

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

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

Volume V

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VOLUME V

Everything is imminent in *Brahman*. *Brahman* is one without a second. Therefore, if someone asks you what is your name, you should reply, “*Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*); I have no other name.” People call God by many names, such as, Rama, Krishna, Govinda Narayana, but *Brahman* is one. *Brahma sathyam jagan-mithya* (*Brahman* alone is real, the world is unreal). People give many names to God. Names are given according to the liking of individuals. Mother gives some names to her children and calls them by those names. In the same way, we call people by various names in this world. But God has only one name and that is *Brahman*. One who understands the principle of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself. All the names of God such as Rama, Krishna, Govinda Narayana refer only to *Brahman*. Hence, we should not attach too much importance to names. *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Santi*, and *Prema* are divine principles. When we adhere to these divine principles, we can attain the proximity of God. Contemplate on any name of *Brahman*, with the feeling that He is present in all. You may identify others by any name, but *Brahman* is present in all of them since He is omnipresent. Everyone should chant “*Namah Sivaya, ... Namah Sivaya, ... Namah Sivaya.*” The principle of *Brahman* is present in this sacred *Panchakshari mantra*.

I have been seeing both Easwaramma and Pedda Venkama Raju for the last one month. Easwaramma is the mother of this body. The meaning of the word ‘Easwaramma’ is ‘mother of Easwara (God)’. In the history of Divinity, Mother Easwaramma exemplifies Divine Motherhood. Not only this. Pedda Venkama Raju, the father of this body, signifies the lord of seven hills. Now both of them are residing in *Vaikunta* (heaven). **Swami is the incarnation of both Parvati and Easwara. In the triune Sai Avatars, the first one was Shirdi Sai, the second is Parthi Sai and the third will be Prema Sai. Prema Sai will bring about complete unity of mankind.**

Both of them were wearing yellow dress. **Yellow colour represents the principle of *Brahman*.**

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



He is Brahman

*Sai seeks from you good qualities,
Friendliness towards mankind,
The spirit of sacrifice,
Eschewing of selfishness and
Rendering service to society.
This is the offering Sai desires from you.
And this is verily the wealth you
should offer to Sai. (Telugu Poem)*

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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**13. RAVANA, HIS
CONSORT AND THEIR
CHILDREN**

The mind of man is churned by the forces of good and evil every day and there emanates from the same mind both good and bad. The bad comes because the mind flows towards sensory pleasures and is lost in the swamps of greed and envy, of lust and pride.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

13.1 RAVANA



Figure 1: Ravana, the Rakshasa King of Lanka

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description	Motive-description: RAVANA, Indian god – Demon-King of Lanka (Sri Lanka). Watercolor-painting by an unknown artist around 1920.
Author	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scan/photo by: User:Henryart (who is owner of the original painting/object/photo)

RAVANA

Ravana was a king of ancient Lanka and the primary antagonist in the Ramayana. In the classic text, Ravana kidnaps Rama's wife Sita, to claim vengeance on Rama and his brother Lakshmana for having cut off the nose of his sister Surpanakha.

This depiction is, however, open to other interpretations. Ravana is described as a devout follower of Shiva, a great scholar, a capable ruler and a maestro of the Veena. He has his apologists and staunch devotees within the Hindu traditions, some of whom believe that his description as a ten-headed person (Dasagriva) is a reference to him possessing a very thorough knowledge over the 4 Vedas and 6 Upanishads, which made him as powerful as 10 scholars. An alternative interpretation is that he is guided by and does not have control over the five senses and five bodily instruments of action. His counterpart, Rama, on the contrary, is always in full control of these ten. However, there is mention in Atharva Veda of demonic Brahmans called Dasagva (ten-headed) and Navagva (nine-headed). These early beings may be the actual forerunners of the later character in the Ramayana.

Ravana also authored Ravana Samhita, a powerful book on the Hindu astrology. Ravana possessed a thorough knowledge of Ayurveda and political science. He is said to have possessed the nectar of immortality, which was stored under his navel, thanks to a celestial boon by Brahma. According to some theories, he was a historical emperor who reigned over Sri Lanka roughly between 1800-1600 BC.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

RAVANA

Ravana¹: Lord of demons and king of Lanka, who abducted Sita (Rama's wife). (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

BIRTH

Ravana was born to parents by name Brahma and Kaikasi. He had brothers, with names Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. (*SSB 1977 p.154*)

Ravana was the great-grandson of Brahma..... the grandson of the great Pulastya and the son of Visravas

RAVANA AND DASARATHA:

Ravana, 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. Ravana sought for an

¹ Also spelt as Ravana

excuse to provoke Dasaratha into a fight. One day, he sent word through a messenger, that unless tribute was paid to him, he would have to meet Ravana on the battlefield and demonstrate his superior might in war. This call was against international morality, but what morality did a Rakshasa respect?

