

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

**Actors in the Divine Play as scripted by
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

Volume I

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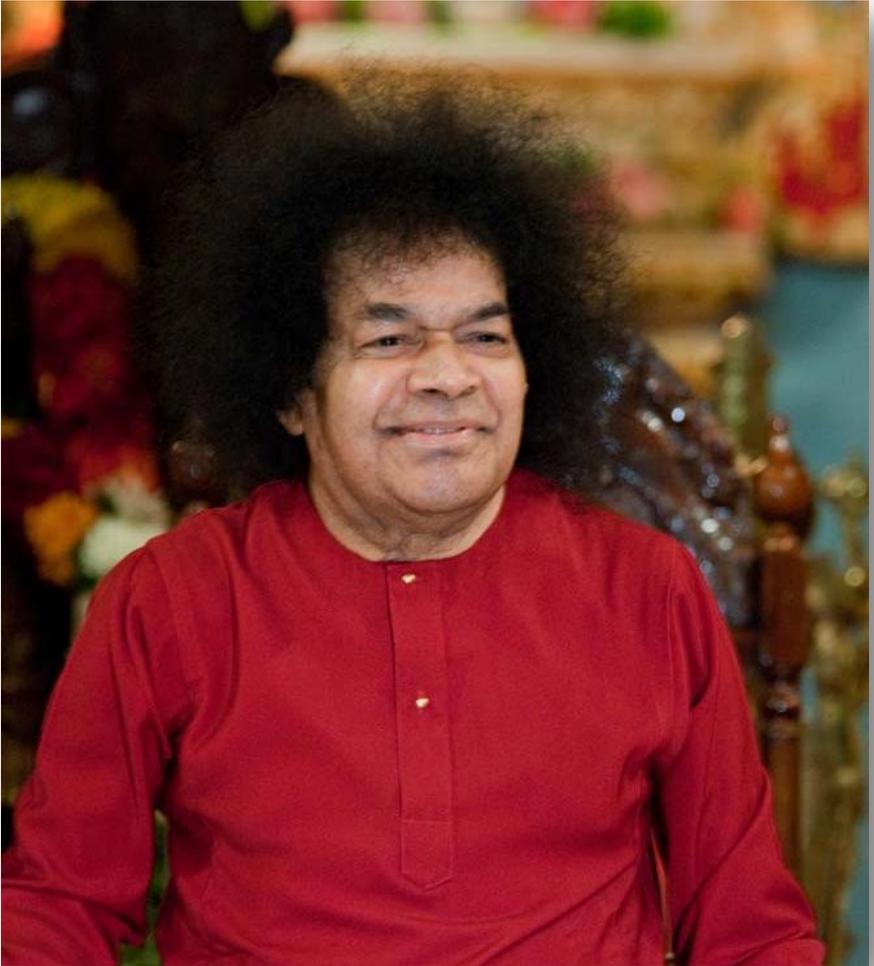
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VOLUME I

No one can shake truth; no one can install untruth. No one can understand My mystery. The best you can do is get immersed in it. The mysterious, indescribable power has come within the reach of all. No one is born and allowed to live for the sake of others. Each has their own burden to carry and lay down.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



**Put all your burdens on Me. I have come to bear it, so that
you can devote yourselves to Sadhana**

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PRAYERS



*Vaamaankasthitha Jaanaki parilasat
kodanda dandaamkare
Chakram Chordhva karena bahu yugale
samkham saram Dakshine
Bibranam Jalajadi patri nayanam
Bhadradri muurdhin sthitham
Keyuradi vibhushitham Raghupathim
Soumitri Yuktham Bhaje!!*

- *Adi Sankara.*

PRAYERS

1. Vakra tunda mahaa kayam suryakoti samaprabha
Nirvighnam kurumeedeva sarva kareshu sarvada!
2. GuruBrahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur devo Mahesawrah
Guru sakshath Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Guravenamah!
3. Saraswathi Namasthubhayam Varade Kamaroopini
Vidyarambham Karishyami siddirbhavathume sada
Padmapatra Visalakshi padmakesari varnani
Nityam Padmalayadevi samampathu Saraswathi
Bhagavathi Bharathi Nissesha Jadyapaha!
4. Sai Mataa Pita Deena Bandhu Sakha
Tere charano Mey Sai Mera koti Pranam
Mujhe Sakthi do Hey Sai Shiva
Mujhe Bhakthi do Hey Sai Shiva
Muhje Mukthi Do Merey Sai SHiva!
5. Twameva mata cha pitha twameva
Twameva bandhu sakha twameva
Twameva vidya dravinam twameva
Twame va sarvam mama deva deva!
6. Trimurthi roopa Dattatreya
Triloka pooja Dattatreya

Anasuyatmaja Dattatreya
Ananda Roopa Dattatreya
Parthi Purisaa Dattatreya!

7. Jogeswara Sai Dayakaro krupakaro
Jogeswara Sai Dayakaro !!
Hey Karunasindhu Ram Hey Deenabandhu Sai Ram
Rameswara Sai Dayakaro Krupakaro
Jogeswara Sai Dayakaro
Dayakaro Krupakaro Jogeswara Sai Dayakaro!
Hey Patitajanavana Ram
Hey Parthipureswara Ram
Dayakaro Krupakaro Jogeswara Sai Dayakaro !!
8. Sundare Sundaro Ramah
Sundare Sundaree Katha
Sundare Sundari Sita
Sundare Sundaram Vanam
Sundare Sundaram Kavyam
Sundare Sundarah Kapihi
Sundare Sundaram Mantram
Sundare Kim Na Sundaram!
9. Kanakambara Keyura Makara kundaladhara
Sri Ramachandra Prabho Namu Namu
Kotimanmadha Lavanya Nava sundarakara
Sri Ramachandra prabho Namu Namu
Sarvalankara Ramaneeya komala Sitamanohara
Sri Ramachandra prabho Namu Namu!

10. Pahi Ramaprabho Pahi Ramaprabho
Pahi Bhadradi Vaikuntha Ramaprabho !!
Shirdi Ramaprabho Parthi Ramaprabho
Sai Ramaprabho Sathya Ramaprabho
Pahi Bhadi Vaikunta Ramaprabho !!
Pahi Ramaprabho Pahi Ramaprabho
Sai Bhadradi Vaikuntha Ramaprabho!!
11. Namu astu raamaaya salakSmaNaaya|
devyai ca tasyai janaka aatmajaayai |
namu astu rudra indra yama anilebhyo |
namu astu candra arka marud gaNebhyaH ||
12. Sakthi hastam virupaksham saki vaham Shadananam
Darunamripu rogogham Bhavaye kukutadwyajam!
13. Adityacha somaya mangalaya budhayacha
Guru sukra sanibhyachya rahave ketave namah!
14. Namah Pranavardhaya Suddha Jnanekimurthaye
Nirmalaaya Prasanthaya Dakshinamurthaye Namah!
15. Om. Saayeeshwaraaya Vidhmahe
Sathya-Dhevaaya Dheemahi
Thannah- Sarvah Prachodhayaath!

1. SAMARPANAM

Vinavayya O' Rama Naamora

(Listen to my lamentation O'Rama)

Vinnapamaalimpumayya O' Rama

(I pray to you O'Rama to give an ear to my request)

Vivarinchalenu Naa Vyadhanu

(I am unable to explain my suffering and distress)

Vijnana Vyraagya Vivekamulanosagi

(I Pray to you to grant me wisdom, discrimination and detachment)

Karunimpumayya O'Rama

(I pray to you O'Rama for your Grace)

Dhanadhanyamulu Aasinchaledu

(I do not desire for riches and wealth)

Neecharana Daasyame Vedukontimira Rama

(I am only craving for the service of Your Feet O'Rama)

Karunimpumayya O'Rama ||

(Please shower Your Grace I seek You O' Rama)

Kankshinchaledu Bhouthikasukhamulanu

(I have not desired for external physical happiness)

Asinchaledu Bhogabhagyamulan

(I have not expected enjoyment of riches and fortune)

Koritiney Neepadayugalamulan

(I only desire Your Divine Feet)

Vedukontiney Nee Apaarakarunan ||

(I pray for your infinite Compassion)

- ***Inspired Composition by Tumuluru***
- ***Translation by Sai Prabhakar Balanthrapu***

SAMARPANAM



Our Family Deity

Our family has been worshipping Sri Ramachandra for generations. When I started my career and was posted to Delhi in August 1955 my mother gave me this above photo of Kodandaramaswami which was perhaps in my parent's family prayer room for several years. This photo is still in our Puja Mandir and we worship Sri Rama.

We had the Darsan of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the first time on 11th January 1974 and ever since then, we have been protected by Swami as He said "*Inta Venta Janta Kanta Undi mimmu Kapadutaa*". We worship Sri Rama and Sai Ram

as ONE. As a family we had attended the Summer Course in 1977 and I have had since then, a desire to compile the characters in Ramayana as narrated by Bhagawan. I did compile to some extent and even discussed some of the characters in Study circles.

I had requested Bhagawan in one the interviews He kindly granted, to help me in compiling the same. But Bhagawan then said first let these two Ramayanas (tapping on my daughters' heads) be over. Later on, I have been praying to Bhagawan continually and have been trying since then to complete the Ramayana I had ventured on. I then realised that the ego 'I will compile' and that it should be completed by 'a certain date' were the obstacles. Bhagawan is the compiler as "He is the writer, director, actor and the curtain puller and All, while we are mere puppets and instruments in His hands. He is the Kaala Kaalaya, Kalaa teetatha, Kaala Rudraya etc. He is Time. He has His own time frame. One cannot have a choice but pray for help.

INSPIRATION

As Kavi Samrat and Jnana Peeth awardee, Viswanatha Satyanarayana in his 'Ramayana Kalpa Vriksha' questions 'why another Ramayana again' when there are so many versions. He answers, "In this world all the time we are doing the same thing, again and again (like eating food again and again ...doing *samsaram* (mundane state of leading domestic family life again and again). One's tastes and life are one's own but *Bhakthi* (devotion) and poetic composition are my own and let me also meditate and worship the same Rama"

Pothana says

*“Palekadedi Bhagavatamata
Palikinchedivadu Ramabhadrudata”.*

Potana, the great devotee and poet who wrote the Telugu Bhagavatham, dedicated his work to Lord Rama at the outset, by saying that Rama was the real writer and he (Pothana) was a mere instrument in the hands of Rama. (*ICS p.159-160*)

The first and the last Governor General of Independent India, Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) in his preface to Ramayana says, “Once again, I repeat my confession that in the evening of my busy life during a great and eventful period of Indian history, the writing of these two books wherein I have retold the Mahabharata and Ramayana, is, in my opinion, the best service I have rendered to my people. At any rate, they embody the best joy I have experienced; for in these two books I helped our great sages to speak to our dear men and women again in their own language, elevating their minds through the sorrows borne by Kunti, Kausalya, Draupadi and Sita. The real need of the hour is a re-communion between us and the sages of our land, so that the future may be built on rock and not on sand.”

In this connection, I cannot say anything better than resorting to a quote by Sri N. Kasturi, Editor of Sanathana Sarathi, on ‘Ramakatha Rasavahini’ written by Bhagawan,

“*Sai* (Isa, God), whose Thought is the Universe, whose Will is Its History, is the Author, Director, Actor, Witness and Appraiser of the Drama that is ever unfolding in Time and Space. He has now deigned to tell us Himself the story of this one epic Act in that Drama, wherein He took on the Rama role. As Rama, Sai instructed, inspired and invigorated, corrected, consoled and comforted His contemporaries in the Tretha Age. As Sai Rama, He is now engaged in the same task.

Sai Rama has recapitulated herein, in His own simple, sweet and sustaining style, His own Divine Career, as Rama! What great good fortune, this, to have in our hands, to inscribe on our minds, to imprint on our hearts, this Divine narrative! May we be processed by the study of this book into efficient and enthusiastic tools for consummating His Mission of moulding mankind into One Family, of making each one of us realise Sai Rama as the Reality, the only Reality that IS.” (*RKRV - The Book*)

“Ramayana and Mahabharata are sacred books, which will directly tell us about many things, especially the way in which we have to conduct ourselves. Ramayana and Mahabharata will help us in our daily life, like our two eyes. We are not able to know the true value of these jewels and we think that Mahabharata is merely a battle between the sons of two brothers, and that Ramayana is a story wherein a demon stole away the wife of Rama and Rama again won her back. It is not

like that and these two epics are like the heart and the head of India, are as vital to India as the heart and the head are to a human body.” (SSB 1972 p.146)

“The *Ramayana* is not merely a great poetic work, but a great treatise on Human relationships between parents and children, between brothers, husband and wife and the king and his subjects. It is only when we are able to understand the significance of *Ramayana* in the larger context that the country will prosper with love and affection between citizens. In a few years’ time, nay, very shortly, the world will realise the greatness of *Ramayana* and try to emulate the ideals set in *Ramayana*, Today, we find wide variety of nations, religions and castes in the world. NO. No. The situation will certainly change. Within a short span of time, the world will realise the truth.” (SSS Vol.38 p.84)

Our Good Fortune:

We are indeed blessed to be Bhagawan’s contemporaries and to have had the opportunity of reading and hearing what Bhagawan had written and said in the Ramakatha Rasa Vahini and through the discourses given at various times which have been recorded in 42 Volumes of Sathya Sai Speaks, The Summer Showers, Sathyam Shivam Sundaram and the other Vahinis, He had penned.

As motivated by Him only, I had culled them at the appropriate place giving within brackets the sources and cross references and also incorporating in the Story of Rama, the Character of

Rama. When one reads the narration, one is bound to feel both Sri Rama and Sai Rama are one and only ONE.

Bhagawan has said, “After the annihilation of Ravana, when Rama was requested to take over the reins of Lanka, He declared: *Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi* (mother and motherland are greater than heaven itself). One who does not have love and regard for one’s own mother land, one’s own mother tongue and one’s own religion is a living corpse!” (*Sanathana Sarathi, June ‘98 p.154-155*)

Therefore, we have a duty to ourselves and to our children and grandchildren to maintain the culture of Bharat by studying and imbibing, implementing ‘the eternal moral, ethical and Human Values enunciated in Ramayana, Mahabharata and Srimad Maha Bhagavatham and the Bhagavad Gita,” making ourselves worthy of motherland and Bharatiya Culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With my prayerful Pranams at the Lotus Feet of my parents and Bhagawan Sri Rama and Sai Rama, My Aaradhya Daivam, I invoke His choicest blessings on all those who have contributed to bring the narration of HIS STORY and offer it at His LOTUS FEET. I am ever and eternally grateful to Bhagawan Baba and with a further prayer to HIM to make me, His instrument by giving me more opportunities to serve in His Mission till my last breath. I must mention that I have received the encouragement and inspiration from my wife Srimati Prabha; help, assistance and suggestions from all the members of my family; Sri B. R. Prasad and Sri Balantrapu Sai

Prabhakar. My special thanks to Kharidehal Venkata Bhima Rao who has contributed his artistic pictures; Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi who has taken lots of pain in editing the compiled material under various characters of the Ramayana. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank Sri D.S.N. Murthy for encouraging, cooperating and helping Sri Sai Lakshmi and me in seeing through this Divine Work.

I would also like to acknowledge the various websites which have hosted the pictures for free download. I have acknowledged the source at the verso of each Photo.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank all those who have directly and indirectly helped me especially the encouragement and suggestions given by Sri K.S. Rajan and Sri V.N. Prahlad of Publications Division of Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust in this Bruhat karyam.

Samastha Loka Sukhino bhavanthu

Tumuluru Krishna Murty
Prasanthi Nilayam
Guru Poornima (3rd July, 2012)

2. EDITORIAL COMMENTS

***“That heart which you have given me, O Lord!
I give it back to you, O mighty one!
What else can I offer you, my Master!
I offer my prayerful salutations with tears of
Gratitude, O Lord!
Accept them all with my heart.”
(Telugu Poem)***

(SSB 2002 p.143)

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Dear readers,

The entire story of Ramayana has been divided into five volumes: the first, second and third volumes relate to the members of the Ikshvaku Dynasty – the dynasty in which the protagonist of the divine play took birth as the seventh avatar of Vishnu; the fourth volume is dedicated to the Vanaras and the other associates of Rama in his war for the revival of *Dharma*; and to our noble and revered Sages and seers, who enacted their parts in the drama of Ramayana; the fifth volume deals with the antagonist, Ravana and his family members and the other characters who appear in the story.

The entire book which has been conceived by my father, Sri Tumuluru Krishna Murty, has been compiled on the discourses given by *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Baba*.

As the editor of these volumes, I have tried to insert a few passages at the beginning of each character of Ramayana outlining their stories. This is for our foreign readers who might not be aware of the lesser known characters of Ramayana. The passages have been taken mostly from *Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*. The copyright information is given at the end of the fourth volume.

The acts of each character as played by them in the divine drama have been told in the beginning of each chapter which is followed by the inner perceptions and interpretations given by

Bhagawan for their roles in the play. Since we have had to show how each character's role unfolds in the divine play, there will be a repetition of story and also a few passages. However, we have tried not to repeat the passages as far as possible by taking the stories (from different sources) told at different times by Bhagawan in His various Discourses.

I have tried to be true to the books from which these pages have been compiled from. However, I have tried to maintain uniformity in spelling and have as such changed the spellings of the names of the various characters. In some books we have different spellings of proper nouns, for example Raama, Rama, Ramaa; Surpanakha and Soorpanakha; Sita, Seeta and Sita (phonetical). As a foot note, I have listed all the various spelling used in the different books.

After the end of the passage or a few paragraphs, I have cited the name of the book and the page numbers in Italics from which those were taken. The source page numbers may differ if one refers to a subsequent edition. A few lines which have been italicised in between a paragraph, indicates that these lines have been taken from a different book and the source has been cited in the footnote. To avoid monotony, I have highlighted the gist of the proceeding paragraphs in Bold. A complete bibliographic citation has been included at the end of this book.

These volumes are a humble offering at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan.

Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi
Editor

3. THE ESSENCE OF RAMAYANA

The *Ramayana* has been described as the story of Rama, the ideal man. In fact every human, in a way, is Rama Himself, when he embodies the ideals of Rama. Hence, it is imperative on the part of every individual to cultivate the ideals of Rama. The *Ramayana* enshrines in itself the very essence of the *dharma* (righteousness) of the individual, family, and society.

- ***Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba***

THE ESSENCE OF RAMAYANA

The Rama Story, Stream of Sacred Sweetness, has been for millions of men, women and children, for many centuries the perennial source of solace during sorrow, vitality when floored by vacillation, illumination while confounded, inspiration in moments of dejection and guidance while caught in quandaries. It is an intensely human drama where God impersonates as man and gathers around Him, on the vast world-stage, the perfect and the imperfect, the human and the subhuman, the beast and the demon, to confer on us, by precept and example, the boon of Supreme Wisdom. It is a story that plays its tender fingers on the heartstrings of man, evoking lithe, limpid responses of pathos, pity, exultation, adoration, ecstasy and surrender, rendering us transformed from the animal and the human, into the Divine which is our core.

No other story in human history has had such profound impact on the mind of man. It transcends the milestones of history and the boundaries of geography. It has shaped and sublimated the habits and attitudes of generations. The Ramayana, the Story

of Rama, has become a curative corpuscle in the blood stream of mankind, over vast areas of the globe. It has struck root in the conscience of peoples, prodding and prompting them along the paths of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. Through legends and lullabies, myths and tales, dance and drama, through sculpture, music and painting, through ritual, poetry and symbol, Rama has become the Breath, the Bliss, the Treasure of countless seekers and sadhakas (aspirant for spiritual progress).

The characters in the Rama Story have invited them to emulation and to be elevated themselves. They have provided shining examples of achievement and adventure. They have warned the wavering against vice and violence, pride and pettiness. They have encouraged them by their fidelity and fortitude. To every language and dialect that the tongue of man has devised for the expression of his higher desires, the Story of Rama has added a unique, sustaining sweetness.

N. KASTURI

Editor, Sanathana Sarathi

From Ramakatha Rasavahini

Ramayana - This sacred Hindu epic composed by Sage Valmiki deals with the incarnation of Vishnu as Sri Rama who strove all his life to re-establish the reign of Dharma in the world. The Ramayana has played a very important role in influencing and shaping the Hindu ethos over the centuries. (*SSS Vol.1 Glossary*) glossary

Eka Slokatmaka Ramayanam.

*Adau Rama Tapovanadi Gamanam Hatvamrigam Kanchanam
Videhi Haranam Jatayu Maranam Sugriva Sambhashanam
Vali Nigrahanaqm Samudratharanam Lankapuridahanam
Paschat[dravana Kumbhakarnaharanam Ethadhiramayanam*

Ramayana - A Sacred Way of Life

The Ramayana is a guide book, a sacred text, an inspiring scripture, for everyman in all lands, at all times, whatever his creed or condition might be. For, it imparts poise, balance, equanimity, inner strength and peace. Peace is the best treasure, without which power, authority, fame, fortune are all dry and burdensome. (*SSS Vol.13 p.55*)

The Ramayana is not a sacred text to be used only for parayana (ritualistic reading) - (*SSS Vol.31 p.71*)

The *Ramayana* represents a sacred path, sacred door to Divinity, and a sacred way of life. The *Ramayana* is not merely the biography of an individual. (*SSS Vol.38 p.105*)

The Ramayana holds up the ideals to be pursued by the father, the son, the mother, the brother, the friend, the servant, the master, the teacher, the pupil, etc. The happy home¹ is the basic

¹ The parents of today do not bother to find out the ways and means of bringing up their children and keeping them under control. They think that their responsibility is over after admitting them into a primary school or a village school. *Home is the first school for children.* It is in this school that children should learn to respect their parents; to observe Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Non-violence; how to behave in the school; how to respect the teachers; and how to

cell of the national organism. It ensures a happy world, for mankind is one family, and if any one unit is sad or struggling in distress, how can, the rest be safe or satisfied? (*SSS Vol.13 p.56*)

There are many who spend much time in mechanically reciting the name Rama or systematically reading the entire Ramayana according to a fixed time-table, or who worship the images of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, as a daily ritual, with pomp and pedantry. (*SSS Vol.13 p.60-61*)

The Ramayana is the very life-blood of the Bharatiya. (*SSS Vol.7 p.457*)

The Ramayana story illustrates the greatness and sacredness of culture and heritage of this country. Rama is not the story of Rama. Rama + Ayana is Ramayana. Ayana means Path. The

behave with fellow students. They must also know how to abide by the rules and regulations of the school and how to observe discipline. It is by learning these things that the students turn into ideal students.

Wake up from bed, When the cock crows in the morn:

Brush and bathe, Eat properly. And moderately.

Go to school And study diligently.

Earn a good name that You are an obedient student.

Don't move When weather is damp.

And never go near ditches.

Run and play Have fun and frolic.

If you abide by All the principles mentioned above

You will enjoy both health and wealth.

But nobody is imparting such a teaching to the children. (*SSB 2002 38-39*)

inner meaning of Ramayana is that the path shown by Rama should be followed. (*SSS Vol.21 p.79*)

The great epic Ramayana was translated into several languages in the world, including Russian. It is widely read classic in the world. Several non-Indians not only read Ramayana in their own language, but they even worship and revere the great epic. The other day, the first lady of Kazakhstan, a former Republic of the erstwhile Soviet Union visited Prashanthi Nilayam and heard My discourse on Ramayana with great reverence and joy. In fact, Ramayana is held in high esteem in the erstwhile communist countries. They have developed great faith and devotion in Ramayana and the Ramayana way of life. Unfortunately, the Indians are still lagging behind in this regard. The Ramayana is a great spiritual text, which everyone should read with utmost reverence and devotion. (*DD 10th October 2005 p7*)

Ramayana has been divided into two sections, The Purva Ramayana and Uttara Ramayana. The Purva Ramayana deals with valorous deeds of Rama, his victory over indomitable heroes like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. These events speak of the dauntless courage, the matchless valour and immense physical and mental prowess of Sri Rama. The Uttara Ramayana (the latter half) is suffused with *Karuna* (compassion) and seeks to install the *Rama Thathwa* (The Rama Principle) in the heart of the people. (*SSS Vol.25 p.180*)

Ramayana Compared to sweetness of Sugarcane juice

Valmiki has compared the sweetness of the Ramayana to the sweetness of Sugarcane juice. The sugarcane has a hard rind and is full of knots. Nevertheless, the juice from it is sweet. Likewise in spite of many evil characters in the story and the sad episodes in it, the epic maintains its sweetness. The appeal of the Ramayana is inexhaustible.

When the Ramayana story is understood in its inner essence, it will transform human nature. Rama should be regarded not as Prince of Ayodhya, but as the Atma-Rama, the in-dweller in every heart. Dedicate your mind, speech and body to the Divine and thereby raise yourselves from the level of the human to that of the Divine. (*SSS Vol.23 p.47*)

Sacred Ideals of Ramayana

The Ramayana sets great ideals to men. People should contemplate on the sacred story and follow its ideals. The story of Rama is not an ancient one. It is eternal and ever new. It is full of auspiciousness. May you fill your heart with the sacred ideals of the Ramayana! May you give up hatred and all differences! May you live in peace and harmony! When you contemplate on Rama incessantly, you derive great joy and delight. (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p.114-115*)

The *Ramayana* shows us the way to lead an ideal life. That is why people of all countries and all languages hold the *Ramayana* in high esteem. This sacred epic is ever new and ever inspiring. Its glory has not diminished even a bit with the

passage of time. It has stood the test of time because of the sacred ideals it stands for. (*SSS Vol.33 p.83*)

Ramayana and Puranic Texts

The Ramayana cannot be compared with other Puranic texts. It is not merely a great poetic work, but a great treatise on Human relationships between parents and children, between brothers, husband and wife and the king and his subjects. It is only when we are able to understand the significance of Ramayana in the larger context that the country will prosper with love and affection between citizens. In a few years' time, nay, very shortly, the whole world will realise the greatness of Ramayana and try to emulate the ideals set in Ramayana, Today, we find wide variety of nations, religions and castes in the world. The situation will certainly change. Within a short span of time, the world will realise the truth. (*SSS Vol.38 p.84*)

Ramayana – The Essence of the Vedas

The source for the knowledge of *Paramapurusha is Veda*. Such *Paramapurusha* when He has taken the *Avatar* as the son of Dasaratha, *Veda* appeared in the form of Ramayana from Valmiki Maharshi. This is the belief of the sons of Bharatha. We recite with *Bhakthi* and *Sraddha* and do *parayana* as *Veda*, and get liberated. (*DD - 19th May, 1977*)

Vedha-vedhye Pare Pumse

Jaathe Dasharathaathmaje

Vedhah Praachethas Aaseeth

Saakshaath Ramayanaathmanaa (Sanskrit Sloka)

(SSS Vol.29 p.69)

Just as *Veda Purusha* (*Virat Purusha*) was born as Dasaratha's earthly son, the Vedas were born from Prachetas in the form of The Ramayana. (*SSS Vol.34 p.69*)

The story of Rama is the story of one who was filled with the sweetness of compassion. This story is the royal road to human progress and an ideal life. The author of the Ramayana is called Prachetas^{2&3}. (*SSS Vol.29 p.69*)

The *Ramayana* is the very form of the Vedas that have come down to us from the heavens. The Vedas are divided into four parts, namely Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Lord Rama is the embodiment of Rig Veda, Lakshmana, the Yajur Veda, Bharatha, the Sama Veda and Satrughna, the Atharvana Veda. The four Vedas became the four sons of Dasaratha and played at his palace. The Rig Veda and the Yajur Veda consist of Mantras, which are related to *Yajnas* and *Yagas*. That is the reason why Sage Viswamitra took Rama and Lakshmana along with him to safeguard his *Yajna*. While Rama was in exile, Bharatha left Ayodhya and stayed in a village called Nandigrama, all the time singing the Divine Name of Rama for 14 long years. It is for this reason that Bharatha is described as the personification of Sama Veda. It was Satrughna who safeguarded the places of sacred rituals like *Yajnas* and *Yagas* from the invasion of evil spirits and demons. Do not think that *Ramayana* is different from the

² See Chapter, *Valmiki - COMPOSING THE RAMAYANA*

³ Prachetas (Prachethas): Valmiki's father. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Vedas. In fact, it is the very essence of the Vedas. (*SSS Vol.34 p.69-70*)

In fact it is said that the Vedas incarnated as Ramayana, in order to help in the destruction of the evil and the revival of righteous living, tasks, which the Lord took upon Himself during His career as Rama. Why! Rama and His three brothers are from one point of view, the Four⁴ Vedas in Human form. The Yajur Veda lays down the rights and duties of man, The Dharma which ensures Peace and Prosperity for him, both here and hereafter. So, it is represented by Rama Himself, For He put on the vesture of manhood in order to establish and exemplify Dharma. "*Rama Vighrahaan Dharmah*" is how the Ramayana Describes Him - "Rama, the embodied Dharma". (*SSS Vol.11 p.17*)

Pravritti and Nivritti

This life is nothing but an ocean with the waves of union and separate. Everybody has to pass through the adversities of life. It is the nature of *Pravritti*⁵ (outward path). There is another aspect of life, i.e., *Nivritti*⁶ (inward path). A child goes to its mother and says, "I am hungry." The mother who follows the outward path says, "Child go and eat food. Your hunger will be

⁴ See Under Section, *Rama - Rama, His Brothers And Their Childhood - Manifestation Of The Vedas In Human Form*

⁵ Pravritti (pravritthi): Worldly activity, attachment (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁶ Nivritti (nivritthi): Withdrawal, detachment, renunciation. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

satiated.” This is the Pravritti dharma. But the mother who treads the inward path does not merely say. “Go and eat food.” She would advise the child as to what type of food to eat, when and how to eat. When you are hungry, you should not eat whatever you like without enquiring whether it is good for health. The Nivritti mother advises you eat such food which will bestow good health on you. Even Veda have dealt with desires but they should be under limit. They should be based on truth and righteousness. Do not eat everything you get. You should speak only after proper enquiry. These are some of the lessons that the Ramayana teaches to mankind. That is why the Ramayana is compared to Vedas. It teaches the Pravritti and Nivritti aspects of life in a beautiful manner. Pravritti is the *Swabhava* (nature) of prakriti; Nivritti is the *Swarupa* (form) of the Atma. Nivritti broadens our outlook, whereas Pravritti does the opposite. Hence, we should base all our activities on Nivritti. (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p.111-112*)

Subtle truth of Ramayana:

The *Ramayana* has very subtle truths embedded in it. The epic first of all expounds the duties of the individual. In the everyday world, any person’s form is termed as the individual. The duties of the individual taught by *Ramayana* are not relating to this external form of the individual. The Un-manifest, immanent and hidden human values are the essence of the *Ramayana*. The inner reality and the divinity resident in the heart constitute the true individuality. Individual does not mean the form; the individual in action is the true individual. (*SSS Vol.34 p.71-72*)

Profound secrets and truths – Rama displayed equanimity:

The basic elements are common to all mankind. The world itself is one family. All men are brothers. Rama preached to the world this basic truth. He taught the world the duties of everyday life, social duties and family obligations. This triple stream of duties is the Message of Ramayana. Whoever bathes in this triple stream is absolved of his sins and is redeemed. Such great work as the Ramayana has to be read, reread and lived up to by everyone. (*SSS Vol.30 p.92*)

Deep under current and significant meaning

The Ramayana has a deep undercurrent of significant meaning - Dasaratha means, he who rides in a chariot of ten, that is to say MAN. He is tied up with *three gunas, or three wives as in the Ramayana. He has four sons, the Purusharthas: Dharma* (Rama), *Artha* (Lakshmana), *Kama* (Bharatha), and *Moksha* (Satrughna). These four aims of man have to be systematically realised, with the last one, *Moksha*, always clearly before the eye. Lakshmana represents the Buddhi or intellect, and Sita is Truth. Hanuman is the mind, and it is the repository, if controlled and trained, of courage. Sugriva, the master of Hanuman is discrimination. With these to help him, Rama seeks Truth and succeeds. That is the lesson of the Epic to every man. (*SSS Vol.9 p.204-205*)

You must cultivate the positive quality of Love (*Prema*) for the Embodiment of Prema can be realised only through Prema. That is the Message the Ramayana gives all those who study it with sincere desire to learn. That is the Message I wish to give you. (*SSS Vol.9 p.206*)

The epic *Ramayana* is replete with inner significance. All the ideals propagated by the *Ramayana* should be properly understood and put into practice by one and all. Only then will human life find fulfilment. The name and form of Rama is highly sacred. *Ramayathithi Ramaha*, (Rama is one who pleases everyone). So, all should emulate Him. Rama is a synonym for *Atma*. Hence the term *Atmarama*. So in essence, all are the embodiments of Rama principle.

*Sarvathah Paanipaadham That
Sarvathokshi Shiromukham
Sarvathah Shruthimalloke
Sarvamaavrithya Thishtthathi.
(SSS Vol.32 Part 2 p.72)*

(Everywhere is His hands and feet, everywhere are His eyes, head and mouth; His ears are on all sides and He stands all-pervading.)

The oneness among humanity- Ramayana Is More a Story of Human Relationships:

The greatest truth propounded by Ramayana is the oneness among humanity. When there is such unity, there will be mutual love between people. When that mutual love between different people develops, the whole world can experience great joy and happiness. Thus, it is only Ramayana that can provide great joy to the entire humanity. Hence, let every individual chant Divine Name ‘Rama! Rama! Rama!’ (SSS Vol.38 p.85)

Duty is God:

Duty is God. That is the lesson that Ramayana teaches. The word duty is today used to indicate the methods by which one exercises his authority. No. Duty is the responsibility you have to respect and receive others and to serve them to the best of your ability. You claim to have the freedom to walk waving your walking stick around you; but, the man coming behind has as much freedom to use the road as you have. To exercise your freedom so that you do not limit or harm the freedom of others - that is the Duty, which becomes Worship.

When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reached the banks of the Ganga, Sumantra, the aged Minister of the Court who had taken them so far in the Royal Chariot could not follow them; he had in duty bound return to the Capital. So, he turned back with tearful eyes; Guha rowed them across the river, they entered the forest and started walking in single file through the thick jungle, Rama, Sita in the middle and Lakshmana following behind. They reached the hermitage of Valmiki soon; when the sage came forward to welcome them, Rama asked him to indicate a place where he can reside. Valmiki said, "We sages reside in You; You reside in us. Where else can I request You to reside? Though you have assumed human form, you give yourself away the Beauty that shines in You".
(SSS Vol.13 p.57-58)

The human destiny

In the Divine epic of the Ramayana there is a profound message. That message is: man must lead the life of a human

being; man must seek oneness with the Divine. Man should harmonise the three qualities in him - *Satwa, Rajas, Tamas*. In every human being all the three natures- human, Divine and demonic – are present. But most men today ignore their humanness and divinity and foster only their demonic nature. Man, in fact, should strive to manifest his divinity, and not display his weakness or his demonic qualities. (*SSS Vol.31 p.71*)

Ramayana is a guide on human relationships

There are a series of episodes in the Ramayana to show how deep was the love between the four brothers and how devoted were the younger brothers to Rama. Such fraternal love is an example to the world for all time.

The Ramayana is a guidebook on the ideal relations between mothers and children, between husband and wife, between brothers, between the ruler and the people, between the master and the servants and many other human relationships Rama showed compassion to the dying eagle Jatayu, which had fought with Ravana when he was carrying Sita away to Lanka and Rama gave refuge to Vibhishana, even against the fears expressed by Lakshmana. These are examples of Rama's supreme benevolence and magnanimity towards anyone who revered him or sought his protection. Rama declared to Lakshmana: "Anyone who comes to me in a spirit of surrender, whoever he might be, is mine and I am his. I shall give him asylum. This is my vow." Rama was a man pledged to one word, to one wife and to a single arrow.

Devotees should install Rama in their hearts and celebrate Ramanavami for achieving Atmic bliss. Going through the Ramayana epic they should reach the state of “Atma-Rama” (oneness with the Universal Spirit). In such a state there is no *Ahamkara* (ego-sense). (*SSS Vol.20 p.46/55*)

The Ramayana stands out as a great ideal to the entire mankind. It sets examples in every field of life. The Ramayana is an inspiration not only for ancient times, but also for the modern age. Every man is born in this world, to shine as an ideal. Not to lead an ego centric life. Every man should stand out as a model to the best of his capacity. The Ramayana demonstrates to all how an ideal family should be and what should ideal manners be like. (*SSB 2002 p.46-47*)

The Ramayana demonstrates to us how one should live in the world, in the society and in the family. Rama provides example of an ideal brother, ideal son and ideal husband and ideal ruler. The ideal of Rama is most relevant to the world, at a time when it is fraught with chaos and confusion. We live today in a world where misunderstanding is driving a wedge between husband and wife, father and son, teacher and student, rulers and citizens. The remedy for all this lies in following the ideal set by Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.41*)

Models of unity and amity

The four brothers were virtually inseparable and manifested their divinity in equal measure. There was no discord between them. The unity between the four brothers is, in fact, the sum

and substance of Ramayana. Similarly, their blessed mothers Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were models of unity and amity. None can describe in full glory of the Ramayana.

Full of Noble Characters

The Ramayana is full of noble characters. The four brothers and their wives hold out great ideals for mankind. The mothers, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were also great women. They are embodiments of virtue and right conduct. People blame Kaikeyi saying that she was responsible for suffering of Rama and Sita. She was actually a divine instrument in the mission of Rama. She was not the kind of lady who would be swayed away by the words of Manthara. She was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good. There are great subtleties and secrets in the Ramayana.. (*SSB 2002 p.110*)

Every aspirant needs to go through Ramayana

Ramayana needs to be gone through during the life of every aspirant. The heart is the Ayodhya. Dasaratha is the body, the Gunas are the consorts, the Purusharthas are the sons, Sita is Wisdom. Attempt and attain this Realisation by purifying the three tools – body, speech and mind. (*SSS Vol.19 p.71*)

Ramayana teaches the ideals of life:

The society today is in utter need of *Ramayana*. We do not have children who respect their parents, nor do we have parents who have great affection for their children. We do not have disciples today who revere their preceptors; nor do we have preceptors who have great love for their disciples. We do not

have homes where parents shine as role models for their children. We do not have homes where brothers live with mutual love and affection; nor do we have homes where wives and husbands shine as ideals to others by virtue of their mutual love and affection. Good manners and courtesies have vanished. The *Ramayana* stands as an ideal for the trouble-torn society of today in various fields of activities. (**SSB 2002 p.37-38**)

The story of Rama teaches us the threefold *Dharma* (code of conduct) pertaining to the individual, the family and the society. You have to make every effort to understand the duties of the individual, the family and the society. Rama is the ocean of compassion. He is love personified. It is possible to understand His divinity only through the path of love. Love is the undercurrent of human life. Man will be able to manifest his innate divinity only when he develops love within.

Modern society needs to follow the *dharma* that is contained in the epic *Ramayana*. Why? Today, the son is not paying heed to his father's advice, and the parents are not concerned about the future of the son. Devotion to the *guru* should be the aim of the students. But students are not having regard for their teachers and the teachers are not imparting anything good to them. In such a situation, everyone needs to follow the ideals of the *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* speaks of the true identity of the individual, the real significance of the family, and the sanctity of the society. The *Ramayana* teaches the importance of human values. Today, corruption is rampant in all fields such as business, education, and politics. Under these circumstances,

the principles of the *Ramayana* are very important. It explains in detail the relationship that should exist between brothers, the father and the son, the preceptor and the disciple. (*SSS Vol.32 Part I p.100*)

The story of the *Ramayana* reveals the ideal relationship that should exist between brothers. Lakshmana and Satrugna served Rama and Bharatha respectively, with utmost devotion and sincerity. When Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, “In this world, I might find another mother like Kausalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana.” A brother should be like this —one who respects elders and brings name and fame to the whole family. It is the unity amongst the brothers that brought reputation to the whole family. (*SSS Vol.32 Part I p.107*)

Ideals to be pursued

The *Ramayana* holds up the ideals to be pursued by the father, the son, the mother, the brother, the friend, the servant, the master, the teacher, the pupil etc. The happy home is the basic cell of the national organism. It ensures a happy world, for mankind is one family, and if any one unit is sad and struggling in distress, how can the rest be safe and satisfied?

The *Ramayana* instils the wise, valid, valuable detachment, or *thyaga*. Rama gladly journeys into the forest as an exile, the moment he knows that his father's wish was that he should do so; and, remember, he was to be crowned Emperor just that moment by very same person who ordered him to go into exile. When those who have full powers and claims, renounce

positions of authority in the Ramayana, we see today persons with no powers or claims clamouring to occupy positions of authority! (*SSS Vol.13 p.56-57*)

The drama enacted by Rama and Sita held forth for every householder and every individual the highest ideal of righteous conduct. It placed before the fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, brothers and friends the best lines of behaviour expected of them and how each of them had to keep their promises, and tend their virtues. Why dilate further? The Ramayana lays down ideals for all relationships of life and for the realisation of the highest aim of human life. Nowhere else can there be seen such a variety and quantity of moral dicta with their practical applications. The one text, Ramayana, has soaked in its pages, directions for correct conduct in all situations and under all conditions; it teaches how to justify human birth, how to carry on the government of a kingdom, how to regulate the reactions of the people and how to design laws that can control and consummate the wishes of the people. If only the Ramayana is studied closely and observed in daily practice, mankind can attain peace and prosperity in all fields. (*RKR V Part II p.66*)

Ramayana conveys a great message. It is a compendium of qualities such as *Thyaga* (renunciation), *Daya* (compassion), *Karuna* (kindness), *Sahana* (forbearance), *Saanubhuthi* (empathy). (*SSS Vol.21 p.91*)

Today's education is leading to agitation. True education lies in assimilating and digesting the principle of love. You are the

embodiments of love. You are filled with love. You may not know this, but I can see love in you from top to toe. In future, the principles of Ramayana will be manifested in a glorious manner. The Ramayana will fill your lives with love and make you forget yourselves. Let your love be directed towards Rama. Rama + Ayana is Ramayana. (*DD 17-10-2003 p.7-8*) & (*SSS Vol.36 Part 2 p.70*)

The moral, social, and spiritual values on Ramayana

All of us live on the same earth. The same sky is above all of us. We breathe the same air and drink the same water. Ignoring this underlying principle of unity man visualizes multiplicity, which is a big mistake. The *Ramayana* centres on the principle of unity in diversity. Today, since man has lost the ability to see unity in diversity, he is immersed in restlessness. What we need today is to see unity in diversity and the divinity behind this unity.

The culture of Bharat says:

*Sathyam bruyath, priyam bruyath,
na bruyath sathyam apriyam*

(speak the truth, speak sweetly and softly, and never utter truth in an unpalatable way).

Sathyam bruyath is the moral value. *Priyam bruyath* is the social value. *Na bruyath sathyam apriyam* is the spiritual value. So, the moral, social, and spiritual values are all contained in the above statement.

The *Ramayana* teaches these values in the simplest way. But man has forgotten the message of the *Ramayana* and is leading the life of a Ravana. Ravana did not understand this principle of divinity. There was no transformation in him, though he had acquired all forms of knowledge and had done severe penance. He ruined himself on account of excessive desires. Before his death, he gave a message to the people: “O people, with all my skills and expertise in different forms of knowledge I became a victim of desires. I lost my sons, ruined my clan, and burnt my kingdom to ashes, since I could not control my desires. Do not become a victim of desires like me. Follow the path of truth and righteousness and be like Rama. Experience divinity.”
(SSS Vol.32 Part I p.100-101)

*If your ambitions are not fulfilled,
Do not waver or get depressed.
He is a realized one who is cheerful
in the face of all adversities.*
[Telugu Poem]

One has to face many obstacles in life, but one should never get depressed. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realize it. Life is a game, play it. Life is love, enjoy it. Be cheerful and courageous in the face of adversities; never give scope to any weakness whatsoever. The *Vedanta* declared, *Na Ayam Atma balaheenena labhya* (a weak-minded person cannot realize the *Atma*). A weak-minded person cannot accomplish anything. So, be strong-minded. Develop faith in that which is good.

*Since there is no fear of sin and love for God,
Humanness is on the decline in human beings.
This is the cause for lack of peace in the world.*
[Telugu Poem]

Therefore, man should cultivate *Daiva preethi*, *papa bheeti*, and *sangha neeti* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Though Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge, sage Valmiki extolled Rama as Divine and condemned Ravana as a foolish one. What is the reason? Ravana did not translate into action the knowledge he had acquired; on the contrary he used it for wicked purposes. On the other hand, Rama translated all his knowledge into action and gave joy to one and all. *Sarva loka hithe ratah* (Rama was engaged in the welfare of all). *Sarvajnanopasampannah* (He was the master).

Bhagawan says put teachings of Ramayana into practice

The *Ramayana* demonstrates that anything can be achieved through sincerity and devotion. The story of the *Ramayana* is so enchanting and captivating that one feels like listening to it again and again. *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been singing the story of Rama since ancient times. Everyone should try to understand the essence of the *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* teaches that one should have a good character, one should obey the command of the father and respect the parents, and there should be unity among brothers. If you follow these teachings in letter and spirit, your life itself will become a living *Ramayana*. (*SSS Vol.32 Part1 p.110*)

The relationship that existed between the brothers of Rama is an ideal to the rest of the humanity. They lived in unity in spite of troubles and turmoil. Mother Kaikeyi wanted her son Bharatha to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, but Bharatha never had any such desire. He went to Chitrakoota Mountain, fell at the feet of Rama, and prayed, He, being the eldest, should take over the kingdom of Ayodhya. But Rama did not yield to his request.

