your miseries are over", and he comforted and gladdened her thus. Then paying his respects to Sumitra, Kaikeyi and his other step-mothers, he came to his preceptor, Vasishtha, and saluted him. (Is not the love of Dasaratha for his son Rama borne out of the fact that he died of a broken heart when he sent Rama away to the forest at the bidding of Kaikeyi? Is not the love and devotion of Bharata for Rama evidenced by the way Bharata went after Rama into the forest and entreated him to return to the kingdom? If Ravana did not carry away Sita, how could the glory of Anjaneya and the friendship of Sugriva shine? If Rama had remained in Ayodhya, how could Lakshmana have served Rama as he did? If Sita had not accompanied Rama and been abducted by Ravana, how could the world know her purity and her motherly love for all? How could the prowess of Rama and the glory of his bow have been proclaimed if he had not killed Ravana and the *rakshasas*? But for Kaikeyi, Ravana and the *rakshasas*, who could suppose that Ramachandra, the idol of all creatures in all the worlds, could have any enemies? Did not all these attain importance because Kaikeyi brought about the banishment of Rama, the divine qualities of the lord and therefore deserves all credit?).

The citizens greeted Rama saying "Rama, Kausalya's darling! Welcome to you!" When they saluted Rama in reverence, their joined palms looked like buds that had bloomed. Then Bharata took those sandals and with his own hands set Rama's feet upon them, saying in all humility, "This kingdom was entrusted to me by you. I ruled it, to the best of my ability. Now I return it to you. Pray, accept it. Today, with you back in Ayodhya as its ruler, I am happy and content. Please inspect the treasury, the granary, the city, the armies and the bastions. Thanks to your grace, all of them have been multiplied ten times."

The monkeys and Vibhishana shed tears of joy at the sight of the love between the two brothers and the confidence each had in the other. They heaved a sigh of sorrow at the thought, "Were not our families ruined for want of this unity, confidence and affection?" Then ascending the *Pushpaka* car and seating Bharata on his lap Rama reached Nandigrama. There descending from the celestial car he sent it back saying "Go back now to serve Kubera". The wonderful car, thus directed by Rama, went northwards where lay the city of Kubera. Then Raghava touched the feet of his *guru*, offered him seat and sitting alongside of him shone brilliantly even as Indra does with Brihaspati.

THE CORONATION OF SRI RAMACHANDRA

(FOREWORD : Having returned the celestial car back to Kubera and having resolved not to enter Ayodhya without the permission of Bharata, Rama stayed at Nandigrama. The citizens of Ayodhya too stayed with him there, anxious not to be deprived of his company. Kausalya and the other ladies of the palace were around him. Assessing the intentions of Rama from a physiognomical study, Bharata laid bare his heart to Rama).

With his folded hands raised above his head, Bharata spoke thus to his valiant brother : “Lord, you gladdened the heart of my mother by giving up the kingdom of Kosala and setting off to live in a forest. At Chitrakuta, you entrusted it to me. And now I restore it unto you. You may say, ‘Return it to me only when I want it back and till then, keep it yourself. Leave me free to live happily in Ayodhya enjoying all pleasures, free from the cares and anxieties of the State. You had better continue as our ruler.’” How can a calf carry a burden that was borne by a strong bull? I can bear no more the groaning weight of a kingdom. You may ask, ‘How then did you do it so long?’. It is no bed of roses to keep intact a kingdom. As the banks of rivers and lakes have to be fortified with trees and other revetments to prevent the flood-waters from breaching them, so has a kingdom to be protected with great care, and this is no easy task. You may again ask, ‘Can you not win the confidence of the people with kingly qualities even as I?’ What a world of difference between the fleet horse and a slow-paced donkey or between the common crow and royal swan? Can another set foot on the path that you tread? But you may say, ‘Let me assist you when you rule.’ There was a gardener who planted a seed in a fertile soil and devoted all his time and care to the rearing of it. In good time, the seed sprouted; it became a plant; it grew into a mighty tree that hid the earth and the sky with its dense foliage. No one

dare to go up among its branches. It was almost invisible beneath its mantle of flowers. But if it bore no fruit, not a single one, just imagine the cold misery of him who planted it and reared it so carefully, all eager to enjoy the fruit of his labours.