When Dasaratha heard the messenger speak, he laughed outright, in derision. Even while the messenger was looking on, he shot sharp deadly arrows which reached Lanka itself and fastened the gates of that City!

Addressing the envoys Dasaratha said, “Well, Sirs! I have now made fast the doors of your fortress city, your master cannot open them, however hard he may try; that is the ‘tribute’ I pay to your impertinent lord.” When the envoys returned and informed Ravana of this, he was shocked to find all the doors closed fast. The desperate efforts made by Ravana with all his men met with failure; they could not open the gates. When Ravana was struck with shame, strangely enough, the arrows returned to Ayodhya and the doors flew open.

Ravana, however, decided that he must overpower all the rulers of the world and realising that he could do so only by winning Divine Grace, he went over to the depths of the forest and selected a favourable, auspicious spot for his ascetic practices.

The asceticism of Ravana was so intense and satisfying that God Brahma was compelled to appear before him and offer to grant him whatever boon he desired. “Ravana! Ask for anything you want! I shall give you your heart’s desire,” said Brahma. Ravana

was revolving in his mind the insult he had suffered at the hands of Dasaratha. He argued that Dasaratha might get even mightier sons from whom he might suffer more. So, he asked the boon he wanted, “Lord! Bless me with this gift of Grace: let no child be born from the loins of Dasaratha.” At this, Brahma said, “So be it,” and immediately vanished from the scene, lest Ravana might frame another foul request if He were present before him! Ravana strutted about, proud and devoid of fear, exulting over his prowess and success.

Meanwhile, another project entered his head! “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! When one’s own destruction is imminent, reason turns crooked—as the saying goes. Ravana could not see the truth that nothing can ever happen without the concurrence of the Divine Will. Brahma willed otherwise.²(*RKR V Part I p.27-29*)

SITA’S SWAYAMVARA AND RAVANA’S PREDICAMENT

Janaka decided to give his daughter Sita in marriage to a man of valour who could tie the string to the bow *Shiva dhanush* (*bow of Shiva*) which ordinary mortals cannot lift.³

² See Chapter, Kausalya - Story of Kausalya

³ SSS Vol. 35 p.118

Thousands of strong men wheeled the great bow of Shiva into the open court. Many a Prince from far-off parts of Bharat 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. **(SSB 1996 p. 28)**

Ravana was one among them. He was very powerful and had a (*massive*⁴) fearsome personality. He was the first one to come forward to lift the bow. As he was proceeding towards the bow, kings were surprised at his gait and personality. They thought, “If he is able to lift the bow, King Janaka has to give his daughter in marriage to him. The very sight of Ravana is terrifying. How can Janaka give his daughter in marriage to him? Anyway, let us see what is going to happen.”

Ravana in the first instance tried to lift the bow with his left hand. But it did not move. He used all his strength and tried with both his hands. Yet it did not move. In process, he lost his balance and fell down on the (*ground with the Bow on top of him. There was nobody to help him out, as he lay trapped under the bow*⁵)much to his humiliation. He became the object of ridicule. One with ego is bound to face humiliation. He cannot receive respect and honour in society. Ego leads to ruin. **(SSS Vol.35 p.118-119)**

⁴ Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114-116

⁵ **Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114-116**

The one who is swayed by the ego is sure to suffer in life. When people laughed loudly at his plight, Ravana felt deeply wounded, as though he had lost all his ten heads. (*SSB 1996 p.28*)

Seeing the mighty Ravana fall down in such a manner, all the kings were surprised. They said to themselves, “If Ravana cannot lift it, nobody else can do it.” They were afraid even to come forward to try lifting the bow. (*SSS Vol.35 p.118-119*)