Quoting the *Vedic* dictum, *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava*, He exhorted Bharatha to obey the command of the father and fulfil the desire of his mother by becoming king of Ayodhya. Rama promised him that He would render all help and support. That is why even today, people extol Rama as *Sathyavakparipalaka* (one who adheres to truthful speech). *(SSS Vol.32 Part I p.101-102)*

Today, many people read the holy *Ramayana*, but few understand its essence. They spend their time in acquiring bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge but fail to have practical knowledge. There are many people who can explain the teachings of *Ramayana* in a beautiful way, but how many of them obey the command of their fathers in their daily life? Not many! What is the use of reading various texts if we do not put into practice the message contained in them? Mere textual information is of no use. But, today, man is interested only in information and not transformation. Intellect will blossom only when there is transformation. *(SSS Vol.32 p.101-102)*

Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara

An important lesson that the Ramayana teaches is One must be grateful throughout life to one's benefactor. He alone is qualified to be called a man, who extends this kind of thankfulness. An ungrateful person is a demon. Demons and humans do not differ in physical forms. They are categorized based upon their behaviour. Demons are those who possess evil feelings and do bad actions. Those perverted people who disregard the kind deed done to them and indulge in only harming others are demons. Those foolish ones who consider falsehood to their very life breath have been called as demons. In the world today, man finds untruth to be very dear to him. He is behaving most unrighteously. Yet, our Vedas have declared: "*Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara*". They call us to speak the Truth and practise Righteousness. But today, the words Truth and Righteousness hardly feature in daily conversation. (*SSB 1996 p.102*)

Throw away selfishness

The main teaching of Ramayana is to ask you to throw away your selfishness and promote selfless service and good qualities in you. Every individual character in Ramayana has been preaching this kind of ideal life. Such an ideal example of life, we should give some respect to disciplinary measures. Without discipline, whatever ideal examples you may give to your life, there is no value for them. (*SSB 1977 p.72*)

Not Merely a Grantha:

The Ramayana is not a mere story. It explains and expounds the principle of the Atma. The Ramayana Thathwa has to be

understood properly and translated into our life. Therefore, one should study the Ramayana with devotion and sacredness and experience the principle of the Atma.

Ramayana is not merely *Grantha* (sacred text); it is full of the *Gandha* (fragrance) of its sacredness spreads in the country, the country will prosper and its inhabitants will experience love, peace and bliss. Not only that, in a few year's time, nay, very shortly, the whole world will realise the sacredness and greatness of the Ramayana and follow its ideals. In fact, *Rama Thathwa* (principle of Rama) is present in all in the form of the Atma. Today we find many nations, religions and castes in the world. No. No. Within a short period of time the whole world will have one race, one caste and one religion.

The greatest truth propounded by the Ramayana is the unity of mankind. When there is such unity, then people will attain purity of heart. The purity of heart will bring the people close to each other. When there is amity among people, the whole world will experience bliss. Thus, Ramayana can give bliss to one and all. Hence everybody should chant the Divine Name, "Rama! Rama! Rama!"

During the entire period of 14 years of Rama's exile to the forest, all the brothers and their wives were always thinking and wishing the well-being of Rama; so were their mothers. Such was the nobility of their hearts.

The main emphasis of the Ramayana is on the principle of unity.

Every incident, every character, every episode of the Ramayana is full of bliss and divine mystery.

*The story of Lord Rama is amazing,
It purifies the lives of the people in all the three worlds,
It is like the sickle that cuts the creepers of worldly
bondage,
It is like a good friend who helps you in times of need,
It is like a shelter for the sages and seers doing penance
in the forest. (Telugu Poem)*

The story of Rama is most wonderful and endless. It is essential for every human being to put the ideals set by Rama into practice in his day-to-day life. (*SS May 2005. 130-131*)

Un sullied fraternal love is the core of Ramayana

In the epic *Ramayana*, not only the four brothers, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, Satrughna, but also their wives played important roles. They demonstrated great ideals to the world. (*SSS Vol.38 p.79*)

The epic deals with the Incarnation of Rama-

The Ramayana, the epic that deals with the story of the Rama Incarnation, is sacred text that is reverentially recited by people with varieties of equipment, the scholar as well as ignoramus, the millionaire as well as the pauper. The Name that the Ramayana glorifies, cleanses all evil; it transforms the sinner; it

reveals the Form that the Name represents, the Form that is as charming as the Name itself. (*RKR V Part I p.1-2*)

Ramayana is the joint epic of Rama and Sita

The term “Rama” means one who is pleasing and lovable. “Ayana” means movement or journey. “Ra” refers to Atma and “Ma” refers to Mind. The Rama Principle means merging the mind in the Atma. “Ramayana” means suffusing the world with the bliss of the Rama Principle. But it is not Sri Rama alone that is involved in this process; Sita is also an epic personality. “Rama” is another name for Sita. The Ramayana is thus a joint epic of Rama and Sita or Sita-Rama Ramayana.

Rarely in the world do we see married couples who are identical -man and wife - in their physical features, their qualities, behaviour, thoughts and capacities. But in the case of Rama and Sita the similarity was complete in every respect. There were no differences in features, qualities or other aspects. The truth of this is evident from what Hanuman experienced. Once Hanuman happened to look at Sita when she was alone. He got a doubt whether Rama himself had assumed a feminine form. Looking at Sita, he thought it was Rama himself. Hence Rama and Sita should be regarded as one identical entity and not as separate beings. (*SSS Vol.20 p.47-48*)

THE THREE CITIES:

The Ramayana is not merely the story of Rama. It is an epic, which proclaims the greatness of three cities-Mithila, Ayodhya and Lanka. The Rama Principle has brought out and

demonstrated the significance of these three cities. (*SSS Vol.20 p.46*)

Mithila:

The inner significance of the Sita-Rama story will be clear when we consider the role of the three cities in the Ramayana. First comes Mithila. Emperor Janaka was its ruler. He was a *Bhahmajnani* (one who possesses knowledge of identity of individual self with the cosmic being) who had renounced everything. Like water on a lotus-leaf, he was completely detached, with no concern for worldly things. Having no children of his own, he brought up with great love a foundling (Sita). There were two powerful entities in his kingdom: Siva's bow and Sita. Once, while engaging in play, Sita lifted the giant bow of Siva with astonishing ease. Struck by this feat, Janaka decided that Sita should be given in marriage only to one who could handle Siva's bow and be worthy of Sita's hand. With this resolve, he invited princes for *Sita's Swayamvara* (selection of a husband by the bride herself). Rama arrived and lifted Siva's bow as lightly as Sita had done. Janaka realised that Rama and Sita were well matched in every respect-beauty, character and strength. Sita was no ordinary woman. She was the embodiment of *Maha Maya* (supreme divine illusion). Rama acquired *Maha Maya* as his mate. Sita, for her part, sought oneness with the *Atma principle* represented by Rama. The marriage of Rama and Sita represents the association of the *Atma* and the *Maya*. It is in this combined form of *Atma* and *Maya* that Rama entered Ayodhya.

Ayodhya:

‘Ayodhya’ means “invincible”. Its ruler was Dasaratha. Dasaratha means one who has made his ten indriyas (sense organs)-the five organs of action and the five organs of perception-his chariot. Allegorically, this means that Dasaratha represents the body, with its ten organs. These sense organs are related to the three *gunas* (qualities) - *Satwa*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. Dasaratha’s three wives - Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi - symbolise these three *gunas*. When one is influenced by *gunas*, he develops desires. The four sons of Dasaratha were the embodiments of his desires. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna symbolise the four *Vedas-Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana*. *The Rig Veda figures in the Yajur and Sama Vedas to varying extent. It is the embodiment of Dharma. Yajur-Veda embodies mantras (sacred formulae). Lakshmana was continually engaged in contemplating about Rama and immersing himself in the Rama mantra. Bharatha was one who could not bear separation from Rama and who was ever dwelling on Rama’s name and form. He was the embodiment of Sama Veda. Shatrughna was one who had mastered all the sciences and used his powers for protecting his brothers. He was skilled in the use of all kinds of weapons. Thus the four Vedas, taking the form of the four brothers, were sporting in Dasaratha’s palace.*

Soon after his entry into Ayodhya in the company of Sita as *Maya*, Rama had to enter the jungle of life. These ordeals are the concomitants of those who are associated with *Maya*. As a result, he had to embark on a search for Sita. On the way, he met Sugriva. Sugriva and Vali - the bothers - represent the

qualities of *Viveka* (discrimination) and *Dheeratva* (valour). Rama made common cause with Sugriva to overcome Vali. He got the friendship of Anjaneya who symbolises *Dhairyam* (dauntless courage). With the help of Sugriva and Hanuman, Rama crossed the ocean of *moha* (delusion) to enter Lanka. Once again he encountered the three *gunas*-*Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* (qualities of serenity, passion and passivity)-in Lanka in the form of Vibhishana, Ravana and Kumbhakarna. He vanquished Ravana and Kumbhakarna (*Rajo and Tamo gunas*) and crowned Vibhishana (*Satwa guna*) as King. He recovered Sita who now assumed the form of *Anubhavajnana* (wisdom born of experience) and re-entered Ayodhya with her.

Lanka:

Here, the unique features of Lanka may be noted. Its ruler was the ten-headed Ravana. Although he was endowed with all powers, he was perpetually immersed in Moha (infatuation for women). He had the appellation “*Dasagriva*” - the one with ten heads. In Ayodhya, Dasaratha was the ruler and in Lanka it was Dasagriva. Dasaratha had ten indriyas (sense organs) as his chariot. Ravana was the one who was enjoying the ten senses as a sensualist. Whatever one’s scholarship or wealth or strength, if he has no control over his senses, he descends to the depths of degradation. Without control over his senses, a person who may have conquered the three worlds will be a slave of his impulses. The bad traits of Ravana were shared by all the people of Lanka. As is the ruler, so are the subjects, says the adage. When the ruler indulges in sensual pleasures, the subjects also do likewise. Lanka was thus immersed in carnal pleasures. The people were not aware of human virtues, much

less of divine qualities. Pleasures of the flesh their sole preoccupation. But at the same time, they carried on ritualistic practices like *yagas* and *yajnas* (sacrificial rites and rituals). (SSS Vol.20 p.48/53)

Transformation of demonic nature to divinity

Witnessing the grandeur and beauty of Lanka-with its huge mansions and beautiful gardens-and seeing the sacrificial fires burning in every home, Hanuman at first wondered whether the ruler of such a paradise on earth could commit the heinous crime of abducting Sita. Later Hanuman realised that Lanka was like the fig, fruit, which is very attractive on the outside but is full of worms inside. In spite of all its external beauty and grandeur, Lanka contained within it, forces of evil and wickedness. The conversion of such an abode of evil into a kingdom of righteousness by the installation of Vibhishana is the climax of the Ramayana story. (SSS Vol.20 p.53)

SUKSHMA RAMAYANAM

The *Atma* is Rama. He has come in the character of Jivi, wearing the dress called body. It is all a play, His *Leela*, sport. What is joy for Him? And what is suffering for Him? He is *Anandaswarupa* who knows neither. By His Will to create *Maya*, He can produce everything. He has enacted on the stage of the theatre of the world, with Himself taking a role and showing each quality or *guna* as a separate form. Such a Ramayana is taking place, even today, in every heart. Rama is

the Heart, the *Atma-Rama* is observing everything, as the Witness.

This *Jada* accepts the active Chaithanya, viz., the knowledge of Brahman. *Chaithanya* is born with the name of Sita. The *Jada-Chaithanya* becomes One. This is referred to as Sitarama. So long as the *Jada* and the Chaithanya are One, there is no trouble and no suffering. It is the separation of one of these two that is the origin of all the bother.

Sita, who is Brahmajnana, goes away from the Atma, which is in the form of the Jiva, hence falling into the darkness, or the jungle, is inevitable. Rama has acted in this way to show us this; if Sita, or *Brahmajnana*, is allowed to be lost, one cannot escape wandering about in the jungle of darkness. One should not be alone in the dark jungle of life; one should have the Manas ever by one's side. It is for this that Lakshmana is kept near always.

When wandering in the dark jungle one gets overcome by despair but one should have discrimination. Vali and Sugriva have a vengeful hatred of one another. Vali who is despair has to be destroyed; then only can success come. Despair is Vali; discrimination is Sugriva.

Hanuman is of great help in the destruction of despair, viz. Courage! That is Hanuman. He is in the form of courage. Because of the association one has developed with courage, it is possible to cross the ocean of delusion, with the army of zest, strength and steadfastness represented by Jambavan, Angada

and the other Vanaras. That is why Rama has shown that He built the *Sethu*, or bridge, with the help of Hanuman.

Rama, after crossing over the bridge and conquering *Moha*, or illusion, slew *Rajoguna* and *Thamo guna* in the forms of Ravana and Kumbhakarna. The remaining brother, the last, the *Satwa guna*, viz., Vibhishana was crowned king. The three *gunas* have been illustrated in the characters and careers of the three brothers, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana.

Next is the attainment of Anubhavajnana, or Sita; the Jnana reached after experience, Jnana realised in actual life. When both *Jada* and *Chaithanya* unite again, that is the *Pattabhisheka*, the Coronation; that is to say, *Jivanmukthi*, salvation for the *Jiva*. Therefore, the fundamental teaching of the Ramayana is this: "The *Jiva*, *Manas*, *Jnana*, despair, discrimination, courage, delusion, *Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Satwa*; these demonstrate themselves each in a different form; it is to be learnt how and in what way each of these can be either acquired or subdued".

All this is done by the *Atma*, who has come in the form and with the name of Rama, by His acting, behaving, directing and guiding. So the Ramayana did not end that day. As long as in each one's life there is a struggle for achievement through these paths and persons attain the *Anubhavajnana* in the end, and *Satwa guna* is crowned at last, the Ramayana will continue to take place in the heart of man. The life is led perpetually. This is the *Sukshma* form of Ramayana.

That means, in the Ramayana of actual life, Atma is Rama, Manas is Lakshmana, Brahmajnana is Sita; and when that Sita is lost, Rama falls into the forest of existence; there, in that forest, there are Despair and Discrimination. If we associate ourselves with Hanuman or Courage, we can go across the sea of delusion, with the army of zest, strength and steadfastness represented by Jambavan, Angada and other Vanaras. As soon as we cross it, we can destroy the Rajasic quality and the Tamasic quality symbolised by Ravana and Kumbhakarna. The Satwic quality or Vibhishana can then be crowned; Anubhavajnana or Sita is then attained. This union of Japa and Chaithanya, that is, of Sita and Rama is the Ananda, the Jivanmukthi, and Salvation for the Soul. The Ramayana accomplished as the Son of Dasaratha is being enacted now as the Subtle Ramayana, through Gunas and Indriyas, qualities and senses in each individual. It is happening as the subtle Ramayana!

Gunas are bred in the senses. The senses of action are five; the senses of knowledge are five. These ten, with the help of the *Manas*, create attachment *in Atma*. Otherwise there is no merging at all. Born in Maya bred in Maya, Man's mission is to master "Maya". So too, born in the Senses bred in Senses, the Jada *Chaithanya* had to master Senses. That is the basic characteristic. The ten senses were all in the form of Dasaratha. From the ten senses, not only four, but any number of *Gunas* and *Rupas* can originate. But only the most important, symbolising the four faces of the Lord, originated by His will. They are born as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna.

In the subtle form, they are *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema*. These are the four faces of the Lord.

Rama is *Sathya swarupa*. "The status and the honour should go to him who has the right, not to me", said Bharatha and so he is *Dharma swarupa*. Placing complete faith in the Atma, that is, the Rama swarupa, believing that there is no *Ananda* sweeter than its uninterrupted company, Lakshmana followed Rama, and so he is *Prema swarupa*. Having no individual separate ambition of his own, treading the paths followed by these three, Satrugna was calm and unperturbed and so he is *Santha swarupa*.

Born in *Maya*, bred in *Maya*, one has to transcend this *Maya*; so also, one is born from *Gunas*, one is brought up with *Gunas* and finally, one has to transcend the *Gunas*.

Just to show this fact, the three mothers represent the three *gunas*! Among them, Kausalya is *Satwa guna*, Kaikeyi is *Rajoguna* and Sumitra, *Thamo guna*; they play those roles. Dasaratha in the form of *Dasendriyas*, is associated with these *gunas* and so he is *Indriya guna swarupa*. It is because man cannot easily grasp the truth through the senses and the *gunas* that the Lord taught him through the Ramayana by means of a variety of forms; the Lord is teaching even to this day.

The Lord performed that day the gross Ramayana in those days, whereas today He is performing the *Sukshma Ramayana* in the heart of man. (*Sandeha Nivarini p.90-96*)

ADHYATMA RAMAYANAM

Man has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Altogether he has got ten indriyas and Dasaratha literally means the human body which has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Dasaratha symbolises this chariot of the human body which got ten organs. Dasaratha also attracted three gunas in the form of Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeya. The four Purusharthas: dharma, artha, kama and moksha are symbolised by Dasaratha's four sons. Dasaratha was one who proclaimed such significant inner meaning to the world and urged the people to lead an Ideal life.

Sita is the daughter of the king of Mithilapura whose name is *Videha*. Videha means one who has no body or one who has no consciousness of his human body. The capital of Dasaratha was Ayodhya. Ayodhya means a city into which enemies cannot enter. Dasaratha had such noble qualities and ideals that he was carrying on the rule of his country in an exemplary manner. Sita can be identified with wisdom and Sita marries Rama or becomes one with Rama who is dharma. When wisdom comes together with dharma, in the ordinary course such a good event will meet with some obstacles. As I state often, pleasure is only an interval between two pains. If there is no pain at all, there is no value for pleasure. Sita is the embodiment of wisdom and she had been taken away by Ravana, who symbolizes selfishness and ego.

If one wants his little wisdom to disappear, all that one has to do is to promote his selfishness, jealousy and ego. Ravana symbolizes selfishness, jealousy and ego. To make a search for

Sita who had been taken away by the bad qualities, selfishness, jealousy and ego, Rama, in the form of dharma along with the other *Purusharthas*, i.e. *artha, kama and moksha* makes a journey. Here Lakshmana is to be identified with the mind. We should notice that Rama, the embodiment of dharma, combines with Lakshmana who is identified as mind and goes to the forest which signifies life. In the forest of life, Rama searches for wisdom in the form of Sita. In this context, there is an argument between two the brothers Vali and Sugriva. Sugriva can be compared to the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Here the inability or the weakness which is called *dhirathwa* has been destroyed in the form of Vali and Sugriva, who symbolizes the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, comes out victorious. Along with Sugriva who symbolizes *viveka* or the ability to distinguish right from wrong, we have Hanuman. The combination of Sugriva and Hanuman is like the combination of *viveka* and courage. The *Viveka* and courage went together in search of Sita, the wisdom. They meet with one obstacle in the form of an ocean of *moha*. Thus the ocean of *moha* had to be crossed and this crossing was affected with the help of courage in the form of Hanuman.

After crossing the ocean, they encounter the three *gunas*: *the Rajo, tama and satwic* on the opposite bank of the ocean. They are Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana representing the three *gunas* respectively. The *rajo* and the *tama*, Ravana and Kumbhakarna were removed from the scene and finally the *satwic* gets the upper hand in the form of Vibhishana. He has been crowned the king. After making Vibhishana the king of

Lanka, Rama has the vision of wisdom born out of experience in the person of Sita. Rama, prior to finding Sita, could be called a *Bhahmajnani* but when he found Sita symbolizing the knowledge of experience, there is a reunion of the knowledge of experience with pure *Brahmajnana* and the culminating was the coronation. The description which has now been given can be called *Adhyatma Ramayana*. It is only when we can understand this interpretation of *Adhyatma Ramayana*; there is some benefit for us and a possibility of the realization of the nature of *atma*. If we keep on thinking of Ramayana in the human form of a king Dasaratha, a son Rama and look only superficially, how can we know the real significance? (*SSB 1977 p.81-83*)

Inner Significance of the Characters of Ramayana:

One ought to revere the story of Rama as a profound allegory. Every act and actor in that story attracts attention and gets imprinted on the memory because the allegory is personal to each of us. (*SSS Vol.19 p.68*)

The Ramayana is not a mere compilation of incidents, like abduction of Sita, the fury of Rama, the death of Ravana etc. This is not the real Ramayana. We must understand the spiritual undertone of the Ramayana. (*SSB 1996 p.84*)

If we carefully look at the main characters in the story of Ramayana, we will come to the conclusion that God has put all this together as a drama on the stage of the world. People can learn from the numerous examples which God has given through Ramayana. God will also bend Himself to help His

devotees. For the sake of happiness to devotees, God will be prepared to undertake any kind of trouble. Even if we blame God, He does not feel unhappy as when His devotees are blamed. God is above *gunas*; He is not affected by *gunas*. So, He does not attach importance to blemish. God is omnipresent. Because He assumes some form, we believe that God is of a particular form. That God is omnipresent is the Truth. (*SSB 1977 p.73*)

Go a little more deeply into the story of Ramayana and you will realise that Dasaratha is not the ruler of a far-off land, that his capital city is not on the map of Northern India, and that the four brothers are not people who lived and passed away! Ayodhya means a city that is unconquerable, into which the enemy cannot penetrate, an impregnable fortress. It represents the Atma, the heart where the Lord resides, which is proof against temptations, the subtle foes of passion and emotion, impulse and instinct. And Dasaratha? The person who has as his 'ratha' (chariot) the 'ten', namely, the body with the five senses of action and the five senses of knowledge! He married three brides, this individual who is the symbol of all individuals. Now, though each married man may have a wife with a physical existence of her own, he has also wedded to him, and inseparable from him, till death 'do separate' three attributes; *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the three natures, balanced, passionate and dull. The three queens represent the three *gunas* - Kausalya; the *Satwic* (balanced) *guna*, Sumitra, the *Rajas* (the passionate, active) and Kaikeyi, the *Tamasic* (stupid, dull, indiscriminating). No one can escape living with these *Gunas* and experiencing the varied reactions, which that contact

involves. In due course, the yearning arose in the mind that it must have a Master whom it could obey and revere. The agony became so acute that the Transcendent Divine actualised itself in grace that took the Form of *Payasam*, brought by a Messenger of God from the sacrificial fire. That gift of grace was shared by the three *gunas*, and four sons were born representing *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*, the four prime ends of man. Rama, the eldest, is Dharma and the other three stand for the rest.

You will have to sacrifice a great deal if Dharma is to be born in your heart. That is why Dasaratha had to do the *Puthrakameshtiyaga*, a great sacrifice. The Divine is the very embodiment of Dharma and it is only by means of *Dharma* that He can be worshipped. And *Dharma* is the garland of flowers of holy deeds, holy words, and holy thoughts. (*SSS Vol.7 p.458*)

Rama is the very embodiment of *Dharma* (Morality, Virtue, Right conduct). The other three goals can be achieved only by steady adherence to *Dharma*. We find, therefore, the brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna following the footsteps of Rama. Rama had mustered so much spiritual strength through his consistent observance of *Dharma*, that he could wield and bend the mighty bow named *Sivadhanus*. That was the proof of the *Jivi* (the individual) having overcome delusion. Janaka, the Ruler of Videha, had the bow in his custody. He was on the lookout for a hero who had mastered the fatal flaw. (*SSS Vol.19 p.69*)

The story relates that Janaka, the *Videhi*, (ruler of Videha, that is to say, 'without body' or 'body-consciousness') offered his daughter (the awareness of *Brahman*) to Rama⁷. Wedding Sita is another way of saying 'acquiring Supreme Wisdom', for, from where was Sita gained? The story says, 'from a furrow on the Earth', that is to say, from *Prakriti* (Nature). This statement reveals that *Brahma Jnana* can be won by meaningful involvement with *Prakriti*. (*SSS Vol.19 p.69*)

The next stage in the career of Rama finds him in the thick jungle of life⁸. Rama, accompanied by Sita (*Prajnana*) went to into forest of ignorance (*Anjana*)⁹. The jungle was infested with attractions and aversions. The Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality. It insists on the renunciation of both aspects. Rama pursued the golden deer, which Sita longed to possess. *Brahma Jnanam* disappeared as a consequence of this lapse. (*SSS Vol.19 p.69*) There, Ravana the embodiment of evil (*Durnaya*) stole Sita¹⁰.

Rama (the representative *jivi*) had to undergo many spiritual austerities to regain the Supreme Enlightenment. He reached, according to the story, the *Rishyamuka* peak, the abode of total detachment. There he secured two allies, Sugriva¹¹

⁷ Dharma seeks *Prajnana*, Rama who is the Embodiment of *Dharma*, married Sita, who was the embodiment of *Prajanana*. (*SSB 1996 p.84*)

⁸ *SSS Vol.19 p.69*

⁹ *SSB 1996 p.84*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ This then led to Rama coming into contact with Sugriva, the embodiment of discrimination (*Viveka*) and Vali, the embodiment of

(Discrimination) and Hanuman (Courage). The alliance was sealed by an act of service from Rama, which indicated his loyalty to *Dharma* under all conditions. He slew Vali, the vicious victim of wickedness. Vali had dethroned his father, forced him to take refuge in the jungles, associated with Ravana, of evil fame, and ill-treated his brother Sugriva for no reason at all. Vali succumbed so low, because of the company he preferred to be in. He serves as a warning to everyone. Einstein said, "Tell me your company; I can tell you what you are."

Rama installed *Viveka* on the throne of Vali. With his allies, he entered on the quest for the Wisdom that he had lost. He found across his path a wide ocean of *Moha* (delusion). His ally, Hanuman (Courage) had a vision, unclouded by desire or ignorance. His only desire was fixed on the Name of Rama and the Form of Rama. So he was able to leap across the ocean, smooth and safe. (*SSS Vol.19 p.70*)

After crossing the ocean of *Samsara* (worldly attachment), He came face to face with Vibhishana, Ravana and Kumbhakarna¹². He slew Ravana (the embodiment of the *Rajasic*, passionate, impulsive, possessive traits) and his brother, Kumbhakarna (the embodiment of the *Tamasic*, the dull, the self-destructive, the lethargic, traits)¹³.

indiscrimination (*Aviveka*). Rama befriended *Viveka* (Discrimination) and killed Indiscrimination. (*SSB 1996 p.84*)

¹² *SSB 1996 p.84-85*

¹³ *SSS Vol.19 p.70*

After crowning Satwic temperament (Vibhishana), He got back the embodiment of *Anubhavajnana*¹⁴ (Experienced Knowledge). *Prajnana* was ultimately transformed into *Anubhavajnana*. The transformation of *Prajnana* into *Anubhavajnana* is real Wisdom. One has to grow through trials and tribulations to achieve true education. (*SSB 1996 p.84-85*)

The consummation of the soul's journey is the Coronation, the *Maha Pattabhishekam*. This is the Ramayana which needs to be gone through, during the life of every aspirant. The heart is the Ayodhya. Dasaratha is the body, the *Gunas* are the consorts, the *Purusharthas* are the sons, Sita is Wisdom. Attempt and attain this Realisation by purifying the three tools-body, speech and mind. (*SSS Vol.19 p.71*)

Be Good, Do Good, See Good

The kind of ideals that are contained in the story of Ramayana are very necessary for every individual, for every country and for every group of people. Either for one's sorrow or for one's degradation, the kind of work which we do, the karma that we indulge in is responsible. This is the why we say, "Be Good, Do Good, See Good". This is the way to God. Do good work, see good things, live in good manner and die as a good man. (*SSB 1997 p.101*)

¹⁴ Rama recovered Sita (*Brahma Jnana*) now confirmed by striving and struggling, and more convincingly precious as a result of constant meditation. And, Rama returned with her to Ayodhya (the impregnable city, the Source and Spring of Wisdom). (*ibid*)

Krodha and Kama – Manthara and Surpanakha-

The Ramayana story is woven around the anger (*Krodha*) of Manthara and lust (*Kama*) of Surpanakha. The Ramayana of each individual too is woven round these two elemental passions. When the first intimations of these evil influences threaten to invade your mind, stop and inquire accordingly into the nature of the urge, the manner of prompting, the type of consequences for you and others. Reason out these things in silence and solitude. (*SSS Vol.5 p.199*)

Game of Chess

The entire Ramayana is like a game of chess. The scene in the Ramayana is a kind of battlefield where the forces of right and wrong are waging war. Rama represents righteousness and Ravana represents unrighteousness. The battle between the two is the war fought on the battlefield. (*SSS Vol.30 p.91*)

The Inner Significance of Ramayana

Rama exemplified three kinds of righteous behaviour (*dharma*), namely, the *dharmas* relating to (1) the individual (2) the family and (3) society. To uphold this three-fold *dharma*, Divinity manifested in a triangular flow, in the form of the *Trimurtis* (the Triune form). The *Ramayana* manifested to elaborate the human values. The period of the *Mahabharata* was well over 5000 years ago, and the *Ramayana* was enacted aeons earlier. Even after the passage of countless ages, if it is still occupying the hearts of the people at large, you can well imagine its importance. There are two kinds of messages dominating the *Ramayana*: One pertains to Rama and the other to Ravana. (*SSS Vol.34 p.70*)

The Ramayana has been described as the story of Rama, the ideal man. In fact every human, in a way, is Rama Himself, when he embodies the ideals of Rama. Hence, it is imperative on the part of every individual to cultivate the ideas of Rama. The Ramayana enshrines in itself the essence of the ideals of the Dharma of the individual, the family and the society. (*SSB 1996 p.11*)

In the Ramayana, Ravana exemplifies lust. The entire Ramayana story happened because of Ravana's lust. Rama advent as *Avatar* was for the purpose of destroying Ravana. (*SSS Vol.21 p.88*)

Ramayana is gone through in every one's life

You see, it is *viveka* that sends emissaries to the various corners to discover where *Brahmajnana* is available. Hanuman is Courage. Courage won through unflinching faith that alone can penetrate the darkness and bring the good news of the Dawn. Then Rama crosses the sea of illusion; He destroys the Demon of *Thamo guna* (quality of inertia), namely, Kumbhakarna; the Demon of *Rajo guna*, (emotional quality) namely Ravana; and He installs on the throne, the *Satwa guna* (quality of goodness), Vibhishana. After this, Rama meets and receives Sita, who has become now *Anubhavajnana* (knowledge derived from experience), not merely *Brahmajnana*. That is represented by the *Pattabhisheka* (Coronation).

The Ramayana is therefore not a story that had an end. In each one's life there is a Ramayana being gone through: in the *Gunas*, the *indriyas* (the senses), the Search and the *Sadhana*.

Rama is the son of Dasaratha---he of the ten chariots. What do you think are these ten chariots? They are the senses, the five *Karmendriyas* (sense organs of action) and the five *Jnanendriyas* (organs of perception). *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shanti* and *Prema* are the four sons; of which Rama is *Sathya*; Bharatha is *Dharma*; Lakshmana is *Prema* and Satrugna is *Shanti*. Take as your ideals these great characters depicted in the Ramayana. You will see how your life is filled with peace and joy if only you dwell with these ideals. The Ramayana in the heart is to be experienced; not investigated as a mental phenomenon. As you go on reading and ruminating the inner meaning will flash on you when the mind is cleansed by the elevating ideas therein. Do not exaggerate the importance of things that have but material utility, they fade, even while you grasp them by the hand. Search for the Sat---that which suffers no change.

Search for the *Chit*---the state of consciousness, which is unaffected by gusts of passion, which is pure, which is free from egoism or the desire to possess. Then alone can you experience the Light, and illumine the Path for others. Search for *Ananda*, the *Ananda* that emanates from *Prema*, Love with no blemish of attachment. Be like bees hovering on the flower of the Glory of the Lord, sucking the sweet nectar of Grace, silently and joyfully. (*SSS Vol. 2 p.42-43*)

*Prema Mudita Manasey Kaho Rama Rama Ram
Rama Rama Ram
Rama Rama Ram Shri Rama Rama Ram
Papa Ghatay Dukha Mitey Lekay Rama Nam
Bhava Samudra Sukhada Nava Eka Rama Nam
Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama
Ram
Shri Rama Rama Ram
Parama Shanti Sukha Nidhana Divya Rama Nam
Niradhara Ko Adhara Eka Rama Nam
Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama
Ram
Shri Rama Rama Ram
Parama Gopya Parama Divya Mantra Rama Nam
Santa Hrudaya Sada Vasatha Eka Rama Nam
Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama
Ram
Shri Rama Rama Ram
Maata Pita Bandhu Sakha Suba Hi Rama Nam
Bhakta Janara Jivana Dhana Eka Rama Nam
Shri Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama Ram
Rama Rama Ram Shri Rama Rama Ram*

With the heart and mind full of love and devotion, recite the name of Lord Rama. Reciting the name of Lord Rama cuts down sins and miseries and helps to cross the ocean of life and death. So potent is Lord Rama's name that it brings eternal peace and bliss and is the only support of those who have no support. So loving and so divine is Lord Rama's name that

sages and saints always have only Lord Rama's name in their hearts. O Lord Rama! Thou art my Mother, Father, Relations, Friends, everything, and all. The only Life-long treasure of the devotee is Thy name. Chant the mantra 'Rama Rama Ram.'
(Sai Bhajana Mala p.317)

The spirit of sacrifice is the basic equipment of the sevak. Without the inspiration of the sense of sacrifice, your seva will be hypocrisy, a hollow ritual. Inscribe it deep and clear on your heart.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. IKSHVAKU DYNASTY-THE IMPERIAL LINE

People believe that incarnations of God happen only for two reasons: the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the righteous. But those represent only one aspect of the Task. The granting of peace and joy, of a sense of fulfilment to seekers who have striven long—this too is the Task.

The Avatar, or Form Incarnate, is only the concretisation of the yearning of the seekers. It is the solidified sweetness of the devotion of godly aspirants. The formless assumes the Form for the sake of these aspirants and seekers.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

IKSHVAKU DYNASTY- THE IMPERIAL LINE

The Ikshvaku dynasty, in Puranic literature, was a mythical dynasty founded by Ikshvaku, grandson of Vivasvan or Surya and son of Vaivasvata Manu. This dynasty is also known as Sūryavamśa (the Solar dynasty). The important personalities belonging to this royal house are Harishchandra, Dilīpa, Sagara, Raghu, Rama and Prasenajit. Although, both the Hindu Puranas and the Buddhist texts include Shuddodhana, Gautama Buddha and Rahula in their accounts of the Ikshvaku dynasty, but according to the Buddhist texts, Mahasammata, an ancestor of Ikshvaku was the founder of this dynasty who was elected by the people as the first king of the present era. The Ikshvaku dynasty of Jaina literature includes 22 Jaina Tirthankaras. According to the Puranas, supreme preceptor of the Ikshvaku dynasty was sage Vashishta.

Ikshvaku was the first king of the Ikshvaku dynasty and founder of the Sun Dynasty (Suryavamsh). He is the son of Vivasvat Manu who is the son of Vivasvant (Surya, the Sun god). Ikshvaku reigned over Kosala, the present day Oudh in the state of Uttar Pradesh along the banks of the river Sarayu with

Ayodhya as its capital. There are many illustrious Kings in the Ikshvaku Dynasty. Bhaghiratha, who brought the river Ganga to earth from heaven. Harischandra, who accepted selling his wife and son, but did not tell a lie. Shibi, who cut his limbs to feed a hawk so that he could save the life of a dove who had sought refuge in him. Ram, who was the seventh incarnation of Vishnu.

The last important king of Ayodhya was Brihdbal, who was killed by Abhimanyu in the Kurukshetra war. The last ruling king of the dynasty at Ayodhya was Sumitra in the 4th century BC, who, after being forced out of Ayodhya by emperor Mahapadma Nanda of Magadha's Nanda Dynasty, continued the royal line at Rohtas.

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- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

KHATVANGA TO DILEEPA

In the immaculate pure Solar Dynasty was born the highly mighty, the far famed, the strong armed, the intensely loved and revered ruler, Khatvanga. His rule showered supreme bliss on the immense population under his throne and persuaded them to pay homage to him, as if he were himself God. He had a “one-and-only” son, named Dileepa. He grew up, shining in the glory of knowledge and virtue; he shared with his father the joy and privilege of guarding and guiding the people. He

moved among his subjects, eager to know their joys and sorrows, anxious to discover how best to relieve pain and distress, intent on their welfare and prosperity.

Dileepa, too, was the very embodiment of righteousness, and as a consequence, he saw that neither want nor disappointment affected him in the least. He held fast to the ideals and practices of his father so far as the administration of the empire was concerned, and so he could slowly and without any dislocation, take upon himself the full responsibility of administration. Thus, he was able to give his father rest in his old age. Khatvanga rejoiced within himself, contemplating the great qualities of his son and observing his skill, efficiency and practical wisdom.

Dileepa's marriage and

The father watched his son grow straight and strong, virtuous and wise. He sought a bride for him so that after the marriage, he could place on his shoulders part of the burden of the sceptre. He sought her in royal houses far and wide, for she must be a worthy companion for the prince. At last, the choice fell on the Magadha princess, Sudakshina. The wedding was celebrated with unsurpassed pomp and exultation by the people of the court.

Sudakshina was endowed with all womanly virtues in ample measure. She was saintly and simple and a sincere votary of her husband. She served her lord and poured love on him, as if he were her very breath. She walked in the footsteps of her husband and never deviated from the path of righteousness.

Dileepa's Coronation

Some years passed. Then, Khatvanga directed the court astrologers to select an auspicious day and hour for the Coronation of Dileepa and on the day fixed by them he installed Dileepa as the Monarch of the realm.

Lord and Sovereign of the Empire

Dileepa shone forth as the Lord and Sovereign of the Empire, which stretched from sea to sea, with the seven islands of the Ocean. His rule was so just and compassionate, so much in conformity with the injunctions laid down in the scriptures that rains came as plentifully as needed and the harvest was rich and profuse. The entire empire was green and glorious, festive and full. The land was resonant with the sacred sound of the Vedas recited in every village, the purifying rhythm of the Manthras chanted in the Vedic sacrifices performed throughout the land; every community lived in concord with all the rest.

Cause of being Childless

The Maharaja was apparently overcome by some mysterious anxiety. His face was losing effulgence. The lapse of a few years did not improve matters. Despair wrote its deep lines firmer on his brow. One day, he revealed the cause of his gloom to his queen, Sudakshina: "Darling! We have no children, and sadness is overpowering me as a consequence. I am even more affected when I realise that this Ikshvaku dynasty will terminate with me. Some sin which I committed must have brought about this calamity. I am unable to decide the process by which I can counter this malign destiny. I am eager to learn from our family preceptor, the sage Vashishta,

the means by which I can win the Grace of God and make amends for the sin. I am very much agitated by grief. What do you suggest as the best means to win Grace?”

Sudakshina did not take time even to think out the answer. “Lord! This same fear had entered my mind too, and caused me much grief. I had not given expression to it. I smothered it in the mind for I cannot, I know, reveal my fears, without being prompted by you, my Lord. I am ever willing and eager to support and follow implicitly what appeals to you as the best means of overcoming our sorrow. Why should there be any delay? Let us hasten to consult revered Vashishta,” she said.

Dileepa ordered the chariot to be brought for the pilgrimage to the hermitage of the Preceptor. He directed that no escort or courtier need accompany him that day. In fact, he drove the vehicle himself and reached the simple cottage of his Gurudev. At the sound of the chariot, the hermits on the outskirts of the Ashram went into the cottage and made known to their Master the arrival of the Ruler of the Empire. Vashishta showered his blessings on the Ruler of the Empire and inquired about his health and the welfare of his subjects and his kith and kin.

Sudakshina fell at the feet of the sage’s consort, the famed Arundathi, the embodiment of all the virtues which adorn the noblest of women. Arundathi lifted her into her arms and fondly embraced her, prodding her with questions about her welfare. She led her into the inner part of the hermitage.

Dileepa enquired from Vashishta whether the Yajnas and Yagas (sacrifices), the ascetics had to perform as parts of the cultural tradition were being carried out without any handicap. Whether the anchorites¹⁵ were experiencing any difficulty in acquiring food and carrying on their studies and spiritual practices and whether the sylvan campuses were terrorised by wild beasts. He was yearning, he said, to make their studies and spiritual exercises progress well without any distraction due to adverse environment or counter influences.

Vashishta suggested to the assembled sages and seekers to move into their hermitages, and asked king the reason for his coming to his place accompanied by the queen and none else. The king communicated to his preceptor the nature and depth of his grief., and prayed for the only remedy that could remove it namely, his Grace.

Listening to that prayer, Vashishta was lost in deep meditation. Perfect silence prevailed. The king too sat in the lotus posture on the bare floor and merged his mind in God. The queen attuned her mind with the Divine.

¹⁵ *somebody who lives a reclusive life of prayer*
Anchorite (female: anchoress; adj. anchoritic; , signifying "to withdraw", "to depart into the rural countryside") denotes someone who, for religious reasons, withdraws from secular society so as to be able to lead an intensely prayer-oriented, ascetic, and—circumstances permitting—Eucharist-focused life. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

At last, Vashishta opened his eyes and said, “King! The will of God can be thwarted by no man, whatever his might or authority. I have no power to over-ride the decree of the Divine. I cannot manifest enough Grace to confer, through my blessings, the son you desire. You have drawn on yourself a curse. On one occasion, when you were approaching the Capital, during your journey home, the Divine Cow, Kamadhenu, was reclining in the cool shade of the Divine Tree, the Kalpatharu! Your eye fell on her, but caught up in the tangle of worldly pleasures; you ignored her and passed on, in pride, to the palace. Kamadhenu was pained by the neglect. She was hurt that you failed to honour her. She felt that your people will start dishonouring the cow, since the king himself had failed in his duty. When the rulers, who do not revere the Vedas or adore Brahmins who learn and practice the Vedas or neglect the cow which sustains man, continue to rule without restraint, she argued there will be no dharma in the land.

Kamadhenu cursed you that day that you should have no son to succeed to your throne. She declared, however, that when you take advice of the Guru and start in humility and reverence to serve the cow and worship her in gratitude, the curse will be rendered in fructuous and you will be rewarded with a son and heir.

Therefore, worship the cow from this moment, with your queen, as laid down in the sacred texts and you are certain to have a son. The hour is near when cows start returning home from the pasture. My treasure, the divine cow, Nandini, is fast approaching the hermitage. Go, serve her with devotion and

steady faith. Give her food and drink at appropriate hours. Wash the cow and take her out to the pastures and see that no harm comes to her while she grazes.”

Vashishta then initiated the King and Queen in the ritualistic vow of “Cow Worship” (*Dhenuvratha*); he sent them into the cowshed with holy water and offerings for the worship and himself walked towards the river for ablutions and evening prayers.

One day, when Nandini was gazing happily in the jungle, a lion espied and followed her in order to allay his hunger. Dileepa observed this. He used all his skill and might to foil the lion from pouncing on her. He resolved to offer his own body in exchange. That lion, though feline and ferocious, was a strict follower of Dharma. Moved by compassion at the sacrifice that the king was willing to make to save the cow that he worshipped, it released the cow and the king from its clutches, and left the place.

Nandini was filled with inexpressible sense of gratitude and joy at the self-sacrificing gesture of Dileepa. She said: “King! This moment the curse that afflicts you is lifted! You will have a son who will subdue the whole world, support the principles and practice of Dharma, earn renown on earth and in heaven, enhance the Ikshvaku line, wherein the Lord Himself, Narayana, will one day take birth! May this son be born soon.” Nandini blessed the King. Attended by the King, the sacred cow returned to the ashram of Vashishta.

Vashishta had no need to be told! He knew all. As soon as he saw the faces of the King and Queen he surmised that their wish was fulfilled; so, he blessed them and permitted them to leave for the City. Then, Dileepa and Queen Sudakshina prostrated before the Sage and reached the Palace; full of joy at happy turn of events.

A son was born to Dileepa

The child grew in the womb as the blessing guaranteed. When the months ran their full course, at an auspicious moment, the son was born. When happy tidings spread over the city and kingdom, thousands assembled before and around the palace in great joy. The streets were festooned with flags and green leaves, Groups of people danced in glee calling on all to share in the thrill. They waved camphor flames to mark the occasion. Huge crowds exclaimed and moved on the palace grounds.

Dileepa ordered that the birth of the heir to the empire be announced to the multitude gathered in the vast grounds of the Palace, by the Minister himself; and when he did so, the joyous acclamation of the throng hit the sky. The applause was loud and long; the jais echoed and re-echoed from one street to another. It took many hours for the gathering to disperse and reach home.

On the tenth day, the King invited the Guru and celebrated the rite of Naming the new-born (*Namakaranam*). The name of Raghu was selected, on the basis of the asterism under which he was born. The child gave delight to all by its prattle and play. He was liked by all as a bright and charming youngster.

He crossed his teens and became a brave, resolute, efficient helpmate of his father.

Dileepa decides to retire into the silence of the forest, spend his remaining years in the adoration of God

One night- no one could guess why the king felt so – while conversing with the Queen he said, “Sudakshina! I have achieved many a grand victory! I have succeeded in celebrating many a great ritual sacrifice. I have fought many a grim battle with mighty invaders and triumphed over them all, including even ogres and superhuman Titans! We are blessed with a son who is precious gem! We have nothing more to gain.

Let us spend the remainder of our lives in the adoration of God. Raghu is the repository of all virtues. He is fit in all respects to take up the burden of ruling over the Empire. Let us entrust the realm to him. We shall retire into the silence of the forest, live on roots and fruits, serve the sages who lead austere lives filled with godly thoughts and Godward aspiration, and sanctify every moment with *Sravana*, (*Listening to the sacred teachings*), *Manana*, (*Meditating on their inner meaning*) and *Nididhyasana* (*Practising the path laid down*). We shall not yield for a minute to sloth based on Tamasic qualities.

He called the Minister as soon as it was dawn and directed that arrangements be made for the Coronation and marriage of the Prince. Full of spirit of renunciation, he asked the Queen what her plans were. She shed tears of joy and gratitude and said: “What greater good fortune can I have? I am bound by your

order; Proceed with your plans.” Her enthusiasm and willing acceptance strengthened the resolution of the Emperor.

Dileepa called together his ministers, scholars, and sages and communicated to them his intention to celebrate the Coronation and marriage of his son. They whole heartedly agreed and the two functions were held with great pomp. The father then gave the Prince valuable advice on administration, emphasising the need to promote the study of the Vedas and the fostering of scholars learned in Vedic lore, and to lay down laws that would promote popular well- being. After this he moved into forest, with the queen, bent on acquiring the Grace of God. (*RKR* *Part I p.11-20*)

EMPEROR RAGHU’S RULE

Emperor Raghu ruled the kingdom in accordance with the directives given by pundits and with the twin objectives: happiness of his subjects and promotion of righteous living. He believed that these two were as vital as breath and he spared no pains in pursuing these ideals. Though young he was rich in virtue. However tough a problem happened to be, he grasped it quickly and discovered the means of solving it. He made his subjects happy and contented. Wicked kings were taught severe lessons by him. He won them over by peaceful approaches and clever diplomatic tactics, or fielding a little army in order to win them over, or openly breaking with them and defeating them on the field of battle.