For sixty thousand years, our father lived without a baby. After performing *Asvamedha* and *Putrakameshti* sacrifices did he beget you. You have been endowed with the sublime virtues and have been brought up in the midst of pomp and splendour. Our father's desire was to entrust the kingdom to you and so enjoy the fruit of all his labours. You are our lord, our master, our protector; do you not fail in your duty if you do not watch over our safety? In spite of your being possessed with all royal qualities, if you should refuse to reign over the kingdom which has been ruled all along by the eldest sons of the Ikshvaku race through successive generations, of what avail would be the efforts and wishes of our illustrious father? And the illustration above will apply to you. It will be an insult to your intellect if I offer an interpretation of it."

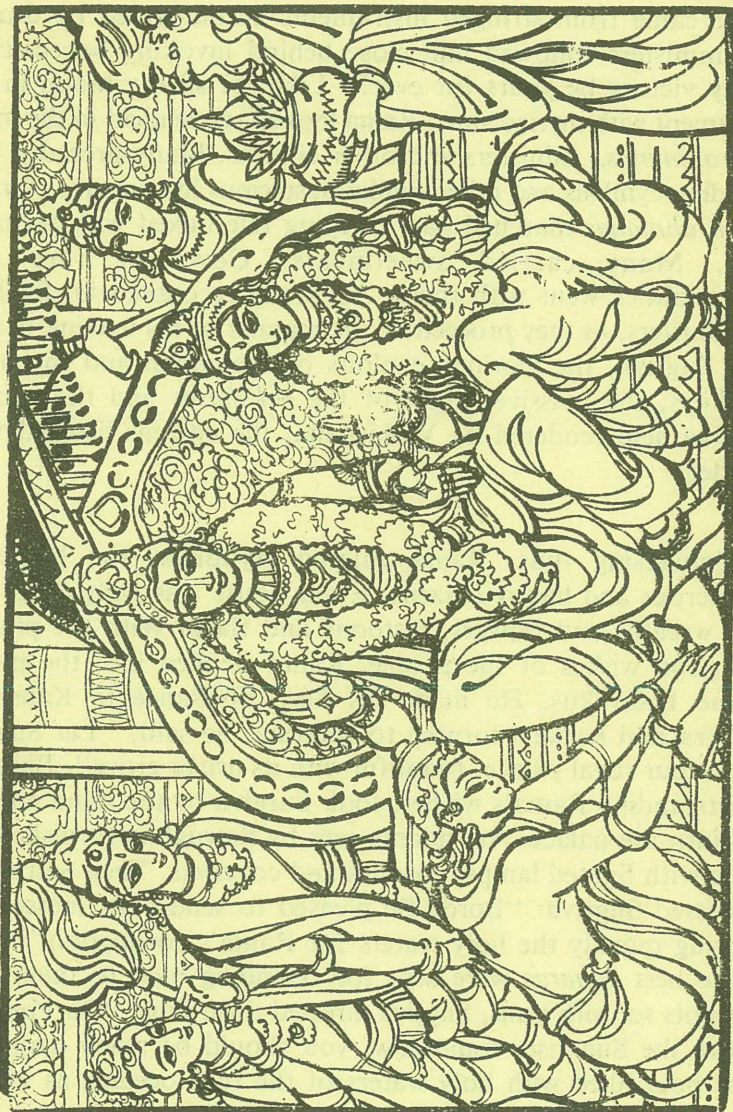
"Grant this world the pleasure and privilege of beholding you crowned in all glory and installed on the throne of the Ikshvaku today, resplendent as the midday myriad-rayed Lord of the day. May you wake up at sun rise, hearing the pleasing music, the sweet melody of many instruments and the jingling sounds of waist-belts and anklets of dancing damsels. *You are indeed the fittest person to enjoy all pleasures.* Say not, 'Are not all of you my brothers and should not you too like to rule the kingdom?' As long as the Sun, the Moon and the stars exist, and as long as this earth has its being, so long shall you be the Lord and master of all here."