He was engaged in activities that ensured welfare of the people and promoted the culture enshrined in the Vedas. All classes of people extolled his rule, irrespective of age, economic status, or attainments. They said he was proving himself superior to his father in physical prowess, courage, righteous conduct and compassion. Everyone said that he brought lasting significance to the name he bore.

He paid special attention to the care and comfort of the hermits engaged in asceticism in the forests. He saw to it that they were saved from harassment and himself supervised the arrangements for assuring them protection and encouragement. So, he received their blessings and grace in ample measure.

And also, one day, a student-hermit, Kautsu, disciple of Varathanthu, came to the Court after finishing his studies. He prayed to the King to help him in securing the Thanks Offering which he had to submit to his preceptor. Raghu gave him the money that he wanted. Kautsu was happy that the gift he received was pure, collected from the people without causing them any distress, and paid by them gladly and gracefully, for Raghu did not collect even a paisa more than was absolutely needed, as he was afraid of the anger of God. The money was also handed over with great love and consideration; and so, Kautsu was overwhelmed by joy and gratefulness. His heart was full and he spoke lovingly to the King. “May you be soon with a son who will achieve world-wide fame.” With this he left the presence of the ruler.

True to his words, ten months later, Raghu was blessed with a son, dazzling like diamond! The rites of baptism and naming were performed by the palace priests. He was name “Aja”. He was a charming babe. He grew into a sprightly boy, eager to learn all the arts and sciences. He became an adept in each of them. His fame as a great scholar and a very accomplished lad spread throughout the land. (*RKR V Part I p.20-22*)

The discontented man is as bad as lost

There was a pupil once, in the kingdom of Raghu, who asked his preceptor at the conclusion of his studies what *Dakshina* (thanksgiving offering) he will accept from him. *Dakshina* means offerings made in gratitude for service rendered. The *Guru* told him that he needed no other *dakshina* than his gratitude; it was enough if he lived according to his teachings and brought honour to his preceptor thereby¹⁶. But the pupil insisted that he must indicate his need and tell him some sum of money or gifts that he would accept. So, just to ward him off and get rid of him, the *Guru* named an impossible sum of money; "You learnt sixteen *Vidyas* (branches of knowledge) from me; well, bring me sixteen lakhs of gold *nishkas* (coins)." At this, the pupil went off, to collect the sum.

The disciple went to Emperor Raghu, and got from him the promise that he will fulfil his every desire; then he placed his petition for sixteen lakhs of gold *nishkas* before him. Raghu was rendered desperate by the vast sum needed; though

¹⁶ Resist the temptation to satisfy the senses, to acquire what the world can give, to accumulate material gains. Set limits to your wants.

Emperor, he was too deep in austerity to have the sum on hand. Still, in order to keep his plighted word, he invaded the realm of *Kubera* (the God of wealth), and brought back as loot enormous stocks of gold. "Take all this and give your preceptor what he has asked for; keep the balance for yourself" the king said. The pupil refused to take a coin more than what he had to offer as *Dakshina* to his *Guru*. "I have brought them for you; it is all yours, take them," insisted Raghu. But the young man resisted the temptation and stood his ground. That is real heroism. *Asanthushtah dhwijo nashtah*---"the discontented man is as bad as lost." Rely on the Lord and accept whatever is your lot. He is in you, with you. He knows best what to give and when. He is full of *Prema* (Love). (*SSS Vol.6 p.144*)

AJA

In course of time, Raghu also felt his father's urge to place on the prince's head the burden of the sceptre and himself retire into forest for the contemplation of God. He too called on the ministers to arrange for the Coronation and marriage. Indumathi, the sister of Bhojaraj, ruler of Magadha was the chosen bride. After the installation of Aja on the throne, the royal parents left for their forest hermitage.

Aja, with the queen as his loving partner, won the loyalty of the subjects by his wisdom and sympathy. They scrupulously followed the advice given by Raghu on the ways and means of administration.

Aja loved and revered the world and its inhabitants as the reflections and image of the Indumathi he loved so deeply, so he was full of happiness and exaltation. They used to spend days and weeks in beautiful sylvan retreats, admiring the glory and grandeur of Nature.

The queen gave birth to a son and news was communicated to the revered Preceptor, Vashishta. Ceremonial rites for the newborn baby were done. He was named Dasaratha. Dasaratha was, indeed, the pet of everyone who saw him and who had the privilege of fondling him. The child waved and tossed its limbs about as if he was all vitality and joy. It appeared as if it was fed on *Ananda* (bliss) and it lived only for imparting *Ananda* to all.

One day, Aja and Indumathi betook themselves into the forest, as was their wont, for recreation in the lap of nature. The silence and the sublimity of that day were even more appealing than on other days. They sat in the shade of a tree and conversed endearingly, when a wind rose heavy and strong. It brought a fragrance, sweet beyond description. And they could hear the captivating strains of divine music! They rose and searched all around them for the cause of these mysterious gifts. They found high above their heads, between the clouds in the sky, Narada, the “mental son” (*Manasa Putra*) of Brahma, moving fast somewhere. Even as they were watching him, a flower from the wreath he was wearing on his tuft, unloosened itself and wafted by the wind, it fell right on top of the head of Indumathi. Aja was amazed at this incident; but, he was

shocked to find that the queen fell instantly on the ground in a faint and closed her eyes forever!

The death of the woman he loved as intimately as his own breath caused desperate grief to the ruler; his lamentation shook the forest from end to end. The earth quaked in sympathy; the trees stood still, rooted in wonder at the sorrow that filled the royal heart and overflowed it.

Narada heard the wail of the king—his sobs and groans—as he wept over the corpse of his beloved. He came down to console his agony. “Raja!”, he said, “sorrow is of no avail when death strikes. The body is prone to birth and death. What brings about birth brings about death too. To seek to know why they happen is an exercise in insanity. The acts of God are beyond the cause-and-effect chain. Ordinary intellects cannot unravel them; they can at best guess the reason, as far as their faculties can reach. How can the intellect grasp something out of its domain?”

“Death is inevitable for each embodied being. However, since the death of Indumathi is resonant with strangeness, I have to tell you its reason,” Narada said. He drew Aja near and said, “Listen! In former days, the sage Thrnabindu was engaged in extreme asceticism, and Indra resolved to test his attainments and the depth of his equanimity. He despatched a Divine Enchantress, named Harini, to attract him into the world of sensualism. But the sage was immune to her wiles and remained unaffected. He opened his eyes and said, ‘You do not seem to be an ordinary woman. You are perhaps a godly

damsel. Well, whoever you are, you must suffer the penalty for resolving to execute a foul deed, a nefarious plan! Be born as a human being, fallen from heaven. Learn what it is to be a mortal human.’ Cursing her thus the sage closed his eyes and plunged into meditation again.

“Harini shook with fear and shed profuse tears of repentance. She prayed for pardon and for cancellation of her exile from heaven, she pleaded pathetically for the removal of the curse. At this, the sage melted a little and said, ‘Oh weak one! It is not possible for me to retake my words. But I shall indicate an occasion when you will be released. Listen! The moment a flower from heaven drops on your head, your human frame will fall and you can return to Heaven.’ Indumathi is that divine damsel and she has found her release this day. When a flower I wore fell on her, she rid herself of the curse. Why grieve over this? It is of no avail.” Narada spoke of the duties of a monarch and his responsibility and the example he must set before all. He spoke of the evanescent nature of life and the mystery of death, the ultimate fate of all beings that are born. After this, Narada wended his way across the sky.

Unable to save his beloved, Aja performed the obsequies and reached the capital city. He was heavy with grief; only Prince Dasaratha could give him some consolation and renew his will to live. He spent his days in morose dreariness. Since Dasaratha was now a full-grown youth, Aja made over the kingdom to him and sat on the bank of the Sarayu river, bent on fulfilling the vow of “non-acceptance of food,” (*Anasana*).

Denying himself the sustenance to continue, he caused his life to ebb away. (*RKR V Part I p.21-26*)

DASARATHA

As soon as Dasaratha¹⁷ heard the news, he hastened quickly to the Sarayu bank and bewailed the loss of his dear father. He arranged for the funeral without delay and felt some relief that his father had given up life through a ritualistic vow. He drew some strength from this fact and resumed his duties as the Ruler, with full mastery of all his varied faculties. (*RKR V Part I p.26*)

IKSHVAKU LINEAGE AND TRADITIONS AS NARRATED BY VASHISHTA AT JANAKA'S COURT

Dasaratha rose and said, “Janaka! For the Ikshvaku Dynasty, the sage Vashishta is God on Earth! He is our supreme preceptor. He can speak with full authority on the traditions of our dynasty.”

As soon as Dasaratha sat down, Vashishta stood before the assembly and spoke as follows: “Royal Sage! Listen, all those who have assembled! Brahman! the Unmanifested Supreme, the Eternal, the Pure, through the exercise of Will created

¹⁷ See Chapter, *Dasaratha*

Marichi. Marichi's son was Kasyapa and his son was Surya. Surya's son was Manu, Manu had a son named Vaivaswatha Manu. He ruled over the people and earned the appellation, Prajapathi. A son Ikshvaku was born to him. He was the first overlord of Ayodhya, and so the dynasty itself came to be called the Ikshvaku Line. Ikshvaku son was Kukshi. Kukshi's son was named Vikukshi. His son was Bana. Bana's son was Anaranya. Anaranya had a son named Trisanku. Trisanku's son was Dhundhumara. Dhundhumara's son was Yuvanaswa. Mandhata was the son of Yuvanaswa. His son Susandhi had two sons, Daivasandhi and Presenjit. The famous Bharatha was the son of Daivasandhi. Bharatha's son was Asitha. When Asitha was ruling the kingdom, a coalition of the Haihayas, Thalajanghas and Sasibindus invaded the realm and Asitha had to flee to the Himalayan region with his two queens. He took refuge in the region called Bhrgu Prasravana and after a few years passed away there itself.

“Both his queens were enceinte when he died. They sought asylum in the hermitage of Chyavana who was filled with compassion at their plight. He consoled them, saying, ‘Mothers! Do not entertain any fear. This is your very home. You will have safe delivery. You will have strong splendour filled fortunate babies.’ His blessing came true. Within a few days, the elder queen delivered a son named Sagara; and, he was installed as the emperor of Ayodhya. “His son was Asamanja, who had a son called Amsumantha. Amsumantha's son was Dileepa, whose son was named Bhagiratha. Bhagiratha begot Kakustha. Kakustha's son was Raghu. Raghu had a son, Pravardha. Pravardha had Sudarsana as son and Sudarsana,

Agnivarna. Seeghraga was the name of the son of Agnivarna. Maru was the name of the son of Seeghraga. After him, the throne came from father to son, to Prasusruka, Ambarisha and Nahusha, in succession.

“Nahusha’s son was Yayathi and Yayathi’s son was Nabhaga. Nabhaga had Aja as his son. Dasaratha is the eldest son of Aja, and his four sons, a precious jewel each one, are Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. (*RKRV Part I p.178-179*)

STORIES OF RAMA’S FOREFATHERS AS NARRATED TO HIM BY SAGE VISWAMITRA: DESCENT OF GANGA

Rama asked him, “Master! Why is it said that the Ganga flows as three streams in the three worlds? How does the Ganga reach the Ocean, which is the Lord of every stream and river throughout the world! Please tell me and make me glad!” Viswamitra said, “Son! The Himalayan range is the basis of all this world: it is the home for all animals and all herbs. It has two daughters, Ganga and Uma. Ganga is the elder of the two. Both these are being adored by the entire world. The gods asked that Ganga be given to them so that they might have prosperity. So, Himavaan (the Deity of the Himalayas) gifted Ganga to the gods in order to secure their blessings, and benefit the three worlds.

“The younger daughter, Uma entered upon a life of extreme asceticism. She immersed herself in hard spiritual discipline, prompted by supreme detachment from everything worldly. So, Himavaan sought to settle her in the world as a wife. In spite of strenuous endeavour, he could not succeed in this for long. At last, he persuaded Rudra to agree to wed her. Thus, she too became entitled to the adoration of the three worlds.

“The Ganga you see here is the Ganga that the gods took with them, and that has come down to Earth and that has three steps, one in heaven, one on earth and another subterranean.”

Rama reminded him that they will be happy to know about the origin of that holy stream. Viswamitra responded and said, “Ramachandra! Your ancestors are responsible for Ganga coming down on earth. As a result of their good deeds, the peoples of the earth are sanctifying themselves, bathing in the sacred waters and performing morning and evening ceremonial rites and ablutions therein. The Ganga is the supreme stream of Divine purity. The nectarine waters can confer immortality. She was dwelling in the matted locks on Siva’s Head. For that reason, she is most auspicious. She grants all that is beneficial.” Hearing Viswamitra extol the river in such superlative terms, Ramachandra said, “How did my ancestors manage to lead down to earth a river with such amazing attributes of power and purity? If you can describe to us the story, we can derive great joy therefrom.”

When Viswamitra heard this request, presented with such humility, he said, “Rama! Listen! In ancient times, Ayodhya

was ruled by an emperor named Sagara. He was a righteous ruler and valiant hero. Fascinated by his qualities of head and heart, the king of Vidarbha gave him his beloved daughter, Kesini, in marriage. She too was a strict follower of Dharma. She never wavered from the path of Truth.

“But since even after the lapse of many years, they were not blessed with progeny, Sagara married the charming daughter of Arishtanemi, named Sumathi, as his second wife, with the concurrence of Kesini. She too proved barren and so, the king decided to spend the rest of his life in asceticism. He went to the bank of a stream by the side of which the sage Bhrigu was having his hermitage, and with his two wives, he plunged into the most severe disciplines of the anchorites.

“A long time elapsed thus. One day, at break of dawn, the sage Bhrigu, staunch upholder of Truth, appeared before him and said, ‘Oh King! End this tormenting of the body, this asceticism. You will earn unparalleled renown in this world. Before long, you will be endowed with the bliss of having a son born unto you!’ As soon as these words of compassion and grace fell upon his ear, Sagara opened his eyes and saw the sage standing before him. Immediately, he fell at his feet, and signed to the wives too to do likewise. He prayed that the sage may bless them directly.

The senior queen, Kesini, bowed her head low and fell at his feet, with many an adulatory hymn emerging from her lips. Bhrigu asked her, ‘Mother! Do you desire a single son, so that the thread of continuity be not broken, or do you desire for a

large number of sons, who will be endowed with enormous physical valour and vast renown?’ She replied that a single son will satisfy her, and prayed that her wish may be gratified. Bhriгу accepted her request and blessed her likewise.

When the second queen Sumathi prostrated before him he asked her the same question. She craved for strong, brave, celebrated sons in plenty, and so, the sage granted that desire and blessed that it be fulfilled.

Elated by the blessings of the sage, Sagara returned to his capital city, accompanied by his wives. They fixed their minds on the boons they received and spent their time happily. Within a few months, both queens conceived and awaited the happy event. When the nine months had passed, Kesini delivered a son and Sumathi gave birth to many.

As the days sped by, the sons romped about and played excitedly with children of the same age and later, started moving out beyond the palace in search of companions and for the sake of games. The son of Kesini, Aswamanja by name, took them to the sands of the Sarayu river; he used to take delight in throwing the children into the river and laughed outright in glee, when the child was drowned! Soon, he earned an infamous reputation, as the worst criminal in the kingdom!

When they emerged out of their teens, Sagara selected suitable royal brides for each of them and had the marriages celebrated. Aswamanja continued his wickedness, however, and the residents of Ayodhya had heartrending grief as a result of his

incurrigible viciousness. One day they approached Sagara and amidst loud wailing, represented to him the atrocious acts of his eldest son. At this, the king ordered that Aswamanja should immediately leave the city and that he must be exiled into the forests. Aswamanja had a son born to him by then. So, he had to leave behind his wife and son, besides his parents.

Years passed. Aswamanja's son Amsumanta grew up won renown throughout the world as loveable, virtuous and valiant. Once, Sagara decided on the performance of the great *Aswamedha* (Horse Sacrifice), and fixed an auspicious moment for starting the rites." While Viswamitra was at this point in his narration, Rama put in a question: "Master! Was the Horse Sacrifice performed in Ayodhya, or did he choose some holy river bank for the purpose?" Viswamitra smiled, and replied, "Rama! I am realising how earnest you are about sacrifices and how reverent your attitude towards sages is! I shall describe it in detail as you desire. Listen! There is a holy range facing the Himalayas from a distance, called the Vindhya range. The region in between is sacred for all yajnas and yagas. The Horse Sacrifice was done in that region. Experts in the recitation of Vedic hymns gathered there and the mountains echoed and re-echoed to the loud and correct recital of the prescribed ritual formulae.

Thousands were watching with great joy the unique ceremonial. Just then, the beautifully caparisoned horse was led in and worshipped. Later it was left to roam where it willed. In order to overcome and defeat any opposition to its free movement (indicative of an ambition on the part of the ruler

who so opposes to be free from the domination of their suzerain, Sagara) Amsumanta followed its footsteps, with his army fully equipped to meet all contingencies. After an unopposed round of the entire country, the horse was led back. The exact moment when the sacrifice had to be done in orthodox Vedic style approached, the people went to bring the animal in.

But the horse was nowhere to be seen! It is laid down that the loss of the sacrificial animal and its non-availability at the auspicious moment bodes ill for the organisers of the Yajna! So, Sagara was naturally upset. He sent the numerous sons of his second wife, armed and equipped, to discover the horse and bring it back to the sacrificial altar. They sought the help of the gods and the demons, and searched everywhere and even dug the earth up, to see whether the horse was kept hidden below by the captors. But they had to return and report that their mission had failed.

Sagara was enraged at this. ‘Of what avail is this numerous progeny, if you announce to me only your incompetence? Why stand before me with faces darkened with disgrace? Go and do not come to me, until you recover the horse.’

The sons reacted sharply to these angry words. They went back into the world determined to leave no spot unexamined. Mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, caves, towns and villages, forests and deserts—why lengthen the list, they looked closely at every yard, every foot of ground. While they were proceeding thus they found in one place, a hermit, deeply

immersed in Dhyana; the horse was there, near him, calmly nibbling grass!

They were overcome by delight when they saw the horse, and by anger, when their eyes fell on the hermit. They were tossed between two conflicting emotions. They lost their sanity, as a result of the irrepressible feelings. Their reason failed. Their hearts were petrified. They shouted in the ear of the hermit, ‘Villainous brute! You have stolen our horse and hidden it in your backyard’! The sage Kapila slowly opened his eyes and looked around. The sons of Sagara stood around him and poured abuses on his head; some even got ready to give him a heavy thrashing!

Kapila saw that words and arguments were futile weapons to meet those bullies. He decided that he must deal with them differently. He burnt them into ash merely by casting his eye on them. Greatly distressed at the inordinate delay caused by their failure to return, Sagara was much agitated. How could he stop the sacrifice that he had half gone through? How could he continue and finish it? Seeing his plight, the grandson, Asumanta fell at his grandfather’s feet and offered to search for the horse and his uncles, and bring news about them, if only he was sent on that mission. Sagara blessed him and sent him on that errand. Asumanta was at his job, day and night. At last he was rewarded by success. He saw signs of his uncles having been reduced into a heap of ashes! He was anxious to perform obsequies for the departed souls. But he could not see any well, tank, lake or stream. This was essential for depositing the funeral offerings. Heavily laden with sorrow, he moved

some distance forward. A reverend old man came across his path and told him, ‘Do not allow grief to overpower you, dear son! Your uncles were reduced to ashes by sage Kapila with the welfare of the world also in view! Do not be content to offer the ritual obligations in mundane waters. Get the holy water of the Celestial Ganga. Bring the Ganga down to earth and let the sacred waters flow over the ashes. Then, the manes will be saved. But first, take the horse along with you and perform the sacrifice unto its glorious conclusion. Thereafter, you can think of ways and means to bring the heavenly Ganga to the Earth.’ Amsumanta fell at the feet of the hermit and hurried to his grandfather, where the yajna was being held up for want of the consecrated animal.”

Sagara was awaiting its arrival, with sleepless anxiety, both night and day, and so, when the horse was brought, he and the rithwiks (the Vedic scholars who officiated as priests) were filled with delight. Amsumanta felt that it would not be proper to announce, during the auspicious festival, that his uncles had an untimely death through the sage’s curse. So, he allowed the Valedictory Rite to come to an end. The priests and guests were given their share of votive gifts.

Then Amsumanta gave a detailed account of what had happened to the uncles and exhorted his grandfather to bring the heavenly river of unique sanctity down to the place where the ashes were lying. Sagara was delighted at the suggestion. He engaged himself in many ascetic disciplines and ritual ceremonies, which, according to the advice of elders, would induce Ganga to give him the boon he wanted. But he could

not succeed. He waned in health day by day as a result of grief at the loss of his sons, and the failure of his attempt to ensure a bright future for them. At last, he cast off his body, a disappointed man.

Rama! The ministers then crowned Amsumanta, after consulting the will of the people. He ruled over the kingdom without the slightest error or fault, for he was strong in morality and spiritual excellence. The people were fostered as if they were children born from his own loins. When old age crept on him, he offered the throne to Dileepa, his son, and proceeded to the Himalayas for the ascetic disciplines he wanted to impose on himself. His aim was not only self-realisation; he sought to bring down the Ganga for the sake of the salvation of the departed uncles. But he too had to give up his body without fulfilling the desire.

Dileepa was also moved by the same wish for, he knew how deeply his father and grandfather had longed for the consummation, bringing the Ganga down on earth! He tried various means. He performed many abstruse yajnas on the advice of sages. Pangs of sorrow that he could not fulfil the family ideal invaded him and he became chronically ill. Seeing that physical strength and mental stamina were declining, he placed his son Bhagiratha on the throne. He entrusted to him the mission that was beyond his grasp, namely, bringing the Ganga down. Soon after, Dileepa too left the earth.

Bhagiratha, bright with spiritual splendour, vowed that he must succeed in the task allotted to him by his father. Though he

ruled the kingdom very satisfactorily, he was sad that he had no children to maintain the line. This, as well as the supreme task of getting the Ganga, forced him to hand over the reins of government to the ministers and retire into the silence of the famous Gokarna Kshetra. He stood there practising austere penance like bearing the heat of the sun and taking food only once a month! At last appreciating his austerity, God appeared before him and said, ‘Son! Bhagiratha! Ask any boon you wish for, it shall be granted.’

Bhagiratha had the Vision of the One with the brilliance of a thousand Suns. He fell prostrate, overwhelmed with gratitude and devotion. He prayed, ‘Lord! Cause the Celestial Ganga to flow on earth, so that my great-grandfathers might be saved from perdition, and be restored to Heaven. And favour me with children, so that the Ikshvaku Royal Line might not be rendered extinct, with me as its last representative. May the dynasty continue and flourish.’ He held fast the Feet of the Lord and submitted his supplication.

The Lord replied, ‘Son! The first of your wishes is very hard to fulfil. Nevertheless, I shall grant you that one. The boon for the royal line? Yes you will have a noble son and your dynasty will continue and flourish. Arise!’ At this, Bhagiratha rose and the Lord continued, ‘Bhagiratha! Ganga is swollen and swift. When it falls from heaven, the earth will not be able to bear the impact. So, as Ruler of the Earth, you have to ponder over the problem and discover means by which dire disaster can be avoided. When the Ganga descends upon the earth, the effect will be calamitous. So, the river must be made to fall first on

the head of Siva. From there, the waters may be led on to earth with lessened impact. This is the best course, from the point of view of the inhabitants of the earth. Consider this well.’ After saying this, the Lord withdrew.

From thence, Bhagiratha began austerities to propitiate Siva and at last, he succeeded in winning His favour and His consent to receive Ganga direct on His Head, when it descends from Heaven. And so it happened that the Ganga fell on Siva and flowed down from His Head onto the earth, in seven distinct streams—Hladini, Nalini and Pavani flowed east, Subhikshu, Sitha and Sindhu flowed west, and the seventh stream followed the footsteps of Bhagiratha to where he led it, namely, the place where the ashes of his great-grandfathers lay in heaps, awaiting rescue from hell.

It flowed along the route that Bhagiratha took and all along the route; men benefited from the sacred stream and sanctified themselves. They were released from the effects of the sins, by the cleansing influence of the celestial Ganga. The great-grandfathers too were redeemed by the performance of obsequies on the bank of the thrice-holy stream, and with its waters.

Since Bhagiratha brought the Ganga to earth, the river got the name, Bhagirathi! After the ceremonies for the manes were over, Bhagiratha returned to Ayodhya. Happy that he could fulfil through Divine Grace the keenest wishes of his father and grandfather, he ruled over the empire for many years, receiving



Figure 1: Descent of Ganga

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)

Title **English:** Ganga vatram or Descent of Ganga

Description **English:** Shiva breaking up Ganga's arrogant descent from heaven using his hair. Parvati, Nandi and Bhagiratha watching. A Ravi Rarma press Oleograph.

Date Around 1910

Medium Oleograph

Source/Photographer http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00route_sdata/0400_0499/pantheon/arddhanarishvara/arddhana_rishvara.html

the spontaneous homage of his contented subjects. At last, he too left the body.”

When Viswamitra narrated the story of Rama’s forefathers thus, Rama and Lakshmana were all attention. They were enraptured with the incidents. (*RKRV Part I p.132-143*)

Be like the lotus, unattached to the slush where it is born and the water in which it is bred; the merits and demerits earned in past births is the slush, where the jeevi (individual soul) is born.

Maya or the enticing illusion called world is the water which sustains; but do not allow that enticement to affect you. Be above and beyond the earthly attachments like the lotus.

Know that though you may be in it, you should not allow the world to get into you and affect your sense of values.

- Sri Sathya Sai

5. DASARATHA AND HIS CONSORTS

To earn the Grace of God, you have to pray to the Personified Power with Name and Form; it is your yearning that decides in what form the Lord appears. You call and He answers. If you are not earnest, if you feel indifferent, and say, "Let Him come when He wills, in the Form He likes and with the Name He prefers," He will not come at all. Call on Him with anguish; He will respond.

- **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

5.1 DASARATHA

DASARATHA

Dasaratha (was a king of Ayodhya of the Ikshvaku dynasty whose life story is narrated principally in the Hindu epic Ramayana. He was a descendant of Raghu and was the father of Rama, the heroic prince of the Ramayana and an Avatara of the god Vishnu according to Hindu tradition. Dasaratha had three wives, namely Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Rama was the son of Kausalya, Lakshmana and Shatrughna were the sons of Sumitra, and Bharatha was the son of Kaikeyi.

Dasaratha had a daughter, Shanta, by his wife Kausalya. She was the eldest of all his children and married to Rishi Shreengi.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

DASARATHA¹⁸: Son of Aja and father of Rama; King of Ayodhya; the name means "ten chariot hero". (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

¹⁸ Also spelt as Dhasharatha

HIS BIRTH:

Queen (*Indumathi*) gave birth to a son. The parents (*Aja and Indumathi*) were overjoyed at this happy event. They had the news communicated to their revered preceptor, Vashishta. They wanted ceremonial rites to be done for the new-born baby. He was named Dasaratha. Dasaratha was, indeed, the pet of everyone who saw him and who had the privilege of fondling him. The child waved and tossed its limbs about as if he was all vitality and joy. It appeared as if it was fed on *Ananda* (bliss) and it lived only for imparting *Ananda* to all. (*RKR Part I p.23*)

DASARATHA MADE THE KING - A GREAT RULER:

Dasaratha was now a full-grown youth, Aja¹⁹ made over the kingdom (*of Kosala*) to him. Within a short time, the fame of Dasaratha illumined all quarters, like the rays of the rising sun. He had the intrepidity and skill of ten charioteers rolled into one and so, the name Dasaratha (The-ten-chariot-hero) was found appropriate. No one could stand up against the onrush of his mighty chariot! Every contemporary ruler, mortally afraid of his prowess, paid homage to his throne. The world extolled him as a hero without equal, a paragon of virtue, a statesman of highest stature. (*RKR Part I p.25-26*)

¹⁹ See Chapter, *Imperial line* - **AJA**

Dasaratha was an embodiment of peace, love and purity. He was a person of steady mind and unblemished character. Earned the title of ‘*Satya Parakrama*’ (a person of truthful valour) for himself. He had another title ‘*Dharma vratha*’ (one who has taken the vow of righteousness). He also had two more titles, ‘*Atirathi*’ (a warrior who can fight with several people at a time, seated on his chariot) and ‘*Rajarishi*’ (A saintly King). Thus he was a personification of all noble qualities. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.76*)

The Glory of Ayodhya

Ayodhya²⁰ was a flourishing city in the prosperous Kingdom of Kosala. Emperor Manu founded this city and there was none more beautiful²¹. It had spiralling mansions, sprawling markets, and spruce gardens. The citizens of Ayodhya took delight in adding fresh beauty to the already beautiful city. The mansions were studded with pearls and precious stones and shone with great splendour. Dasaratha, the Emperor, embodied in himself all noble ideals. The people too shared the noble virtues of

²⁰ Ayodhya is not a mere city, the capital of Kosala. Ayodhya signifies the impregnable fortress, i.e. the heart. The capital is in the centre surrounded by the ten organs. (*SSB 1996 p.111*)

²¹ AYODHYA was the capital of the kingdom of Kosala. It was built in such a way that no enemy could enter it. Hence, it was named Ayodhya (a place secure from enemies). It was built by Emperor Manu on the bank of the river Sarayu. Sarayu was a part of Manasarovar created by the Will of Brahma. Emperor Dasaratha ruled over this sacred place. (*SSS Vol.35 p.109*)

Ayodhya was built by Viswakarma (divine architect) himself. He built it in such a way that no enemy could enter it. (*SSS Vol.42 p.84*)

Emperor Dasaratha. The Emperor was pure and egoless, and verily the embodiment of peace and love. He regarded the subjects of his kingdom as his own children and lavished great love and affection on them.

Dasaratha ruled over his kingdom counselled by eight *Amathyas*²², (Ministers). These Ministers were of extraordinary mettle. They were masters of the Scriptures and masters of their senses as well. They held the Emperor's command in high esteem and were prepared to lay down their lives in the task of carrying out his commands. (*SSB 1996 p.12*) These eight persons were such that they always practised the highest *dharma*. The last one of these eight persons was Sumantra. He has also accepted two persons Vashishta and Vamadeva as his *Gurus*. In Dasaratha's daily life, he was using these two *Gurus* as his *purohits*. (*SSB 1977 p.80*) These priests led profoundly moral and spiritual lives, and were always absorbed in Divine contemplation. (*SSB 1996 p.12*) In addition, when Dasaratha had some doubt or when he found that the people's prosperity was being obstructed or when he wanted some advice, he used to have six people as his principal advisers. The first among these six people was Suyagna; the others were Jabali, Kasyapa, Pascheya, Markandeya and Gautama. These six persons were retained by him as his principal advisers. He was ruling the whole of Bharatha. There was no injustice, there was no untruth, there was no crime in the whole of Bharatha during his rule. At that time he had eight ministers and six advisers. The

²² The word 'Amathya' signifies those who practice righteousness in their daily life and establish the principle thus. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.76*)

rule of that day was such that Dasaratha looked into the prosperity of the people. Dasaratha had such noble qualities and ideals that he was carrying on the rule of his country in an exemplary manner. (*SSB 1977 p.80-81*)

Emperor Dasaratha ruled the entire country of Bharatha as an absolute monarch, ruthlessly suppressing injustice, unrighteousness, untruth as bad practices. He did not give scope at all for these evil traits to raise their ugly head. He was always wedded to truth and righteousness and earned the love and affection of his subjects. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.76*)

Dasaratha ruled the realm with love and care. (*RKRV Part I p.32*)

MEANING OF DASARATHA

Who was Dasaratha? He was not merely the Emperor of the Kosala Kingdom. Dasaratha signifies the chariot of the human body, which has five organs of action and five organs of perception (*SSB 1996 p.84*)

“Ayodhya²³” means “invincible”. Its ruler was Dasaratha. Dasaratha means one who has made his ten indriyas (sense organ) - the five organs of action and the five organs of perception – his chariot. (*SSS Vol.20 p.49*)

²³ The heart is Ayodhya, that which is not easily penetrable. The heart is, however, subject to pleasures and pains. (*SSS Vol.23 p.42*)

Dasaratha is a perfect example of one who has taken the path of truth. He has also a title called Sathya Parakrama. There was another title for Dasaratha, i.e., one who was bound by *dharma*. Atirathi was another title for him and this means one who could give happiness to a large extent. He was also called a *Rajarishi*. A king and yet a *Rishi* shining with brightness because of the several great qualities in him. He was a king for the kingdom.

Man has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Altogether he has got ten *indriyas*, and Dasaratha literally means the human body which has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Dasaratha symbolises this chariot of the human body which has got ten organs. Dasaratha also attracted three *gunas* in the form of Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. The four *Purusharthas*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* are symbolised by Dasaratha's four sons. Dasaratha was one who proclaimed such a significant inner meaning to the world and urged the people to lead an ideal life. (*SSB 1977 p.80-81*)

Dasaratha means he who is master of his ten senses, the five *Karmendriyas* (senses of action) and the five *Jnanendriyas* (senses of perception): that is to say, the successful sadhaka. Such a person can have the progeny of the four *Purusharthas*; *Dharma* (Rama), *Artha* (Lakshmana), *Kama* (Bharatha) and *Moksha* (Shatrughna). (*SSS Vol.6 2nd Edition p.137*)

Dasaratha had no kind of attachment, and he had the ability to discriminate between the right and wrong. He was not an ignorant person. Dasaratha recognised that all attachments are

only relationships between one body and another and such is a purely worldly attachment. (*SSB 1977 p.88-89*)

HIS MARRIAGES AND HIS THREE WIVES

To Kausalya²⁴:

Ravana²⁵, the Rakshasa King of Lanka, heard of Dasaratha and his fame. He was so filled with envy that he determined on a sure plan to destroy him, by means, fair or foul. “Dasaratha is a youth of marital age now. If I so contrive that he does not marry at all, it will make my safety doubly sure,” he thought within himself! Looking about with the aid of his Rakshasa skills, he discerned that there was a great likelihood that Dasaratha will wed the daughter of the King of Kosala. So, he decided to put an end to that princess! Ravana entered the Kosala Kingdom stealthily in disguise and kidnapped the princess (*Kausalya*) placing her in a wooden box; he cast it over the waves of the sea. The box was carried by the waves onto the shore.

The next day, Sumantra²⁶, the Prime Minister of Dasaratha happened to visit the place on a quiet holiday, to be spent in discussing within himself the problems of the State. His eyes fell on the box. He retrieved it and opened it. He was surprised to find in it a charming girl, with attractive eyes and a halo of

²⁴ See Chapter, Kausalya - Story of Kausalya

²⁵ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **RAVANA AND DASARATHA:**

²⁶ See chapter, *Sumantra* - **SUMANTRA’S MARRIAGE**

divine splendour. Sumantra was overcome with pity... He said, "Such barbarian stratagems are resorted to by Rakshasas. They are beyond the ken of men! I shall take you to your father and place you in his hands. Come with me. Let us go without delay," Sumantra placed her in his chariot and proceeded to Kosala, where he restored her to the King.

The king too, interrogated Sumantra in various ways and discovered that Dasaratha, the Emperor of Ayodhya was still unmarried. He was filled with joy at the discovery. He said. "I have resolved to give her in marriage to your master himself. Please inform the king of my offer."

Sumantra told Dasaratha in detail all that had happened. In order to confirm his acceptance, Dasaratha sent with the Court Priest of Kosala his own Court Priest with gifts of auspicious nature. The date and time were fixed. Dasaratha proceeded to the Kosala capital accompanied by a magnificent array of elephantry, chariotry, cavalry and infantry. The paeon of music which marched with him reached the sky and echoed from the horizon. The marriage of Dasaratha and Kausalya was celebrated with resounding grandeur and splendour. The King of Kosala took Sumantra near him and said, "You are the person who brought about this glory; of course, nothing ever happens without God's will. Nevertheless, how can I repay the debt I owe you and demonstrate my gratitude to you? Please honour my offer and accept it; be wedded this day itself in my capital city. If you agree, I shall arrange for the celebration of that joyous event this very day."

Dasaratha and Sumantra gave their consent to the proposal. Sumantra was married to the daughter of Veeradasa, of the clan of Ganga. The news of the marriages of both King and Prime Minister at the same place, on the same day, spread throughout the kingdom! The land was filled with wonder and delight. The festival lasted three days. The populace were treated to music, drama, dance and other forms of entertainment. Night and day were packed with excitement and joy.

On the fourth day, Dasaratha started back for Ayodhya, with his queen and courtiers as well as Minister Sumantra with his bride and entourage. They entered the City amidst the acclamation of the people. His subjects exulted at the marriages of both King and Minister. They danced in the streets and shouted “Jai” “Jai” till their throats got hoarse. They lined the streets to see their Queen. They sprinkled rosewater on the roads by which they came and welcomed them waving flames of camphor.

Dasaratha resumed his royal duties and ruled the realm with love and care. Often, he went with his consort, on excursions into the forests, and spent his days happily. But as time sped through days, months and even years, the shadow of distress darkened the face of the King. For, the pang of being childless saddened him. (*RKRV Part I p.29-31*)

To Sumitra

He consulted priests, pundits and ministers and when he knew that their desire confirmed the earnest prayer of Kausalya he married another wife, Sumitra²⁷. (*RKRV Part I p.32*)

To Kaikeyi

But in spite of the lapse of many years, no signs of the King securing a successor to the throne were evident. Moved by despair, the King married a third wife, at the insistence of the two queens²⁸. She was Kaikeyi, the exquisitely charming daughter of the King of Kekaya in Kashmir. (*RKRV Part I p.32*)

Dasaratha approached the King of Kekaya in Kashmir and proposed that he wanted to marry his daughter, telling him that he had already had two wives.

He always spoke the truth. *Sathyam nasti paro Dharma* (There is no Dharma greater than adherence to truth). He never said anything that was untrue. He explained to the King of Kekaya everything in detail. Then the king of Kekaya said, “You already have two wives and they have not borne you any children. Now you want a third wife. I can give my daughter in marriage to you on the condition that the son born to her will be the heir to your kingdom.” (*SSS Vol.41 p.55*)

²⁷ See Chapter, Sumitra - Dasaratha marries Sumitra who has Companionable Virtues

²⁸ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi* - Kausalya and Sumitra agree to Dasaratha marrying Kaika and agreed to the condition:

The King of Kekaya insisted that the son born of Kaikeyi should have the right of accession to the throne. If the King of Ayodhya could not agree to this, he declared, he would not consent. Garga, the Court Priest, brought back the message to Ayodhya. Kausalya and Sumitra recognised the ardour of the King to wed the princess of Kekaya, whose beauty was being extolled highly by all. They felt that the duty of a true wife is to obey the least wish of the husband and do her best to help the realisation of that wish. They also knew full well that the Imperial Line of Ayodhya can never be polluted by a son who would transgress Dharma. Though Dasaratha might promise that the son of the third wife could succeed to the throne, the son of Kaikeyi born in the dynasty would certainly be an embodiment of righteousness, free from such blemish. So, they pleaded with him, with palms meeting in prayer, “Lord! What greater happiness have we than yours? Accept the conditions laid by the King of Kekaya and wed his daughter and ensure the continuity of this dynasty of Raghu. There is no need to spend even a minute’s thought upon this.” The words of the queens fanned his native ardour to an even brighter flame. Therefore, the King sent Garga back with many presents agreeing to the terms and informing the King that he was following fast for the wedding ceremony. The ceremony itself was celebrated with lavish magnificence.

Dasaratha returned to his capital, shining like the moon amidst the stars, when he passed through the streets in procession, accompanied by the three queens. (*RKRV Part I p.33-34*)

Treated his wives with equal consideration

The king treated each of his three wives with equal consideration; they too, evinced equal love and respect towards each other and the King. They adored him and were afraid to displease him. They endeavoured their best to carry out his wishes and not hinder his desire, for they revered him as their God, in the tradition of the true wife. They lived with such intimate mutual love that it appeared as if all three had one breath, though they moved about as three bodies! (*RKRK Part I p.34*)

Allegory of Dasaratha and his three wives:

Symbolically, of the three wives of Dasaratha, Kausalya represents Satwa, Sumitra represents Rajoguna and Kaikeyi represents Tamoguna. This means that the human body is wedded to the three gunas. (*SSS Vol.23 p.42*)

Dasaratha means one who has made his ten *indriyas* (sense organs) the five organs of action and the five organs of perception—his chariot. Allegorically, this means that Dasaratha represents the body, with its ten organs. These sense organs are related to the three *gunas* (qualities) *Satwa*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*. Dasaratha's three wives--- Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi---symbolise these three *gunas*. (*SSS Vol.20 p.49*)

Dasaratha is one who recognised that happiness and bliss are natural qualities. It is because Dasaratha recognised that happiness is a natural quality of human beings, in his own home, the four *Vedas* in the form of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna were playing happily. They are the

embodiments of the *Vedas*. Here Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna respectively represent the *Yajur Veda*, *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. They were born as children of Dasaratha. (*SSB 1977 p.85-86*)

ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AYODHYA

No progeny from his loins

Years passed. The King and the queens crossed the bounds of youth and middle age and approached the realm of old age. There were no signs of a son. Therefore, though the women's apartments of the palace had all the comforts and accessories needed for happy existence, the hearts of the queens were torn by unrest, anxiety and despair.

One evening, the four (the King and his queens) sat in a room of the palace spending hours of anxiety over the future of Ayodhya, and the prospects of its prosperity and safety; and each attempted to answer intelligently and pleasantly. At last, unable to resolve the problem, they rose, heavily dejected and decided that they should consult the family Preceptor, Vashishta, and accept his advice.

At break of dawn, Vashishta was respectfully invited to grant his Presence. Many Pundits and Counsellors were also called for consultation. The King placed before them the problem of finding a successor to rule the vast realm between the two seas, the imperial domain under the sway of the Raghu dynasty. Overcome by despair, Dasaratha prayed to the elders in

plaintive terms for beneficial suggestions. (*RKRV Part I p. 34-35*)

Invited Sage Rishyasringa and Performed the Sacred Yaga Called Puthrakameshti:

Vashishta dwelt long in thought. At last he opened his eyes and spoke thus: “King! You need not grieve thus. Ayodhya will not be rendered master-less. She will not suffer widowhood. This domain will be gay, happy and prosperous, in unbroken festivity and evergreen with festoonery. She will be the guardian of right living, reverberating with music and joy. I will not agree to the raising of a prince from some other dynasty to the throne of Ayodhya. The Grace of God is a gift inscrutable. The Vow of Righteousness which you are fulfilling will surely bring you the supreme joy of having a son²⁹. (*RKRV Part I p.35*)

At this stage, the Emperor's Prime Minister Sumantra recalled to him the advice which the Sage Sanatkumara had given

²⁹ On one occasion when the Sage Durvasa visited Vashishta, Dasaratha was asking him for the chronology of his own dynasty. Dasaratha put the question to Durvasa with a view to finding out whether his family will uphold truth and *dharma*. Even at that time, Durvasa told Dasaratha that the sons he was going to have will be the embodiments of *dharma*, and that they will protect Truth and will have several good qualities. From that day, he was thinking that even if he has only one son, that will satisfy him provided that son will bring him reputation and glory. It is in that context that it has been said that it is better to be a swan and live for a short time rather than be a crow and live for a long time. What is the use of having barrels of donkey's milk? To have a spoonful of good cow's milk is better. So, even if it is one individual, if that one individual can spend all his time in serving the community around him, it is enough. (*SSB 1977 p.89*)

previously. Sumantra said: "Oh King! You have forgotten what Sanatkumara told you. Sanatkumara had enjoined on you to get the blessings of the great Sage Rishyasringa³⁰ and perform the *Yaga* with Rishyasringa as Brahma at the sacrifice." (*SSS Vol.23 p.39*)

Do not delay any further! Invite the sage Rishyasringa, the son of Vibhandaka and perform, with him as the High Priest, the sacred *Yaga* (Sacrifice) called *Puthrakameshti* (the *Yaga* prescribed for those desirous of begetting a son). Make all the necessary ceremonial and ritual arrangements for the *Yaga* forthwith. Your desire will be achieved without fail."

The queens listened to these reassuring words, spoken so emphatically by Vashishta. They were filled with Ananda! The bud of hope bloomed anew in their hearts. They retired into their apartments, praying most earnestly. The King searched among his entourage for the most appropriate emissary to be sent to Rishyasringa, son of Vibhandaka, and to invite him to the imperial capital on such a mission. At last, he called near him his old friend, Romapada, the King of the Anga State and sent him with necessary instructions and equipment. Meanwhile, arrangements for the *Yaga* were put through, on the bank of the sacred Sarayu river. Attractive sacrificial altars were constructed, in conformity with sacred injunctions. The City was decorated with flags and festoons.

³⁰ Rishyasringa (Rishyashringa) Hermit of family of Kasyapa; born from his father Vibhandaka's semen spilled upon viewing Urvashi (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Puthrakameshti Yagna³¹:

As was anticipated, the great sage Rishyasringa entered the city of Ayodhya, to the great delight of all, with his consort Santha³². Emperor Dasaratha welcomed the sage at the main gate of the Palace. He ceremonially washed the feet of the distinguished saint. He placed on his own head a few drops of the water sanctified by his feet. He then fell at the feet of Vashishta and prayed to him to enquire from Rishyasringa the proper procedure for the contemplated Yaga.

Rishyasringa wanted that the ministers and scholars be seated in appointed order. He directed the King also to sit on his throne. Then he described the various processes of the ceremony, so that the court priests could note them for their guidance. He gave them in such detail that everyone even knew where exactly he was to sit in the sacrificial hall!

The sage decided that the Yaga shall begin on the stroke of seven, the very next day. The news spread all over the City in a trice. Before dawn every street was decorated with green festoons, every road was packed with people pressing forward to the vast open space on the bank of the Sarayu, where the Yaga was to be performed. The river bank was thick with the eager populace. Rishyasringa, with his consort Santha, entered the specially built Yaga *Mantap*, with the King and Queens, while Vedic chanting and the music of bugle, trumpet and clarinet and the cheers of the people resounded from the sky.

³¹ See *Endnotes – No.1 – Puthrakameshti Yagna*

³² See Chapter, *Kausalya - She has a daughter*

Rishyasringa was installed as the “Brahma,” or the Chief Organiser for the Yaga. He assigned various tasks like worship, recitation, chanting, propitiation, etc. to scholars, in consideration of their qualifications. The offerings were placed in the sacred fire with the prescribed formulae by Rishyasringa himself, with scrupulous exactitude, deep devotion and faith.

From the fire that was scripturally fed, there arose before all eyes, a Divine Person who shone with the blinding splendour of a sudden stroke of lightning! He held a bright vessel in his hands. At this, the vast concourse including the priests was petrified with wonder, awe, fear and joy. They were overwhelmed by the sudden onrush of bliss and mystery. The King and Queens shed tears of joy. They cast their looks upon the Divine Person and prayed to Him, with folded palms.

Rishyasringa continued the formulae with undisturbed equanimity, as the texts prescribe, offering oblations in the fire. Suddenly, a Voice as on the Day of Mergence resounded from the dome of the sky. Rishyasringa sat aghast and sought to listen to the Message from above. “Maharaja! Accept this Vessel, and give the sacred ‘*Payasam*³³’ food brought therein in appropriate shares to your three queens,” the Voice announced. Placing the vessel in the hands of the King the mysterious Person who had emerged from the flames disappeared into them.

³³ sweet rice pudding (*SSS Vol.35 p.110*)

The joy of the people, princes, pundits and priests who witnessed this great manifestation knew no bounds. Soon, the final rituals were completed and the Maharaja returned in procession to the Palace, with the sacred vessel gifted by the Gods in his hands. (*RKRV Part I p.35-38*)

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SACRED ‘PAYASAM’:

Vashishta handed over the sacred vessel to Dasaratha who in turn distributed it equally between his three wives (*SSB 2002 p.41*)

Interpretations of the distribution and safekeeping of the *Payasam* :

The composers of the *Ramayana* like Kamban, Valmiki, Tulsidas, etc., gave different versions of the proportion in which the *Payasam*³⁴ was distributed between them. But none of them gave the correct version. Dasaratha gave equal share of the *Payasam* to each of his three queens in three different cups.

³⁴ Also spelt in various parts as *Payasa*



Figure 2: Puthrakameshti Yaga

Artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramachandra Madhwa Mahishi, • Illustrated by Balasaheb Pandit Pant Pratinidhi (author dead before 1952 (April 13, 1951) - see
Title	Sacrifices Yield Boon Giving Pudding
Description	The Boon of Pudding:-
Date	1916
Source/Photographer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chitra Ramayana • http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/mythology/ramayan/30014a.htm

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Whether it is then or now, the principle of equality is most essential for man³⁵. Dasaratha told his wives to have a sacred bath and seek Sage Rishyasringa's blessings before partaking of the *Payasam*. (*SSS Vol.35 p. 110-111*)

“Whatever may have been written in the traditional story of the Ramayana, I am now undertaking to give you the thought as it is in my mind. It has been stated that the sweet which has come from the Goddess of Yagna was distributed to the three wives in a particular manner. I am not very much concerned with this detail but I am concerned with the attitude which Dasaratha showed to the three wives. Dasaratha distributed this *Payasam* to the three wives according to the orders which he received from the Gurus. If it was something which he distributed himself from his own wealth to the wives, then he had the right to do it in a partial manner but when he was distributing God's gift, he had no right to show any partiality and he had to distribute it equally to the three wives. But amongst the three wives, the ideas and the thoughts that came were like the ones which come naturally to any other woman.

³⁵ Dasaratha was a true devotee. He was pure-hearted and selfless. He used to constantly contemplate on God installing him on the altar of his heart. Truth and righteousness were his two eyes. Love and peace were his principles. Emperor Dasaratha had equal love for his three wives. Therefore, distributed the payasam in equal proportion to his three wives. He did not show any favouritism towards any of his wives, in this regard. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.78*)

The youngest among them, namely Kaika, remembered the promise which her husband as the king had given. This was what she had in her mind and therefore she kept her portion of the *Payasam* very carefully. The eldest wife, namely queen Kausalya, naturally believed that the son born to her will succeed and that he will become the king and so she also kept her portion of the *Payasam* very carefully, but the middle one, Sumitra, did not have any ambition and so she did not have any particular desire for having a son. Not only did she not have any ambition but she was even feeling a little bit despondent and unwell. The feeling is quite natural to Sumitra. She thought³⁶ that if a son was born to the eldest queen Kausalya, he may become the king and if a son was born to the youngest, Kaika, he may become the king on the basis of the promise which the king had made to her. But if a son was born to her, that son would have to attend on and associate himself with the son of Kausalya or Kaika. Sumitra thought that there was no point in her looking for children under such circumstances.

As soon as the Yagna was over, Dasaratha brought the *Payasam* along with the Gurus and the Rithwicks of the Yagna and distributed it equally between the three wives. He ordered that they all have a bath and wait for the Rishis to come and bless them and thereafter take the *Payasam*. The three wives had their bath and were keeping the *Payasam* very carefully but so far as Sumitra was concerned she was not very happy but she did not want to show her unhappiness to her

³⁶ See also Chapter, *Sumitra - Her peculiar plight – Kausalya and Kaikeyi share their Payasam:*

companions and so she went up on the terrace of the building and was drying her hair pretending that she was quite happy. She kept the *Payasam* in a golden cup in a corner but as ill luck would have it, a bird came and took away the *Payasam* from the golden vessel. Sumitra was not very sorry for having lost the *Payasam* but she was worried what the king Dasaratha would say if he came to know of the loss of *Payasam*. She immediately ran down and told her sisters Kausalya and Kaika about the incident. (*SSB 1974 p.238-239*)

Since Kausalya and Kaikeyi were virtuous, they shared their sacred pudding with her. (*SSB 2002 p.42*)

THE SONS

Four sons are Born:

Time rolled by; news that the queens were pregnant spread among the people. The bodies of the queens took on a shining complexion. The tenth month arrived. Maids and nurses awaited the happy event and watched over the queens with vigilant care. Meanwhile, they came to know that Kausalya had the pains of labour. They hastened to her palace. While on their way, they learnt that the Royal Consort had delivered a Prince! On the second day, Kaikeyi brought forth a son. The glad tidings filled the entire zenana with joy. The next day, Sumitra had the pangs of labour and she delivered twin sons.

Auspicious signs were seen everywhere. The happy news filled all with immeasurable joy. The earth covered herself with

green, trees blossomed all over! Music filled the air, clouds showered fragrant drops of rain, but only on the apartments where the babies were laid in their cradles! The joy of Dasaratha knew no bounds. While for years he was immersed in agony that he did not have even a single son, the birth of four sons gave him indescribable satisfaction and happiness.

Consequence of great merit:

The two great sages Vashishta and Viswamitra declared to the world that the four *Vedas* had taken birth in human form as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. As a consequence of great merit earned by Dasaratha, the four *Vedas* incarnated as his sons. If anyone asked Sage Viswamitra any questions about the *Vedas*, he replied, “All the four *Vedas*³⁷ have incarnated as the four sons of Dasaratha to set an ideal to the world.” (*SSS Vol.37 p.98*)

Dasaratha celebrates the Birth and asks the Preceptor to cast their horoscopes:

The King invited Brahmins and gave them gold, cows and land gifts in plenty. He arranged for the distribution of money to the poor, and of clothes. Besides he gifted houses for the homeless. He gave food to the hungry. Wherever one cast his eye, he could see people acclaiming the happy event, shouting jai jai. The subjects gathered in huge assemblies to express their joy in music and dance. “We have now princes in the royal line,” they prided themselves.

³⁷ Hence the *Vedas* are not formless; they have a form. (*SSS Vol.37 p.98*)

They were more exhilarated now than when they themselves had sons born to them. Women offered worship to God in gratitude for this act of Grace; for they were sure that the birth of the sons to their King was a signal act of Divine Mercy.

Dasaratha invited the Preceptor of the Royal Dynasty, Vashishta, to the Palace and according to his suggestion; he got a learned astrologer to write down the horoscopes of the newborn. He announced to them that the child of Kausalya was born at a most propitious moment—Uttarayana (the Divine Half-year), Chaitra month, the bright fortnight, the ninth day, the Punarvasu star, Monday, Simha lagna, (the zodiacal sign of the Lion) and the Abhijith period (the period of Victory), when the world was resting happily, when the weather was equable (neither hot, warm nor cold). Kaikeyi's son was born the next day—Chaitra, bright half, tenth day, Tuesday gandhayoga. The third day were born the twins—Chaitra, bright half, eleventh day, Aslesha star, Vriddhiyoga. These details were communicated to the astrologer and he was asked to chart and write the horoscopes in consonance with science and inform the king of his inferences there from.

The astrologer also approved the day and started writing down the list of materials that had to be kept ready for the ritual. He gave the list into the hands of the Chief Priest and left, loaded with the presents that the King granted him. Dasaratha had invitations written for the Ceremony, and sent them to the feudatory rulers, the nobles, courtiers, sages and scholars throughout his Empire, addressing them as befitted their rank and status. The messengers who carried the invitations were

either, ministers, court pundits, officers or Brahmins, their status being suited to the rank and status of invitees. (*RKR* *Part 1 p. 42-44*)

City of Ayodhya is lighted up for the naming ceremony:

Ten days passed. The City of Ayodhya was brightened and beautified, and made most charming to the eye. The melody of music filled the air and spread over the length and breadth of the kingdom, making people wonder whether celestial angels were singing above. Fragrance was sprinkled on the streets. The city was overflowing with visitors. The sages and the Courtiers could enter the inner apartments of the Palace and no others. The rest, whether prince or peasant, had separate quarters arranged for them. They had erected pandals in the courtyard of the Palace to seat all the guests and invitees. They were accommodated there so that they could watch the Naming with all its attendant ceremonials. Very soon, music rose from the Durbar Hall. The chanting of Vedic hymns by Brahmins could be heard. The three Queens entered the elegantly decorated Hall, with the babies in their arms. They shone like Divine Mothers carrying the Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The bliss and the splendour that pervaded their faces were beyond man's powers of description. "Jai" rose from their hearts. Women waved auspicious lamps before them. Three special seats had been placed there for them. Kausalya took her seat first, followed by Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Emperor Dasaratha sat by the side of Kausalya on her right. The Brahmins started the ceremony, with due attention to detail. They lit the sacred fire and poured oblations with the recitation of appropriate formulae. Rice grains were poured and spread on golden plates:

soft silk cloth was spread on the rice. Then, the babies were placed on the cloth by the mothers.

Dasaratha had arranged elaborate banquets for all who attended the ceremony. He filled with joy everyone who had come. He offered each one the hospitality and presents that the status of each deserved. He showered enormous gifts as charity and as ritual penance he distributed cows, lands, gold and other valuables to the poor and the needy. He paid attention to the needs of everyone, so that no one was discontented or disappointed; and after the ceremony was over, he gave them leave with due civility to return to their homes. (*RKRV Part I p.44-46*)

VISWAMITRA IN AYODHYA

When the children attained the age of fourteen, Dasaratha decided to get them married. It was the tradition in those days to perform the marriage early so that the boys did not go astray. For this purpose, the Emperor consulted elders and men of eminence, like Sage Vashishta.

At this stage, Sage Viswamitra³⁸ arrived on the scene. Dasaratha received him with great reverence and courtesy. Sage Viswamitra first blessed the Emperor and made enquiries about the welfare of the Emperor and his subjects. When Dasaratha asked him the reason for his visit, Viswamitra said that he would explain the cause only if the King promised to

³⁸ See Chapter, *Viswamitra* - **Viswamitra comes to Ayodhya**

grant him his wish. When Dasaratha promised that he would honour the words of the Sage, Viswamitra said that the King should send his son Rama for the protection of his *yajna* (sacrifice). Hearing the words of the Sage, Dasaratha pleaded, “Oh Sage! My son Rama is only fourteen years old. He is tender and has not known any hardship. So, it is not possible for me to send my son along with you for the protection of the *yagna*.”

Viswamitra became furious and said, “It is extreme folly to go back on your word, for no one in the noble lineage of Ikshvaku has, until now, ever broken his word. The scions of the Ikshvaku lineage have always been truthful, pure, and sacred. You are tainting their glory by breaking the promise given to me. No merit accrues to those who break their promise, even if they perform many a noble deed and *Yaga*. Death is preferable to the sin of uttering falsehood. It is better that one dies rather than break one’s promise.”

Dasaratha became frightened on hearing the words of Sage Viswamitra. At that instant, Vashishta arrived. Assessing what had happened, the Sage said to Dasaratha, “Oh King, it is not proper on the part of the scions of the Ikshvaku lineage to go back on their word. You need not fear about the safety of Rama. He is the auspicious One and the incarnation of Narayana. You should send Rama along with Viswamitra for the protection of the *yajna*.” Dasaratha agreed to send Rama along with Viswamitra. Lakshmana wanted to follow Rama since he was the very reflection of Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.28-29*)

Rama and Lakshmana, led by sage Viswamitra reached Siddhashram. Both the brothers guarded the *yagna* with great care and killed the demons that tried to disrupt the *yagna* (*SSB 2002 p.78*)

At this stage news arrived from Janaka, the King of Mithila, that a meeting was being arranged to which the bravest heroes of Bharat were being invited. It was to see if anyone could break the bow of Shiva. The victor could win the hand of Janaka's daughter, Sita. Viswamitra told Rama and Lakshmana that they should go to Mithila to break the bow of Shiva. (*SSB 1996 p.34*)

WEDDING OF THE SONS AND ENCOUNTER WITH PARASURAMA

Shiva's Bow is broken

Thousands of strong men wheeled the great bow of Shiva into the open court. Many a Prince from far-off parts of Bharath had assembled there, to win the hand of Sita. They were more interested in winning the hand of Sita than in facing the trial of strength. But Rama and Lakshmana came there in simple obedience to the command of Viswamitra and without any expectation.

One after another, the Princes tried to lift the bow of Shiva; but they returned to their seats humiliated. Rama walked quietly towards the bow.... Rama reached the bow and raised it with His left hand, there was thunderous applause. When Rama bent

the bow to tie the string, the bow snapped with a deafening sound. Thereupon, Emperor Janaka sent speedy messengers on chariots to bring Dasaratha³⁹ and his entourage to Mithila. (*SSB 1996 p.37-38*)

The wedding celebrations:

Dasaratha along with his queens and his sons Bharatha and Satrugna and his ministers arrived in Mithila with great enthusiasm. It appeared as though the entire Ayodhya had come to Mithila. King Janaka extended a royal welcome to them with great honour.

Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi stood in front of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna respectively⁴⁰. First Sita⁴¹ put the garland around the neck of Rama. Thereafter, the other three brides garlanded their respective bridegrooms. All the people joyfully hailed the occasion.

Encounter with Parasurama:

After the marriage function, all left for Ayodhya. On the way they heard a deafening sound. When they looked around to find out where the sound had come from, they were confronted by Parasurama in his fierce form. All of them were perturbed to think, “What is this great hurdle after the glorious celebration

³⁹ See Chapter, *Janaka - Janaka sends for Dasaratha and asks that he and all his ministers and kinsmen be brought with due honours:*

⁴⁰ See Chapter, *Janaka – WINNING SITA*

⁴¹ Under Section, *Rama*, See the Chapter, *Swayamvar – Winning Sita - Prakriti Marries Paramatma*

of the marriages?” Good and bad always follow each other. After experiencing great joy in Mithila, they were confronted with a great difficulty on their way to Ayodhya. Dasaratha⁴² and others became fear-stricken. Parasurama came forward and asked, “Who has broken the bow?” “It is I who has done it,” said Rama.

“If that is so, let us see if you can break my bow,” saying so he gave his bow in the hands of Rama. Rama broke even that bow with His left hand. Seeing that Parasurama offered his salutations to Lord Rama and went away. Experiencing the joy of victory, all of them returned to Ayodhya and participated in the festivities held in Ayodhya with great joy and enthusiasm. The people celebrated that functions with great joy to propagate the power of Rama and the devotion of Sita to the world. (*SSS Vol.40 p.108*)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CORONATION

For twelve years, Rama and Lakshmana assisted their father in the administration of the kingdom. They conducted themselves in a most exemplary manner, much to the delight of everyone in the kingdom. (*SSB 1996 p.35*)

⁴² See Chapter, *Parasurama*

The Emperor's Decision

Dasaratha was sleeping in his palace. He had a dream. In that dream he saw that the whole ocean had dried up, the moon was falling in a myriad pieces, an elephant in rut was tumbling down and collapsing, with the howdah on its back falling apart. He woke up with a start. "What is all this? It is said that a dream in the early hours of the morning portends what is to happen. It is now the fourth quarter of the night. What does this dream portend?" thought Dasaratha. He got up from his bed. He stood before a mirror. He noticed a bizarre change in his face. He saw grey hairs stretching out between his two ears. He realised that old age was creeping on him. He tried to drink a glass of water. He noticed that his hand was trembling. He could see that his organs were beginning to fail. (*SSS Vol.30 p.97-98*)

He poured out himself into a small cup the water from a jar near the bed and while drinking it, he observed that his grasp was not firm. The fingers were shaking! He had no sleep after that. His mind sank into a variety of thoughts. Finally, he inferred that old age had brought on debility. He decided that he should no longer rule over the empire. Any attempt to govern the people without strength of limb and will can only spell confusion and calamity. He was counting the minutes so that as soon as day dawned he could communicate his resolve to his ministers. At last, night melted away and there was light. Finishing his morning ablutions and completing his rites of daily worship he directed the chamberlains to call together the ministers, the leaders of the people and the priests for a special meeting at the Palace. Bowing to the command of the Emperor

all whom he wanted gathered very soon, and awaited him. Dasaratha fell at the feet of Vashishta and informed him of the happenings during the night and the stream of thought that they aroused in him. (*RKRV Part I p.215-216*) He told the *Gurus* that the vitality and the strength of his organs has diminished, and therefore, he cannot rule over the country. (*SSB 1977 p.87*) He told them: “I have reigned for as long as I could. I sought always to please my subjects in every way. I looked after their welfare as that of my children. This kind of feeling is possessed only by Rama. The time is appropriate to install Rama as the heir to the throne.” (*SSS Vol.30 p.97-98*) He requested them to make all preparations to install Rama on the throne. Here he established the truth that an individual who has no control over his own organs had no right to rule over the country. In the matter of ruling over the country, Dasaratha realised the proper code of conduct for the king, and the proper code of conduct for the people. Whoever the individual may be, however great he may be, he must recognise the conditions around him and adjust himself to the surroundings. (*SSB 1977 p.87*)

He said that he had decided to place the burden of imperial administration on Rama. He prayed that no objection be raised against his proposal. He wanted that all arrangements be made soon for the realisation of his desire. (*RKRV Part I p.216*)

“Members of this Assembly! I have all these years ruled over this empire along the path laid down by my forebears and guarded its welfare and prosperity to the best of my abilities, with a sincere desire to promote the good of the entire world. All the years of my life I have spent under the shade of this

White Umbrella that is over my throne. I am now an old man. I have realised that the vigour and vitality of these limbs have declined. This dilapidated body has to be given a little rest. I have decided on this. It is not an easy task, not an insignificant mission, to rule over a kingdom, for it calls for dedication of oneself to Dharma or righteousness. Dharma can be maintained unbroken in the running of the government only by a person engaged in constant Sadhana and who is endowed with rigorous control of the senses. I have borne this burden so long that I am exhausted with the effort. If all of you approve and appreciate my plan, I shall tell you all about it. I shall never act against your desires and preferences.

“There is no pressure on you. Do not fear that I am forcing my wishes on you, or that this is a royal command which you have to perform to obey. I leave you to your own free will and judgement. In case some other arrangement strikes you as more beneficial, you are at perfect liberty to present it before us for candid consideration. Therefore, confer among yourselves and inform me by nightfall what you have agreed upon.”

Even before Dasaratha concluded his address, the assembly became restive and excited, as a flock of peacocks under a cloud-ridden sky that promises copious thunder showers! They shouted aloud their assent, their gratitude and their joy, in unmistakable terms. “You desire just what is our own desire. We do not want any other gift; give us this gift. Oh this is indeed great good fortune. Oh Good Luck! Yuvaraja Ramachandraji ki Jai. Jai Dasaratha Rama.” The acclamation

rent the firmament. Listening to the popular acclaim, Dasaratha was tossed between joy and apprehension.

He stood petrified by this spontaneous outburst of loyalty and affection. Recovering composure after some time, Dasaratha gazed upon the assembly and started speaking: “Members of this Assembly! No task is more important to me than acceding to your wishes. I shall, without fail, crown Rama as the Yuvaraja. But I have some little apprehension too. I want to explain it to you and receive from you consolation on that point. I desire that you should tell me your correct assessment and give me the satisfaction I crave. The fact is while I was about to lay before you the proposal to crown Rama as Yuvaraja, even before I spoke about it, you proclaimed that I must crown him without fail and that he had unbounded capabilities to rule over this realm efficiently and well. Looking this fact in the face, it is obvious that you are a little dissatisfied with my rule, or that some of my laws are against your interests or inclinations. Or did I exhibit any tendency opposed to Dharma? Are you yearning for the coronation of Rama as Yuvaraja because you doubt my ability to govern you for your good? I invite you to point out my faults or the errors I have committed, fearlessly and fully. I welcome this frank recital.”

At this, one of the people’s leaders rose and replied, “The capacity and intelligence of Rama are beyond description. And you, Oh king, are equal to the God of Gods, you are like Sankara, with the same divine compassion and readiness to confer whatever is asked on behalf of the subjects. You are

Vishnu in your ability to protect us. We must be awfully vile and wicked if ever we cast aspersions on your rule. Those who do so are atrocious sinners. You have arrived at this resolve, since you are eager to do us good, and you are anxious to make us happy. We obey unquestioningly your command.” At this, Dasaratha turned to the Chief Priest. “Oh Greatest among Brahmins you have heard the expression of the wishes of the people.

Do not delay any further; collect all the materials and ritual requirements for the Coronation Ceremony,” declared Dasaratha, thrilled with the excitement of anticipation. “Erect the enclosures and the platforms that the scriptures prescribe for the component rites, the sacrificial sites and other sacred structures,” he said.

He fell at the feet of the Family Preceptor, Vashishta, requesting him to supervise the process. “Master! All those who can make it will be present. Let us not delay, awaiting those who have to come from afar. They can derive equal joy when they hear that Rama has been crowned. Do not suggest, as a reason for postponement, the need to invite the Kekaya ruler or Janaka and wait until they arrive. Grant permission to have the holy rite of Coronation performed as early as possible,” he pleaded and prayed with folded hands.

“Maharaja!” Vashishta responded, “I have got all things ready. We can get going as soon as you want. I have directed that the hundred sacred pots, the tiger skin, the covered sacrificial enclosure with its adjuncts, the materials laid down in the

scriptures for the rituals of worship, the herbs and flowers, will all be available by dawn tomorrow.

Nor is this all. I have intimated the four wings of the armed forces to be in good trim; and also the elephant, Sathrunjaya, the one which has every auspicious mark that the Sastras lay down, to be caparisoned most magnificently. The White Umbrella of Splendour, the Royal Flag of the Imperial Dynasty will also be ready at the Palace. The auspicious moment too has been selected. It will be tomorrow.” When Vashishta announced the good news, the populace was overcome with grateful ecstasy. They leaped in joy.

The roads were scrupulously swept and cleaned. Elaborate designs were painted on them and on the walls and buildings facing them. Festoons were hung. Arches and awnings and shades were erected over the roads. Every citizen was busy and happy. The entire city was working fast and excitedly. The Brahmins and the leading citizens took leave of Dasaratha and emerged from the Palace, a veritable stream of exhilaration and excited conversation. The Ministers and Vashishta proceeded into the inner halls with the Emperor.

Dasaratha sent for Rama, and meeting him in the Durbar Hall, he explained to him all the ceremonial formalities and rituals connected with the Coronation. He reminded him that he should be ready before sunrise, and described the preliminaries he had to observe. Lakshmana heard the news. He ran towards Kausalya, the mother, to convey the joyful tidings and communicate his exultation. She could not contain her

happiness. She just waited for Rama to appear before her. There was very little time before them. So the entire city was agog with excitement. The villagers around for miles and even neighbouring states, knew of it pretty soon, for good tidings spread quick and fast. And no one waited for another; no sooner did he hear than he hurried forward to the Capital City. The flow of humanity along all the roads leading to Ayodhya became an uncontrollable surge.

Rama listened to what Dasaratha was detailing to him, but he did not reply. His feelings were beyond words. He could not express what passed in his mind. He stayed silent. So, Dasaratha accosted him; “Son! why is it that I do not see in you any sign of joy at the prospect of your being crowned tomorrow as Yuvaraja? Do you not like to become Yuvaraja? Or, is it a sign of anxiety or fear that we are placing on your head the burden of the State?” In spite of long questioning, and fond appeals, Rama appeared tongue tied before the Emperor. At last, he said, “Father! I do not understand why you are acting in such a hurry. My dear brothers, Bharatha and Satrugna, are not here now. Again, grandfather is far away and he may not be able to reach in time. Father-in-law also might not be able to come. And rulers of other States, Princes, the vassal Kings—they too may find it difficult to attend. My mind is heavy because we are disappointing such large numbers of people. It does not accept the idea of celebration when so many are certain to feel pained.” Pleading pardon for his sentiments, he fell at the feet of Dasaratha.

It was Vashishta who replied. “Rama! These objections were raised even by us. Do not think that we quietly acceded to the wish of the Emperor. We thought of all the arguments for and against, and we consulted the opinion of the people before we decided. Do not raise any objection now. Respect the wish of the Emperor. The Coronation and the anointment have to take place tomorrow itself. You have to observe certain vows. This day you should not use a cot or a soft bed. You and Sita have to be on fast. As soon as day breaks, you must both take bath, after applying sacred oil on the head; for, the auspicious star Pushya which has been selected for the holy rite rises at that time. So, retire into your residence now, without demur.”

As soon as the Preceptor finished, Rama fell at the feet of his father and of Vashishta and proceeded to his palace, accompanied by Sumantra, the trusted Minister. He had no hesitation this time. (*RKRV Part I p.218-224*)

It was decided in the meeting that Rama, the eldest son, was the worthy successor to the throne of Ayodhya. He was able, efficient, ideal and Omniscient. The citizens greatly rejoiced at the prospect of Rama becoming their ruler. (*SSB 1996 p.36*)

THE TWO BOONS

Dasaratha hurries to the Kaikeyi’s Chamber to communicate the happy tidings:

The Emperor had finished making all arrangements for the Coronation Ceremony, and when he emerged from the Durbar

Hall, he felt that, instead of proceeding to the apartments of Kausalya, he should communicate the happy tidings to Kaikeyi first. So, he hurried towards her palace. The maids who stood at attention all along the passage appeared upset with anxiety. The Emperor argued within himself that they had not heard the good news; for, it would have lit up their faces! He pitied them that they did not know that Rama was to be crowned the next day! He directed his steps to the bedroom where he expected the Queen to be.

There his eyes fell on the scattered jewels, the unkempt bed, the heaps on the floor and the general state of untidiness and distraction. He was surprised at all this and searched for the Queen in the room peeping into the corners. A maid-in-waiting announced, “Maharaja! Her Highness Kaikeyi Devi is now in the Hall of Anger.” Hearing this, he was gravely upset. He turned his steps in that direction. Kaikeyi was sprawling on the floor in the blinding darkness of the room, wailing and weeping. He said, “Kaikeyi! What ugly scene is this! Why are you so angry? Who caused you so much sorrow? Tell me, I shall kill them this very moment; I shall confer joy on you. You have only to tell me what you desire. I am ever ready to fulfil your wish. Your joy is my joy. Don’t you know that I have nothing in this world higher and dearer than you? Come, do not test me further.” The Emperor sat by her side and, caressing her head, he consoled her in various ways, and questioned her about the reason for her anger and grief. (*RKR* Part I p.237-238)

Kaikeyi's accusations and Dasaratha's consolation:

Kaikeyi was in a fit of rage. She gnashed her teeth noisily. She threw aside the hands of the Emperor when he tried to fondle her. She said angrily⁴³: “Enough of this false pretence! I put faith in you so long, and this is the degradation I have brought on myself! What do you care what happens to me? Better to die as a queen than drag on as a slave! This day is the last day of my life.”

These wailings heard between the sobs and sighs conveyed no meaning to Dasaratha. He was utterly confused, and tried to console her and assuage her anger. “Kaikeyi!” he began, “What do these words mean! I do not understand. I never use false hypocritical words, nor can I ever use them. My mind and my tongue act in unison. They will ever be the same. Where my love is, there my sweet expressions will be. My tongue will not falsify my mind. It is impossible for it so to behave. I do not know how it has happened, how you have not been able to know me and my sincerity in spite of the lapse of many years. Without telling me plainly what has actually happened to give you so much grief and pain, do not torture me like this. Tell me what has happened. Why are you behaving like this? What has caused you this agony?” Dasaratha pleaded piteously for a long time, but with no effect! The Queen only retorted sharply, brushed aside with effrontery, ridiculed sarcastically and turned a deaf ear to the importunities of the Emperor. She pretended as if she treated his words as of no worth. (*RKRV Part I p.238-239*)

⁴³ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - Kaikeyi's false accusation

Dasaratha ask Manthara the reason for Kaikeyi's anger:

Dasaratha was wounded very deep in his heart. Not knowing what to do, he called Manthara in. She rushed in, playacting her conspiratorial role, shrieking for help for the queen, her mistress. "Oh King! Save my mother!" she cried and clasped the feet of the Emperor.

The Emperor was really the embodiment of innocence. He had no trace of duplicity in him. So, he could not see through the drama they were enacting. He feared that some calamity must have happened to make his beloved so perverse and stern. So, he asked Manthara again to tell him what exactly had taken place. Manthara said, "Maharaja! What can I tell you? I am not aware of the least bit of what happened. Mother does not divulge the reason for her anger to anyone. All of a sudden she hastened from the bedroom into this Hall of Anger. Noticing this, I came hither. People prayed and pleaded in various way, but she does not disclose the reason. She does not confide even in you. Will she then reveal it to poor me? We see her suffering and in agony. It is unbearable. We cannot simply look on any longer! We are afraid of what might happen to her, and so, we have been waiting for your arrival. Unless you comfort her and bring joy into her mind, her condition might become critical. She has suffered too deeply and too long. Her condition is growing worse every moment. We will retire now." (*RKR* Part I p.239-240)

Dasaratha tries to learn the truth from Kaikeyi who reminds him of the two boons:

Manthara left the Hall with the other maids, saying: “Please find out from her the reason for her grief and anger and pacify her soon by appropriate remedies.” Manthara only added to the mystery and Dasaratha was even more confused by her statements. He sat by the side of the disconsolate Queen and said, “Kaikeyi! Why do you keep me in the dark?” He gently lifted the head of the Queen from the bare floor and placed it on his lap, and sought to persuade her to reveal to him the reason for her inconsolable suffering. After some time, Kaikeyi shook off her silence, and began to speak. “Maharaja! You haven’t forgotten, have you, the two boons you promised to confer on me, that day, during the battle between the Devas and the Asuras?” (*RKRV Part I p.240-241*)

Dasaratha relieved:

Dasaratha was relieved. He said, “Kaikeyi! Why have you put yourself into all this temper and pain for the sake of this simple thing? I will not forget the promise of the two boons so long as there is life in me. That promise is as dear to me as Kaikeyi herself; you are the breath of my life, and the promise too is as the breath. “Queen! Has anyone harmed you? Or, is your health affected adversely? Or has any wicked person dared act against your will? Speak! For your sake, I shall face even mortal injury, and punish them so that happiness may be restored to you. Do not doubt me. Oh, embodiment of charm! Why do you suffer thus? Are you unaware that the entire Empire is at your beck and call? Whatever you wish to have, from any region, you have only to tell me, I shall secure them for you and bring

you joy. Inform me, what is it that you fear, what has brought this sorrow; do not withhold anything, or hesitate to speak out! As the sun scatters the mist, I shall shatter the grief that smothers you.” Dasaratha fondled and flattered the Queen, and tried various means of consoling her and restoring her spirits.

Kaikeyi kept in her mind the advice that Manthara had given her. She resolved that she must secure from her husband a promise on oath, before revealing her bitter wishes to him. To induce it out of him, she displayed exaggerated and seductive love, and wiped the tears from her eyes⁴⁴. (*RKR V Part I p.241-242*)

Dasaratha agrees to grant the two boons:

Announcing thus, she burst into loud weeping and wailing. Dasaratha was rendered helpless and weak by her histrionics. Like an innocent deer that is drawn into the net spread for his capture by the imitative cries of the hunter, Dasaratha overcome by cooings of love and drawn by the entrancing gestures of the Queen fell into the trap, like an insane ineffective man. He vowed solemnly “I shall certainly give you the two boons,” holding her palms tightly in his. He urged her on, with the prompting, “Kaikeyi: why do you delay further? Ask! Ask for the boons!”

Kaikeyi hesitated; she stuttered: “With the arrangements made for the Coronation of Rama, perform the coronation of

⁴⁴ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **Kaikeyi displays exaggerated and seductive love – asks Dasaratha to swear before she reveals her boons - Dasaratha swears on Rama:**

Bharatha, *my son*: this is the first boon I demand! Next, Rama, wearing matted hair and deerskin, and dressed in tree bark raiment, shall go into the Dandaka forest and remain there for fourteen years, as a forest dweller; this is the second boon I ask for”. Thus declaring⁴⁵, she stood up and stared wildly in a determined stance, like a demoness. (*RKRV Part I p. 244-245*)

Dasaratha exclaims in confusion and anger:

The Emperor was crushed by the cruel bolts that rained on him. Was it a dream? Could it be true? Was it Kaikeyi who asked for these boons? Or, was it a bloodthirsty monster? Could it be a terrible hallucination of his? Was it a vile trick played by some horrid illness? He could not gauge! So, he cried, “Kaikeyi! Is it you, there? Or is it some ogress who has assumed your form? Tell me first who you are.” Like a person who has lost control of his limbs, he tottered unable to mouth the words he wished to speak. He rolled listlessly from side to side like a madman, his eyes looking wildly all around. Suddenly, sparks flew from his eyes as he gazed at Kaikeyi. He exclaimed in terrible anger, “Vile woman! What exactly is your aim? Is it to uproot the entire royal line? What injury has my dear son Rama done to you? He loves you even more than he does his own mother. How could your heart agree to send my Rama into the thick dark jungle? I took you so long to be a Princess; now, I find you are a venomous cobra. I allowed you to infest my home, out of sheer ignorance. How could such a

⁴⁵ See chapter Kaikeyi - Kaikeyi expresses her demands as tutored by Manthara

sinful idea enter your head, when Rama, the very breath of my life, is being acclaimed by every being that breathes? If imperative, I am prepared to give up the empire or even my life; but, I cannot give up Rama; no. You crave that your son be hailed as Emperor. Well, have him so. I shall hie to the forest, with Kausalya, Sumitra and others, taking my Rama with me. But I can never send Rama alone into the jungle. That is impossible. Give up this atrociously sinful desire. Give up the hatred of Rama that you have cultivated. Kaikeyi! Tell me frankly do you really desire that these things take place? Or, is all this merely a stratagem to find out whether I have affection towards your son, Bharatha? If so, you can ask that Bharatha be crowned Yuvaraja; but there is no meaning in asking that Rama be exiled into the forest. Such a desire should not be entertained or expressed lightly. Kaikeyi! Rama is the firstborn son. He is the repository of all virtues. The years of his reign will be most glorious. You have told me often that you are looking forwards to the time when such golden dreams will come true. And now you want that this selfsame Rama should be sent into the forest! What is the deeper meaning of this request? Are you joking with me? If it is all a joke, why this scene in the Hall of Anger? Why this rolling on the hard stone floor? Jokes too have limits beyond which they become pitifully cruel. I cannot entertain the idea, even as a joke. No. I can never be separated from Rama. Kaikeyi! You have been behaving like an intelligent woman all these years. But now, your intelligence has become crooked and wicked. Such perversions are always harbingers of self-destruction.

It is a heinous sin to injure the good. Of course, the good will not be affected by these tactics. The stratagems of the wicked will only promote the fame and glory of the good. They might appear hard to bear, only for some little time. “Your wicked plans appear to me to be fraught with disaster to the Ikshvaku dynasty itself. For, until this moment, you have never spoken an unpleasant word or thought of an inauspicious act. I find it impossible to believe that it is the same one who is asking me such things today! (*RKR Part I p.245-247*)

Kaikeyi transgresses the Codes of moral law:

Kaikeyi! you were all along afraid of transgressing the Codes of moral law. You were anxious to win the Grace of God by means of each little thought, word and deed. Where has that fear of unrighteousness gone now? What have you done with that devotion to God which kept you on the path of righteousness?

Dasaratha describes Rama’s beauty, His consideration for the welfare of the people:

“What is the gain you look for when you want Rama to be sent to the forest for fourteen years? His body is soft and tender, like the petal of a freshly blossomed flower. He is most charming to behold. Rama is so enticingly beautiful. Of what profit is it for you if he suffers unbearable pangs of pain in the forest? In this palace, there are many thousands attendants and maids. Can any one of them point a finger at him and say, that he is faulty in any respect? Well. Leave alone our palace. Can you bring from the capital city any single person, can you name anyone who blames Rama? He has discovered many a misery

and relieved them with gifts and riches. He has shown great consideration for them. He has noticed many who are homeless and provided them with houses. By his love and care, he has won the affection of all people. That you should harbour hate against such a loveable son strikes me dumb. I cannot find words to describe your devilish cruelty.

“There are many who exploit their own subjects, and act only to foster their own selfish interests. Such demons are appearing in good numbers today. But in your eyes, due perhaps to the age, or your own past sins, persons who assuage the wrongs done to the poor and the distressed and foster their advancement, those who directly enquire into their difficulties and problems and afford relief, such good men appear bad, deserving exile and punishment!

“Everyone in this empire relishes listening to the virtues of Rama and takes great delight in recounting his goodness. While they feel exhausted in the fields, farmers and labourers sing songs of Rama and his charms, to make their tasks lighter; when I came to know of this, I was filled with joy. How can your heart agree to inflict on such a compassionate soul this excruciating sentence? This very evening, when I placed before a gathering of sages, elders, ministers, leading citizens, scholars and many experts in statecraft, the proposal for the Coronation of Rama, no one raised a note of dissatisfaction or dissent. On the other hand, they praised Rama in countless ways, and declared that it was the fruit of the merit that they had accumulated in many past lives that they could now secure as Heir-apparent and lord a spiritual hero who had mastered his

senses, an embodiment of selfless activity, intelligent detachment and unflinching loyalty to Truth. They indicated their joy by continuous Jai Jais. Is this treasure of my love, this favourite of my people, whom you seek to send into the forest? Whatever you may say, this is certain, I will not send my Rama into the forest. And listen to this also. The coronation of Rama *shall* take place tomorrow. It cannot be cancelled.” Dasaratha announced this, in an outburst of pride and courage.

Kaikeyi’s terrific Mien

At this, Kaikeyi assumed a terrific mien and retorted⁴⁶: “Maharaja! Remember, a few moments ago, you vowed under many oaths that you will grant me the boons I ask. And now you are going back on your word. Now, who is dragging the glory of the Ikshvaku Line in the dust, you or me? Ponder over this.”

“When Rama is crowned as Heir-apparent, his mother Kausalya, will become the Rajamatha, the Queen Mother. My son will stand with folded arms, awaiting the command of Rama, ready to run errands for him⁴⁷. ... I cannot be a witness to such scenes. I shall not be satisfied with anything less than exiling Rama to the forest.” With these agonisingly harsh words, Kaikeyi fell on the floor, and started sobbing and

⁴⁶ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **Kaikeyi reminds Dasaratha that he would be breaking the word given and bringing disrepute to the Ikshvaku Dynasty:**

⁴⁷ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - Kaikeyi says it is better to die than see Bharatha waiting on the order of Rama with folded hands:

groaning in a fit of heartrending sorrow. (*RKRV Part I p.247-252*)

Dasaratha explains the consequence of Rama's going to forest:

Dasaratha beat his head in despair. He said, “Kaikeyi! Has anyone advised you that this calamity will benefit you? Or, has some evil spirit possessed you, and forced you to utter these desires? What is this absurdity, this ridiculous madness, sending Rama into the forest and crowning Bharatha? Why not wish well for me, your husband, for Bharatha, your son, and this Kingdom of Ayodhya? Give up this desire fraught with certain calamity. Think deeply over the consequences. Or else, you and I, and your son, all three, will become targets for the direst infamy. It will not end with that. The entire kingdom will be ruined, and many more tragedies are bound to take place. Mean, degraded woman! Can we ever believe that Bharatha will agree to get himself crowned even if I now accept your request and promise to do so? Bharatha is a true adherent to Dharma. He is intelligent and a model of rectitude. He will not agree either to exiling Rama into the forest or to himself becoming the Heir-apparent. Not he alone, but the Ministers, the courtiers, the Vassals, the Allies, the Sages, the Commons, the Citizens—everyone will oppose your desire. How can you be happy when so many are unhappy?”

“Consider the situation you are responsible for! The elders and sages endorsed it. They were all of one mind. This evening, at the Grand Assembly of Citizens, I announced that I shall celebrate the Coronation of Rama. If I act counter to that

Announcement, I will be counted as a coward who runs back from the battlefield at the sight of the enemy. All arrangements have been completed for the Coronation. All have been informed about the festival. The people have started preparing the City for the Celebration. The streets are already packed with happy throngs, with faces shining in expectant joy. At this moment, if I send Rama into the forest, will not the people laugh at me, saying, ‘What! This man has finished three chapters—the Coronation, the Rulership of the Realm and the Exile—all in one single night!’ In what manner can I explain my action to them, after what I had publicly declared in the midst of the mammoth gathering of the populace? How harshly the people will blame me, feeling that their king is such a big fool. I ruled over them all these long years and won their applause as a consistent adherent of Dharma, as an embodiment of high virtues and as a redoubtable hero, brave and full of courage. But now, how can I bear the dishonour of being talked about as a fool, who plunged into this low level of conduct?”

Demoness of Destruction

Dasaratha spoke in this strain, reminding her of the hard blow that his fair name and unblemished fame will receive if he acts according to her desire. Nevertheless, Kaikeyi transformed herself into a Demoness of Destruction, and brushed aside Dasaratha’s importunities, as if they were empty words and she did not attach any value to them. She refused to yield or loosen her hold. On the other hand, her grip became tighter every moment, her greed more deep-rooted. She spoke quite contrary to the appeals of the Maharaja and insisted on reminding him

only of the promise from which he threatened to resile. So, Dasaratha said, “Kaikeyi! If it happens that Rama goes to the forest, I will not be able to live a moment longer. And I need not tell you what will happen to Kausalya. She will draw her last breath that very moment. And Sita? She will be mortally shocked. She cannot live even a second away from Rama. Will the people look upon all this with equanimity? When the great hero, the paragon of wisdom, Rama, is being sent as an exile into the forest, can Lakshmana keep quiet? Why detail a thousand things. The very next moment, Lakshmana will cast off his body. This is the bare truth. Thus, our Kingdom will have to suffer all these catastrophes and calamities. You too are aware of this string of tragedies; but I cannot understand why you are attempting with eyes open, to win a widow’s role? Oh, wicked, vile soul! I was deceived by your charms. It was like cutting one’s own throat while charmed by a sword of gold. I drank the cup of milk, unaware that it had poison in it. You cheated me, with many a winsome trick. At last, you have planned to consign to the dust my dynasty itself. Shame on me! What a fool I am! I secured this son, after performing a scriptural Yaga (Sacrifice). Divine Grace gave him unto me. Am I to barter away his fortune and his future for the paltry pleasure a woman gave me? Is this worthy of His Majesty, Emperor Dasaratha? Will not the meanest being in my kingdom hurl stones at me, in derision? Alas! Is this to be the fate of Dasaratha in his last days? I clasped a thing round my own neck, not realising that it was a rope that strangles. I never knew that it was the Deity of Death with whom I dallied and diverted myself so long. Alas! I flirted with Death and fondled it on my breast. I treated her as my favourite, comrade and

companion. It is surely the weight of my sins recoiling on me now. Or else, was there anywhere, at any time, a father, who, for the sake of a woman's bed drives his son into the fearful forest, as an exile? (*RKRK Part I p.252-255*)

Dasaratha tells Kaikeyi none of his sons will disobey his commands:

“Ah! What strange behaviour is this, of a human being! I am unable to believe this, in spite of everything, Kaikeyi! Change your foolish thought. Rama will not go against any word of mine. The mere report of these happenings is enough. He will prepare himself to move into the forest! He will not even ask the question, why are you anxious to send me into the jungle! He is of such sterling virtue. Why mention only Rama! No one of my sons will disobey any of my commands.

“Bharatha will be disgusted when he hears of your plan. He may even ignore the fact that you are his mother and behave quite inexplicably. He may be ready for any dire step. Rama is his very life, his vital breaths, all the five put together. He may do something to defeat your pet desire. That is to say, he may exile himself into the forest and ask that Rama be crowned. He is of that stamp of goodness and rectitude. I am wondering at your crooked intellect, which cannot grasp the workings of Bharatha's mind. Kaikeyi! Wicked designs are precursors of self-destruction, as the saying goes. This design has entered your head, presaging your ruination, remember. You are bringing on the fair name of the Ikshvaku Royal family an indelible blot. You are plunging so many into fathomless depths of grief. You are bringing about their end. Can so many

lives be hurt for the sake of this fell desire? What happiness do you hope to have, after perpetrating all this? (*RKR Part I p.256*)

Dasaratha reiterates the consequences and asks a promise that his funeral is performed by Bharatha:

“Even if you do achieve your goal, will that be ananda? Can you call it so? Oh shame! Those who exult over the sorrows of others are in truth sinners of the darkest hue, of demonic brood. Those who strive to cause joy to others, those who yearn that others be happy, they are the holy ones. You are a Queen; you are a Princess, of Royalty born; yet, you are not conscious of this elementary truth. You are a disgrace to royal blood. One final word! Rama is my very life. Without him, I cannot hold on to life. No! I cannot continue to live. He will not disappoint you; so, though I may not order him by word of my own mouth to go into the forest, he may on hearing of my oath and your desire, himself proceed thereto, in order to make my word valid.