Rama accepted the offer of Bharata and took his place on an auspicious seat. At the orders of Satrugna, skilled and quick tonsorial artists waited upon Raghava and his three brothers,

and their matted hair was neatly removed. When Bharata, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana had bathed, Rama and Lakshmana were adorned by Satrughna with the rare and beautiful garlands perfumed with sweet scents, and were robed in silken garments and bedecked with various ornaments. The queens of Dasaratha themselves dressed Sita. Kausalya, on account of her boundless affection towards her son Rama, did herself all that was necessary to adorn Tara and other *vanara*-women. Then at the instance of Satrughna, Sumantra, the royal charioteer, brought the glittering chariot yoked with caprisoned horses of noble pedigree. Delighted at the sight of the chariot which was shining like the Sun, Rama took his seat in it. Sugriva and Hanuman, clad in the best of clothes and adorned with jewels, and looking like Mahendra, accompanied Rama. Sita and the wives of Sugriva, similarly bedecked gorgeously went with them eager to see Ayodhya. At Ayodhya, Vasishtha and the other ministers of Dasaratha were busy collecting the auspicious materials required for the coronation of Rama. Asoka, Vijaya, and Sumantra addressed Vasishtha, "May you perform all the due ceremonies for promoting the prosperity of the country and for ensuring Rama's health and happiness, wealth and welfare!" and then left the city to meet Rama. Even as Devendra journeys in the celestial car drawn by the divine horses, Rama shone in all his glory in the chariot and set off towards the capital. Bharata, sitting by the side of Sumantra, held the reins and guided the chariot. Satrughna supported the white umbrella of the Ikshvaku kings; Lakshmana waved the chowry over his head and also fanned him. (Since he is the greatest of the great in his all round dedicated service to Rama, he appears to have taken upon himself both the services). Vibhishana, the king of the *rakshasas*, waved the other chowry. The sky was melodiously charged with the sweet music of the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, *vidyadharas*, *uragas*, *garudas*, *pannagas*, *siddhas*, *sadhyas*, *nagas*, and *maruts*, who were eulogizing Rama for having delivered them from the clutches of the *rakshasas*. Sugriva rode on the back of Satrunjaya, the mountain-like elephant, and shone brilliantly like Indra on his Iravata. The *vanaras*, assuming the forms of men and bedecked with all kinds of jewels, rode on

nine thousand elephants. Raghuvira sped towards the city with the blare of the conches and *dundubhis*, while sweet strains of music came from stringed instruments accompanied by drums. The ministers followed him close behind invoking benediction, "May victory be yours for ever!" Like the silvery moon in the firmament with myriad stars, Rama looked resplendent in the midst of *brahmanas*, ministers and other citizens. Many preceded him sounding cymbals and other similar auspicious instruments. Virgins and *brahmanas* marched past carrying rice mixed with turmeric dust. Many carried sweetmeats. Cows of rare and best qualities went with them. As Rama recounted in detail to his ministers, as they proceeded, the manner of his making friends with Sugriva, the glorious exploits of Hanuman and the other monkeys, the massive might of the *rakshasas* and the equally massive help rendered by Vibhishana, the citizens listened with wonder.

Conversing thus, Rama entered Ayodhya, the home of prosperous and happy citizens. Every house was gaily decorated with wreaths and flowers, festoons and flags. With the prayers and good wishes of the people, Rama stepped into the palace of the Ikshvakus. He made his deep obeisance to Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi turning to Bharata, he said, "Let Sugriva stay in our royal palace, beautiful with its *asoka* grove". Bharata, understanding Rama's wishes, took Sugriva by the hand and led him into the palace. Attendants sent by Satrugna furnished the home with lighted lamps, couches and coverlets. Then Satrugna addressed Sugriva: "Lord! Be pleased to send your messengers to bring quickly the holy waters for Rama's coronation." Four of the best *vanaras* were sent for. Handing over to them four gold pots set with gems, Sugriva directed them thus: "Oh *Vanaras*! Before the Sun rises tomorrow, you should be ready here with these pots filled with holy waters of the four oceans, as well as of the sacred spots. Thus enjoined, the powerful *vanaras* flew with the speed of Garuda. Jambavan, Hanuman, Vegadarsi, Rishaba and others fetched in golden pitchers holy water from the five hundred rivers — Sushena from the Eastern Ocean, Rishaba from the Southern Ocean, Gavaya from the Western



Ocean and Nala from the Northern ocean. When the *vanaras* had completed their task, Satrugna and the ministers informed Vasishtha and other friends.