He will brook no delay or debate. As soon as I hear news of that event, know that I draw my last breath. Lakshmana, Sita, and Kausalya may, in all likelihood follow Rama. Kausalya cannot exist alive, apart from Rama. Sita will not stay away from Rama. Lakshmana cannot walk except along the footsteps of Rama. Urmila too may proceed along with Lakshmana into exile. There will be none here then, to perform the funeral rites of this body, and days will elapse to get Bharatha and Satrughna from the Kekaya Kingdom.

Till then, this will have to lie without the ceremonial. Perhaps, the people will rise against me for having descended to this low level of wickedness and condemn my body to be thrown as carrion for crows and vultures, since it does not deserve decent disposal. Perhaps, no; for, my subjects will wait until Bharatha arrives, embalming the corpse by some means or other. Bharatha will never agree to accept the throne and be King.

Under such circumstances, he is not entitled to touch the body or perform the funeral rites. Come! At least, promise me that you will have my funeral rites performed by him,” he pleaded. He said, “Of course, I am sure you are ready to promise me so; for, you are after the ananda you hope to derive from a widow’s life. What it is that you hope for, tell me, Oh vile viper! You have turned into a demon, at last! Are you undermining and laying under the earth, the Raghu Clan, this Royal Line? Is this the upsurge of your basic nature? Or, is it some mysterious Divine fate that dogs your thought and forces you to act against your will in this strange way? I find it beyond me to gauge the secret.”

While Dasaratha was being tortured in mind like this, the night rolled on into the third quarter. He groaned like a man in great pain afflicted with some mortal illness. He was caught in the coils of agony. (*RKRV Part I p.256-258*)

Dasaratha uses flattery to gain Kaikeyi’s affection:

Dasaratha tried his best, now, to win the affections of Kaikeyi and persuade her to accept the coronation of Rama. He began to flatter her, in honeyed words. “Oh, Queen! You are the very

embodiment of auspiciousness and prosperity. I treated you so long as my very breath. You too fostered and guarded me as if I was your very heart. Come, let us spend the remaining years without giving room for scandals about differences between us.

Let us be peaceful and happy during the rest of our allotted lives. Oh, Charming Princess! I will not live many years more. Throughout my life, I was famed as a steady adherent of Truth, and all men honoured me on that account. I have sworn at the public gathering that Rama will be crowned tomorrow as Heir-apparent. Consider how my subjects will despise me, if the function does not take place! Consider how they will cast insults at me! You saved me that day, during the battle between the Gods and the Demons. Are you giving me up now, when something worse is threatening me? This is not just or proper. Well, I shall endow on you this entire kingdom as dowry. Crown Rama, yourself, tomorrow. Bharatha too will be very happy if you do this. Not merely he; ministers, sages, elders, scholars, common citizens, the entire populace will appreciate and thank you for this. Your fame will last eternally on this earth. Instead if you create obstacles in the way of Rama's Coronation, the whole world will castigate and condemn you. Even your son will find fault with you and fall foul of you. Your cruel fancy will bring ruin on you; besides, it will cover this royal line with shame. You will become the target of the 'Fie' that the smallest of the land will fling at you. Reflect over these possibilities! Earn eternal renown. Stop the stratagem to prevent the coronation. Crown Rama with your own hands, tomorrow!" (*RKR Part I p.258-259*)

Kaikeyi not to be persuaded:

Dasaratha described the joy she could derive from this generous act in sweet enticing words, artfully put together. He hoped to enrapture her at the prospect of herself crowning the Heir-apparent; but Kaikeyi interrupted him, and said, “King! Your words strike me as strange and meaningless. You are trying to slide back from the promise made on oath.

“Don’t plan otherwise⁴⁸. Call Rama to your side and tell him to get ready to proceed to the forest, and set on foot preparations to call Bharatha from where he is now to this City. ... These two boons must be realised before dawn. However long you argue, I will be content with no less.” (*RKR V Part I p.259-261*)

Dasaratha was like the Emperor Bali:

Dasaratha watched Kaikeyi raging and swearing, angry and fearful. He could neither demonstrate the rage that was surging within him, nor could he suppress it. He was like Emperor Bali who promised three feet of land to God (in the form of Vamana); but discovered that he could not fulfil that promise, for Vamana measured the entire earth with one foot, the entire sky with another foot, and stood asking for the third foot of land, that had been gifted to Him! Dasaratha dreaded the curse that awaited him, for breaking the rules of Dharma. His eyes were dimmed with doubt and despair. His head became heavy on the shoulders. He fell on the floor, where he stood. At last,

⁴⁸ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **Kaikeyi not to be persuaded – asks Dasaratha not to tarnish the Ikshvaku Dynasty with irredeemable dishonour**

mustering up some courage, he shouted, “Oh Sinful Woman! If the Coronation of Rama is cancelled, my death is a certainty. After that, you can rule over this kingdom, as a widow, as freely as you wish.” Giving vent to his anger in this strain, Dasaratha cried out, “Alas! Rama! Has it come to this that I have to send you, with my own consent, into the forest? No, I will not send you. I will rather give up my life. I cannot keep alive a moment, apart from you. Oh, vicious demon! How could your heart entertain this dark plan of sending my lovely and tender Rama into the thick, dark, wild jungle? Horrid Fury! What a Monster have you become!” And with that, Dasaratha swooned, and soon lost consciousness. (*RKRV Part I p.262*)

ENTERING INTO EXILE

Dasaratha’s Agony at the sight of Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana:

The Minister went in and aroused the Emperor who had fallen unconscious on the floor. He made him sit up, and placed him in position. He communicated to him the news that Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had come to have audience with him. Rama had already stood near his father, speaking words of soothing love. When Dasaratha saw Sita and Lakshmana, his grief knew no bounds. He embraced Rama closely and fell on the floor. Anguish choked his throat. He pressed his hands on his chest and tried to suppress the agony. Sita and Lakshmana could not look on at the suffering Emperor. (*RKRV Part I p.321*)

At that time, Kaikeyi said, “Rama! You are plunging your father in deeper grief! The sooner you leave and reach the forest, the quicker will your father be relieved from anxiety. Do not delay any longer! Prostrate before your father, and go.” These words so devoid of elementary kindness seemed to split the heart of Dasaratha. Dasaratha suddenly shouted, “Demoness! Evil spirit! How hard and adamant are your words,” and fell in a faint. Just at that moment, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at his feet. Rama said, “Father! Bless us and permit us to leave. This is a time fit for rejoicing, not pining and grieving. Over-attachment brings infamy in its train.” Rama pleaded that he should be courageous and give up the delusion that makes him dote on him. Rama clasped his father’s feet, and then knelt on his knees, caressing and consoling. (*RKR V Part I p.322*)

Dasaratha opened his eyes and looked full at his beloved son. He sat up with great difficulty and holding both hands of Rama in his, he said, “Oh my darling Son! Listen to my words! You are possessed of self-control and discrimination. You know what is right. It is proper that you should do only the right thing. Now, it is not right when one person does wrong, for another to suffer from its consequences, isn’t it? The play of Fate is unpredictable; it is a riddle beyond solution.” (*RKR V Part I p.322*)

The Emperor began to pile argument on argument in his innocence and love, to dissuade Rama from his resolve to proceed to the forest. (*RKR V Part I p.322*)

Rama was known to Dasaratha, the father, as a Master of the Codes of Morality, and as a strict adherent of these Codes. He was skilled in justifying his acts. He was unafraid of the consequences of his resolve. Dasaratha read from the face of Rama who stood before him that he had come ready to take leave of him for the journey into exile.

Dasaratha describes to Sita the travails of forest life and asks her to stay back:

When he saw Sita too before him, he called her near and when she knelt by his side, he stroked her head softly, and described to her the travails of forest life. He told her that the best course for her would be to stay back, either with her parents-in-law, or with her own parents. His words came through groans of unbearable sorrow. He gnashed his teeth in rage, when his eyes fell upon Kaikeyi. All the while, he was fuming and fretting within himself, unable to contain his grief. (*RKRV Part I p.323*)

Sita fell at his feet and said, “Revered Father-in-law! My mind longs only for the service of Rama. Confer on me your blessings and send me with Ramachandra.” Dasaratha could well understand and appreciate the yearning of Sita. He extolled her virtues with genuine enthusiasm, for the edification of Kaikeyi, standing before him. (*RKRV Part I p.323-324*)

Ayodhyakandam

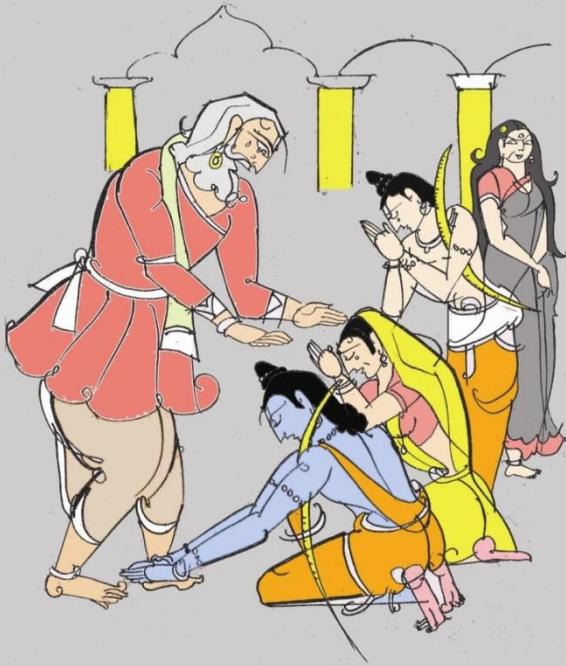


Figure 3: Rama taking leave of Dasaratha

Source of Painting:

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

The trio leave for the forest:

The three prostrated reverently before Dasaratha, who fainted away at the sight of his sons in their ascetic attire. They prostrated also before Kaikeyi who was standing nearby. They fell at the feet of sage Vashishta and of his Consort. And they started towards the forest. (*RKRV Part I p.328*)

Dasaratha asks Sumantra to take the chariot and drop Rama in the forest:

Meanwhile, Dasaratha recovered from his faint and became conscious of what had happened. He lamented, “Rama! Rama!” and tried to raise himself up. But heavy with grief, he fell on the floor again. When he rose, he tried to walk, but could not. He moved falteringly around. At that moment, Sumantra entered the room, and endeavoured to hold him and console him. But with huge outbursts of anguish surging in him, how could he convey consolation to his master? However, he remembered Rama’s order to that effect, and so he dutifully swallowed the sorrow that was overwhelming his heart and sat by the side of the Emperor with tears still flowing in streams. He could not utter any word for a long time. Dasaratha opened his eyes, he saw Sumantra by his side; exclaiming in uncontrollable grief, “Rama!” he fell into the lap of the old minister and poured out his sobs. Then, he rose and groaned, “Sumantra! Rama has gone into the forest; yet, my life has not gone out of this body! What can my life gain by sticking to this body?” Then, getting a little calmer, he said, “Here! Hasten behind Rama! Take a fast chariot and go. My daughter-in-law can never bear the heat of the sun. She will soon have blisters

on those lotus petal soles! Go! Go with the chariot! (*RKR*
Part I p.330)

“Sumantra,” Dasaratha said, “My Ramachandra is an unshakeable hero; he will not turn back. His resolution cannot be shaken or suppressed by anyone. Efforts made for modifying it will be futile; and, we will only be causing him distress by our attempts. Besides, Rama is an unswerving adherent of Truth. Do not delay, for if even a little time is spent in getting the chariot ready, you may miss his trail. My subjects cannot bear the sight of Rama walking along the royal roads of Ayodhya. Go, go!”

The Emperor hurried him out, with the words, “Carry with you in that chariot, a few hampers of food and a few weapons and give them over. Sumantra! I forgot to tell you this. Plead as strongly as you can, mention also that I told you to pray that Sita be directed to return to Ayodhya. Take them into the chariot, and let them go with you some distance towards the forest. Go into the forest along with them; for, if Sita is frightened at the sight of the jungle, and you become aware of her fear, immediately ask Rama for orders, and pray Sita, the tender Princess of Mithila, to return to Ayodhya, bringing to her mind that it is also my wish. Tell her that, if she cannot agree to stay in Ayodhya, the Emperor will arrange to send her to her father, Janaka.” Dasaratha repeated these words often, and laden with grief at the pictures they evoked, he lost consciousness and rolled on the ground.

Rising soon, he exclaimed, in great distress, “Sumantra! Why waste words and time? Bring my Rama, Lakshmana and Sita before me now. Let me have a look at all three. Decide on doing that, and make me happy.” Then, he plaintively requested Sumantra, “Go fast, don’t delay, take the chariot to where they are and drive the vehicle as far as it is possible for it to proceed, to the spot beyond which it cannot go. Perhaps, it may be possible to journey in a chariot for three or four days. At the end of that period, let them alight. Stand there watching them, until they move beyond the reach of your eyes, before you turn back to bring me the news of their health and safety. Now go. Don’t stay near me. Go.” Dasaratha asked the Minister to hasten.

Bowing his head in acceptance of the Emperor’s order, Sumantra⁴⁹ fell at his feet and got the chariot ready. He caught up with Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, who were going along the City roads on foot. He told them what the Emperor had spoken to him. He had them seated inside the chariot. Then, he drove off in the direction of the forest. (*RKRV Part I p.332-334*)

Dasaratha tries to follow and catch up with Rama’s chariot:

Meanwhile, Dasaratha regained his consciousness and recalled everything. Utterly agitated, he rushed onto the street, shouting, “Rama, are you going? No, no! Please wait!” (*SSB 2002 p.63*) Dasaratha had himself seated in a chariot! He shouted aloud,

⁴⁹ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Sumantra seats Sita, Rama and Lakshmana in the chariot and drives off to the forest:**

“Rama! Rama! Sumantra! Sumantra! Stop that chariot! I will look at the treasure of my Love, just once.” He quickened the pace of the horses and came faster and faster. (*RKRV Part I p.334*)

Dasaratha implored⁵⁰, “O Sumantra! Stop! Stay a moment! Let me have a glimpse of my Rama just once.” Rama told him to discharge his duty as per the command of Emperor Dasaratha and not to accede to the wailing pleas of his father Dasaratha⁵¹. (*SSB 2002 p.63*)

The mass of citizens following Rama were caught between his chariot and the chariot of the Emperor, and many of them were so exhausted that they fell on the ground. When they saw a chariot passing by with speed, they raised their heads to find out whether Rama was returning seated in it. They rose and tried to stop it, to have a glimpse of Rama, their beloved Prince. But when the groans of Dasaratha fell on their ears, they too broke into sobs. They allowed the chariot to pass, pleading pathetically, “Oh King! Go soon, go and bring back our Ramachandra!” Dasaratha saw the chariot of Rama speeding along the sand dunes outside the City, and he cried out, “Sumantra! Sumantra! Rein in. Stop,” and himself

⁵⁰ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Dasaratha asks Sumantra to Stop the chariot carrying Rama:**

⁵¹ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Rama says to Sumantra to listen to the order of the Emperor and not to the pleas of an individual, a father:**

commanded his charioteer to speed up. (*RKRV Part I p.334-335*)

When Dasaratha saw that Rama was driving on, he stopped his vehicle and turned back towards Ayodhya, moaning his lot, and wailing aloud. (*RKRV Part I p.337*)

GLOOM OVER AYODHYA

Kausalya comforts Dasaratha:

Kausalya mustered courage and stepping near, she placed the head of her lord on her lap and tried to make him listen to a few words of consolation and comfort. She said, “Lord! Sita, Rama and Lakshmana will be arriving soon and seeing you. Hear my words; take courage; strengthen yourself.” When she so compassionately prayed into his ear, Dasaratha opened his eyes, and muttered audibly, “Kausalya! Where is my Rama? Show me, show me, where is he? Take me to him. Alas! My sweet and tender daughter-in-law is not here now. And Lakshmana, where is he that I don’t see him here.” (*RKRV Part I p.390-391*)

Dasaratha bent his head, unable to hold it up any more. The burden of grief was so heavy. A few minutes later, the Emperor remembered the curse that was pronounced on him by the blind hermit, the father of Sravana. He sat up with a struggle, and began telling Kausalya in feeble accents, the story of that curse. (*RKRV Part I p.391*)

Dasaratha recalls the curse - story of the curse:

“Kausalya! On one occasion, I had gone into the forest on a hunting expedition. A large number of soldiers and huntsmen followed me thither. We could not meet any wild animal the whole day. But I felt that I should not return to the Capital with empty hands, with nothing bagged. We entered the forest in the night, and waited and watched for some luck. The dawn was about to break into the darkness around us on the brink of a vast lake, when something moved on the edge of the water. I could also hear the sound of the movement.

“I inferred that it was a big beast of the jungle, and since I could shoot the arrow straight at the sound and effect a kill, I drew my bow and let go the sharp, sure arrow. It flew fast and furious and hit that animal already on the move. Suddenly! I heard the cry of pain, ‘Ah,’ emanating from the place where it fell. I ran forward with the soldiers and lo, I found it was not a beast I had killed. It was the young son of a hermit! I bent by his side and prayed that he should pardon me for the tragic error. The son of the hermit told me: ‘Emperor! Do not grieve. Fulfil this request of mine, the request I shall presently tell you, that will be enough requital for the sin you have perpetrated. My name is Sravana. My father and mother are both blind. I was spending the days of my life serving them both. That service was granting me all the happiness I needed. I was blessed with even the highest knowledge, the Realisation of the Reality. They are now suffering from excruciating thirst. I came here to this lake to take some water to them. You shot at me imagining me to be an animal of the forest. Who can avoid the decrees of destiny? My present condition is such that I can

no longer walk with this water to my parents. Therefore, take this vessel of water with you to them. Go in the northerly direction, until you come to a lonely thatched hut; and after they have slaked their thirst, describe what has happened to me here. Do not tell them anything about me before they slake their thirst.” Saying this, he placed the vessel in my hands, and passed away.

“Kausalya! Oh, how pathetically anxious he was for his parents! He never worried about his life which was fast ebbing away. He did not speak a harsh word to me. Those soft sweet loving words he uttered are still echoing in my ears. With his last breath, he repeated the sacred Pranava, Om, Om, Om, clearly three times. Seeing him and his calm courageous death, I decided that I should make amends for my sin by fulfilling his last desire. I hurried to the hut he had mentioned, and gave the vessel into their hands, without uttering a single word. But those parents started asking many questions. They enquired, ‘Son! Why did you take so much time? Why this delay?’ They moved their hands forward and waved them about, so that they may touch him, and feel his presence before them. I stepped back a little. Meanwhile the aged couple wailed, ‘Son! Why is it that today you are not speaking to us? We shall not drink the water that you have brought unless you talk to us and answer our queries!’

“I had directed, that the body of Sravana be brought behind me by the soldiers to the parents’ hut. They arrived at this time with the corpse. I placed the body within reach of the mother. She wept most pathetically over the body; I could not look on.

Sometime later, the mother established some little mastery over her grief and told me, ‘Emperor! There is no use extending our lives hereafter, since our son has left us. We have grown old. Who will serve us and foster us? Kill us too, as you killed him. Or else, erect a pyre, so that we can immolate ourselves with our son.’ I bowed my head, and accepted their command. I heaped dry wood and piled up a pyre. The son’s corpse was placed on it. They sat on it and by sheer exercise of Yogic power, they created fire in themselves and burnt themselves.

“Before they immolated themselves, they addressed me and spoke a few words. Their holy curse is proving true today.” At this point, Dasaratha stopped some time, in order to take rest, and to compose the agitation of his mind. Kausalya pacified him, and gave him consolation and mental calm. She said, “Lord! What did the parents say? Tell me, I am anxious to hear.” Dasaratha stayed silent for a while and replied, “Kausalya! What can I say? How can I repeat those words? Those old people, the aged couple spoke thus: ‘You will end your life, as we are doing now, out of unbearable agony at separation from your son.’ And then, they breathed their last, amidst the rising flames.

“At that time, I had no son. I wondered how their curse would affect me. How could their word come true, I thought within myself. But I also thought, that being the words of an aged sage, they cannot but become true. That meant I must have sons, so that I may be separated from them. You know how sad we were, for we had no sons then. I felt that the curse might



Figure 4: Dasaratha sees the fatally injured Sravana

Source of the Photo: (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

Artist	Raja ravi varma
Date	19th century
Source	http://s240.photobucket.com/albums/ff296/om25499/Raja%20Ravi%20Varma/?action=view&current=DashrathRajaShravan.jpg

prove a blessing. I prayed it may come true, so that, even though I may have to be separated from them, I might have sons. I could not tell you this secret till now. Now, I understand that the words of that holy hermit represented genuine truth⁵². The agony of separation from Rama is bringing about my end. I have recalled to memory the tragedy of Sravana. My courage is spent. I cannot muster it anymore.” (*RKRV Part I p.391-394*)

Sumantra returns to Ayodhya and meets Dasaratha:

Dasaratha pulled himself up a little. He made Sumantra sit right in front of him. He asked him, “Sumantra! Tell me about my Sita and Rama⁵³. Tell me all about them. How is Lakshmana? Alas, tender Sita must indeed be very much tired. Where are they now? Tell me.”

DASARATHA BREATHES HIS LAST:

The Emperor’s breath was suffocated, like a fish which struggles to wriggle out of the dense slush into which it has fallen. Seeing his plight, the queens burst into heartrending wails. Words cannot describe that moment of desperate

⁵² Dasaratha recognised that whatever one does, the consequences will be inevitable and unavoidable. Dasaratha purified himself by telling himself that he must suffer the consequences of what he had done. Dasaratha was a *rishi* amongst the kings. He realised that sorrow is something which comes and goes and he set an example to the world by his own life. (*SSB 1977 p.96*)

⁵³ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **SUMANTRA’S DESCRIPTION OF HIS JOURNEY WITH RAMA**

distress. Seeing their sorrow, even sorrow could not restrain its own sorrow. The agony of the queens, the agony of the Emperor, the agony of the maids of the palace, spread confusion and consternation over the entire City. The residents of the Capital scattered in terror, just like birds of the forest, frightened at midnight by a sudden thunderbolt.

Like a lotus stalk which, plucked and thrown out of the water, fades fast, the Emperor was fast leaving the body. Words could not emerge from the throat, the tongue became dry. The senses turned dull and ineffective. Kausalya watched the Emperor and denoted that the Sun of the Solar Dynasty was setting. (*RKRV Part I p.390*)

Dasaratha was lost in the contemplation of the incidents of the past. “Rama! Rama! Rama!” he cried thrice, and leaned back on Kausalya. Kausalya noticed the change that had come over him, and screamed. The attendants and maids gathered around. They found that the Emperor had drawn his last breath⁵⁴. The city was turned into a vale of tears, a seething pool of grief. Crowds surged into the palace. The streets became fast-moving torrents of weeping humanity. People cast curses on Kaikeyi, for they felt that the city had lost its Eyes as a result of her machinations. (*RKRV Part I p.394-395*)

⁵⁴ See Chapter, *Vashishta* - **Vashishta praises Dasaratha saying that he died to redeem his promise:**

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF DASARATHA

Dasaratha was so enamoured of his young queen, Kaikeyi, that he promised to grant her two boons, whatever they may be, whenever she desired! This was foolish; who can say what she will ask for, and when? It placed the Emperor Dasaratha fully at the mercy of her whim. And what a monstrous whim she had! The very moment Rama was to be installed on the throne as Prince Regent, she put forth her two demands: "Rama must be banished into the forest for as long as fourteen years! Her son, Bharatha, should be crowned Prince Regent, instead." He had to agree. The pang of separation from his dearly beloved son killed him when Rama left.

Pre-occupation with happiness derived from external objects and from others---this caused Dasaratha's death. All men are Dasarathas. They are enamoured of happiness derived from outside themselves, they are immersed in sensual, objective pursuits, and they reap the reward of grief and death. (*SSS Vol.8 p.128*)

IDEAL FAMILY:

A family is the most important functional unit in the world. If the family is running on sound lines, the world will also run smoothly. If the unity among the family members suffers even to a small extent, the world will face the repercussions. Unity gives strength to the lives of the family members. Therefore, every family should strive for achieving unity and harmonious relationship among its members. (*SSS Vol.36 p.50*)

The *Ramayana* stands out as a great ideal to the entire mankind. It sets examples in every field of life. It shows how brothers, sisters and parents should live as ideals. (*SSB 2002 p.46*)

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna are the four sons of Dasaratha. Merely knowing this will not suffice. One should enquire and understand the inner meaning. Who is Dasaratha? He represents the human body

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

consisting of ten senses (five senses of perception and five senses of action). Strictly speaking, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrugna are not the sons of Dasaratha and his three wives. We should not think that they were born like mere mortals. They are the Chaithanya swarupas (embodiments of divine consciousness) who emerged from the sacrificial fire. They set an ideal to parents, brothers, and sisters in every family and to humanity at large. (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p102*)

Every individual character in the story of the *Ramayana* has been projecting an important ideal. Not only this, when Dasaratha realised that he was growing old, and that his strength and vitality were diminishing, then he showed to the world that he should no longer undertake the task of being a ruler. (*SSB 1977 p.87*)

Ideal Consorts for Ideal Sons

When the four sons of Dasaratha returned to Ayodhya from Mithila accompanied by their consorts, Dasaratha was overjoyed. He told them, “These four consorts of yours are highly noble and virtuous. I will look after them as though they are my daughters. It is by the Divine grace that I have such daughters-in-law. Where is Mithila and where is Ayodhya? It is Divine will that all of them should be united like this.” These four consorts of the four sons of Dasaratha were of exemplary excellence. Sita and Urmila were the daughters of Janaka, and married Rama and Lakshmana, respectively. Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi who were the daughters of Kushadwaja, Janaka’s brother, married Bharatha and Shatrughna, respectively. As the four daughters-in-law were ideal women, the home of Dasaratha was also an ideal one. (*SSB 2002 p.44*)

Ideal home:

The home of Dasaratha was an ideal one where all the mothers lived in great harmony. The queens of Dasaratha also lived in great unity and understanding. Nowadays it is difficult to lead one’s life with a single wife, what to speak of three wives? But the home of Dasaratha was an exception. Great harmony and understanding prevailed there. (*SSB 2002 p.45*)

5.2 KAUSALYA

Andalu chinde Ananda Rama

(O' Blissful Rama who is always displaying matchless beauty)

Ananda Rama Atmabhi Rama

(Ever Blissful Rama whose abode is the hearts of devotees)

Atmabhi Rama Sri Sai Rama

(O' Sai Rama who is the Living Principle of each and every soul)

Karunanu vedajallu Karunya Rama ||

(O' Merciful Rama who is always showering grace and compassion)

- ***Inspired Composition by Tumuluru***
- ***Translation by Sai Prabhakar Balanthrapu***

KAUSALYA

Kausalya was the eldest wife of King Dasaratha's three wives and a queen of Ayodhya, she was the daughter of the King of the Kosala Kingdom. She was the mother of Rama, the king of Ayodhya, upon whom the story of the Ramayana is based.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

KAUSALYA⁵⁵: Daughter of the King of Kosala, first wife of Dasaratha, and mother of Rama. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

STORY OF KAUSALYA

Ravana, the Rakshasa King of Lanka, heard of Dasaratha⁵⁶ and his fame..... With the aid of his Rakshasa skills, he discerned that there was a great likelihood that Dasaratha will wed the daughter of the King of Kosala. So, he decided to put

⁵⁵ Also spelt as Kausalyaa

⁵⁶ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **RAVANA AND DASARATHA:**

an end to that princess! When one's own destruction is imminent, reason turns crooked—as the saying goes. He entered the Kosala kingdom stealthily in disguise and kidnapped the princess. Placing her in a wooden box, he cast it over the waves of the sea.

Ravana could not see the truth that nothing can ever happen without the concurrence of the Divine Will. Brahma willed otherwise: the box was carried by the waves onto the shore. The place where it landed was a fine recreation area. The next day, Sumantra, the Prime Minister of Dasaratha happened to visit the place on a quiet holiday, to be spent in discussing within himself the problems of the State. His eyes fell on the box. He retrieved it and opened it. He was surprised to find in it a charming girl, with attractive shining eyes and a halo of divine splendour. Sumantra was overcome with pity. He spoke soft and sweet to the girl, “Little one! How did it happen that you were placed inside this box?” She replied, “Sir, I am the princess of the Kosala kingdom; my name is Kausalya. I am not aware how I came inside this box, nor who placed me in it. I was playing with my companions in the palace gardens. I do not remember what happened to me.” Sumantra was moved by her simple and sincere statement. He said, “Such barbarian stratagems are resorted to only by Rakshasas. They are beyond the ken of men! I shall take you to your father and place you in his hands. Come with me. Let us go without delay.”

Sumantra placed her in his chariot and proceeded to Kosala, where he restored her to the King and recited before the Court the details known to him. The King too, interrogated Sumantra

in various ways. He discovered that he was none other than the minister at the Court of Dasaratha, Emperor of Ayodhya, and that his master was still unmarried. He was filled with joy at the discovery. He said, “Minister! You brought back to me this child of mine, saving her from destruction. So, I have resolved to give her in marriage to your master himself. Please inform the king of my offer.” He honoured Sumantra with due ceremony and sent him with the Court Priest and appropriate presents.

Sumantra told Dasaratha in detail all that had happened. In order to confirm his acceptance, Dasaratha sent with the Court Priest of Kosala his own Court Priest with gifts of auspicious nature. The date and time were fixed. Dasaratha proceeded to the Kosala capital accompanied by a magnificent array of elephantry, chariotry, cavalry and infantry. The paeon of music which marched with him reached the sky and echoed from the horizon. The marriage of Dasaratha and Kausalya was celebrated with resounding grandeur and splendour.

Dasaratha gave his consent to the proposal. The news of the marriages of both King and Prime Minister⁵⁷ at the same place, on the same day, spread throughout the kingdom! The land was filled with wonder and delight. The festival lasted three days. The populace were treated to music, drama, dance and other forms of entertainment. Night and day were packed with excitement and joy. On the fourth day, Dasaratha started back for Ayodhya, with his queen and courtiers as well as Minister

⁵⁷ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **SUMANTRA’S MARRIAGE:**

Sumantra with his bride and entourage. They entered the City amidst the acclamation of the people. His subjects exulted at the marriages of both King and Minister. They danced in the streets and shouted “Jai” “Jai” till their throats got hoarse. They lined the streets to see their Queen. They sprinkled rosewater on the roads by which they came and welcomed them waving flames of camphor. Dasaratha resumed his royal duties and ruled the realm with love and care. Often, he went with his consort, on excursions into the forests, and spent his days happily. (*RKR V Part I p.29-32*)

She has a daughter

Kausalya gave birth to a daughter. She was named Shanta. But Dasaratha was not satisfied with the birth of a female child and wanted a male child. Therefore, he gave her to a friend who adopted her*. Thereafter, he did not have any other issue. (*SSS Vol.41 p.54-55*)

Dasaratha gave Shanta in adoption to King Romapada. The king brought her up and gave her in marriage to Sage Rishyasringa. Rishyasringa was a noble sage. There were plenty of rains, peace and prosperity and people lived in joy and plenty wherever Rishyasringa set his foot. Sumantra went to Rishyasringa and requested him to be the chief *rithwik* for the Puthrakameshti Yaga⁵⁸. Rishyasringa replied, ‘I cannot come alone. I agree to be the chief *rithwik* but my consort

⁵⁸ See also *Dasaratha - Invited Sage Rishyasringa And Performed The Sacred Yaga Called Puthrakameshti*
See also the *Endnote* – No.1- **Puthrakameshti Yaga**

Shanta also should come with me. She shall also function as a *rithwik*.” Sumantra agreed to this. Shanta and Rishyasringa reached there. As soon as she reached Ayodhya, Shanta did prostrations at the feet of Dasaratha and Kausalya. Dasaratha wondered who she was as she looked like a rishi. Wherever set her foot, draught vanished, making place for timely rains. When the parents wondered who she was, Shanta had to reveal her identity to Dasaratha and Kausalya. She said, “I am your daughter, Shanta. Dasaratha and Kausalya were overjoyed when they realised that she was Shanta. They had given away in adoption to King Romapada. (*SSB 2002 p.77-78*)

Dasaratha obtained permission of Kausalya, his first wife to marry Sumitra

Sumitra was the second wife of Dasaratha. Prior to his marriage with Sumitra, Dasaratha sought the consent of Kausalya. (The family custom in those days was that a husband cannot marry for a second time without the consent of the first wife. (*SSS Vol.40 p.187*) Kausalya replied, “Our kingdom needs an heir, doesn’t it? Hence, you marry a woman of your choice. I will also participate in the marriage.” Dasaratha was very happy and pleasantly surprised. (*SSS Vol.40 p.110*)

Her love for the other queen:

Kausalya and Sumitra were bound to each other by ties of affection, far stronger than those between a mother and a child. Each yearned to give joy to the other; each had deep fortitude, detachment and sympathy. (*RKR Part I p.32*)

Duty of the true wife

Kausalya and Sumitra recognised the ardour of the King to wed the princess of Kekaya for, her beauty was being extolled by all; they felt that the duty of the true wife⁵⁹ is to obey the least wish of the husband and do her best to help the realisation of that wish. They also knew full well that the Imperial Line of Ayodhya can never be polluted by a son who would transgress Dharma. Though Dasaratha might promise that the son of the third wife could succeed to the throne, the son of Kaikeyi born in the dynasty would certainly be an embodiment of righteousness, free from such blemish. So pleaded with him, with palms meeting in prayer, “Lord! What greater happiness have we than yours? Accept the conditions laid by the king of Kekaya and wed his daughter and ensure the continuity of this dynasty of Raghu. There is no need to spend even a minute’s thought upon this.” (*RKR V Part I p.33*)

The three Queens lived with intimate love

The three queens, (Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) evinced equal love and respect towards each other and the King. They adored him and were afraid to displease him. They endeavoured their best to carry out his wishes and to hinder his desire, for they revered him as their God, in the traditions of a true wife. They lived with such intimate love that it appeared as if all the three had but one breath, though they moved about as three bodies! (*RKR V Part I p.34*)

⁵⁹ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - Kausalya and Sumitra agree to Dasaratha marrying Kaika and agreed to the condition

EXPERIENCES WITH THE DIVINE:

Divine sport of the child Rama

The maids as well as many kinsmen of the royal family derived great joy watching the children at play. After they left, Kausalya used to insist that rites to ward off the evil eye were performed scrupulously. She was so affectionate and considerate towards the children that she never recognised the passage of day and the arrival of night or the passage of night and the dawn of a new day. She could not leave them out of sight even for the fraction of a second. While taking her bath or when she was engaged in worship inside the shrine, her mind was on them and she would hasten towards them as quickly as feasible. All her work she did in a hurry so that she could spend more time on their care.

One day, Kausalya, bathed Rama and Lakshmana; she applied fragrant smoke to their curls in order to dry them and perfume them; she carried them to the golden cradles; she sang sweet lullabies and rocked them to sleep. When she found that they had slept she asked the maids to keep watch and she went into her rooms, and prepared the daily food offering to God, in order to complete the rites of worship. She took the golden plate of food and offered it to God. Sometime later, she went into the shrine in order to bring the plate out and give a small quantity of the offering to the children. What was her surprise, when she found in that room, before the altar, Rama sitting on the floor, with the offering before Him, eating with delight the food she had dedicated to God! She could not believe what her own eyes told her! Kausalya wondered: "What is this I see? Do

my eyes deceive me? Is it true? Can it be true? How did this baby which was sleeping in the cradle come to the shrine? Who brought it hither? She ran towards the cradle, and peeped into it, only to find Rama asleep therein! She assured herself that hers was but delusion; she went into the shrine to remove from there the vessel of payasam she had placed before the idols. She found the vessel empty! How could this be, she wondered! Seeing the child in the shrine might well be a trick of the eye; but, what about the vessel being empty? How could that be an optical illusion?"

Thus she was between amazement and disbelief. She took hold of the vessel with the remnants of the offering and hastening to the cradle, stood watching the two babes. She could see Rama rolling something on his tongue and evidently enjoying its taste; she was amusingly watching his face, when lo, she saw the entire Universe revolving therein. She lost all consciousness of herself and her surroundings; she stood transfixed, staring with dazed eyes, on the unique panorama that was revealed.

The maids were astounded at her behaviour; they cried out in their anxiety, but, she did not hear them. One maid held her feet and shook her until she awoke to her surroundings. She came to, in a trice, with a quick shiver; by wonder, she sat on a bedstead. Turning to the maids, she asked, "Did you notice the child?" She saw the maids around her and stricken by you notice the child?" They replied "Yes; we are here since long. We have not taken our eyes away from him." "Did you notice any change him?" Kausalya enquired in eager haste. "We did

not notice any change. The child is fast asleep as you can see was their reply. Kausalya had her problem: Was her vision a delusion? Or fact? If true, why did not these maids notice it? She thought about it for long and finally, consoled herself with the argument that, since the children were born as products of Divine Grace, Divine manifestations were only to be expected of them. She nursed them and nourished them with deep maternal solicitude. They grew day by day, with greater and greater splendour, as the moon does in the bright half of the month. She derived immeasurable joy, fondling them, and fitting clothes and jewels on them.

The childhood of Rama was a simple but sublime part in his life. Very often, forgetting that He was her child, Kausalya fell at His feet, and folded her palms before Him, knowing that He was Divine. Immediately, she feared what people would say if they saw her bowing before her own child and touching Its feet in adoration. To cover up her confusion, she looked up and prayed aloud, “Lord! Keep my child away from harm and injury.” She used to close her eyes in contemplation of the Divine Child and begged God that she might not waver in her faith through the vagaries of His Maya (power to delude). She was struck by the halo of light that encircled His face. She was afraid that others might question her sanity if she told them her experiences. Nor could she keep them to herself. She was so upset that she behaved often in a peculiar manner, as if carried away by the thrill of the Divine Sport of her child.

Sometimes, she was eager to open her heart to Sumitra or Kaikeyi when they were near her; but controlled herself, lest

they doubt the authenticity of the experience and attribute it to exaggeration, or her desire to extol her own son. (*RKRV Part I p.50-53*)

No ordinary human child

At last, one day, she made bold to relate to Emperor Dasaratha the entire story of wonder and thrill. He listened intently and said, “Lady! This is just the creation of your fancy. You are over fond of the child. You imagine he is Divine and watch his every movement and action in that light and so, he appears strange and wonderful. That is all.” This reply gave her no satisfaction. So, the Emperor consoled her with some specious arguments and sent her to her apartments. In spite of what Dasaratha affirmed, the Queen who had witnessed the miraculous incidents with her own eyes remained unconvinced. She was not convinced by his words.

Therefore, she approached the Preceptor Vashishta and consulted him on the genuineness of her experiences. He heard her account and said; “Queen! What you have seen is unalloyed Truth. They are not creations of your imagination. Your son is no ordinary human child! He is Divine. You got Him as your son, as the fruit of many meritorious lives. That the saviour of Humanity should be born as the son of Kausalya is the unique good fortune of the citizens of Ayodhya.” He blessed the Queen profusely and departed. Kausalya realised the truth of Vashishta statement! She knew that her son was Divinity Itself. She derived great joy watching the child. (*RKRV Part I p.53-54*)

Servant-Maid's wife to fondle child Rama

A significant thing happened as soon as Rama was born. The servant-maid of Kausalya rushed to Dasaratha to inform of the good news of the birth of the child. Overjoyed by the good news, Dasaratha wished to present the servant-maid with a necklace of precious stones. The servant-maid rejected the offer and instead pleaded: "Master! Grant me the boon of fondling, caressing and cradling your child." Such noble thoughts arise in people due to the meritorious lives led by them in the past. (*SSB 1996 p.20-21*)

KAUSALYA'S COUNSEL

Sage Viswamitra resolve to take Rama and Lakshmana to – Kausalya's counsel to Dasaratha:

Sage Viswamitra⁶⁰... resolved upon a holy rite, known as Yajna. But however often he inaugurated it; the demons desecrated the rite and fouled its sanctity. They showered pieces of flesh on the sacred area and made it unfit for such Vedic ceremonies. In many other ways, too, they cast obstacles and halted the holy mission. Viswamitra was at his wits' end. He went to the capital city of the empire, Ayodhya, to meet the Ruler himself. (*RKRV Part I p.81*)

Dasaratha yearned to know the reason for the sage's arrival. He assured him that he was ever ready to fulfil his least desire. He

⁶⁰ See Chapter, *Viswamitra - Viswamitra comes to Ayodhya*

declared with great devotion that he will discharge earnestly any duty that the sage may cast on him. He was only waiting to know what he could do for him⁶¹. “I need only two of your sons, Rama and Lakshmana, to accompany me. What do you say to this?” the sage asked. Hearing these words, Dasaratha felt he could not do anything else than obey. He sent word that the Queens should come into the presence.

The Queens put in their appearance with veils over their heads. They touched the feet of the sages and of Dasaratha and afterwards, they moved towards the children and stood by their side, fondling with loving fingers the crown of their heads. Vashishta spoke to them first. He said, “Mother! Our Rama and Lakshmana are ready to leave with Viswamitra in order to guard his Yajna rite from interference and obstruction by demoniac hordes. Bless them before they leave.” As soon as she heard this, Kausalya raised her head in surprise saying: “What is this I hear? Are these saplings to guard and protect the Yajna which the great Sage is celebrating? I have heard that the Manthras themselves with their Divine potency will be the best armour. How can mere man dare take upon himself the burden of saving the Yajna from harm? The responsibility for the successful conclusion of the Yajna lies on the rectitude of the participating priesthood.”

This appeared to Vashishta as correct; but yet, he thought it best to shed a little more light on the situation. “Kausalya! Mother! The Yajna of Viswamitra is no ordinary rite! Many

⁶¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **VISWAMITRA IN AYODHYA**

obstacles are affecting it and creating anxiety.” Vashishta was continuing with his explanation when Kausalya intervened and said, “I am really amazed to hear that anxiety overshadows the Yajnas performed by sages and rishis. I believe that no power can stand against any sacred resolve. The sage is nursing this desire and craving for its fulfilment in order to manifest the Supreme Light and Peace; that is my surmise. He might have put forward this request in order to test the King’s attachment to his children. Or else, how can we believe that these tiny sprouts of tenderness will guard from harm the Yajna that this sage, endowed with all mystic and mysterious powers, is proposing to celebrate?” While Kausalya was saying this, her hand caressing the head of Rama, Dasaratha who was listening to her talk, suddenly realised the truth in a flash and arrived at a bold decision. He said, “Yes! The words of Kausalya convey authentic truth. This is but a plan to test me. I am certain about it. Master! How can I, a weakling, encounter your test? I shall abide by your wish, whatever it is!” With these words, Dasaratha fell at the feet of Vashishta. Vashishta looked at him and said, “Maharaja! You have proved yourself worthy. These boys are not of common stamp. Their skills and capacities are limitless. We know this. Others do not know. (*RKRV Part I p.82-92, 94*)

Kausalya spoke sweet words of benediction and gave counsel as to how his rule should be-

Lakshmana heard the news. He ran towards Kausalya, the mother, to convey the joyful tidings and communicate his exultation. She could not contain her happiness. She just waited for Rama to appear before her. There was very little

time before them. So the entire city was agog with excitement. The villagers around for miles and even neighbouring states, knew of it pretty soon, for good tidings spread quick and fast. And no one waited for another; no sooner did he hear than he hurried forward to the Capital City. The flow of humanity along all the roads leading to Ayodhya became an uncontrollable surge.

Rama then moved on fast to the apartments of his mother and He prostrated before his mother. She raised him tenderly, and fondled him affectionately, overwhelmed with joy. She directed him to give away to Brahmins, as a mark of thanksgiving, cows which she had collected for the purpose which she had decorated with costly ornaments. Rama gave away many other gifts to others. Lakshmana and his mother were there, at that time. Kausalya had Rama seated by her side and wiping the tears of joy that flowed freely she said, “Son, I had long awaited this precious moment. My yearning is now fulfilled. I am happy; my life is rendered worthwhile. Oh dearest jewel! My golden son! From tomorrow, you are Yuvaraja! Live long to rule over the empire, let the welfare of the people be ever your ideal. May your rule be happy and secure, in accordance with the dictates of justice and morality? Accumulated untarnished fame and maintain the reputation and glory earned by the kings of this line. Attain might and majesty more than even your father. The day you achieve that position, I would feel that my life has attained fruition. My vows, fasts and vigils would have then borne fruit.”

Kausalya caressed Rama, stroked his curls of his hair and spoke sweet words of benediction. She gave valuable counsel to which Rama paid meticulous attention. (*RKRV Part I p.223-225*)

BREAKING OF THE NEWS OF HIS BANISHMENT TO KAUSLAYA

A mother's Ananda and Rama unwillingness to break the news of his banishment:

Rama did not proceed direct to the apartments of Sita. He chose to walk to the palace of Kausalya. The palace was resplendent with flags and festoons and other external marks of jubilation. The women and other attendants of the palace got intimation of the approach of Rama and Lakshmana to the mansion and they got ready lamps on plates, and ranged themselves in rows to welcome them. Old and trusted guards at the main entrance rose sharply when they espied the Brothers, and exclaimed, "Victory! Victory!" "May it be victory to you!" They bowed low and offered homage. When Rama entered the second square inside, Brahmins who had gathered there showered their blessing on him. On entering the third square, the young maids in attendance on the queen rushed in, carrying the happy tidings that Rama and his younger brother were arriving to offer reverence to the mother. They were themselves delighted at the sight of the princes. From the outer door right up to the room where the Mother was, maidens standing on both sides of the long passage waved ceremonial

lamps as signs of welcome, to ward off evil and welcome joy and prosperity.

Queen Kausalya had observed vigil all night, in preparation for the holy day that had dawned. She was engaged since dawn in worshipful rites. Aged Brahmin priests were propitiating the God of Fire with Vedic hymns, when Rama was announced. The mother was overwhelmed with joy, since she could witness with her own eyes the Coronation of her son. She celebrated her joy by means of several rites. She gave away plentiful gifts. She fasted and kept vigil. Ananda was enough food for her, the ananda she shared with all. She ran forward to clasp Rama in her arms. She caressed the curls on his head. She led him by the hand into the shrine room where she was spending the morning. She had no knowledge of the somersault events had taken. Innocent and simple hearted that she was she wore the white sari of purity and with the sacred silk cord tied round her wrist, she was gratefully engaged in the worship of the Gods. Looking at the face of Rama, she noticed an added splendour illumining it. So she could not contain within herself her Ananda. "Son!" she said, "your forefathers were all Royal Sages, Rajarshis. They were strong upholders of Right. They were super-souls, Mahatmas, each one. You shall be as long-lived as they, as renowned as they. Your glory must reach the ends of all the quarters as their glory did, Son! Follow the ideals of Righteousness which were held high by this dynasty. Do not neglect them, even in a fit of absence of mind. Hold on to them, without wavering in the least." With these words, she placed a few grains of rice on his head, in token of her blessing on the auspicious day. She placed a golden seat near hers,

saying, “Son! You observed the ceremonial vigil last night, didn’t you? And you fasted yesterday, according to rule. You must be exhausted. Sit here for a while, and eat a few fruits.” So saying, she held forth a gold plate of fruits which she had made ready for him.

Rama was thrilled by the ananda of his mother and love she showered on him. He wondered how he could communicate to her the turn of events. He was unwilling to destroy the atmosphere of joy. For the sake giving satisfaction he sat on the golden chairs, fingered the contents of the plate and said, “Mother! From this moment, I should not touch gold. I should sit on golden chairs. I am awaiting your blessing, for I have to proceed as an exile to the Dandaka Forest. I came to you to for taking leave.” Kausalya could not understand a word of what he said. She could only say, “Son! Within minutes you are to be crowned King and you talk of the Dandaka Forest! I am at a loss to make out the sense of what you say.” She thought her son was teasing her with a joke, She said, “Son! In this auspicious hour you should not, even in fun, talk of things of bad omen. Give it up, my lovely gem!” She scooped with her fingers a little from a place of rice, boiled in milk and sweetened with sugar and placed it on Rama’s tongue!

Observing her love and ananda, the eyes of Lakshmana were spontaneously filled with tears. Kausalya noted it. She turned to him, and enquired, “Lakshmana! Why are you sad?” She hurried towards him and tried to caress him, but Lakshmana could not suppress his grief any longer. He wept aloud and

sobbed. Rama's words and Lakshmana's grief confused her much.

Rama tells his mother that he bows to the command of the king and has come to take leave:

Meanwhile Rama interceded: "Mother! If you promise not to grieve, I shall tell you one thing." And he held her hands in his, very firmly. "This is something that will endow me and you and our entire family and dynasty with imperishable glory. So, don't give room for any anxiety, doubt or distress. Agree to it with alacrity and affection. Does it not give you great joy that I obey father's command? He has resolved to crown my brother, Bharatha! He has resolved to send me to, in the habiliments of a hermit the Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years. I have bowed to his command and come here to take leave of you."

At this, Kausalya shrieked, "Rama" and fell on the floor. "What a turn of events in this? Is the tender child of mine to be sent into dark, jungle? What crime has my son, Rama done to deserve this? Can this be true? Or, is it meaningless jabber coming out of my brain, since I had no sleep and no food?"

While she was thus trying to explain to herself and consoling herself, the happenings at Kaikeyi's palace had spread throughout the zenana and the noise of wailing and lamentation rose from maids and attendants everywhere. All faces streamed with tears in great sorrow. Cries of "Rama! Do not leave us"; were heard on all sides. Grief-stricken groups hurried to the palace of Kausalya, who was overwhelmed with astonishment,

sorrow and fear. She could not unravel the mystery of it all. She could not rise from the floor, for she was weighed down with anxiety and despair. Nevertheless, she was longing to understand what had really happened to cause this universal agony. She drew Rama on to her lap, and caressing his curly hair she asked, “Son! What is this I hear? This news? Tell me clearly what took place. I cannot bear this suspense any longer.”

Rama told her, “Honouring the two boons that father had promised Kaikeyi once upon a time, father granted her those two wishes.” Rama told Kausalya that the first boon she was granted was, “Bharatha is to be crowned” and the second was, “I should be sent to the Forest for fourteen years.”

When Rama related these facts and confirmed their truth, Kausalya exclaimed, “Rama! Did Kaikeyi really demand such boons? Kaikeyi had unbounded love and affection towards you. She would not have wished for these things any day. Let that rest. Even if she has, I am sure it must be only to test the king! For this simple thing, why should there be so much confusion and anxiety? Or, assuming that she asked for the boons, will your father ever agree to grant them? I refuse to believe this. Will your father, who cannot tolerate your absence from his presence for a single moment, send you away into the forest for fourteen years? This is plunging me into more confusion.”

Seeing his mother doubting the truth of the incidents that actually took place, Rama again held both her hands in his and

pleaded, “Mother! Believe my words! Father had already promised to grant her whichever two boons she desired. Afterwards, when she asked for these two, he had no inclination to break his plighted word, to take back the promise he had solemnly granted. Nor could his mind agree to order me into the forest and be without me. So, he is suffering great mental distress. I cannot bear the sight of his affliction. I have just now returned from that palace. He is stricken unconscious. He is in terrible anguish. This is the truth. I am not so cruel as to cause such anxiety in you over a light laughable matter, believe me. I have accepted father’s order. I have come to you for your permission.” With these words, Rama fell at the feet of his mother.

Kausalya’s lamentation:

Kausalya lifted him up tenderly. She said, “Rama! What strange behaviour is this? However barbarian a person may be, will he demand these horrible boons? Can ever any human being think of sending you, who is to be crowned in a few minutes, into the forest and for fourteen years? Am I to suffer throughout my life? I got a son, after observing many a vow and ritual. Looking on your lovely face, I overcame the pangs of those years of sorrow. I have no other desire; I ask for no other boons. It is enough for me if my son is with me, near me. Have I become unfit for this little gift? Did I deliver a child only to throw it into the forest? Will any mother agree to send her son into the jungle? Alas, what sin have I committed in the past? In which of my precious lives have I kept apart a mother from her son? Since the day when you were initiated into Vedic studies, I was deriving happiness every moment from the

thought that the day of your Coronation was drawing near. Have those sweet dreams of mine come to naught? Have all my hopes been dashed to the ground and broken to pieces? Have all the vows, vigils, rites and rituals I so scrupulously observed and performed, for ensuring your joy and happiness, been in vain? Oh! What a big sinner am I? Why has my heart not broken on hearing this news? Perhaps, I have to hear and bear much more heart-breaking news! Death does not help me! My heart still beats, in spite of this shock. Alas, even death awaits the allotted moment. He comes; but on seeing my plight leaves me alive, postponing the moment of my release. Yama too has no mercy towards me. I am pronounced undeserving of even the realm of Death. Oh Rama! That this calamity should happen to us!” She lamented and fell on the floor in a faint.

Coming to, she rolled on the floor, pressing her heart with the palm of her hand. Rama could not quietly look on the scene. The wailing of the maids, who gathered around blasted his ears like thunderbolts.

Rama’s Equanimity – would never swerve from his path of duty - not stray away from path laid by his father:

Rama did not utter a single word. He sat near his mother and stroked her forehead, caressing her hair and consoling her. He brushed away the dust with which her clothes were covered. Like a huge well-set rock struck deep in the sea. Rama sat unhurt by the lashing of the surging billows around. He was above and beyond the blows of grief and blandishments of joy. He was filled with as much equanimity now when he had to leave for the forest for fourteen years, as he had a few moments

ago, while proceeding to the Durbar Hall to be crowned as the Ruler of a great empire!

Kausalya too knew that Rama would never swerve from his path of duty. She was aware that Rama would never break his plighted word, and that he would not stray a hair's breadth from the path laid down by his father. She was certain that her lamentations would not induce him to turn back. So, she gave up all attempts to persuade him to give up his resolution. "Son! Of what use it to blame others when one is destined to meet these tragic developments? No. It is sheer waste of words. Everything is for our own good. No one can say 'no' to the dictates of the Divine. I have no happiness in this Ayodhya, in this palace. I can be happy only where Rama is. So, I shall come with you. Take me with you," she said. The maids held her and seated her leaning against the wall. They spoke softly and sweetly to bring her round. (*RKRV Part I p.280-287*)

Lakshmana⁶² questions the authority of any son other than the eldest becoming the king? He says he cannot live without Ramachandra and he will follow Rama if he moves into forest - Kausalya was comforted – Brothers like Lakshmana are rare – Mothers who have borne such children are venerable- She wanted that she should be taken with Rama- (RKRV Part I p.290-291)

⁶² See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Lakshmana questions the authority of any son**

Rama explained the true facts and said: righteous conduct is the very root of life and one cannot exist without Sathya and Dharma which he would achieve by following commands of father and not allow the breaking of plighted word- He would not deviate from the resolution- He said to Mother, Kausalya not to obstruct his resolve and cause breach of his vow and send him with Love and bless his vow and resolution and fell at her feet and prayed for permission to leave... (RKRV Part I p.292)

Rama makes it clear that Dasaratha's Command to be carried to the very letter - it is ancient law, the Sanathana Dharma⁶³:

The mother was shaken by the agony that was torturing her and wept aloud. Rama was unable to restrain his emotions. He held her feet and said, "Mother! My word is supreme Truth. Listen, No hardship will happen to me while in the forest. I will spend fourteen years with largest measure of happiness and joy. I shall come back and fall at these Feet again. I shall fulfil all your hopes about me. Mother! It is Dasaratha's Command! It is a Command which not only I but you, Lakshmana, Sumitra and Bharatha too have to carry out to the very letter. This is the ancient law, the *Sanathana Dharma*." (RKRV Part I p.292)

⁶³ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, - *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama explains the true facts*

Kausalya says she is the Ardhangi and mother's command to be followed:

Kausalya listened to these words of Rama. She could not bear the grief that descended on her. She groaned in great pain. 'Oh my son! Father brought you up and helped you grow and was happy to see you tall and strong. So, he deserves reverence and obedience. Am I too not worthy of reverence? And obedience? And consider this! The wife is the husband half. The husband is the wife's right half. Thus, when each is the half of the other, I am half of Dasaratha, am I not? That is why the wife is named the *Ardhangi* (half the body) of the husband. When you say that you have been commanded by Dasaratha, it is only the command of half of him. It did not originate from all of him. It will become authoritative only when this half too agrees. When I do not, it is not valid as a command. You know the meaning and significance of Dharma in all its varied aspects, so you must be aware of this too. Without the mother's acceptance, no duty can be binding and nothing deserves the name of Dharma. More than the father's command, the mother's is to be followed. For, it is the mother who nourished you into childhood and boyhood, not the father! Had the mother not borne it for nine months, there be no child at all! You are now throwing that mother into the flames of grief, and proclaiming. 'Oh, it is my father's command. I must obey it at all costs.' I shall not accept that conduct as correct. No treasure is richer to the mother than her son. And for mothers such as I, the son is all. When the son looks askance at me and considers the father's order as superior, of what benefit is it for me to secure heaven and live on Divine Nectar? I shall rather be in hell. I shall deem it heaven if my son is with me.

Rama! What can I do at this place? I have not tasted a moment's happiness throughout my life? From birth, I was bound by the limitations imposed by mother and father; then, caught in anxiety about what kind of husband I would get, and what his character and behaviour would be. I was at last wedded to your father. For years, the agony of childlessness afflicted me. Then I had to suffer from conflict with the other wives of your father. I have no relief from that battle, from that day to this. As a result I do not know of what merit in my previous life, I secured you as son. And now, separation from you is happening to me. When have I been happy? "My life has become a vast stream of grief. I am unable to swim. I sink in it without being saved. I had you as a branch which I could hold onto to save myself. As a consequence of my absence your father will not suffer any feeling of loss. He has his ananda in Kaikeyi. None else is need by him. Therefore instead of hanging on here, and broiling in agony and finally giving up breath, I prefer looking on at the charming face of my dear son. Though I may not have food and drink in the forest, I shall sustain myself on that joy."

Kausalya was in tears. She lamented. "O my dear Son, I was so happy thinking You were going to be crowned. But in a few short moments, destiny has taken such a shocking turn. After You leave, I cannot remain here in Ayodhya even for a second. So, I too will go with you to forest. (*SSB 2000 p.92*) She said, 'I shall come with you. I am a queen only in name. My life has been a stream of tears. Viswamitra took you away from us; I spend anxious days, when you were with him countering the demons; then Parasurama appeared before you, challenging

you for a fight, I was really overpowered by grief. I can never be happy away from you.” (*SSS Vol.6 p.140*) ‘Rama softly replied, “Father is old and also somewhat disabled. No matter, you cannot leave him. For a woman, husband is God. Your primary duty is to serve him.” (*SSB 2000 p.92*) “Promise me that you will be full of joy, the fourteen years I spend in exile”, he pleaded. He convinced her that her place was with the grieving father, King Dasaratha, her master and lord. Kausalya blessed Him, “May the dharma you revere and represent guard you.” (*SSS Vol.6 p.140*)

Meanwhile Lakshmana intervened and said, “Brother! Mother’s words are the highest Truth. The mother deserves even more reverence than the father. The scripture has laid down, ‘*Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava,*’ thus placing the mother first, and the father in the second position. It says, “Let the mother be your God.” And thereafter, “Let father be your God.” It is not proper for you to stick so firmly to your resolution and cause so much grief to mother.”

Rama expounds the rights and duties of a son:

Rama intercepted his words, ”Lakshmana, you are supporting the statements of a mother who is suffering from the clouding effect of a strong attachment to progeny, Consider the order of the Father, which concerns the welfare of the empire, the world in its entirety and the human community. You have not

understood the inner implication and meaning of that order⁶⁴.
(RKRV Part I p.295)

Rama's advice to Lakshmana on the path of Truth and Righteousness.... asked him to remain in Ayodhya and serve father.... Lakshmana said just as Rama had his Dharma he too had his duty.... Being his very breath he would don hermit's habiliment and follow him to the forest and threw away all the royal robes..... Rama's heart was softened...

Rama said to Lakshmana, "By your coming with me, mother Kausalya too will gain some peace of mind. She is very much agitated by fear and doubt about how I shall spend fourteen years in the forest, and whether I will return after the period of exile is over. So, tell mother to be free from fear. Go and soothe her. While we spend the hours like this, Father must be suffering more and more anxiety.

Kaikeyi will suffer from the welling doubt that I may not leave at all! Therefore, I shall go to Sita and inform her, and thence, I shall go to the Palace of Kaikeyi to take leave of Father. Meanwhile, you will go to your mother Sumitra and receive her consent to join me."(RKRV Part I p.298-299)

Kausalya Blesses Rama as he leaves for the forest:

With these words, Rama went round Kausalya full circle, and fell flat at her feet in reverence. At that, the maids and

⁶⁴ Under Section, *Rama*, See chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama expounds the rights and duties of a son:*

attendants as well as the other inmates of the zenana, set up a loud wail, as if the Deluge had come upon them. But Kausalya bravely drew Rama towards her when he stood up awaiting her blessings. She embraced him, and caressed his hair, and with her hands on his shoulder, she said, “Son! Rama! you are the staunchest adherent of Dharma. You are a resolute hero. You can have no cause to fear life in the forest. You have resolved on the exile in the forest. It has become impossible for me to dissuade you from that decision. May it be well with you. Fulfil your ideal, your yearning, to respect the wish of your father! Repay the debt that one owes to one’s father, by acting according to his command. As for me, I wish only one thing: return happy to Ayodhya. I shall be happy on that day at least. Rama! The decree of destiny is indeed inscrutable. Its text cannot be reshaped even by the most powerful. The Dharma for whose sake you are now leaving us will certainly guard you and guide you while in exile. Rama! How nice it would be if at this very moment the fourteen years roll by, and I see your return, rather than your departure. Alas! Pardon my madness! Son! How shall I convey to you my blessings⁶⁵? Shall I say, let the fourteen years pass by, as fourteen days, no, no, as fourteen winks of the eye! Come safe, come soon. And be crowned Emperor. Oh, Jewel of Raghu dynasty! Oh, my dearest son! The Goddess of Dharma will surely shelter you during the years of exile, for it is to propitiate Her that you are entering the forest. She is the strongest and most steadfast of Guardians.

⁶⁵ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama’s equanimity – Embodiment of Divinity - and Kausalya’s Blessing:*

I shall be propitiating the Gods here these fourteen years and praying that no harm comes to you. The service you have offered to your mother, your father and your preceptor will confer on you long life, health and happiness. Your loyalty to Truth will grant you impregnable courage. The mountains, the rivers, the bushes, the anthills, the beasts and birds of the forest, these will approach you in kind affection, cater to your needs, and fill you with joy.

The sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies will ward off all evil and protect you. Even the demonic Rakshasas of the forest intent on heinous acts of cruelty will be drawn towards you, for your heart is full of cool comforting love, and they will surrender at your feet, accepting you as Master.”

Kausalya puts on a brave face

Blessing Rama thus, Kausalya gulped down with some great effort the sorrow that was overwhelming her, and put on a calm brave face. She smelt the crown of Rama’s head and held him hard and close in loving embrace. She kissed his cheeks. Her lips quivered when she spoke the parting words, ‘Rama! ‘Return safe; proceed in joy. (*RKRV Part I p.299/301*)

Kausalya said to her son, “Rama! May the four sages⁶⁶ Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata be with you always and protect you as eyelids protect eyes. (*SSB 2002 p.77*)

⁶⁶ The four sages, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata live in human beings and render help to them. They come to the rescue of human beings in times of dangers and ward off calamities. The four

Sumitra consoles Kausalya⁶⁷:

When Kausalya was shedding tears after Rama left for the forest, Sumitra tried to comfort her, saying, “Dear sister! Why do you cry? Is it because Rama is going to the forest, while we would enjoy Royal comforts in Ayodhya? In fact, wherever Rama lives, it is Ayodhya and the rest is nothing but a forest. We should lead our life with equanimity, remaining equal-minded in happiness and sorrow. Happiness and sorrow come one after the other. We should not be affected by them. We should neither be elated by happiness nor depressed by sorrow. Can there be a human being in this world without happiness and sorrow? Rama is, in fact, omniscient and omnipresent. No harm can ever befall Him from wild animals or demons in the forest.”

Kausalya was also worried about Sita since she was accompanying Rama to the forest. (*SSS Vol.39 p.79/80*)

Kausalya watched the Emperor and denoted that the Sun of the Solar Dynasty was setting⁶⁸ – Kausalya tried to instil courage and comfort – Dasaratha muttered the story of the curse⁶⁹ - Dasaratha was lost in contemplation of the incidents of the past – “Rama! Rama! Rama!” he cried thrice and leaned back

noble sages are eternal benefactors who work for the welfare of humanity day and night. (*SSB 2002 p.76/77*)

⁶⁷ See also chapter, *Sumitra* – **SUMITRA CONSOLES KAUSALYA**

⁶⁸ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **DASARATHA BREATHES HIS LAST:**

⁶⁹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha recalls the curse - story of the curse:**

See also - **Kausalya comforts Dasaratha:**

over Kausalya – he had drawn his last breath. (RKRV Part I p.387/395)

BHARATHA RETURNS TO AYODHA AND UPSET WITH HIS MOTHER, GOES TO KAUSALYA’S APARTMENT:

As soon as he got details of what had happened, Bharatha became very upset. His eyes became very red. He became so excited that he used very harsh words to his mother. He could not stay there even for a moment. He went straight along with Shatrughna to Kausalya’s apartment. (*SSB 1977 p.68*)

*Kausalya was rolling on the floor, in her dust-ridden clothes, lamenting aloud, “Oh Lord! Lord, Rama. Rama!”.*⁷⁰ He fell at her feet and asked her to pardon him, and said that he was innocent, and that he was not responsible for what has happened. In many ways, he asked for her pardon. (*SSB 1977 p.68*) Crying out, “Mother! Mother! He collapsed on the floor at her feet. Queen Sumitra too was there, with Kausalya. Both of them recognised Bharatha and Shatrughna, and suddenly fainted away. Recovering they clasped each other in a fit of agony and wept aloud. It was a scene that would have melted the hardest stone. The brothers could not bear the weight of sorrow. (*RKRV Part I p.402*) Bharatha felt sad that he did not have the good fortune of seeing his father when he was on his death bed. He consoled himself that at least Rama and

⁷⁰ *RKRV Part I p.402*

Lakshmana merited the good fortune of being with father at the last moment. (*SSB 1996 p.38-39*)

Mother! Take me to father. Tell me the reason why he passed away. Why did my Brothers Rama and Lakshmana proceed to the forest, with Sita? It is all a mystery to me. Save me from this agony, tell me why?” Bharatha pleaded pitifully, clasping the feet of Kausalya. Kausalya embraced him tenderly and replied, “With your return my son, I am consoled a little. Seeing you, I can forget the pangs of separation from dear Rama. You are as much as Rama to me. I make no distinction.”

Even while saying so, she interrupted her words, with sobs and groans, and the cry, “Ah! Rama! Can I keep alive for fourteen long years, while you spend them in the forest? Have you resolved that I should be reduced to ashes by the sorrow of separation, just as your father was? Alas how unfortunate am I?” Bharatha suffered even more at these outbursts. His imagination pictured all kind of tragedies and miseries. For, he was not yet aware of the truth. He prayed, “Mother! Do not keep fact away from me. Trust me. Tell me why Rama went away into the forest, and why father breathed his lost. Tell me and save me from this tangle of confusion.”

Kausalya laments her grief to Bharatha⁷¹:

Kausalya was ever simple and straight forward and compassionate by nature. She took Bharatha to be Rama

⁷¹ See Chapter, *Bharatha* -- **BHARATHA’S INTERACTION WITH KAUSALYA:**

himself returned. She drew Bharatha near her, and wiping her tears off, she said, “Son! Bharatha! Be bold⁷². Do not grieve over the past. Such grief is useless. Strange things do happen when times are not propitious and circumstances so conspire. Of what benefit is it to lay the blame on someone? No one should be found fault with. It is my destiny to live in sorrow. This cannot be avoided. It must be endured by me. But you are young. You are like the sun at the hour of early dawn. Remember that.

My dearly loved darling, Rama, in obedience to father’s order, wore apparels of fibre, tied his matted hair into a topknot, and is now moving about in the jungle. Sita, who cannot live away from him even for a moment, is with him, clothed in a bark garment. Lakshmana attempted to prevent Rama from going into the forest, but his efforts were of no avail. He declared that Ayodhya without Rama was a jungle for him, he followed Rama. All this happened before my eyes. Oh! What a sinful soul should I be that I still live!

I could not go with them, nor would my life depart, when they left. How shall I describe my miserable plight? My heart is really carved out of adamant stone. Oh tender-hearted Rama! You suffer so much now, since you were born of me. Or else, why should you? Alas! Rama! How much suffering you have to endure, living on fruits and roots, and wandering about

⁷² See Chapter, *Bharatha* -- **Kausalya comforted Bharatha and advised – No word of condemnation for his mother**

in terror striking recesses of the jungle!” She groaned aloud once and fell in a faint on the floor. (*RKRV Part I p.402/404*)

Bharatha and Satrughna straight went to the assembly and pleaded that he did not deserve to rule the Empire which rightfully not belonged to him- He had decided to go to forest where Rama was and had obtained permission of Kausalya and Sumitra - Sought the permission of the Elders and Ministers for their blessings and permission

Kausalya and Sumitra too set out on the journey with their maids⁷³ (*RKRV Part I p 418/421*)

Kaikeyi⁷⁴ pleads that she might be allowed to accompany the queens and permitted to pray for pardon:

Kausalya who had a pure unblemished heart, did not entertain the least doubt or deviation from right consciousness. She sent word that Kaikeyi could certainly join her. (*RKRV Part I p 421*)

CORONATION

Rama, while nearing Ayodhya....gathered around him the Vanaras and Vibhishana. Kausalya addressed them thus, "O Vanaras! You are all as dear to me as my son Rama himself.

⁷³ See Chapter, *Sunayana* – **THE BROTHERS MEET**

⁷⁴ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi* -**She pleads that she might be allowed to accompany the queens and pray for pardon**

My Rama will never forget you; may he ever protect you⁷⁵".
(*RKRV Part II p.270-277*)

It was on Dipavali day that Sri Rama's coronation took place after his victorious return to Ayodhya from Lanka vanquishing Ravana and his Rakshasa brood. (*SSS Vol.24 p.290*) Kausalya, the mother of Rama, turned her eyes on Rama, every now and then, and felt supremely happy. (*RKRV Part II p.281-282*)

Exile for Sita and Kausalya's Departure from the Earth:

The three mothers were so affected by separation from Sita that they became weaker and weaker with every passing day. It resulted in their death too, finally. They manifested through Yoga the fire latent in them and allowed the fire to reduce their bodies into ashes⁷⁶.

INTERPRETATION AND INNER PERCEPTIONS OF KAUSALYA'S CHARACTER:

Highly virtuous

Mother Kausalya was highly virtuous. Being the eldest queen, everyone respected her and obeyed her command. (*SSS Vol.35 p.122*)

⁷⁵ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam* - Bharatha welcomes the Vanaras accompanying Rama:
See also - Jubilant Ayodhya

⁷⁶ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam* - The Three Mothers pass away at the separation from Sita:

Good name -

Kausalya attained a good name because of her son, Rama. Her name appears first in Suprabhatam which begins with the words – ‘Kausalya Supraja Rama ... “Oh! The noble son of mother Kausalya.... (SSS Vol.35 p.95-96)

*"kausalya supraja rama! purva sandhya pravartate,
uthishtha! narasardula! kartavyam daivam ahnikam "*

“Sri Rama! Kausalya's endearing son! Wake up, dear! You have to do your day-to-day duties do wake up please.”

Kausalya's philosophy (her interaction with the Queen of Mithila, Sunayana, Emperor Janaka's consort)

Kausalya said, “Sunayana! This happened not through fault of one particular person. Happiness and misery, profit and loss, are all the consequences of Karma, the deeds, words and thoughts of the persons, themselves. Has it not been declared, *Avasyam anubhikthavyam, kritham Karma subhaasubham?* Good or bad, whatever karma has been done, its consequences have to be willy- nilly suffered or enjoyed. God knows the hardship-filled process of Karma. He confers the appropriate consequence according to the deed. Each one carries on the head this Divine Command. Oh, Queen! We are entangled in delusion, and we yield in vain to grief. Why the merit earned and stored by us in previous lives desert us when we grieve? Can this rule of cause and effect holding sway over the world from before the beginning of the world be set aside for our sake? It is a mad hope. Kausalya ended her attempt at consoling, with many a sigh.

When (Kausalya) finished, Queen Sunayana spoke thus: “Mothers! You are indeed highly fortunate, for Emperor Dasaratha has renown for holy merit that few rulers have. You are Consorts of such noble person. You are the mothers of the very embodiments of Dharma, the very personification of love, Rama, whose heart embraces all beings in compassion. You have earned everlasting fame all over the world. (RKRV Part I p.461-462)

MOTHERLY QUALITIES:

Noble Mother

Rama's divinity blossomed under Kausalya's loving care; Amma (mother) is the first word that man picks up in life. The first letter of the word 'Amma' also happens to be the first letter of the alphabet. (*SS June, 99 - p. 141*)

Rama - Attained Godhood

Rama attained godhood because he was the son of Kausalya. Lava and Kusa became heroic because of their great mother, Sita Devi, It is the noble thoughts of the mother which make the children great. A mother may go wrong in other respects, but she always strives for the well-being of her children. Hence every son has to love the mother as the primary duty. Then he loves the father and reveres the preceptor. The mother confers the body. The father protects it. The preceptor imparts knowledge and wisdom. For every human being all three are essential for getting on in the world. (*SSS Vol.30 p.104*)

Kausalya's Concern for Bharatha

Kausalya said amidst her sobs, in a grief-stricken voice, "If Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reside in forest, many calamities will happen. I know Bharatha cannot survive separation from Rama. My agony is heightened when I see Bharatha, more than when I see Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. Fear overpowers me when I think of Bharatha." Sumitra and Kaikeyi agreed that it was very true. They too were saddened at the condition of Bharatha. (*RKR Part I p.462*)

Kausalya's anxiety about Bharatha being separated from Rama: Her affection to Bharatha

It is only the condition of Bharatha that gives me anxiety. His attachment and love for Rama are deep-rooted and delicate. The Emperor has passed away. Rama will not return from the forest. If Bharatha finds separation from Rama unbearable, it might lead to his death. Then, the entire empire would be reduced to a living corpse! My heart is torn by fear and anxiety

when I picture the future, and the calamities that are in store.” (*RKR V Part I p. 464*)

Humility and Virtue

Sunayana was touched by affection that filled the heart of the Queen and her adherence to the path of righteousness. She said, "Mother! Humility and Virtue are genuine in you. They are natural expressions of your goodness and nobility, as smoke on fire and beds of grass on mountain peaks. Of course, the Emperor Janaka is ever ready to serve you by word, deed, and thought. He is ever eager to help.” (*RKR V Part I p.464*)

Kausalya to the Vanaras

"O Vanaras! You are all as dear to me as my son Rama himself. My Rama never forget you; may he ever protect you". (*RVR V Part II p.276*)

KAUSLAYA CHARACTER THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS:

Kaikeyi:

Kaikeya⁷⁷ said to Manthara "Stop that stuff, Manthara! My sister is incapable of intrigue; she will never descend so low. It can never happen. It will never be." (*RKR V Part I p.231*)

Rama:

Rama⁷⁸ says - I shall do whatever is needed to bring joy back to him (Dasaratha), however hard it may be. His command, however painful, I shall discharge to the full, most loyally, with bowed head. Whoever is born, the father is the cause of his birth. Therefore, the father is everyone's visible God. I seek nothing higher than his happiness..... When Father is reluctant to tell me what that is, at least you can tell me about it, and console my grief.”

⁷⁷ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi* - **Manthara continued to poison Kaikeyi's mind**

⁷⁸ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi* - **Rama tries to find out the cause of Dasaratha's grief – not hesitating to bow to the order of his father**

Mother! Was your self-respect hurt by any incident, resulting in your speaking some harsh words against father? Or, did my mother act against his will and hurt his feelings? Mother Kausalya will never behave like that.
(RKR Part I p.272)

Once you try with all your might, the Lord's Grace will be there to help you forward. The first step in the spiritual discipline is the cleansing of the speech. Talk sweet without anger. Do not boast of your scholarship or attainments. Be humble, eager to serve; conserve your speech. Practise silence. That will save you from squabbles, idle thoughts and factions.

Again, practise the attitude of joy when others are joyful and of grief when others around you are grieved. Let your heart move in sympathy. But the joy and grief have to be translated into service; they should not be mere emotions.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

5.3 SUMITRA

Kausalyatmaja Seetavallabha

Janaki Jeevana Ram

Dasaratha nandana Dasamukhamardana

Sabaree Sevita Ram Janaki Jeevana Ram

Seetavallabha Sundara Ram

Maruthi Sevita Ram

Janaki Jeevana Ram ||

- Inspired composition by Tumuluru

SUMITRA

Sumitra in the Indian Epic, Ramayana was the second of King Dasaratha's three wives and a queen of Ayodhya. She was the mother of twins Lakshmana and Shatrughna. She came from the ancient kingdom of Kashi. She was supposed to be the wisest of the all the wives of Dasaratha. She was the one to first realize that Rama was the incarnation of Lord Narayana. She even encouraged Lakshmana to accompany Rama and serve him during his exile.

Sumitra is held in high esteem, because although Kausalya produced a master and Kaikeyi produced a master, Sumitra produced two servants, one to serve the Lord and one to serve the servant of the Lord. That is why we bow down to Mother Sumitra, who in the Ramayana is called a tapaswini, a woman of sacrifice.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SUMITRA⁷⁹: Second wife of Dasaratha and mother of Lakshmana and Satrughna. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

ABOUT SUMITRA – HER CHARACTER:

Among the three wives of Dasaratha, not much has been said about the second wife, Sumitra, anywhere in history.

But Sumitra had absolutely no desire whatsoever. She was the epitome of all virtues. She was *Mitha Bhashini* and *Hitha Bhashini* (one who talks less in pleasing manner). Her conduct was appropriate to her name Su-mitra (good friend)

She had two sons- Lakshmana and Satrughna. There was no way either of them could become the crown prince. Yet Sumitra was not worried. She demonstrated the ideal of service to the rest of the world. "When Rama becomes the king, my first son Lakshmana should dedicate himself to His service". This was her desire. Likewise, she wanted her second son, Satrughna be in the service of Bharatha. The servant is always by the side of his master. That is why Lakshmana followed Lord Rama, and Satrughna was always in the company of Bharatha. She understood the sacredness of service and exhorted her sons to follow this divine path. When you carefully go through the sacred story of Lord Rama, you will be able to understand and appreciate the noble and ideal character of mother Sumitra. (*SSS Vol.35 p.95-96*)

Also spelt as Sumithraa

Dasaratha marries Sumitra who has Companionable Virtues

The pang of being childless saddened Dasaratha. The King consulted the priests, pundits and ministers and when he knew that their desires confirmed the earnest prayer of Kausalya, he married another wife, Sumitra. Sumitra lived up to her name, for she was indeed full of companionable virtues. Kausalya and Sumitra⁸⁰ were bound to each other by the ties of affection, far stronger than those between a mother and a child. Each yearned to give joy to the other; each had deep fortitude, detachment and sympathy. (*RKRV Part I p.32*)

Her peculiar plight – Kausalya and Kaikeyi share their Payasam⁸¹:

Years passed..... There were no signs of a son..... the King and his queens..... decided that they should consult the family Preceptor, Vashishta, and accept his advice.

Vashishta spoke thus: perform the sacred Yaga (Sacrifice) called *Puthrakameshti* (the Yaga prescribed for those desirous of begetting a son).

The offerings..... were placed in the sacred fire. Suddenly, a Voice..... resounded from the dome of the sky....., “Maharaja! Accept this Vessel, and give the sacred ‘*payasam*’

⁸⁰ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - Allegory of Dasaratha and his three wives:*

⁸¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - Interpretations of the distribution and safekeeping of the Payasam :*

food brought therein in appropriate shares to your three queens, “the Voice announced. Placing the vessel in the hands of the King the mysterious Person who had emerged from the flames disappeared into them. Vashishta directed Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi should partake of the Payasam.....

Therefore, Kausalya and *Kaikeyi* kept their cups safe in the shrine itself and went among their maids to dry their hair, before attending to coiffure. Meanwhile, Sumitra stepped on to the terrace, and, keeping her cup on the short parapet wall, she dried her hair in the sun, ruminating all the time on her peculiar plight: “She was the second Queen! The son of the eldest Queen will ascend the throne, as of right; the son of *Kaikeyi*, the third Queen can ascend the throne according to the promise made by the King at the time of his marriage with her!” But, Sumitra wondered, “What will happen to the son I would get? He will neither be here nor there. Why have a son at all, to suffer as a nobody without status and sovereignty? Better far that a son is not born than to be born and get neglected.”

But that was only for moment. Soon she reconciled herself; she felt that what Gods decide must happen; none can stop it. She remembered that it was the command of her Preceptor and the order of the King. (*RKR Part I p.39-40*)

In the meantime, a servant-maid came running to her and informed that King Dasaratha had asked her to come at once. She plaited her hair and was about to pick up the cup. Just then, an eagle swooped down and took away the cup in a trice. She was afraid that her husband Dasaratha and Sage Vashishta

would get annoyed with her. She shuddered at the thought of being cursed by Sage Rishyasringa. (*SSS Vol.35 p.111*)

Sumitra repented for her negligence of the precious payasam; she felt that the King would be very upset, if he came to know of the mishap. She could not decide on her next step; she went straight to her sister Kausalya..... Just then, *Kaikeyi* too came there, after tying up her dried hair. The three sisters were very loving to each other, like sisters bound by one single silken thread of affection. (*RKRV Part I p.40*) She explained to them her predicament. “Sisters, an eagle took away the cup because of my negligence. No doubt, it was a mistake but it was not done intentionally.” Both Kausalya and Kaikeyi sympathized with her. Immediately, Kausalya brought a similar cup from inside and poured half of her share of payasam into it. Kaikeyi followed suit. Sumitra was happy at their consideration and cooperation. All this happened in a natural manner. The three queens went to the Puja room and partook of their share of payasam, (*SSS Vol.35 p.111*) while Rishyasringa was pronouncing his blessings and elders and scholars were chanting auspicious Vedic hymns. The Queens then slipped sanctifying water and prostrated before altar; they fell at the Feet of Rishyasringa and proceeded to their own palaces. (*RKRV Part I p.41*)

Sumitra becomes the mother of twin sons:

Time rolled by; news that the queens were pregnant spread among the people..... Sumitra had the pangs of labour and she

delivered twin sons⁸² in Uttarayana (the Divine Half-year)... the bright fortnight and the Abhijith period (the period of Victory)... When the weather was equable (neither hot, warm, nor cold) (In the month of) Chaitra... eleventh day, Aslesha star, Vriddhiyoga.

Vashishta gazed upon the twin children of Sumitra. The elder one, he felt, would be a hero, a stalwart fighter, and endowed with vast wealth. He knew that he would take delight in the service of God and His Consort, Lakshmi; that service would be for him like the very breath of life. So, he chose the name Lakshmana for him. His younger brother, Vashishta knew, would be a formidable destroyer of enemies, and withal a contented follower in the footsteps of his elder brothers. He therefore blessed him with the name, Satrugna, (the slayer of enemies). (*RKR V Part I p. 42-43/45-46*)

CURIOUS THING – SUMITRA NOT DESTINED TO MOTHER HER TWINS

The children grew fast on the fond care of the mothers. But one curious thing was noticed early. It was observed very soon that Lakshmana always sought Rama and Satrugna always sought Bharatha! Since the day of his birth, Lakshmana was always wailing! The nurses, the ayahs and others tried various remedies and palliatives; but nothing could alleviate his misery or stop his wail. Internal pain was suspected and medicines

⁸² See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha celebrates the Birth and asks the Preceptor to cast their horoscopes:**

galore were tried. They were of no avail. So, Sumitra was certain that the child's pain was beyond the reach of drugs; she sent for the Preceptor Vashishta; she fell at His Feet as soon as he entered the room. 'Master', she appealed, 'this Lakshmana is weeping, since birth, and clamouring for something I am not able to discover. I have consulted doctors and treated him, as advised. But, the wailing is increasing day by day; he does not relish even mother's milk! As for sleep, it is totally absent... Kindly tell me why he is behaving so, and bless him that he may give up this continuous wail'. (*RKRV Part I p.47*)

“Guruji, I don’t expect anything from my sons. It is enough for me if they lead a happy and healthy life. They don’t seem to have any physical ailments. I am unable to understand why they are restless and continue crying right from their birth.” Vashishta closed his eyes to contemplate on the reason for the children’s strange behaviour. After some time, he opened his eyes and said, “Mother Sumitra you are fortunate. You are endowed with the noble virtue of *samadrishti* (equanimity). As your name suggests, you are a good friend of all. You don’t need to be worried at all.” (*SSS Vol.35 p112*)

Vashishta... said, 'Oh Queen! His pain is unique and you are trying to cure it by familiar means and drugs! His yearning is beyond the ken of mortals to understand. Do as I tell you and the child will be quiet and happy. The moment you do so, the child will cease wailing and begin playing about with gusto. Take him now and lay him beside Rama, the child of Kausalya. This is the panacea". After this, Vashishta left, leaving his blessings on mother and child.

The story of Satrughna was also on similar lines. He was melancholy, averse to food and play. He appeared very weak and tired. Sumitra was worried at this development; so, she invited the Preceptor to the Palace and inquired from him the reason. Vashishta smiled again; he said, Mother! Your children are not of the common stamp. They are born to enact a Divine Drama! Place Satrughna on the same bed as Bharatha! Then his daily routine will be joyful. He will be extremely happy; you need not worry any more'. Vashishta blessed her and left. Sumitra followed his instructions, immediately. Since then, Satrughna spent time in the company of Bharatha. The children were in unbounded bliss, together; their progress was beyond measure! Like the splendour of the Sun, they grew in intelligence and glory from hour to hour.

Kausalya and Kaikeyi readily consented to Sumitra's request. They said, "Sister, bring Lakshmana and Satrughna at once. They are also like our children. Is it not a matter of joy for us to watch the four brothers grow together?" Sumitra did as per the advice of Sage Vashishta. No sooner did she put Lakshmana by the side of Rama in the cradle than he stopped crying. The same was the case with Satrughna too. He stopped crying as soon as he was put by the side of Bharatha. Lakshmana and Satrughna were extremely happy in the company of Rama and Bharatha, respectively. They were all smiles and started moving their hands and legs in a blissful manner. Watching her sons enjoying themselves thus, Sumitra felt greatly relieved. *(SSS Vol.35 p.113)*

Those who saw this transformation took it as a great wonder! Lakshmana who was until then suffering began to prattle aloud in joy, kicking his feet about, waving his hands in glee, as fishes do when they are thrown back into water, gliding gleefully along, in quick darts. He was in the presence of Rama, immersed in bliss and aware of the Grace Rama showered.

Sumitra had nothing to do now for her children; but, since she loved her twins as her dear life, she spent some of her time with Kausalya and some, with *Kaikeyi*, fondling the children and attending to their needs. She moved from on Palace to the other and relished her chore as a maid caring for the comforts of children. "I am not destined to mother them", she sometimes pined in solitude. Often she wondered how this strange situation arose, of her children, happy with those mothers and not with her. (*RKRV Part I p.48-49*)

Sumitra realises the Truth *Mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathana:*

Sumitra approached Sage Vashishta.. and requested him to explain the strange behaviour of her sons. She wanted to know why Lakshmana and Satrugna were crying continuously till they were placed by the side of Rama and Bharatha, respectively. Sage Vashishta started explaining in this manner: "Oh Sumitra! You are a noble soul. Your heart is pure and unsullied. You are totally selfless. So, it is not difficult for you to understand the reason behind this. Do you remember when your share of *payasam* was taken away by an eagle; Kausalya and Kaikeyi came to your rescue by sharing their *payasam* with

you? As a result, you bore two sons. Lakshmana is born from Kausalya's share of *payasam* and Satrughna is born from that of Kaikeyi. It means Lakshmana is an *amsa* (aspect) of Rama and Satrughna is an *amsa* of Bharatha. So, it is natural that Lakshmana is blissful in the company of Rama and so too is Satrughna in the company of Bharatha." Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathana* (the eternal atma in all beings is a part of My Being). Lakshmana, being an aspect of Rama, was in his company always. Likewise, Satrughna and Bharatha were always together. (*SSS Vol.35 p.113-114*) He laid bare the real reason: 'Mother! Lakshmana is a 'part' of Rama; Satrughna is a 'part' of Bharatha. Even as these words fell from his lips, Sumitra exclaimed, "Yes, Yes! I realise it now! I am glad I know from you the truth", and she fell at the Feet of Vashishta.

She said to herself, "When the eagle carried away in its beak the precious gift of *payasam* (Divine food) given by the Divine Messenger, I was so frightened at the prospect of the King becoming angry at my negligence that I informed Kausalya and *Kaikeyi* about the calamity; she poured out for me a share from her cup and the other sister poured out another share from her own cup; so, I alone of the queens had twins, as a result of the twin shares I consumed! Oh, the will of God is mysterious. It is beyond anyone to know His might and majesty. Who can alter His decree?"

"Yes", she consoled herself, "I bore them for nine months; I went through the pangs of delivery. But, their real mothers are Kausalya and *Kaikeyi*, there is no doubt". She was confirmed

in this belief and she gladly entrusted her children to Kausalya and *Kaikeyi*, and, joined them in fondling and fostering them. (*RKRV Part I p.49-50*)

Sumitra decides her sons will serve Rama and Bharatha:

True to her name Sumitra was a woman of noble qualities. She ... decided that the son born out of the share of payasam given to her by Kausalya, namely Lakshmana should always follow Rama. Similarly, the other son born out the share of payasam given by Kaikeyi, namely, Shatrughna should serve Bharatha. (*SSS Vol.40 p.190*)

Sumitra..... said to Kausalya and Kaikeyi “Lakshmana and Shatrughna are your gifts. My children will serve your children. Lakshmana will serve Rama and Shatrughna will serve Bharatha. It is my good fortune that my sons will serve others.” (*SSB 2002 p.43*)

Sumitra called her sons to her side and instructed them accordingly. From then onwards, Lakshmana became a constant follower of Rama, while Shatrughna followed Bharatha, with the blessings of their mother. Thus, all the four brothers were happily spending their time. Lakshmana could not leave the company of Rama even for a moment; so was Shatrughna yearning for Bharatha’s company. (*SSS Vol.40 p.190*)

She demonstrated the ideal of service to the rest of the world. “When Lord Rama becomes the king, my first son Lakshmana should dedicate himself to his service.” This was her desire.