THEN VASISHTHA OF THE ANCIENT DAYS, THE PRIEST OF IKSHVAKU RACE WITH HIS MIND AND SENSES SERENE, HAVING OBTAINED THE ASSENT OF THE *BRAHMANAS*, INSTALLED RAGHAVA AND SITA ON THE THRONE BEDECKED WITH GEMS. AS THE VASUS ENTHRONED INDRA EVEN SO DID VASISHTHA, VAMADEVA, JABALI, KASYAPA, KATYAYANA, SUYAJNA, GAUTAMA AND VIJAYA — THE EIGHT *MAHATMAS* — ENTHRONED SRI RAMACHANDRA, BATHING HIM WITH PURE AND FRAGRANT WATER TO THE BEATIFIED CHANTING OF THE *VEDAS*. THE SACRIFICIAL PRIESTS AND THE *BRAHMANAS*, THE VIRGINS AND THE OFFICIALS, THE *KSHATRIYAS* AND THE *VAISYAS*, SPRINKLED ON RAGHUVIRA HOLY WATER MIXED WITH THE JUICES OF CELESTIAL HERBS.

THE REGIONS OF THE SKY WERE THRONED WITH THE JOYOUS *DEVAS* AND THE GUARDIAN DEITIES OF THE FOUR QUARTERS, SATRUGHNA HELD ALOFT THE WHITE UMBRELLA; SUGRIVA WAVED THE WHITE *CHAMARA*; THE LORD OF THE WINDS, SENT BY INDRA, GARLANDED RAMA WITH LOTUS WREATHS MADE OF GOLD PETALS, AND WITH STRINGS OF PEARLS OF DAZZLING BEAUTY. THE *DEVAS* AND *GANDHARVAS* SANG RAPTUREOUSLY. THE *APSARASAS* DANCED WITH GRACEFUL SKILL. THE EARTH WAS COVERED WITH PLENTY; THE TREES WERE LADEN WITH FRUITS. THE FLOWERS BREATHED SWEET FRAGRANCES.

Raghunatha then presented to the *Brahmanas* and other guests hundreds of cows and calves, bulls, horses, thirty crores of gold coins and all kinds of ornaments and clothes. Sugriva was presented

with a garland made of gold, inlaid with many gems. Vali's son, Angada, was the recipient of a pair of bracelets set with diamonds. Sri Rama gave Sita a garland of pearls and precious stones which shone like the rays of the moon. She, in her turn, looking significantly at her lord, with his implied consent, gave to Hanuman the gift of a pair of noble garments and beautiful ornaments. (It was the intention of Rama that Sita should present Anjaneya with her own hands the wreath of pearls that was given by him). Then taking the garland from her neck, she looked again and again at the monkeys and at her Lord. ("Was it not the wish of Rama, when he gave this garland to me in the midst of the assemblage, that I should present it to somebody here? Who is the worthy person to receive it?") Such were her thoughts). Rama, who knew what was passing in her mind, said to her, "Give it to him with whom you are most pleased; to him whose manliness, prowess, and intelligence are great beyond comparison. (Maruti proved his manliness by crossing the ocean; his prowess by setting fire to Lanka; and his intelligence by seeking all over Lanka and finding her in the *asoka* grove). Without hesitating, she put the garland on the neck of Hanuman who then shone like the mountain-top, girdled by white moon-lit clouds.