Likewise, she wanted her second son Satrugna to be in the service of Bharatha. The servant is always by the side of the master. That is why Lakshmana followed Lord Rama, and Satrugna was always in the company of Bharatha. She understood the sacredness of service and exhorted her sons to follow this divine path. When you carefully go through the sacred story of Lord Rama, you will be able to understand and appreciate the noble and ideal character of mother Sumitra. *(SSS Vol.35 p.96)*

When Rama said to Lakshmana that half the responsibility in governance is yours⁸³, Sumitra was shedding tears and showering blessings on both Rama and Lakshmana. She said, “Rama! The love that subsists between you and Lakshmana gives me great happiness. My son needs no higher status than being your servant. If he is able to have forever your love and affection that is enough for him.” (RKR Part I p.226)

SUMITRA CONSOLES KAUSALYA

When Rama leaves for the forest:

When Lord Rama was leaving for the forest, mother Kausalya wept inconsolably. It was only Sumitra who did not shed tears. She tried to pacify Kausalya⁸⁴ and instil courage in her, saying, “Dear sister, my son Lakshmana would accompany Rama to

⁸³ See Chapter, *Lakshmana - Rama teases Lakshmana and asks to be ready to take half share of his burdens – in happiness, fame and fortune:*

⁸⁴ See Chapter, *Kausalya - Sumitra consoles Kausalya:*

the forest to look after His needs. He will make sure that Rama is put to no difficulty under any circumstances. Just as eyelids protect the eyes, Lakshmana will take full care of Rama with devotion. You need don't need to be worried about Rama's safety and security". She willingly sent her son to the forest along with Rama. Will any mother act in such a courageous and selfish manner? (*SSS Vol.35 p.96-97*)

When Rama was engaged in battle with Ravana

Comforts herself when she hears the news that Lakshmana has fainted and counsels Kausalya that Lakshmana was under Divine care and protection... Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana came to know about the incident. Though it saddened her for a while, she quickly regained her composure. Sumitra was a noble lady. No one has attempted to describe her qualities so far in the Ramayana. Not only she comforted herself, but she also counselled Kausalya saying, "Oh elder sister, You need not feel sorry that Rama is engaged in a battle against Ravana. Sri Rama is not an ordinary person. He is a great warrior, who can conquer the entire world and rule over it. Hence, Rama Himself will protect Lakshmana." Meanwhile, Lakshmana's wife Urmila also came to know about the incident and she was happy that her husband was under the divine care and protection of Rama. Urmila⁸⁵ too was a noble and courageous woman. It is because of such noble

⁸⁵ See Chapter, *Urmila* - Urmila asks Lakshmana a promise before going to the forest:

women⁸⁶, the four brothers Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna were happy and safe. (*SSS Vol.40 p.194-195*)

Bharatha⁸⁷ was ecstatic at this news, He sent word to for mother Kausalya's and said, "Mother! The messenger had news about Rama." He then introduced Hanuman to her who went on to tell her in detail all the news of the battlefield, "There is a fierce battle going on between Rama and Ravana. It shall definitely be over in a day or two. Lakshmana had fainted and these herbs are meant to revive him." Sumitra too was asked to come by Bharatha. She did not express any anxiety at the news about Lakshmana. On the contrary she said, "I am never worried about my sons' welfare. My only concern is that Rama is being put to inconvenience. If my son Lakshmana were to die, I shall definitely send my other son Shatrughna to serve Rama. My only aim is to see Rama happy. It is with this intention that I had sent Lakshmana to forest with Rama. (*SSB 2002 p.89*)

Consoles Bharatha when he is anxious about the welfare of Rama: Encounter with Khara and Dushana

In those days, Kings used to appoint special messengers to keep them informed about the happenings in and around the kingdom. Once, a message was conveyed to Bharatha relating the enormous trouble that the demons were causing to Rama. A particular mention was made of the terrible duo Khara and

⁸⁶ See chapter, *Urmila - Her broadmindedness and utter selflessness*

⁸⁷ See Chapter, *Bharatha - Bharatha mistakes Hanuman for Rakshasa --Nobility of Sumitra and Urmila and their faith that Lakshmana was under Divine care and protection.*

Dushana. They were close associates of the demon king Ravana. They attempted to secretly harm Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Bharatha was informed of these developments. It was Surpanakha who poisoned the ears of Khara and Dushana and goaded them to attack the brothers. Bharatha was hence anxiously awaiting further news about Rama from his messengers. He was also hesitant to approach the elders with this news. Such news was generally conveyed only to Sumitra. She was a great lady. She would always use soft words and advise aptly. Therefore, she was relied upon. Bharatha conveyed this news to Sumitra and sought her advice. He did not mention this to his own mother Kaikeyi. At this moment of Bharatha's anxiety, Sumitra consoled Bharatha and said, "Rama will not come to any harm. He is Divinity incarnate. Therefore, do not give scope for any worries." She advised Bharatha thus. (*SSB 2002 p.93-94*)

SUMITRA'S LIFE PURPOSE WAS SERVED – HER PEACEFUL END

The house of Dasaratha was indeed fortunate to have four gems of sons and four equally virtuous daughters-in-law. Sumitra⁸⁸ gathered the four couples together, blessed them contently and retired from the scene. She told Rama, "I have spent fourteen years of my life thinking only of you. It was my cherished desire that I see you after fourteen years. I have seen you now and sanctified myself. My life's purpose is served. There is

⁸⁸ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - BACK TO AYODHYA*

nothing else she wanted from life and soon died peacefully.
(*SSB 2002 p.129-130*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF SUMITRA'S CHARACTER:

Numerous noble qualities

Sumitra was not given much importance in spite of her numerous noble qualities. In fact, the qualities of Sumitra and her sons cannot be described in words. (*SSS Vol.35 p.122*)

When Lakshmana decided to accompany Rama to the forest, mother Sumitra told him, "My son, it is God's will that I am your mother and you are my son. We should play our roles according to divine destiny. Don't feel bad that you are going to the forest. Ayodhya without you is a forest for us and a forest in your company, is Ayodhya." These were the ideals upheld by the great women of those days. (*SSB 2002 p.47*)

Sumitra counselled Lakshmana thus: "Never be under the impression that you are going to the forest. Wherever Rama and Sita are present, that itself is Ayodhya. This Ayodhya without Sita and Rama is a veritable forest. Consider Sita and Rama as your mother and father and serve them to the best of your ability with all love, sincerity, faith and devotion." You cannot find a woman greater than Sumitra in this world. She blessed her son to serve God wholeheartedly. The term Sumitra means good friend (*Su* - good, *Mitra* - friend). Such noble mothers like Sumitra and sons like Lakshmana with total devotion to God are needed today. (*SSS Vol.32 Part1 p.111-112*)

Great Virtue

Sumitra was one of great virtues. True to her name "Su-mitra" (good friend), she was the friend of all. She went to Kausalya and spoke words of great encouragement. "Dear elder sister, why should worry? What do you

think of Rama? He is Lord Narayana Himself. How does it matter to Him, whether He is in Ayodhya, or in a forest? Wherever He is, He is always with us. For Rama, Ayodhya and *Aranya* (forest) are one and the same.”

Kausalya was somewhat comforted to hear the words of Sumitra. Her mind also became peaceful. Sumitra added, “Dear elder sister, two sons were born to me, while both you and Kaikeyi gave birth to one son each. Do you know why? The reason is that my sons will have opportunity to serve their elder brothers; Lakshmana will serve Rama, and Bharatha will be served by Shatrughna. Therefore, pay attention to my resolve. Lakshmana will go to forest with Rama and will protect Rama as the eyelids protect the eyes. Therefore, do not have any fear. (*SSS Vol.40 p 110*)

This entire Drama is the master plan of God:

Kausalya was highly distressed at the turn of events. At this juncture Sumitra’s noble qualities need to be recalled. As her name, so was her character. She has a pure heart. She did not weep at the turn of events. Instead, she consoled Kausalya thus: “Sister, why are you so sad. Rama, who has incarnated for the emancipation of mankind, can never come to any harm. If you are concerned about his physical welfare, my son Lakshmana is going to be there with Rama always. He will be Rama’s attendant and aide. You must not give any scope for fear or anxiety.” Yet Kausalya’s womb that bore Rama. Her pain at his exile was therefore, immense. In this context, the noble and courageous counsel of Sumitra to Kausalya was much more laudable. However, while dealing with the epic Ramayana, hardly anyone discusses these noble attributes of Sumitra. She further told Kausalya, “This entire Drama is the master plan of God, You and me cannot add or change any of this. For the welfare of the world and the establishment of Dharma, God has enacted this mission. Hence sister! Do not shed tears. Your tears at the time of departure of your sons will only prove inauspicious to them. With cheer and joy, bless them and send them.” Thus did Sumitra stand by Kausalya and gave her a great deal of courage. The princes and Sita soon left. (*SSB 2002 p.62-63*)

Instilling the notion of service in her sons:

As per the promises extracted by Kaikeyi from Dasaratha, only Rama was obliged to go forest. It was not obligatory for Lakshmana to accompany Him. Sumitra could have argued in this manner and prevented Lakshmana from going to the forest. But Sumitra did not raise any objection whatsoever. "Lakshmana is born only to serve Lord Rama. He is an instrument in Rama's hands. So, Rama is taking His instrument with Him. Who am I to send Lakshmana with Him and who is Lakshmana to decide about his going with Rama? Rama has every right to take Lakshmana with Him". These were her feelings. She blessed her son Lakshmana and said, "My dear, take proper care of Sita and Rama". When Bharatha was proceeding to his uncle's kingdom of Kekaya, Satrughna had no information whether to stay back or follow. Yet, Satrughna got ready to accompany Bharatha, as he knew it was duty to serve him. In the history of Bharat, there are many noble mothers like Sumitra⁸⁹ who encouraged their sons to take to the path of service. (*SS May 2002 p.140-141*)

Sumitra's illustriousness as a noble mother

Lakshmana prostrated before his mother Sumitra. The noble lady told her son: "Only the place where Rama is not is the forest. The forest in which Rama stays will be your Ayodhya. Without Rama in Ayodhya, we will be living in wilderness. Redeem your life to the service of Rama." Because there were such illustrious mothers, fathers and preceptors in those days, the *Upanishads* could exhort the people to revere the mother as God, the father as God and the *Guru* as God and the guest as God. (*SSS Vol.21 p.89*)

Lessons of unity:

The four brothers, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha,⁹⁰ Satrughna and their consorts had perfect unity and harmony among themselves. They were like different carpels of the orange fruit. One day Sumitra peeled out the skin of an orange fruit. As she took out each slice, she was saying, "This is Rama,

⁸⁹ See Chapter, *Shatrughna* - **INNER PERCEPTION AND QUALITIES OF SATRUGHNA - Nobility:**

⁹⁰ See Chapter, *Bharatha* - **Sumitra says Bharatha is the effulgent Lamp of Royal Line:**

this is Lakshmana ... " She considered each slice of the fruit to represent the four brothers and their wives. She was very happy to have such virtuous daughters-in-law like Sita, Urmila⁹¹, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi. The daughters-in-law also served their mothers-in-law with utmost love and care. (*Dasara Discourses 2004 p.77*)

SUMITRA'S CHARACTER THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS:

Rama:

Did my mother act against his will and his feelings? Mother Kausalya will never behave like that, And, Sumitra? I am more certain about her. She will not at all acts so. (*RKRV Part I p.272*).

Sage Vashishta and Sage Viswamitra extolled her noble qualities

The name of Sumitra does not find a place of prominence that it deserves in the *Ramayana*. She was a paragon of virtues and, true to her name, she was a good friend of all. The sacrifice made by Sumitra was greater compared to the sacrifice made by Kausalya. Some of the virtues of Sumitra were not to be found even in Kausalya and Kaikeyi. Before leaving for the forest, Rama sought the blessings of Kausalya. Then he went to the residence of Sumitra. Rama prostrated before her and said, "Mother, I am very happy to obey father's command and go to the forest, but I feel sad to leave you and go. I pray to you to shower your love and blessings on me. I do not require anything else." So saying, he offered his salutations to her again and again, took leave of her and left for the forest. Among the three queens, Sumitra was the noblest. Even Sage Vashishta and Sage Viswamitra had extolled her noble qualities. We should accept others' greatness and not indulge in self-glorification In order to glorify others' greatness, sometimes; we need to be modest and self-effacing. (*Dasara Discourses 2004 p.76-77*)

⁹¹ See also Chapter, *Urmila- Urmila meets Lakshmana after fourteen years:*

Lakshmana

Lakshmana⁹² said. “Brother, the great Dasaratha is my father and the noble Sumitra is my mother, who had blameless characters. The blood flowing in my body is theirs. They never could do anything contrary to dharma in their word or deed. How can I being their son, do it?” As is the seed, so is the tree. As is the food taken, so is the belch. What parents are, that embodies itself in their children too. (*Divine Discourse on 17th August, 1991*)

Hanuman:

Hanuman turned to Bharatha and said, “Your brother Lakshmana has fallen unconscious in the battlefield. The physician there wanted Sanjivini herb to be brought in order to revive Lakshmana. As I could not locate the exact herb, I am carrying the entire mountain with me.” On coming to know that Lakshmana had fainted and Rama was grief stricken, everyone assembled there started shedding tears; the ladies in particular were inconsolable. When Hanuman looked around, he found everyone in tears except for one lady. She was none other than Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana. “Lakshmana can never be put to any harm. He constantly chants Rama’s name. Every cell of his body is filled with the divine name of Rama. So, nothing untoward can happen to him.” With such conviction she was composed. (*SSS Vol.35 p.125*)

⁹² See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Rama asks Lakshmana to identify the Jewels of Sita:**

5.4 KAIKEYI

Kaikeyi Rama Kainkarya Rama

Kausalya Rama Kodanda Rama

Karunasagara Karunya Rama

Dayasagara Dasaratha Rama ||

- Inspired Composition by Tumuluru

KAIKEYI

The daughter of the mighty Ashwapati, a long-term ally of Kosala, Kaikeyi married Dasaratha after the latter had promised her father that the son born of her womb would succeed him as King of Kosala. Dasaratha was able to make this promise as his first wife, Kausalya and second wife, Sumitra, the princess of Magadha, another kingdom with strong political ties to Kosala, were childless and was not likely to produce a son. Kaikeyi also remained barren for many years of marriage, She was raised by her wet nurse, Manthara, who accompanied Kaikeyi to Ayodhya as a trusted maid upon her marriage to Dasaratha. Kaikeyi gave birth to Bharatha, as a result of partaking the sacrificial offering from the Puthrakameshti Yaga performed by her husband for the purpose of obtaining children

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

KAIKEYI ⁹³ was Kaika ⁹⁴, the exquisitely charming daughter of the king of Kekaya in Kashmir. (*RKRV Part I p.32*)

Kaikeyi is the daughter of the King of Kekaya State. (*RKRV Part 1 p.347*)

Kausalya and Sumitra agree to Dasaratha marrying Kaika and agreed to the condition:

Kausalya was the first wife of King Dasaratha. He had two other wives, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Kausalya gave birth to a female child, named Santha, who was given in adoption to a King. She had no other issues. The family custom in those days was that a husband cannot marry for a second time without the consent of the first wife. Dasaratha therefore took permission from Kausalya to take Sumitra as his second wife. The name Sumitra implies a good friend to one and all. She had a pure heart. She too could not bear a son for him. He therefore approached the King of Kekaya Kingdom with a request to give his daughter Kaika in marriage to him. The king of Kekaya kingdom, however, insisted on a promise from Dasaratha that a son born to Kaika shall be crowned as the King of Ayodhya. He asked, “Oh Dasaratha, You already have two wives. Now you wish to marry for a third time. For what purpose? Is it not for begetting a son who can rule the kingdom? Then can you make a promise that the son born to my daughter will be made the king of Ayodhya?” Dasaratha

⁹³ Kaikeyi was also known as Kaika; spelt also as Kaikeyee

⁹⁴ Kaika (Kaikaa). Same as Kaikeyi. A princess of Kekaya (Kashmir), third wife of Dasaratha, and mother of Bharatha. (*Glossary for Vahinis*)

hesitated to give a promise. He said he would come back to him after sometime. He straight away went to his two wives and consulted them enquiring, “Will both agree to the condition that the son born to Kaika whom I wish to marry now should be made the King of Ayodhya? Will you both agree for this condition?” Kausalya and Sumitra readily agreed for the same. They informed the King Dasaratha. “We will be happy if you beget a son who can rule the kingdom.” (*SSS Vol.40 p.187-188*)

Kausalya and Sumitra recognised the ardour of the King to wed the princess of Kekaya. They also knew full well that the Imperial Line of Ayodhya can never be polluted by a son who would transgress Dharma. Though Dasaratha might promise that the son of the third wife could succeed to the throne, the son of Kaikeyi born in the dynasty would certainly be an embodiment of righteousness, free from such blemish. - Accept the conditions laid by the king of Kekaya and wed his daughter and ensure the continuity of this dynasty of Raghu. (*RKRV Part I p.33*)

Dasaratha then conveyed their consent to the King of Kekaya and married his daughter Kaika.. (*SSS Vol.40 p.188*)

It appeared as if all the three had but one breath, though they moved about as three bodies ⁹⁵! (*RKRV Part I p.34*).

⁹⁵ See Chapter, *Kausalya - The three Queens lived with intimate love*

Though Kaikeyi was the youngest queen, nobody could go against her wish as she exercised great influence over Dasaratha. Dasaratha could not deny any of her wishes. (SSS Vol.35 p.122)

Manthara⁹⁶ was born to fulfil a Vow – Poisoned Kaikeyi's mind – Jealousy root cause of all Evils

Manthara never forgot her past resolve and therefore decided to poison Kaikeyi's mind against her natural affection and her duties toward Dasaratha. Outside Kaikeyi's palace, there was fanfare, trumpeting, and joyous noise of some procession. It was actually Dasaratha coming with all his regal paraphernalia to inform Kaikeyi about his decision to crown Rama. The hunchback Manthara looked out of the window to see what the noise was about. The glory of Dasaratha was distasteful to Manthara. Manthara was infuriated by this. She was even jealous Immediately, she went to Kaikeyi and asked her, "Why are you decked out in all these fineries?" Kaikeyi did not pay any attention to Manthara's words. Manthara went near Kaikeyi and told her, "You simpleton, you are under the false impression that Dasaratha loves you more than anyone else. But it is really deceit. You will see what happens to you in the future. Just listen to me." So saying, Manthara tapped on Kaikeyi's shoulder. (SSS Vol.34 p.79-80)

⁹⁶ See also Chapter *Manthara- Manthara's Past Life*

Kaikeyi says Rama becoming the Yuvaraja is the happiest augury for the entire empire

Kaikeyi was impressed by her loyalty, but was not convinced of the rightness of her arguments. She said: Manthara! What has happened to you? Have you become insane? Why do you talk like mad! Rama becoming the Yuvaraja is the happiest augury for the entire empire. Here, take the necklace of mine, as a reward, a gift, for bringing me great good news first! Be happy, be full of joy! The coronation of Rama as Yuvaraja gives me even more joy than perhaps to Kausalya. My joy at this good news is boundless. Ramachandra too loves me more than he does even his mother. He reveres me more. I will not listen to such imputations against such pure, loving person. You seem to have lost your wits. Your reason has taken leave of you.” Kaikeyi reprimanded Manthara sharply. (*RKRV Part I p.230*)

Manthara continued to poison Kaikeyi’s mind⁹⁷ (*RKRV Part I p.231*)

Manthara said “The Maharaja has no love towards his other queens; he is enamoured only of the Senior Queen Kausalya. Just to please you, he might use endearing words now and then, that is all; but he has no love in his heart towards you..... The whole thing is the intrigue of Kausalya,” asserted Manthara.

Kaikeyi burst out: “Maharaja is much nobler, more righteous than my sisters – You cannot find him a trace of subterfuge or

⁹⁷ See Chapter, *Manthara* - **Manthara used many a specious and cunning argument to cloud and poison the pure and unselfish mind of Kaikeyi**

meanness” - They must have resolved upon the Coronation; quickly, for good reason. The wedding celebration of Rama would have involved months of preparation took place at short notice, didn't it? So too, the Coronation of Rama might have been decided at short notice. Why should it not be? The Maharaja himself will reveal to me the special reason that induced him to arrange it so. You have not cared to know the truth. Kaikeyi admonished the maid severely. (*RKR Part I p.231*)

Manthara⁹⁸ feared that her stratagem will fail ignominiously. So, she stooped to even worse tactics of persuasion.

Kaikeyi was so fond of Rama till then turned against Him in a moment⁹⁹. Manthara told her, "Remember, you had rendered a lot of help to Dasaratha on the occasion when he was fighting with Sharadushana. When the retaining peg of the axle tree of Dasaratha's chariot got loose and the wheel was about to fall off, you put your finger in the place of the lost peg and retained the wheel in place until Dasaratha was able to vanquish his enemy. At that time, Dasaratha in his joy, granted you two boons. You had told him that you would ask for the same at some future date, and the king had promised you that he would keep up his word. Now is the time for you to ask for the boons. (*SSS Vol.34 p.80*)

⁹⁸ See Chapter, Manthara - **Manthara stooped to even worst tactics of persuasion:**

⁹⁹ Bhagawan says: It is very dangerous to cultivate association with anyone with evil habits. Even a little contact with them can pollute you with their qualities. (*SSS Vol.34 p.80*)

When Manthara spoke plainly and emphatically, Kaikeyi raised her head as if she was startled, and said, “Oh Manthara, how clever you are! Though in appearance you are an ugly hunchback, in resourcefulness and intelligence, you are extremely charming. Though wanting in beauty, you make up by being an expert in intellectual attainments. Tell me how I am to secure these two boons, and what these boons are to me. Manthara replied, “Mother! One boon shall be that your son shall be crowned Yuvaraja. The second can well be that Rama shall not stay in the empire.” (*RKRV Part I p.234-235*)

Kaikeyi felt that it might be just demand for her son to be crowned But her mind would not agree to send Rama out of kingdom and was pained at the very thought.

Listening to her suggestions given on the spot, without a moment's thought, Kaikeyi fell into a trough of reflection, She said after recovering herself,. Manthara! It may be a just demand that my son should be crowned, but my mind will not agree to send Rama out of kingdom, I am pained at the very thought,” With that she dropped into a seat. Manthara saw that she must act quickly. “Mother! This is no occasion for sentimental qualms, Procrastination turns ambrosia into poison. You have to be a little firm or else, we cannot succeed in our plan for the cruel wrong done by them this is no adequate reprisal. If you desire that your son must rule as King and that you should have the status of the Queen Mother, then act this way; or I shall end my life by taking poison. I cannot bear to see you suffer while I am alive.” Manthara wept aloud, as if

she was carried by intense love and attachment towards Kaikeyi¹⁰⁰. (*RKRV Part I p.235*)

Manthara's wish –

Manthara pleaded with Kaikeyi: “Mother I am your servant. From your very birth I have nursed you and brought you up. Kindly fulfil a desire of mine. King Dasaratha has decided to crown Rama. But as per the promise given earlier, he should crown Bharatha. (*SSS Vol.40 p.109*)

So, you ask Dasaratha to banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years¹⁰¹ and insist on the coronation of Bharatha immediately. (*SSS Vol.34 p.80*) Manthara replied, “When I suggested you should ask that Rama be sent into exile into forests beyond the realm, do not imagine, I had not weighed the consequences. I did it only after due deliberation.” Since Kaikeyi was a child in political affairs and legal lore, she said, “The law declares that unhampered possession and enjoyment of usufruct for twelve continuous years give the person ownership of property. So, it is better to fix a length of years for the exile, say fourteen years. When he returns after that period, he cannot claim kingdom - it becomes the unquestioned property of your son.”

¹⁰⁰ Swami keeps telling you, Thyaga Durjana Samsargam (Leave association with people of evil habits). Don't associate with anyone who is afflicted with jealousy even at the cost of losing your life. (*SSS Vol.34 p.81*)

¹⁰¹ Bhagawan here mentioned that if the husband and wife remain separated for more than thirteen years, the relationship between them ceases to exist. (*SSS Vol.34 p.80*)

Manthara continues to tutor Kaikeyi:

Mother, do not delay further. If you beg him for the boons, just as you are now, the Emperor will not be persuaded to yield. You must work up a wave of rage. Scatter the pillows and sheets in your bedroom; throw off your jewels into corners. Loosen the hair and make it wild and dishevelled, Act as if you have resolved to give up your life! Go and lie down on the floor of the Hall of Anger, the room where queens who are overcome by anger and grief retire, so that they may be discovered and consoled. You cannot just go to him as you are and straight away ask for the boons. Pretend to him you are in desperate agony and that only the grant of the boons can save you from death. Then only will your demand be worthy of consideration and acceptance. Rise! Take the first step for the work ahead!" (*RKRV Part I p.236-237*) See Dasaratha is coming. Take off all your ornaments; throw them pell-mell on the floor. Get into your Hall of Anger, lie down on the ground like a withered creeper." Kaikeyi followed her advice (*SSS Vol.34 p.79-80*)

When Manthara pressed her thus, Kaikeyi yielded to her persuasion and after carrying out her directions she entered the Anger hall and lamented her fate and the impending calamity. (*RKRV Part I p.237*)

Dasaratha instead of proceeding to apartment to Kausalya – He felt he should communicate the happy tidings to Kaikeyi first- He hurried towards her palace:

Meanwhile, the Emperor had finished making all arrangements for the Coronation ceremony, and when he emerged from the

Durbar Hall, he felt that, instead of proceeding to the apartments of Kausalya, he should communicate the happy tidings to Kaikeyi first. So, he hurried towards her palace. The maids who stood at attention all along the passage appeared upset with anxiety. The Emperor argued within himself that they had not heard the good news; for it would have lit up their faces! He pitied them that they did not know that Rama was to be crowned the next day! He directed his steps to the bedroom where he expected the queen to be.

There his eyes fell on the scattered jewels, the unkempt bed, the heaps on floor and the general state of untidiness and distraction. He was surprised at all this and searched for the Queen in the room peeping into corners. (*RKRV Part I p.237-238*)

Dasaratha asks Manthara the reasons for anger/sorrow:

The king came, asked where Kaikeyi was and got no reply. Manthara came forward and told him, “Go and see for yourself”. Dasaratha was horrified by sight he saw inside the chamber¹⁰². He asked gently, “Kaikeyi, why are you acting in this manner?” (*SSS Vol.34 p. 81*) “Why are you so angry? Who caused you so much sorrow? Tell me, I shall kill them this very moment. I shall confer joy on you. You have only to tell me what you desire. (*RKRV Part I p.238*) Whatever you want, palace or ornaments or anything else that you want, just

¹⁰² See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha hurries to the Kaikeyi’s Chamber to communicate the happy tidings:**

mention and it will be yours." Kaikeyi replied that she did not want any of these things. (*SSS Vol. 34 p. 81*)

Kaikeyi's false accusation

Kaikeyi was in a fit of rage. She gnashed her teeth noisily. She threw aside the hands of the Emperor when he tried to fondle her. She said angrily: "Enough of this false pretence! I put faith in you so long, and this is the degradation I have brought on myself! I do not trust you anymore. I could not believe that you are capable of this hypocritical game. Is this the punishment for putting faith in you? Go, go to your favourites, why sit here by my side? You mortgage your mind in one place and your tongue in another. Give your tongue to the place where you have given your mind. I am not in a mood hereafter to place faith in your words. Do not inflict more sorrow on me, but go back the way you came. What do you care what happens to me? Better to die as a queen than drag on as a slave! This day is the last day of my life."

Dasaratha's asks Manthara

Dasaratha was utterly confused and tried to console her¹⁰³ and assuage her anger. Dasaratha pleaded piteously for a long time, but with no effect. The queen ridiculed sarcastically and turned a deaf ear. .. Not knowing what to do, he called Manthara inside.

¹⁰³ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Kaikeyi's accusations and Dasaratha's consolation:**

Manthara rushed in, playacting her conspiratorial role, shrieking for help for the queen. He feared that some calamity must have happened to make his beloved perverse and stern. So, He asked Manthara¹⁰⁴.

Manthara said, “Maharaja! What can I tell you? I am not aware of the least bit of what happened. ..Manthara left the Hall saying, “Please find out the reason for the grief and anger and pacify her soon by approximate remedies” Manthara only added to the mystery and Dasaratha was even more confused by her statements.

Kaikeyi reminds Dasaratha of the two boons:-

He sat by her side of the disconsolate Queen and said, “Kaikeyi! Why do you keep me in the dark?” He gently lifted the head of the Queen from the bare floor and placed it on his lap, and sought to persuade her to reveal to him the reason for her inconsolable suffering. (*RKRV Part I p.238-241*) There was no reply. Dasaratha exhorted further, "Kaikeyi, this is not an occasion to behave in this manner. Rama is to be crowned and this is a very important event life. On such a happy occasion, you should not put on such a sorry face. (*SSS Vol.34 p.81*)

After sometime, Kaikeyi shook off her silence, and began to speak, “Maharaja! You haven’t forgotten, have you, the two boons you promised to confer on me, that day, during the battle

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha ask Manthara the reason for Kaikeyi’s anger:**

between the Devas and the Asuras?” Dasaratha was relieved and said, “I will not forget the promise of the two boons so long as there is life in me. The promise is as dear to me as Kaikeyi herself; you are the breath of my life, and the promise too is as the breath... I shall secure them for you and bring joy to you. Inform me.” Dasaratha¹⁰⁵ fondled and flattered the Queen, and tried various means of consoling her and restoring her spirits.

Kaikeyi displays exaggerated and seductive love – asks Dasaratha to swear before she reveals her boons - Dasaratha swears on Rama:

Kaikeyi kept in her mind the advice that Manthara had given her. She resolved that she must secure from her husband a promise on oath, before revealing her bitter wishes to him. To induce it out of him, she displayed exaggerated and seductive love, and wiped the tears from her eyes. She held firm the hands of the King, so pitiably enslaved by her enchantments and so greatly enamoured of her charms. She said, “Lord! I have no resentment against anyone, nor has anyone done me any harm or dealt me any insult. I have no craving for anything from any distant region of the earth. But I have a long-nourished desire, I must admit. If you swear on oath that you will fulfil it, I shall tell you what it is.” She enticed him with a smile playing on her face. Dasaratha too smiled in response, and sidling a little towards her, said, “Oh, you foolish Queen! For this one simple affair, why was it necessary for you to put

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha relieved:**

on so much of temper, and cause so much of anxiety and anguish? Hear this: Among women, you are the most dear to me; and among men, Rama is most dear to me. You are both my very breath. You know this well, don't you? I cannot survive a single day without feasting my eyes on you and him. Therefore, I swear on Rama himself. Tell me what your wish is. I shall fulfil it without fail." When he declared thus on oath, with both her hands in his, Kaikeyi was overwhelmed with joy! She rose and sat up. She demonstrated even more love towards him for she was glad he had changed into a well-wisher of hers.

Kaikeyi gives a threat – her last day of her life if boons unfulfilled:-

She asked, "Oh King! You have sworn on Rama. He is the witness to the oath, is this genuine?" She made her position doubly secure, saying, "Lord! You are a Votary of Truth! You are the highest among the Righteous! You are endowed with sovereign Might and Majesty! You must have in your memory the war between the Gods and the Demons; yet, let me remind you of that exploit once again. That day, when the Demon Sambara slaughtered all before him, you struggled desperately to defeat him. Had I not guarded you and nursed you into life, keeping myself vigilant and alert, you know what would have happened to you. You appreciated my devoted sacrifice and declared, 'Kaikeyi! you rescued me from death itself. What can I give you in return! Whatever it may be, ask me two boons; I shall fulfil them, and repay the debt I owe you, the gratitude I have to evince.' You desired that I should name the boons you offered to grant. But I felt then that your coming back to life

was itself the most precious boon for me, and so, I replied, ‘Lord! I have no boon to ask from you now. I shall present my request for them sometime later. Keep them with you in reserve for me,’ I pleaded with you. You were elated at my attitude, and expressed your admiration! You said, you liked my renunciation, and declared that the boons will be kept on trust, so long as life lasts, and can be drawn upon with no objections raised. All this must be fresh in your consciousness, aren’t they. You are the monarch of the earth. You are faithful to the plighted word. Therefore, give me now the two boons of mine that you kept in abeyance on my behalf. Make me happy thereby. I do not demand any new boon from you. I ask only for what are really mine. I need not remind you. You know very well that it is a heinous sin to refuse to give back riches placed in trust in one’s hands for safe custody. If you say now that you cannot grant them, you will be injuring me, with that breach of faith. I cannot bear the disappointment. Rather than live with that sense of defeat, I consider getting rid of life is more honourable. When the husband does not honour the word given to the wife, how can the wishes of the people in the kingdom be realised? An Emperor who stoops to deceiving his wife, making her believe him and then acting against that belief, does not deserve the position of protector of his subjects, does he? You know that the lawgiver sage Manu has laid down that such ungrateful prevaricators should not be treated as monarchs. Why should I dilate further on this point and repeat a thousand arguments? In case my boons are not granted this day, Kaikeyi will not be alive at dawn.”

Dasaratha falls into trap and agrees to give the two boons:

Announcing this she burst into loud weeping and wailing. Dasaratha was rendered helpless and weak by her histrionics. Like an innocent deer that is drawn into the net spread for his capture by the imitative cries of the hunter Dasaratha overcome by cooing of love and drawn by the entrancing gestures of the Queen fell into the trap, like an insane ineffective man. He vowed solemnly “I shall certainly give you the two boons,” holding her palms tightly in his.

Kaikeyi expresses her demands as tutored by Manthara

No sooner were those words uttered than the eyes of Kaikeyi bloomed wide and bright. She watched the face of Dasaratha intently for some time and said, “Oh King! This day I have realised how good you are! This day, you have proved the genuineness of your claim that you will never break a promise once made.” She started extolling Dasaratha in this and other ways. The lovelorn Emperor was highly elated by her praise. He urged her to ask for the boons.¹⁰⁶ Kaikeyi hesitated and she stuttered” (*RKRV Part I p.238-245*)

Then she expressed her demands as tutored by Manthara. (SSS Vol.34 p.81) “With the arrangements made for the Coronation of Rama, perform the Coronation of Bharatha, my son: this is the first boon I demand! Next, Rama, wearing matted hair and deerskin, and dressed in tree bark raiment, shall go into the Dandaka forest and remain there for fourteen years as a forest

¹⁰⁶ See also Chapter *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha agrees to grant the two boons:**

dweller; this is my second boon I ask. Bharatha must become Heir –apparent, with no one obstructing his path. Rama must be sent out into jungle before my very eyes. Grant these two boons and maintain the honour and dignity of your line untarnished; or else assent extinction of Kaikeyi’s life this very moment.” Thus declaring, she stood up and stared wildly in a determined stance, like a demoness, (*RKRK Part I p.245*)

On hearing this, Dasaratha fell unconscious. In a fit of jealousy, Manthara pushed Kaikeyi into this plight. Anyone possessed by demon of jealousy will not be spared. Dasaratha pleaded with Kaikeyi, saying, "Why are you afflicted by this fit of jealousy? This will only bring you ill-fame." But Kaikeyi stuck to her stand. (*SSS Vol.34 p.81*)

Dasaratha¹⁰⁷ exclaimed in terrible anger, ‘Vile Woman! What injury has my dear son Rama done to you? He loves you even more than his own mother I find you a venomous cobra. I allowed you to infest my home, out of the sheer ignorance..... If imperative, I am prepared to give up the empire or even my life; but I cannot give up Rama; no. You crave that your son should be hailed as Emperor. Well, have him so. I shall (head) to the forest, with Kausalya, Sumitra and others, taking my Rama with me. But I cannot send Rama alone into the jungle. That is impossible. Give up this atrociously sinful desire. Give up the hatred of Rama that you have cultivated Kaikeyi! Tell me frankly do you really desire

¹⁰⁷ See also Chapter *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha exclaims in confusion and anger:**

that these things take place? Or, is all this merely a stratagem to find out whether I have affection to your son, Bharatha? If so, you can ask that Bharatha be crowned Yuvaraja; but there is no meaning in asking Rama to be exiled into forest. Such a desire should not be entertained or expressed lightly. (*RKRV Part I p245/246*)

You¹⁰⁸ were anxious to win the grace of God by means of each little thought, word and deed. Where has that fear of unrighteousness gone now? What is the gain you look for when you want Rama to be sent to the forest for fourteen years." (*RKRV Part I p.247*)

His¹⁰⁹ body is soft and tender, like petal..... gathering of sages, elders, ministers.... scholars..... praised him in countless ways..... as Heir-apparent.... and indicated their joy. I will not send my Rama into the forest. And listen to this also. The Coronation of Rama shall take place tomorrow. It cannot be cancelled” Dasaratha announced this, in an outburst of pride and courage. (*RKRV Part I p.247/249*)

Kaikeyi reminds Dasaratha that he would be breaking the word given and bringing disrepute to the Ikshvaku Dynasty:

At this, Kaikeyi assumed a terrific mien and retorted: “Maharaja! Remember, a few moments ago, you vowed under

¹⁰⁸ See chapter *Dasaratha - Kaikeyi transgresses the Codes of moral law:*

¹⁰⁹ See chapter *Dasaratha - Dasaratha describes Rama’s beauty, His consideration for the welfare of the people:*

many oaths that you will grant me the boons I ask. And now you are going back on your word. Now, who is dragging the glory of the Ikshvaku Line in the dust, you or me? Ponder over this. It is the pride of the Ikshvaku Line that no one of that dynasty shall go back on his word once it is given. You are now soiling that fair fame. Without weighing the pros and cons, you promised to grant without fail the boons I wanted. The mistake, if any, is yours, not mine. You gave me the boons; then, you promised to grant them today. You are the very person who gave your word twice. Consider your honour, your status, your dignity, when you deny the very words you spoke then and now.”

“It may be common usage for rulers to injure and insult the weak, and act contrary to promises solemnly made. But it cannot promote self-respect. Those who break their promises and cheat women are savages, not sovereigns. When rulers slide into this savagery, the subjects will naturally resent and revolt. The kingdom will fast become demondom!

“All these years, you have striven to acquire honour and renown; and you have won them to a large extent. Now the infamy of breaking the plighted word is on your head, not on mine. Recollect the careers of the kings of old. Take good care that you do not act counter to your vows and oaths. Ponder well. You are proceeding along a path that is atrociously bad! Beware! You are moving against the dictates of Dharma. Well, were you as intelligent as you are reputed to be, you should have first ascertained fully the nature of the boons I wanted before you gave the promise. You did not look before and

after. You were enchanted by my words and you gave word that they shall be granted. And now, you blame me when I ask you to fulfil that promise! Consider how seriously you are mistaken in this! How foolish you proclaim yourself to be! You accuse me for having given up my fear of the unrighteous act, my devotion to the Divine, and my counting this reprehensible cruelty. But what about you?

You are acclaimed as *Dharmavratha* (a strict adherent of the vow to be righteous in word, thought and deed), and *Daiva Samaana* (equal to a God); what name can you claim now when you are going back on your oath? Pronounce judgement on yourself. The cleverness that dives and discovers the faults of those before you isn't commendable. If one dives into one's own faults and failings and is vigilant that they do not lead him astray into wrong and sin, that way of using the intelligence is commendable. Kings and rulers are highly intelligent. They are taken to be all knowing. If such as you do not benefit by self-examination, but are concerned only with selfish interests, what right have you to blame us as selfish and narrow-minded? You granted the boons; it is a fact. You took an oath; it is a fact. You broke the oath; you went back on the given word, it is a fact. Reflect within yourself whether these three are true or not. You are deluded by attachment to the son. You are enslaved by fondness for the wife. So, you dump your promise into the waters! I am not the culprit. It is you who have done wrong. For, it is natural for a mother to be attached to her son. Every woman who is a mother will yearn that her son must rise to a position of the highest authority, that of the Monarch of the Realm. It is the prompting of Nature. It is her bounden duty to

see that her plan is unassailed by others. It is only natural that she plans in advance to counteract all possible assailants. I am only carrying out my natural duties and responsibilities, remember; there is nothing unnatural or wrong in my conduct.

Kaikeyi says it is better to die than see Bharatha waiting on the order of Rama with folded hands:

“When Rama is crowned as Heir–apparent, his mother Kausalya, will become Raja Mata, the Queen Mother. My son will stand with folded arms, awaiting the command of Rama, ready to run errands for him. He will fall at the feet of Rama, while reporting to him about the task he has accomplished for him; it may be. He will be reprimanded. No. I cannot be a witness to such scenes. I will be so humiliated that I cannot live a day longer. Better far to drink poison now and die than look on at the shameful condition of my son. I am declaring this, as a solemn oath, taken in the name of my son Bharatha, whom I value as my breath. I shall not be satisfied with anything less than exiling Rama to the forest.” With those agonisingly harsh words, Kaikeyi fell on the floor and started sobbing and groaning in a fit of heartrending sorrow. (*RKRV Part I p. 249-252*)

Dasaratha’s despair:

Dasaratha beat his head in despair. He said: ‘Kaikeyi! Has anyone advised you that this calamity will benefit you? Or, has some evil spirit possessed you, and forced you to utter your desires? What is this absurdity, this ridiculous madness, sending Rama into forest and crowning Bharatha? Why not wish well for me, your husband, for Bharatha, your son, and

this Kingdom of Ayodhya? Give up this desire fraught with certain calamity. Think deeply over the consequences. Or else, you and I, and your son, all three, will become targets for the direst infamy. It will not end with that. The entire kingdom will be ruined and many more tragedies are bound to take place. Mean, degraded woman! Can you ever believe that Bharatha will agree to get himself crowned even if I now accept your request and promise to do so? Bharatha is a true adherent to Dharma. He is intelligent and a model of rectitude. He will not agree either exiling Rama into forest or to himself becoming the Heir apparent. Not he alone, but Ministers, the Courtiers, the Vassals, the Allies, the Sages, the Commons, the Citizens – everyone will oppose your desire. How can you be happy when many are unhappy? (*RKRV Part I p. 252-253*)

Dasaratha explains the consequence of Rama’s going to forest – Kingdom to suffer all catastrophes and the string of tragedies

Dasaratha said, “Kaikeyi! If it happens that Rama goes to the forest, I will not be able to live a moment longer. And I need not tell what will happen to Kausalya. She will draw her last breath that very moment. And Sita? She will be mortally shocked. She cannot live even a second away from Rama. Will the people look upon all this with equanimity? When the great hero, the paragon of wisdom, Rama, is being sent as an exile into the forest, can Lakshmana keep quiet? Lakshmana will

cast off his body. This is the bare truth. Thus, the Kingdom will have to suffer all the catastrophes¹¹⁰. (*RKR Part I p.252-255*)

Dasaratha spoke in this strain reminding her of the hard that his name and unblemished fame will receive if he acts according to her desire. Nevertheless, Kaikeyi..... brushed aside Dasaratha's importunities as if they were empty words and she did not attach any value to them. She refused to yield or loosen her hold. On the other hand, her grip became tighter every moment, her greed more deep-rooted. She spoke contrary to the appeals of the Maharaja and insisted on reminding him only of the promise from which he threatened to resile.

Dasaratha once again repeats the consequences – Pleads for a promise that Kaikeyi will have his funeral performed by Bharatha-

“One final word! Rama is my very life. Without him I cannot hold on to my life. No. I cannot continue to live. He will not disappoint you; so though I may not order him by word of my own mouth to go into forest. He may on hearing of my oath and your desire, himself proceed thereto, in order to make my word valid. He will brook no delay or debate. As soon as I hear the news of that event, know that I draw my last breath, Lakshmana, Sita and Kausalya may, in all likelihood follow Rama. Sita will not stay away from Rama. Lakshmana cannot walk except along the footsteps of Rama. Urmila too may proceed along with Lakshmana into exile. There will be none

¹¹⁰ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha explains the consequence of Rama's going to forest:**

here then, to perform the funeral rites of this body, and days will elapse to get Bharatha and Satrugna from Kakeya Kingdom. Till then, this will have without the ceremonial. Perhaps, the people will rise against me for having descended to this level of wickedness and condemn my body to be thrown as carrion for cows and vultures, since it does not deserve decent disposal. Perhaps, no; for, my subjects will wait until Bharatha arrives, embalming the corpse by some means or other. Bharatha will never agree to the throne and King. Under such circumstances, he is not entitled to touch my body or perform the funeral rites. Come! At least, promise me that you will have funeral performed by him¹¹¹,” he pleaded. He said, “of course, I am sure you are ready to promise me so; for, you are after ananda you hope to derive from a widow’s life. What is it you hope for, tell me, O vile viper! The night rolled on into third quarter. He groaned like a man in great pain afflicted with some mortal illness. He was caught in the coils of agony. (*RKR Part I p.255-258*)

Kaikeyi not to be persuaded – asks Dasaratha not to tarnish the Ikshvaku Dynasty with irredeemable dishonour
Kaikeyi interrupted him, and said, “King! Your words strike me as strange and meaningless. You are trying to slide back from the promise made on oath. To cover up your sin, you are spinning fascinating yarns! No. A thousand such tricks will not induce me to change my stand. You said, on your own, ‘Ask any boons you desire; I shall grant them,’ and, now instead of

¹¹¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha reiterates the consequences and asks a promise that his funeral is performed by Bharatha:**

acting on that promise, you exhibit a fine bunch of sighs and groans. This does not become you. You are, by your own conduct, undermining your reputation and honour. I am not in the least responsible for this distress of yours. Recollect the pronouncement of those who are masters of Dharma, that *Sathya* (Truth) is the *Parama* (Highest) Dharma (Principle of righteousness). I, too, have based my request for the promised boons on the same principle of Dharma, and as befits a follower of Dharma, you, too, agreed and said, ‘Right! They shall be granted.’ Nevertheless, you have started imputing motives to me, that I am thrusting you into unrighteousness, that I am set upon committing an unpardonable sin, that I am attempting to bring lasting infamy on your name! This is most improper. It is thoroughly unjustifiable.

“I am absolutely innocent of any wrong, in this affair. You made the solemn promise without a thought on the past or the future; and when that promise had to be put into action, you suddenly become confused and desperate. The fault is yours, not mine. Those who promise and are not willing to act accordingly, are sinners of great magnitude. Act as the promise directs you to; then, the Truth you have maintained will itself wash off any related sin. Don’t you remember? In the past, Emperor Sibi sliced flesh from his own body as food for an eagle pursuing a dove for prey! So too, Emperor Alarka had pledged his word that he would give whatever was asked from him. He was a king of unique splendour. And to keep up his promise, he plucked and gave a Brahmin his own two eyes! Look at the Ocean. It is the Lord of all the Rivers; yet, bound by Its Vow, It limits Itself between the shores, instead of

transgressing them. Why repeat a thousand examples? For all things, for all men, Truth is the highest authority, the highest ideal. Truth is Brahman. Truth is the Primeval Sound. It is Dharma. Truth alone undergoes no change or diminution. Royal Majesties like you should not give up the Imperishable for the sake of the perishable. Hold fast to the promise you made, and ensure lasting fame and glory for yourself. That is the right thing to do. Do not yield to delusive attachment to the son; deceptive sympathy for women. Do not overrule the dictates of political idealism and royal obligation. Do not tarnish the Ikshvaku Dynasty with irredeemable dishonour!

“Don’t plan otherwise. Call Rama to your side and tell him to get ready to proceed to the forest, and set on foot preparations to call Bharatha from where he is now to this City. Instruct the Minister concerned to attend to these matters without delay. See! The eastern sky is getting bright. These two boons must be realised before dawn. However long you argue, I will be content with no less. If, on the other hand, you are adamant and you consummate the Coronation of Rama, I am determined to end my life in full view of the thickly packed Assembly. This is my vow. This shall happen.” (*RKR V Part I p.259-261*)

Dasaratha¹¹² cried out, “Alas! Rama! Has it come to this that I have to send you, with my own consent, into the forest? No. I will not send you. I will rather give up my life. I cannot keep

¹¹² See also under Chapter, *Dasaratha* -- **Dasaratha was like the Emperor Bali**

alive a moment, apart from you..... Dasaratha swooned, and soon lost consciousness. (*RKRV Part I p.262*)

Vashishta¹¹³ was waiting for the arrival of Dasaratha to attend to preliminary rites - Sumantra was asked to inform Dasaratha:

Nine instruments of Music at the Palace Gate heralded the Day of Joy. The constellation of Pushya rose as the Star of the day. The sage Vashishta proceed with the group of his disciples to the Sarayu River for the ceremonial bath and returned from there, with Consecrated Water necessary for the Coronation Ablutions passing through Royal road entered the Royal Palace the decorated Main Gate. Vashishta beckoned Sumantra, the Minister, and said, “Go, the auspicious hour fixed for the rite of Coronation is approaching, many preliminary rituals have to be attended to. Go and inform the Maharaja that his presence is urgently needed. Covey the message that Vashishta is waiting for his arrival”

Sumantra being an old faithful had the freedom to enter any of the inner apartments of the palace. So he hurried into the chambers of Queen Kaikeyi, in search of the Emperor. Entering the Hall, where Royal beds were, Sumantra was shocked out of his wits. He was aghast at the sight of the Emperor fallen on the floor! Are my eyes seeing aright, he wondered, “King! This morning must find you like the sea at moonrise, having ecstasy. I cannot understand why you are lying prostrate on the ground. The auspicious hour is

¹¹³ Also spelt in different books as Vashishta, Vashishta

approaching, the great sages, learned in Vedic Lore, are ready in their roles, waiting your arrival at the Hall of Ceremonies. Rise and wear royal robes and jewels and come into the Hall, accompanied by the Queens in lustrous imperial splendour. The sage Vashishta bade me hither to bring you into the holy precincts of the Throne.”

Listening to his importunities, Dasaratha could not restrain the outburst of his grief. He wept aloud, and spoke to the Minister between sobs thus: “Sumantra! Your adulation pierces my heart” Sumantra could not take a step forward, nor could he move a step backward. He stood transfixed, where he was. He prayed with folded hands, “Maharaja! Why this turn of events? At a time when you have to be immersed in ananda, why this grief, this piteous weeping? What is the reason behind all this? It is beyond my understanding.”

When Sumantra stood hopeless, sunk in sorrow, Kaikeyi intervened¹¹⁴ and said, “Oh best of ministers! Emperor spent the entire night without sleep, in anxiety about Rama. If you can go immediately and bring Rama with you here, the mystery will be unravelled. I am telling you this. Do not misunderstand me but bring Rama here quickly.” Sumantra took her instructions as the commands of the Sovereign; He hastened to the Residence of Rama. (*RKRV Part I p.264-265*)

Sumantra was in a hurry. He could not brook delay. He said, “Rama! Mother Kaikeyi and our Father have both asked me to

¹¹⁴ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Kaikeyi sends Sumantra to bring Rama:**

ring you quickly to the Palace of that Queen. They have sent me on that mission here. I have hurried hither for that same purpose¹¹⁵.”

Sita (said to Rama), “Mother Kaikeyi has inordinate affection towards you; anything that she directs us to do, any order that she gives us, will be for our good beyond doubt. There is no one here on earth who is as solicitous for our welfare as Mother Kaikeyi. When Father and such a Mother send word that you should hasten towards them, how happy we should be!" Saying this, Sita followed Rama to main door of the Hall and wished him well. (*RKRV Part I p.267-268*)

Rama tries to find out the cause of Dasaratha’s grief – not hesitating to bow to the order of his father

Rama had never before seen or experienced such a fearsome scene. He was filled with anxiety. He hastened to the presence of his father, and held both his feet in his hands. “Tell me, father, why you lament so? (*RKRV Part I p.270-271*)

At this Dasaratha exclaimed, “Rama!” and broke into tears again, unable to continue. He lost consciousness Rama tried to revive him and console him, but he fell deeper into grief and could not be pacified. Then, Rama mustered courage and took his father to task, “Father! What is all this? Till this day, whenever you were angry or worried, my coming to you used to remove in a trice all signs of those troubles, and to make you

¹¹⁵ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama tells Sita that his parents summoning him at this hour broods obstacles:*

beam with ananda. You used to gain peace again when you drew me near, didn't you? How is it then that the longer you look at me the more you suffer from sorrow? This makes my grief too more painful. Can you not mention the reason for this strange behaviour and bring solace to me? Won't you tell me?"

Praying thus, Rama turned towards Kaikeyi. With folded palms, he asked her. Mother! Have I committed any wrong? Tell me who that execrable sinner is who caused such grief to father! The moment father saw me, he used to beckon me lovingly, draw me close to him, and fondle me caressingly! Now, he does not even look at my face; why is it so? He does not utter a word. Is he suffering from any illness or disease? Have my brothers, Bharatha and Satrugna sent any bad news? They are well, I hope! I am overcome with grief, since I am unable to understand the reason for father's agony! Tell me what has taken place. Mother! Was your self-respect hurt by any incident, resulting in your speaking harsh words against father? Or, did my mother act against his will and hurt his feelings? Mother Kausalya will never behave like that. And Sumitra? I am more certain about her. She will not at all act so. There must be some very serious reason for his plight. When Father is reluctant to tell me what that is, at least you can tell me about it, and console my grief." (*RKRV Part I p.272-273*)

Kaikeyi gives up all sense of mercy, dignity and motherly status - Power of Words – Dasaratha's death:

Looking at Rama who was so pathetically praying to her, Kaikeyi gave up all sense of mercy and moderation, all consideration for the husband who might be plunged in deeper

misery when he hears her words¹¹⁶ spoken in utter disregard of the calamities they were sure to usher in. She did not stop to enquire whether the words could be uttered or whether they were better left unspoken, she did not discriminate between the fleeting present and the oncoming future. She brushed aside the

¹¹⁶ **Power of Words:**

The words of man earn him wealth and riches. It is words of man that cause bondage. Hence words are cause for good or evil. It is better to speak every word after due rumination and reflection. Words help us a lot in life.

Man should use his words with utmost care and caution. It is important that man uses words after weighing pros and cons. Words give life and take away life.

Words are dainty delicacies.

Words are aromatic fragrance.

Words are the essence of nectar.

Words are the essence of the Vedas.

(Telugu Poem)

The words uttered by Rama were sweet and delicious. Words should be pleasant and they should be used in moderation.

Words were the cause of Rama's exile into the forest. Kaikeyi's infamy and Dasaratha's death. As words contain potent sounds, we should use them with utmost care and caution and discrimination. The words of promise given by Dasaratha to Kaikeyi at the time of battle brought **sorrow and suffering to him. So we should use words with utmost care.**

Life is impermanent.

Impermanent are wealth and youth.

Wife and children are also impermanent.

Only truth and good reputation are permanent.(Sanskrit Verse) - (*SSB 2002 p.75/76*)

claims of love, and cast off her own innate dignity and motherly status. *RKR Part I p. 273*)

Kaikeyi recalls the two boons given by Dasaratha and tells Rama that scions of the Ikshvaku line never break their promised word:

She said, “Rama! Listen! Years ago, during the battle between the Devas and the Asuras (Gods and Demons) your father was wounded by dire demonic arrows and he suffered unbearable pain. I nursed him back to health and happiness. He appreciated my sacrifice and service and told me to name two boons promising to grant them to me. At that time, I felt that the only thing I craved for was his recovery and victory; so I replied: ‘I do not desire my boon now, I shall ask you for the promised boons when I feel the urge later.’ Your father said, ‘Right! Whenever you like, ask me whichever two boons you wish for. I shall certainly grant them and fulfil your desire. These boons have no limit of time and are bound by no condition. Whenever you ask, whatever the boons, I shall give them,’ he vowed.

“You know that scions of the Ikshvaku line never break their promised word. Putting faith in that well-known fact, I asked now for those two boons: one that my son Bharatha should be crowned Emperor and two that you should be sent into the Dandaka Forest for a period of fourteen years.”

“As a result, your father is creating this hubbub! Why elaborate further? I shall not modify nor withdraw my demands. If your father is an adherent of Truth, and if you desire to prove that

you too are an adherent of Truth, you have to go this very moment to the Dandaka Forest, wearing deerskin and matted hair. You have to reside there for fourteen years. “Since you are his very life breath, he does not like to send you into exile. He is reluctant to ask you to go. He apprehends you may take it amiss. That is the reason for this grief. Rama! No other calamity or deluge has happened here. It is meaningless to exaggerate this minor matter and make out that a mountainous catastrophe has landed on us. Rama! The father can be saved from the sin of breaking his word only when his very image, the son, resolves to fulfil the vow he fails to fulfil. Else, if he who vowed and he who is the son of the person, who vowed, both neglect it, then the father has to meet the doom of eternal downfall. You are not unaware of this.” (*RKRV Part I p.273-274*)

Rama not affected – He says Dasaratha was not only father but also preceptor - prepared to stay not only fourteen years but all life if father so wishes:

Rama was not affected in the least, while listening to these words uttered with such deliberate hardheartedness. With a smile playing on his lips, he replied, “For this reason, it is not proper that father should lament.” He nodded his head as if to signify his approval of the proposals made by Kaikeyi, and said¹¹⁷, “Mother! It will happen as you have contemplated! I am reverentially placing on my head the promise made by my

¹¹⁷ Under Section *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama unaffected on hearing the boons of Kaikeyi – says that no act is nobler than dedicating the body to the services of the father:*

father. He is for me not only the father, but the preceptor who teaches the highest path. I will derive immense ananda in the forest for fourteen years. Is there any act of gratitude nobler than dedicating this body, which was received from the father, to his service alone? I shall offer it with ananda.

Mother why did you not mention to me that Bharatha is the person to be crowned? I and my brother—there is no difference between us? We know no distinction among ourselves. I am leaving Ayodhya this very day, and proceeding to the forest. Mother! Send proper messengers charged with the task of bringing Bharatha from the grandfather's place.

Kaikeyi's fear

When Kaikeyi heard these words from Rama, she was filled with ananda and apprehension. She feared what might happen if Bharatha arrived while Rama was still present in the city. She concluded that it was best to insist on Rama leaving for the forest that very day itself. She replied, "Rama! It is possible to make arrangement to get Bharatha from where he is to Ayodhya. But there is no need why you should continue here until he reaches this city. Since you have decided to start the hermit life, why should you delay your departure? For, longer the start is delayed; the day of return will be advanced! It is advisable that you get ready to leave even now."

Your father is unwilling to express his command

"Your father is eager to tell you this himself; but, he is unwilling to express his command directly. Though his heart insists that he should say it, he is bothered by a sense of shame,

for he loves you much. He is reluctant to inform you of the promise to me. He has no other grief. The quicker you depart from Ayodhya, the sooner he will recover from agony. Until you leave Ayodhya, I am afraid he will not take food or bathe. If you yearn to restore him to happiness, the sooner you depart the better.”

Dasaratha lying prostrate on the bed heard these heart-piercing words of Kaikeyi. He could contain his anger and sorrow. He burst into indistinct fury, “Fie on you, traitorous demon!” and turning to Rama, he cried, “Rama” twice, before he fainted again. Rama sat on the bed, with the head of the father on his lap the forehead and consoled and comforted him with sweet lovingness. He also spoke to Kaikeyi, “Mother! Though father has not directly spoken to me, you are telling me what his command is, aren’t you. This is quite enough. Besides, you are speaking in his very presence, and despite his hearing what you say, he is unable to alter or deny anything. Therefore, I infer that your words are virtually his, So, I bow to the order, and shall leave as directed.

With these words, Rama fell prostrate on the ground and touched the feet of Mother Kaikeyi. Knowing that Rama will not stay in Ayodhya any longer, Dasaratha lost all sense of propriety and status. He shouted “Rama!” and slumped on the hard floor of the room. Rama realised that it was not advisable to delay any longer. He prostrated before his father and touched his feet. Then, he walked out of the apartment. (*RKR V Part I p.274-278*).

Dasaratha cannot tolerate Rama's absence from his presence even a single moment..... He had already promised..... He had no inclination to break his plighted word..... His mind does not agree to send Rama from forest and hence suffering... Rama came to his mother for permission to leave (*RKRV Part I p.284-285*)

Lakshmana¹¹⁸ was watching the anguish of Kausalya and listening to her words. He could not control his emotions. He was bursting with anger. Rama sternly admonished Lakshmana¹¹⁹.... He said: "No one can deny me what I wish for. None can change the march of my will. My exile in the forest cannot be avoided. When the Mother prays today for such boons from father, boons quite contrary to the ways of the world, surely there must be some hidden significance in the affair. This must be the Divine Plan, not mere human tactics. Be quiet, give up your fears and hatreds. We shall await what happens next." Rama advised him. (*RKRV Part I p287-290*)

Rama¹²⁰ said, for all values of life, righteous conduct, Dharma, is the very root. And Dharma is secure only on the foundation of Truth. Sathya and Dharma are interchangeable. One cannot exist without the other. Truth is Goodness and Goodness is Truth. I am now achieving both Sathya and Dharma, while

¹¹⁸ See under chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Lakshmana's Anguish on seeing Kausalya's plight:**

¹¹⁹ Under Section, *Rama*, See Section, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita* - **Rama Chides Lakshmana for crossing the boundaries:**

¹²⁰ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, - *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita* - **Rama explains the true facts**

acting in accordance with the command of Father. No one dedicated to good life shall break the word plighted to the mother, the father or the esteemed Preceptor. Therefore, I shall not overstep the orders of Father .That is certain..... I shall not deviate from that resolution... Turning to his mother, Kausalya, he said, “Do not obstruct my resolve and cause breach of my vow. Whatever may happen to anyone, my exile to the forest cannot be averted, Send me with your Love. Bless my vow, my resolution.” Then, he fell at her feet and prayed for permission to leave. (*RKRV Part I p.290-291*)

(Rama) spoke softly, “Brother! My joy has no bounds, since I have such a brother as you! This is my great good fortune. While we spend the hours like this, Father must be suffering more and more anxiety. Kaikeyi will suffer from the welling doubt that I may not leave at all! Therefore, I shall now go to Sita and inform her, and thence, I shall go to the Palace of Kaikeyi to take leave of Father. Meanwhile, you will go to your mother Sumitra and receive her consent to join me.” (*RKRV Part I p.299*)

ENTERING INTO EXILE:

Thousands had gathered in the quadrangle of the Palace. Their grief was immeasurable. Meanwhile, the Minister went in and aroused the Emperor who had fallen unconscious on the floor. He made him sit up, and placed him in position. He communicated to him the news that Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had come to have audience with him. Rama had already stood near his father, speaking words of soothing love.

When Dasaratha saw Sita and Lakshmana, his grief knew no bounds. He embraced Rama closely and fell on the floor. Anguish choked his throat. He pressed his hands on his chest and tried to suppress the agony. Sita and Lakshmana could not look on at the suffering Emperor.

Lakshmana saw Kaikeyi, standing by an air of authority; his eyes became red with rage. He looked daggers at her as if he would kill her on the spot. But he controlled his anger and cooled his emotion, watching the serenely calm face of Rama.

At that time, Kaikeyi said, “Rama! You are plunging your father in deep grief! The sooner you leave and reach the forest, the quicker will your father be relieved from anxiety¹²¹. Do not delay any longer! Prostrate before your father and go.” (*RKR* *Part I p.321-322*)

Manthara came with bark clothes for Rama to wear. Jealousy is so ready when it decides to act. Rama changed His clothes right there. Rama saluted His father, but Dasaratha unaware of all that was happening. (*SSS Vol.34 p.82*) Kaikeyi held (hermit’s robes of fibre as well as rosaries of Tulsi) before Rama and said, “The Emperor holds you as dear as his very life. So, he is bringing eternal infamy on his head, unwilling to let you go. His affection for you is clouding the righteousness of the course. He will not utter the words, ‘Go into forest’ at any time under any circumstances. It is fruitless to await his

¹²¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - Dasaratha’s Agony at the sight of Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana*:

agreement and his permission. So, decide on any one of these two steps: Are you counting infamy and dishonour and staying to rule over the Empire? Or, are you leaving for the forest and bringing eternal glory to the Ikshvaku Dynasty? Decide and act.” (*RKRV Part I p.324-325*)

Rama was glad that she spoke so. But the words entered the heart of Dasaratha like sharp nails driven in by heavy hammer strokes. “Alas! What cruel fate is mine! That I should be alive even after hearing such words!” he exclaimed. And rolled on the floor in a faint. Regaining consciousness, he recalled the words he had heard and again became unconscious. Rama could not bear the sight of his father’s helplessness in the face of the situation that confronted him. He felt he should accept the suggestion of Kaikeyi and leave; for, the sooner he left, the better it would be for all concerned.

Sita’s embarrassment of wearing the fibre robes – Vashishta fell foul of Kaikeyi:

(Rama) received in his hands the fibre robe his step mother had brought and winding one of them around himself, he gave the other to Sita. She stood holding it in her hands, with her head bent in embarrassment, for she did not know how to wear it or fasten it around her. It looked too short a piece. Rama, who had already worn his robe, came near and spoke to her in a low voice... She was ashamed to confess that she did not know how to wear the fibre garment, which hermit women draped around themselves so elegantly. She whispered, “Besides, this is not like the ones we wear. It is too short and not wide enough!” Rama consoled her, putting courage into her, took her aside

and saying that it could be worn ‘thus wise’ he wound it round her himself. Seeing this, the wives of the hermits and other women of the palace shed tears in sympathy.

At his juncture, Vashishta, the Royal Preceptor arrived at the scene. He stood aghast, taking in the situation at a glance. He fell foul of Queen Kaikeyi. He declared that Sita need not wear the garment of fibre. He asserted that Kaikeyi had asked for and had been granted two boons only—Bharatha to be crowned and Rama sent into forest. He said that Sita could go into forest withal regal paraphernalia and every requisite for a comfortable sojourn there.

At this, Rama unwound the garment he had placed over her dress. But Sita came forward and fell at the feet of the Sage. She said, “Master! Of course, my wearing the garment is not the direct consequence of mother Kaikeyi’s desire. Can I not follow the ways of my Lord? Would it be proper for me, would it bring credit for me, if I live in the forest bedecked in jewels and costly silken garments, when my Lord is wearing the garment of a hermit? It would be extremely absurd for a dutiful wife to adopt this attitude, wouldn’t it be? Therefore, give me permission to put on these garments, so that I may maintain the wife’s code of conduct and carry out my duty.”

The adherence to righteous conduct which prompted the prayer moved the mighty Sage into tearful compassion, with sorrow stuttering his voice, he said, “Sita! This line of thought comes naturally to you, since you are the embodiment of virtue. But as the kings and rulers, there are certain principles to be

respected, by others. The crooked and wicked brain of your mother-in-law Kaikeyi needs some correction and warning. As a matter of fact, this day your husband was to be crowned Emperor of this realm. Though that event did not take place as a result of a combination of circumstances, including promises made long ago, I must say that it is against political justice to crown Bharatha instead. Only eldest son has the claim. If he, for any reason gives up the right through his own free will, as he has done, now, you, as the other half of his person, have right to wield that authority; no third party can exercise it.”

When Vashishta was expounding rules of political morality, Kaikeyi was visibly affected by fear. She was not unaware of the fact that Sita would not desire to exercise regal authority and power. However long Vashishta elaborated on her rights and claims, Sita refused to pay attention to them. She was yearning for the chance to wear the fibre garment of the hermit in preference to the robes of Imperial Splendour. The wife of Royal receptor felt Sita would never retract from her resolve; so she and others took the garment and wound it round her, in correct hermitage style.

Lakshmana too wore the same sylvan garments as Rama had on. Rama decided that there should be no more delay. The three prostrated reverentially before Dasaratha who fainted away at the sight of his sons in their ascetic attire. They prostrated also before Kaikeyi who was standing nearby. They fell at the feet of Sage Vashishta and his Consort. And they started towards the forest. (*RKR V Part I p.324-328*)

The city was turned into vale of tears, a seething pool of grief. Crowds surged into the palace. The streets became fast moving humanity. People cast curses on Kaikeyi, for they felt the city had lost its Eyes as a result of her machinations. (*R K RV Part I p.395*)

Bharatha's interaction with his mother, Kaikeyi

The chariot entered the Royal Palace. The guards received them silently, with no acclamation of joy, the traditional shouts of Jai, Jai. Bharatha stopped the chariot in front of the mansion of Kaikeyi and rushed to see his mother. (*RKRV Part I p.398-399*)

Kaikeyi had noted that her son had come. She went forward with great joy to receive him. The bevvies of maids who rose with her and walked behind her were groaning in sorrow. Bharatha looked at their faces and stood stunned where he stood, unable to speak even a single word. But Kaikeyi started to speak. She said, "Son! Is your uncle well?" Bharatha gave some indistinct reply to that question and pressed forward with his own query, "How is father? How is my eldest brother? How are my aunts, the queens?"

At this, Kaikeyi was rendered mute. Tears gathered in the eyes of the maids who stood around. He realised that some terrible news was being hidden from him. He asked, "Mother, where is father?" At this, the maids burst into sobs and tears. Seeing them, Kaikeyi too sensed that she should not delay any longer. She too shed tears and acted the role of a grief stricken woman. Bharatha could not unravel the mystery unaided. He prayed to

his mother to explain to him what had happened to whom, and why everyone was so overcome with sorrow.

At this, Kaikeyi replied, Son! What shall I say? I was very happy that with the help of Manthara, I was able to achieve all that I desired. But with the first step, my success has broken into bits. The Gods cast an unpropitious eye on it. The Emperor, your dearly beloved father, had left for Heaven.” Kaikeyi started sobbing aloud. No sooner did these words fall on the ear, Bharatha rolled on the ground like a she – elephant at the roar of a lion. He cried out, “Alas! Father! as he fell. Like a plantain tree cut asunder, Shatrughna too fell on the floor. Their agony was indescribable, immeasurable. Bharatha sat up pressing his head with both hands and wept aloud. He cried out, “Father! We could not be present round your bed when you drew your last breath. Oh! What greater sinner are we? Of the four sons, all the four could reap the same merit. And this Bharatha and this Shatrughna are the worst, the most unfortunate. During the last moments, you would have talked so lovingly to us. You would have given us invaluable blessings and directions for life.. Well, we must be grateful that Rama was there with you. You would have certainly have told him what you wished to convey to us. Brother! Rise. Come with me. We shall go to Rama and find out what father left as message for us. Mother! Tell us where Rama is now.” Bharatha stood up, ready to go. He was waiting only for his mother’s reply.

Kaikeyi said, “Son! If Rama were here, your father would not have breathed his last, don’t you realise that? Rama is not in

the City, don't you know? This was like pouring poison into a wound. Bharatha was shocked by the new blow. Bharatha asked, "Mother, Rama is my very breath. Where Rama has gone"? Bharatha was on the brink of collapse, Kaikeyi replied quick and fast: "Whereto? Do you ask where he has gone? Well to the forest." "That may be." Bharatha intervened, "But why has Rama who has gone to the forest not returned yet?"

Kaikeyi's answer was delivered calmly and with deliberation. She said, "Son! We have no time to relate and listen to that long story. First, busy yourself in arranging for the last obsequies of your father!" From this, Bharatha learnt that his mother was trying to hide some unpleasant secret from him. So, he asked the whereabouts of Sita and Lakshmana, one after the other. The mother replied, "They both have followed Rama into the forest. They will not be returning to this City until after fourteen years. Thus did your father command." Kaikeyi delivered this statement, with a firm hard voice

Kaikeyi saw that Bharatha¹²² was rendered increasingly disparate and distressed by her statements; so, she stated consoling him saying, "Son! There is no need to lament over your father. He was, while alive engaging himself continuously in a series of meritorious activities, and so his soul would have attained heaven. Your duty now is to follow the ideal he set before you, to earn similar fame by meritorious deeds and rule over the Empire happily. Increase his fame and renown by your

¹²² See Chapter, *Bharatha* - **Bharatha's interaction with his mother, Kaikeyi**

own wise and merciful rule and maintain the great name of the dynasty.” Kaikeyi endeavoured to heal the lacerated heart of her son by these and similar words. (*RKRV Part I p 399-401*)

*Bharatha drew Satrughna along and rushed out of the room towards the apartments of Kausalya –He pleaded pitifully to Kausalya¹²³ clasping her feet the reason for his father’s death and why Rama left for the forest - Kausalya treated him as Rama – No distinction made - She did not blame anyone- Advised him to be bold - Sumantra brings a message that the royal preceptor asked him to got him - he also did not throw light on the tragic events in the Capital (*RKRV Part I p 402-411*)*

Satrughna rained blows on Manthara:

Bharatha walked first and Satrughna followed him. They were heavy with grief and resentment that Kaikeyi, putting her trust in Manthara, had brought about such havoc. They tried hard to suppress the anger that rose within them. At last, they entered the palace. They saw at the entrance Manthara herself, elaborately bejewelled, waiting to receive them. Satrughna could not tolerate that sight. He dragged her down by hair and rained blows on her. She bawled out “Ayyo” “Ayyo” and when the sound reached the ears of Kaikeyi, she ran to the spot, and started berating Satrughna for his action. (*RKRV Part I p.414-415*)

¹²³ See Chapter, *Bharatha -- Kausalya comforts Bharatha and laments her plight:*

Despicable sin

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Bharatha let himself go, with uncontrolled indignation. He shouted at her, ‘Fie upon you, blackest sinner! You placed faith on this wicked woman’s words (Manthara) and committed despicable sin. How was it that your heart did not break in twain when this woman’s disastrous counsel entered it? How could your tongue pronounce those baneful boons? Did it not turn into ashes, when it uttered those abominable desires? With what face can you dare reside in this palace? Aren’t you ashamed to move within its precincts? Alas! How did the Emperor place faith in the words of a person so evil as you are? Blinded by lust, he agreed to barter away the son, in order to win his wife. The conspiracy was mean and fraught with misery. You polluted the pure heart of the Emperor; you set the kingdom on fire; You have destroyed the dynasty and its glory; You have brought eternal disgrace on the Royal Line of Raghu; Your crooked poisonous heart has achieved all this ruin. To declare you as my mother is a dire sin. How could you decide that, when you harm another, your son will attain good fortune? Are not children of other as dear to them as yours are to you? Women who plan ill for other's children are only accomplishing evil for their own children. How did you miss this great truth? It must be due to the sins you have committed in previous lives. No. All this is due to me. Or else, why should the pure, the steadfast, the undefiled Rama, my beloved brother, and the crown of chastity and goodness, Mother Sita, wander about in the fearsome forest? O, what cruelty! How dreadful! Fie on you. That I have to speak to such a foul-hearted sinner is itself the result of sins I must have committed

in my past lives. Oh, I wonder what dreadful sin I have committed to deserve this punishment, this disgrace, of being born of your womb. Sinners get only sinners as sharers and companions; how can they be associated with good men, men engaged in meritorious activity? (*RKRV –Part I p.415/ 416*)

Selfish wish

"This Solar dynasty is a holy, as pure, as the Celestial Swan, with no trace of blemish. But really speaking, you are like your mother; she had her husband killed, in order to fulfil her ambition. You too have killed your husband, in order to realise your selfish wish." Can the younger son ever rule over the empire, overstepping the eldest son contrary to the established practice of a Royal Line? (*RKRV Part I p.416*).

You did not get this fatal idea now. It was there, latent, as a seed, since the very beginning, or else, it would not have manifested as a giant tree all of a sudden. Endowed with such a wicked nature, you could have smothered me dead as soon as I was born and saved me and this Empire from all this misery. Of what avail is it now to bewail what is past? Alas! Your intelligence directed you to hew down the trunk and water the branches, your reasoning faculty instructed you to promote the lives of fish by bailing out the water from the tank. I am unable to decide whether I have to laugh or weep at your stupidity.

Instead of fouling these minutes conversing with you, I would rather proceed to the presence of Rama, and pray to him to come back to Ayodhya so that I can return with him. In case, he declines to return, I am determined to stay with him as

Lakshmana has one, and be happy, serving him. I shall not look on your face again.” Saying this, Bharatha turned his back on her, and started with his brother. (*RKRV Part I p.416-417*)

Influences of the evil- minded Manthara

Kaikeyi because of the influences of the evil-minded Manthara brought infamy and widowhood upon herself and estranged herself from her noble son Bharatha (*SSS Vol.18 p.191*)

Recognition of her own sin

Kaikeyi ruminated on her erroneous action; she lamented at the turn of her plot had taken; she felt that wicked plans by whomsoever entertained might grant only temporary happiness, but they are certain to have the way to ultimate downfall; she found no means of escape; she could not find words to express her remorse and sorrow; so, she stood petrified and dumb.

Kaikeyi got disgusted with Manthara. She realised the truth. She felt delighted at the righteous stand taken by Rama. And she hung her head in shame at the recognition of her own sin. (*RKRV Part I p.417*)

She pleads that she might be allowed to accompany the queens and pray for pardon:

Kaikeyi overcome with repentance for her errors and her sins, communicated with Kausalya and prayed that she might be allowed to accompany the queens. She pleaded that she might be permitted to pray for pardon, and join the others in their attempts to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya. Kausalya, who had a pure unblemished heart, did not entertain the least

doubt or deviation from right consciousness. She sent word that Kaikeyi could certainly join her. (*RKRV Part I p.421*)

Kaikeyi passes away contented with her role in the master plan.

Kaikeyi too arrived on the scene. She was not wicked as is commonly depicted. She was fully aware of the purpose of Rama's incarnation. The house of Dasaratha was indeed fortunate to have four gems of sons and four equally virtuous daughters-in-law. Sumitra's life purpose was served and there was nothing else she wanted from life and she soon died peacefully.

Kaikeyi was highly contented and at peace with herself. She was subjected to malignant attacks. But she did not heed any attention to them. She was fully aware of the mission that Rama was to undertake. At the time Rama was young, she was teaching him archery. Rama had then already cautioned her, "Mother! I have incarnated to put an end to the demons. You must chalk out a plan to fulfil this mission." This is the reason that Kaikeyi went on to ask the two seemingly heartless boons from Dasaratha. She pretended to succumb to Manthara's wicked promptings and asked Dasaratha to banish Rama. All that was now past. Rama had returned victorious and everybody was singing praises of his glory. She too passed away, contented with her role in the master plan. (*SSB 2002 p.130*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND LESSONS TO BE LEARNT:

Victim of conspiracy of Manthara

Though a queen, she was influenced by the words of her servant and became responsible for the exile of Rama. Afterwards she repented, realising it was a conspiracy of Manthara. In reality Kaikeyi loved Rama very much. It was Kaikeyi who taught many things to Rama. Rama also, loved Kaikeyi more than His mother Kausalya. (*SSS Vol.40 p.109*)

Master falls into the hands of the servant and become the victim of all loss and grief:

The function of the mind is to act as controller of the senses. The role of the senses is to serve the mind, the right relationship is for the servants to obey the master and for the master to rule over the servants. But when the master falls into the hands of his servants, he becomes the victim of all varieties of loss his servants, he becomes the victim of all varieties of loss and grief.

The Ramayana provides a fine illustration for this danger. Kaikeyi the queen, was the mistress; Manthara was her servant, he maid, but since the queen was subservient to her maid, a whole series of tragedies. Kaikeyi came from a Royal dynasty; she was the favourite consort of a famous emperor; she was the mother of a son, Bharatha, famous for his dutifulness and righteousness; she loved her stepson Rama as dearly as her life – breath; yet, despite her own virtue, learning and authority, since she gave ear to her attendant, Manthara, she drew upon herself eternal infamy from everyone. She landed in a situation where her beloved son came to despise her. Even the name Kaikeyi and Manthara have become obnoxious.

The lesson is: we should not allow senses, who are only servants, to lord over us. If we do so we invite the fate of Kaikeyi. Wherever you are, however rich, learned or powerful, when you advise someone to do wrong, you invite on yourselves the fate of Manthara. Since men yield to the blandishments of the senses, they are becoming Kaikeyis and losing the

Divine Nature, the quality of the Master. (SSS Vol.15 p 253/254) & (SSS Vol.11 p.266)

Selfish wiles of her mind:

The Queen (Kaikeyi) yields to the selfish wiles of her maid and as a consequence, her lord king Dasaratha lost his life. Rama who was as her very life-breath was exiled into the forest, her son disowned her and drew on herself the condemnation of the Kingdom of Ayodhya. The story is an allegory. Dasaratha is the human body with the five senses of perception and the five senses of action – the ten chariots or *dasha – ratha*. He wedded the queen, the Mind, and the mind yielded to the servant and caused downfall! (SSS Vol.15 p.308)

“*Vinasakale viparita Buddhi*” In Ramayana, Kaikeyi was the queen. She was a woman of character. She loved Rama more than her own son but Manthara told her erroneous things. Kaikeyi contradicted Manthara in the beginning. “Yours is a cheap mind. You desire to put my Rama to all difficulties. You have no place here. Get out. Go to Kashmir. You are bringing me a bad name.” Had this negation continued, Kaikeyi would have been very lucky. But Manthara continued, “You are putting your own son into problems. If Rama becomes the king, your son will have to be a servant to Rama. Would any mother wish her son to be a slave?” Kaikeyi continuously listened and Manthara’s words got deeply rooted in her. She said, “Manthara what a good teaching you have given!”

“*Vinasakale viparita Buddhi*” (At the time of perdition one will develop an abnormal mentality). Kaikeyi became a slave to Manthara and she was put to disrepute in the world. No one thinks of these two Women. No one keeps their names. The reason being their bad words. (M-P78)

KAIKEYI, AN INSTRUMENT IN THE DIVINE PLAY:

Rama had long ago prepared the mind of Kaikeyi in this regard, for He had been very close to her. One day during the course of His conversation with Kaikeyi he said to her, “Mother, be prepared for my departure to the dense forests, I have to go there to bring about the destruction of the demons. You

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

may earn an evil reputation due to this, but be strong in mind. Ask father the boon that Bharatha should be coronated as King and that I should be sent to the forest.” This was the intimacy and understanding which existed between Queen Kaikeyi and Rama. She was an embodiment of virtue. She loved Rama more than her son Bharatha.” (*SSB 1996 p.37-38*)

The Ramayana is full of noble characters. The four brothers and their wives hold out great ideals for mankind. The mothers, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were also great women. They are embodiments of virtue and right conduct. People blame Kaikeyi saying that she was responsible for suffering of Rama and Sita. She was actually a divine instrument in the mission of Rama. She was not the kind of lady who would be swayed away by the words of Manthara. She was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good. There are great subtleties and secrets in the Ramayana. (*SSB 2002 p.110*)

Kaikeyi's homage to Lord Rama

Kaikeyi (the forlorn queen) what shall we say about her! She was standing there, her heart gnawed by grief. She was anxious to discover how she could explain her wrongs; she tried her best to seek out Rama while he was alone, so that she could beg his pardon, but, could not succeed. She was ashamed even to show her face to Rama. She wondered how she could ever subject Rama, whom she loved so dearly, to all the privations and travails she now witnessed. Rama was her very breath. Therefore, she felt that by herself she was never capable of inflicting harm on him; she guessed that it must be the influence of some power that had possessed her which brought about this sad series of events. But, she said to herself that the world would never pardon her, however strongly she asserted it was none of her doing. Torn by these doubts and misgivings, Kaikeyi was powerless to move forward towards Rama to speak to him, nor could she walk away from him for she was anxious to have the burden lifted from her heart. She stood there, weak and frail, fearful and faltering.

Rama noted her agitation and using an opportune moment, he moved towards her in order to fall at her feet and pay her his homage.

Kaikeyi was waiting for just this chance. She clasped Rama's feet, saying, "Child! You are much younger to me; you are my son. But yet you are the Master of the Whole World by means of your virtue and wisdom. I do not commit wrong when I hold your feet in my hands. Come. Rule over Ayodhya. Pardon my sin. That alone can redeem me from the disgrace which I have brought on myself. If that cannot be, keep Bharatha in thy presence at thy feet; bestow on me that boon. That will give me peace of mind, so long as I live; I have no wish to live after the consummation of this wish of mine. I am myself shocked that I craved for the fulfilment of those two desires; which not even the most vicious ogress would have entertained. Did I ask for them while I was a daughter of the Ruler of Kekaya Kingdom? Or did I speak those words when I was possessed by some evil genius? Or, was I under the poisonous influence of some evil star? I do not know; I cannot tell." She wept aloud in anguish, holding the hands of Rama fast in her clasp.

Rama shed tears at her plight. He assured her by his soft and sweet words. He said "Mother! You have done no wrong, not even the least bit. The human crowd is a pack of crows; they caw loud and hoarse, without any rule or reason. Men do not try to know the truth; in their ignorance, they blabber as the whim dictates. Those boons were not asked by you of your own free will with full knowledge of the implications. All this happened thus, for I willed it to happen so. You have rendered much help for the fulfilment of the purpose for which I have incarnated and the task I have set before myself. You have committed no disservice. Mother! I am repenting very much for having made you plead so long instead of expressing at the very outset my gratitude for the help you have done for my plan of action. Do not grieve over what has happened; if you do so, it will cast a shadow on my task; it will make my days inauspicious. Bless me, Mother! Shower your affection on me. Mother! Bless me. Rama prayed and fell at the feet of Kaikeyi.

When Rama spoke thus, Kaikeyi recovered her mental peace a little. The other Queens, Kausalya and Sumitra heard the conversation and when they realised that Kaikeyi was but the innocent instrument of the Divine Will,

they too consoled and comforted their sister, Kaikeyi. (*RKRV Part I p.455-458*)

Kaikeyi's Prayer

Nevertheless, Kaikeyi stuck to her wish and held on to her prayer that Rama must accept the throne and be installed as Emperor with Sita as the empress of Ayodhya and that Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna must serve them and be their loyal companions in court. She said she would spend her life until death put an end to it, witnessing this glory and sharing in this ecstasy. She repeated these words often and pressed for the grant of her wish. (*RKRV Part I p.458*)

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of Kaikeyi and told her that she had not an iota of responsibility for the exile of Rama into forest and that she was ever-deserving their reverence and worship. She had never intended any harm, they said, They assured that they would pray for her; they pleaded with her that she should not have the least worry over them in the forest. They gave her great deal of courage to bear her burden of repentance. "Bharatha had spoken rashly and impertinently, in a fit of senseless fury, when he was suddenly confronted with the two calamities; the death of his father and exile of his brother. He flew into a passion, for his blood boiled at the person he imagined was responsible for these events. He did not even care for the fact that you were his mother! Rama, sita and Lakshmana prayed that she should not blame Bharatha for that incident. They begged her pardon Bharatha for the indiscretion.

While Rama was speaking thus, Kaikeyi was downcast with shame at the memory of her iniquity. She could not look Rama in the face. She felt within herself, "Alas, that I should be the cause of inflicting so much misery and suffering on this son endowed with heart of compassion and a mind full of virtues, a son who is unalloyed gold, nothing less. Am I not the reason for him to spend his years in this terrifying jungle? O, what a devilish deed did I perpetrate? But, did I do it on my own? Or, was it Rama that willed the turn of events through any instrumentality? Whether the truth, I cannot escape; I have committed the gravest sin."

Kaikeyi was overcome with sorrow over the irrevocable past; she held both hands of Sita in her grasp and petitioned for pardon. Soon, she added, "No. No. It is not just, that you pardon a sinner who brought about such unbearable travail on such a pure and tender woman." She continued to lament her misfortune for long. Everyone who had come from Ayodhya took leave of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana as and when they could get the chance. Afterwards, they ascended their chariots in due order. (*RKRV Part I p.475-476*)

WHAT OTHER CHARACTERS IN RAMAYANA THOUGHT OF KAIKEYI:

Guha:

*Guha*¹²⁴ wails - *The Kekaya Princess has proved herself to be the axe that would cut asunder the very roots of the Tree of Solar Dynasty. Her selfish greed has sunk the world in sorrow.* (*RKRV Part I p 348*)

Valmiki¹²⁵

With utmost humility, Rama addressed the great sage thus: "Most venerable Sage! You are conversant with the past, the present and the future of all. So, the reason why I have entered this forest must be clear to you as the berry in one's palm. Nevertheless, I feel it right that I should discharge my duty of informing you why I am here, with my wife and brother." Then Rama described how queen Kaikeyi sent him into exile in the forest, and how both Bharatha was to be crowned as ruler of the realm, according to the promise made by the father. The sage listened to the story, and communicated his joy with a face lit with smiles. He said, "Rama! As you fulfilled their desires then, you have satisfied my desire now. My austerities, vows and yearning have at last yielded fruit today. I must confer on Kaikeyi my heartfelt gratitude and a share of the bliss I am now enjoying." (*RKRV Part I p.370-371*)

¹²⁴ See chapter, *Guha - Agony sears the heart of Guha:*

¹²⁵ See Chapter, *Valmiki - Valmiki Ashram – Rama's divinity as perceived by Valmiki and other sages*

Sage Bharadwaja¹²⁶

The Sage Bharadwaja said, “Bharatha! You need have no apprehensions. I am aware of all that happened. No one can control or direct the path of Destiny. Why pine over the boons that your mother demanded? No trace of wrong can be attributed to her for this. The Will of God induced her to ask such boons., Kaikeyi, I know, loves Rama as her breath. So, the reason for the turn her mind took is to be sought, not in any human field of thought and reason, but only in the Divine plan. - As the world judges events, Kaikeyi has done wrong. As the Vedas lay down, the Goddess Saraswati who presides over the tongue has done wrong. Know that what has happened is in conformity with the Will of the Almighty.... The Darshan of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana is verily the treasure all spiritual aspirants seek. I secured that fortune; for, I feasted my eyes on that Darshan. I could speak with them. I was in their presence and I could touch them too. I had the privilege and pleasure of being their host. Perhaps, there was some balance of getting your Darshan too. (*RKR Part I p.430-432*)

Bharatha – Kaikeyi, the Embodiment of cruelty and hatred

Bharatha said to Vashishta "Alas, this is the consequence of the sins I have committed, the consequence of this unfortunate being born from the womb of that embodiment of cruelty and hatred, Kaikeyi."(*RKR Part I p.410*)

IDEAL FAMILY

There was great unity and understanding not only among four brothers but also among their consorts. They are ideals for every family. Is there a family where daughters-in-law live in amity? Is there a family where brothers live in harmony without indulging in property disputes? Nowhere do we find such an ideal family. This age of Kali has become the age of Kalaha (conflict). In such a scenario, the Ramayana shines as the beacon – light to every family. How should the brothers and sisters conduct themselves? In the Ramayana, we find demonstration of such great ideals. Merely going through the sacred text of Ramayana is not enough; You have to emulate the ideals. The Ramayana transcends the barriers of time, space, caste, and religion. In all nations, at all times and under all circumstances,

¹²⁶ See Chapter, *Bharadwaja Maharshi*

unity is very essential to find fulfilment in life. Even birds and animals have unity amongst themselves. They do not have the selfishness of hoarding things. Today we find wicked tendencies in man, which are not found even in birds and animals. There is not a single instance of internal dispute in the family of Dasaratha. You may question, "Was not Kaikeyi responsible for a family dispute which led to the exile of Rama?" No. it was not a dispute at all. In fact, Kaikeyi had great affection for Rama. She loved him more dearly than her own son Bharatha. But her mind was poisoned because of the bad company of Manthara. Hence it is said, Tell me the company, I will tell you what you are." (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p.109-110*)

Kaikeyi's relationship with Rama:

It was Kaikeyi who initiated Rama into archery, as she was an expert archer herself. She taught Him military skills with great love and rare affection. (*SSB 1996 p.21*)

KAIKEYI'S PURPOSE IN RAMAYANA:

Rama gave Kaikeyi indirectly Upadesh - "Who am I" - assert cheerfully - "Soham" - "I am That or He

On Rama's return to Ayodhya after finishing His 14 years of exile in the forests, Kaika, who felt penitent about this grievous wrong she had done to Rama, approached Him when He was alone and prayed, "My dear Rama, Even though I knew about your divine nature, I caused you a lot of unnecessary hardship, blinded by narrow feeling of "I and "mine". Kindly give me some Upadesh - spiritual instruction, so that I may be absolved of the heinous sin I have committed against such a noble person like yourself." In response to her request, Rama did not give her the Upadesh directly, but gave her some hints indirectly. This is characteristic of. all Avatars from time immemorial Avatars seldom give advice directly. Whatever they wish to communicate, they convey more often by way of indirect suggestions and only rarely by the direct method of instruction. The reason for this is there is divinity inherent in every human being, which he can manifest spontaneously, if favourable conditions are provided, just as a viable seed will germinate and grow into a tree because of its inherent nature, if only

suitable facilities are provided for the manifestation of its potentiality. Man should be enabled to correct himself by his own efforts, by merely giving timely suggestions, rather than by stultifying his freedom and dignity through directives imposed from without. In short, the best maxim for helping people either in worldly matter or in the spiritual field is: "Help them to help themselves" or "Self-help is the best help."

Following the same strategy, therefore, Sri Rama, in the present instance told, Kaika, "Mother! Please take bath in the holy Sarayu River and come back for My Upadesh. But while bathing in the Sarayu, please observe what is going along the riverside". Kaika went along with her retinue to the river and returned to Rama after bath. Rama asked her, "Mother! Now tell Me what you noticed on the banks of Sarayu". Kaika replied that she saw a number of sheep and goats gazing the green grass on the banks, bleating "Mae, Mae", as usual, every now and then. Then Rama told her promptly that "Mae, Mae" was His Upadesh for her. He disclosed to her that the bleating of the sheep and goats meant, "Who am I? Who am I? He further remarked that when even sheep are concerned with the question of, "Who am I?" if a man does not concern himself with this question, he is worse than sheep.

Everyone should first seek to know the answer to the question "Who am I?" Without knowing who you are, what is the use of trying to know everything about others? At birth you cried out "Koham? - Who am I?" You should not die with the same question on your lips. When you die, you should be able to assert cheerfully - "Soham" – "I am That or He." (*SSB 1990 p.95-97*)

A poem about the lotus feet of Rama, treading the stony, thorny jungle regions. But Kaikeyi had not realised this, when she asked that Rama should go into exile. She learnt about it and was horrified at what she had done only when she saw Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in the hermitage as she watched her son plead with Rama to return to His throne. Rama never felt the thorn or the stone for He had devised the jungle Himself, in order to infuse faith in the sages and nip their fears. . (*SSS Vol.4 p.25*)

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