Rama then presented Mainda, Dvidida, Nila and other monkeys with suitable and worthy gifts of garments and ornaments (according to their deserts). Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanuman and Jambavan and other monkey-chiefs who also received worthy presents of gems, jewels and other precious things left for their homes. The *vanaras*, mightily pleased at the sight of the coronation, returned to Kishkindha. Vibhishana, the king of the *rakshasas*, received as a gift the "Srirangavimana", the ancestral wealth of the Ikshvaku lineage, and left for Lanka. (Mahesvara Tirtha's comments : Here the term ancestral wealth, refers to Lanka which has already been presented to Vibhishana by Rama. The interpretation that the term 'Srirangavimana' referred to here does not therefore aptly fit in. In the original text (131.90) the word 'Ikshvaku' does not find a place before the words 'ancestral wealth'. In the *Uttararamayana* (108.31) it is stated that when Rama went back to Vaikuntha, the purpose of his incarnation having been achieved, he presented Vibhishana with the 'Srirangavimana'. In the *Padmapurana* it is

said that Rama blessed Vibhishana thus : “You shall rule the kingdom so long as the sun and moon shine on the earth; then come and join me.” He then presented to Vibhishana the heir loom “Sri Ranganatha”).

Then, Rama ruled over the kingdom, cherishing his subjects, as if they were his own children and punishing the evil-doers. He said to Lakshmana, “Brother, thou art well-versed in *dharma*! Share with me the burden of kingship which has been borne so ably by our ancestors. But Lakshmana, in spite of persistent persuasions, would not agree. Bharata, the Mahatma, near and dear to Rama, was then consecrated as Yuvaraja. Countless sacrifices — the *Paundarika*, *Asvamedha* and *Vajapeya* and others were performed by Rama. Thus He ruled for eleven thousand years, doing hundreds of horse-sacrifices in which he made large gifts of money. With arms reaching down to his knees, shoulders mighty as the Meru mountain, famed for his prowess, ever waited upon by Lakshmana, he lorded over the earth. He pleased the Gods by performing many a sacrifice along with relatives and friends.

When Rama reigned, women never lost their husbands; there was no occasion for them to lament at all. No danger was there from wild animals and none suffered from disease. Nor was there any fear from thieves. No one was touched by hardship. No occasion arose for the old to perform the obsequies of the young. Everyone lived happily ever wedded to *dharma*. Following in the footsteps of Rama, the people refrained from injuring one another. They lived for the span of a thousand years, begetting thousands of children and untouched by sickness or sorrow. When Rama ruled, the name ‘Rama’ lived ever on the lips of men and they talked all the time of his noble deeds and character. The whole world, nay, every action therein, was Rama-intoxicated; throughout the year, the trees grew luxuriously with branches, flowers and fruits. The clouds shed rain in proper season and the winds blew gently. *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* were all free from avarice and followed dutifully their own professions with contentment and joy. Ever wedded with *dharma* and truth, the subjects were endowed with excellent qualities and engaged in the practice of virtue. With his brothers always in attendance, Rama reigned for eleven thousand years with pristine glory.

This first and grandest epic — a mighty repository of the priceless wisdom enshrined in the *Vedas* — was composed in the far past by Maharishi Valmiki. It confers on kings long life, fame, victory and every other blessing desired. He who reads it or he who hears it is cleansed of his sins. Do you desire offspring from your loins? You fail not to get it. Is wealth your object? You have it as much as you wish. The king triumphs over his enemies and rules the lord of the earth. The woman that listens to this holy narrative with a heart full of devotion, rejoices in her length of days and wealth of children and grand-children even to the seventh remove, like unto the queens of Dasaratha, who saw the lord himself come down unto the earth as children of their loins and rejoiced in everything that this world can give and the next. Anger and her sister passions find not a place in the heart of him who listens to the world of Valmiki. He puts away all misery behind him for ever. The wanderer in strange lands is restored to the bosom of those that love him. Sri Rama is ever ready to gratify his requests. The Shining Ones are delighted beyond measure. The evil powers that may infest his house become his very friends and benefactors. Young women do bring forth excellent sons to gladden their hearts. Those of the royal race that listen to it with a devout heart from some good Brahmana, are ever blessed with wealth unbounded and offspring numerous.

Sri Ramachandra is ever pleased with one who regularly reads or hears the whole of *Ramayana*, for is he not Mahavishnu, the Eternal, the First and Foremost of the Gods, the Mighty Lord of the Lords, Hari and Narayana? In short, an evergrowing circle of kinsmen, abundance of wealth and corn, faithful and devoted wives, perfect health, long life, fame and upright heart, spiritual splendour, good brothers and everything that the human heart can wish for — all this and much more form the meed of him who studies, with a pure heart and devout, the noble epic of Valmiki.

Thus has been narrated this epic story of events that happened in the far remote past. May everything, good and gracious, go with you. Speak out the words, “Let the boundless might of the Lord Vishnu, that baffles word and thought, grow for ever through countless worlds”. Speak it without a shadow of shyness or a glint

of misgiving; speak it with a heart unclouded with doubt or uncertainty.

When the *Ramayana* is read or heard, all the gods are filled with perennial delight. The manes are gratified when one lends one's willing ear to the recital of *Ramayana*. Those who write with devotion this holy composition of Sage Valmiki abide in the world of the gods.



अलं शास्त्राभ्यासैः अलमसकृदाम्नायपठनैः

अलं तीर्थस्नानैः अलमखिलायागव्रतजपैः ।

अलं योगाभ्यासैः अलमपि महापातकभिया

यदस्माकं रामस्मरणमहिमा सा विजयते ॥

No more of the laborious exercises in learning shastras. Enough of recitations of the Vedas endlessly. Enough of dips in sacred waters. Enough of all the Yagas, Vratas and other Japa. Enough of Yogic exercises. Victory unto Rama whose contemplation destroys all fears of even the greatest sins.

— RAMAKARNAMRITA.



शत्रुच्छेदैकमन्त्रं सरसमुपनिषद्वाक्यसंपूज्यमन्त्रं

संसारोत्तारमन्त्रं समुचतसमये सङ्गनिर्याणमन्त्रम् ।

सर्वैश्वर्यैकमन्त्रं व्यसनभुजग सन्दष्ट संज्ञाणमन्त्रं

जिह्वे ! श्रीराममन्त्रं जप जप ! सततं जन्मसाफल्यमन्त्रम् ॥

Rama Mantra is the most effective weapon in destroying the enemy ; which is worshipped by the Upanishadic expressions ; which will help one to rise above samsara ; which will enable one to get rid of attachments at the opportune time ; which confers every kind of wealth, and which can revive one from the bite of the snake sorrow. O tongue ! Repeat always this Sri Rama Mantra which will make life fruitful.

— RAMAKARNAMRITA.



व्यामोहप्रशमीषधं मुनिमनोवृत्तिप्रवृत्त्यौषधं
 दैत्योन्मूलकरीषधं भवभयप्रध्वंसनैकौषधम् ।
 भक्तानन्दकरीषधं त्रिभुवने सञ्जीवनैकौषधं
 श्रेयः प्राप्तिकरीषधं पिब मनः श्रीरामनामौषधम् ॥

Oh mind! Drink the medicine in the form of Sri Rama's name which will remove all infatuations, which will give one the mental attitudes and beatitudes of great munis; which will uproot all the demons, which will annihilate the cycle of births and deaths, which gives endless bliss to its devotees and which is an effective life-giving medicine in all the three worlds and which fetches one all the virtues!

— RAMAKARNAMRITA.



KALYANA-RAMA

मैथिल्यानगरे विवाहसमये कल्याणवेद्यन्तरे

सामन्ते विमलेन्दुरत्नखचिते पीठे वसन्तौ शुभे ।

शृण्वन्तौ निगमार्थवेदिविदुषा माशीर्गिरा राजितौ

पायास्तां सुवधूवरौ रघुपति श्रीजानकीराघवौ ॥

May the Janaki-Raghava pair protect us who, at Mithila, at the time of their marriage, seated before the marriage-fire, on the auspicious seat studded with resplendent gems, listening to the blessings of those well-versed in the Vedas and their meanings, are shining gloriously.

— RAMAKARNAMRITA.