Rama’s instinct was to go to Ravana to get him out of his predicament. Viswamitra seized the opportunity and told Rama to go and pick up the Bow. Rama’s aim was not lifting the Bow; but to help Ravana. Help ever hurt Never. This was Rama’s motto. Rama walked up to the place and lifted up the bow with left hand and put it aside. All were astonished. The weight of the Bow was phenomenal and the power required for lifting it was of a cosmic proportion. It was far beyond human capacity. The divine power is truly cosmic in nature. This power was present in Rama (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.116*)

RAVANA AND HIS SISTER, SURPANAKHA

The wicked and vicious sister of Ravana (*was*) Surpanakha (*RKRV Part II p.28*)

It was (in Panchavati) that the demoness Surpanakha tried to make friendship with Rama and Lakshmana. She was attracted by their charming personality. She assumed the form of a beautiful lady and approached Rama with a request to marry her. Rama signalled to Lakshmana. He, being highly intelligent,

understood its implication and cut the nose and ears of Surpanakha. He spared her life as he did not want to kill a woman.

Surpanakha ran wailing to her brother Ravana in Lanka. She was bleeding from her wounds and lamented to Ravana, “Brother! There are two princes who are the sons of emperor Dasaratha. They are responsible for my sorry state.” Ravana had a very pertinent question to ask her. He said, “Sister! Your nose and ears are separate entities on your face. Both could not have been cut off at the same time. How is it that you did not escape after your nose was mutilated? Why did you remain standing till your ears were also cut off?” Surpanakha replied, “Brother! I cannot explain this. The moment Lakshmana touched me; I was lost in a trance. Their handsome and regal bearing enraptured me. It was as if I lost all my consciousness and remained rooted to the spot.” In this way, she kept eulogizing the two princes’ noble bearing and virtues. **(SSB 2002 P. 95)**

The courtiers and ministers assembled in the Hall listened to the description with awe and delight. Surpanakha’s words confounded even Ravana. The picture of Rama that she (*Surpanakha*) drew was something that gave him great joy and peace, when he contemplated on it. Deep within him, he felt an urge to cast eyes on that inspiring embodiment of divine charm. As he listened to his sister, the anger that had raised its hood within slowly slithered away. He decided to investigate calmly what really happened at Panchavati.

So, he addressed his sister thus: “Sister, tell me, do those two brothers live at Panchavati all alone? Or, are there others with them? Have they no followers, companions or courtiers?” Surpanakha⁶ replied “No. They have no band of bodyguards or kinsmen or warriors. The elder of the two, named Rama, has a woman with him, who is endowed with superlative beauty. She is even more charming than they. She is the very Goddess of Love, in human form. The two brothers are resident at Panchavati, with this woman. They roam about freely and without fear in the forest glades and valleys. In fact, I have never so far set eyes on such perfect feminine beauty. The like of her does not exist on heaven or earth.”

Listening to the words of Surpanakha, the lusty passion of Ravana was aroused, and he became the bond slave of ruinous foolishness⁷. He wriggled out of the feeling of hatred towards Rama and Lakshmana and started planning stratagems to bring Sita away from their presence. He sank in thought and was plunged into anxiety and restlessness, without any effort to quench hunger or thirst. Such was the fatal fascination that haunted him. While Surpanakha was describing the beauty and splendour of the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, there was one person in the Audience Hall, Vibhishana⁸, who gave ear to the story with joy in his heart and tears in his eyes. He installed those

⁶ See Chapter, *Surpanakha* - **Surpanakha's description of Rama**

⁷ Evil people easily succumb to evil words. The words of Surpanakha created a storm in the mind of Ravana. He worked hard at hatching a plot to abduct Sita and make her his wife. (*SSB 1996 p.69*)

⁸ See Chapter *Vibhishana* - **VIBHISHANA LISTENS TO RAMA BEING DESCRIBED BY SURPANAKHA WITH JOY**

Divinely charming figures in the temple of his heart and yearned deeply for the chance of being in their Presence.

Ravana had fallen from the Yogic heights he had reached in his previous lives, and so he was roaming about as a Rakshasa. Really speaking, he was a great devotee of God. He was aware, deep within his consciousness, of the Universal Absolute, named Narayana. He was not aware of the fact that Rama was Narayana Himself come in human form in order to confer joy and peace on the gods and in order to destroy all traces of demonic wickedness on earth. However, since there was no other route for him to reach Narayana, he had to cultivate wanton wickedness and violent hatred, and invite Rama to kill him. Of course, this might be called a type of devotion that is stupid and infamous. But his inner aim was to cross the ocean of birth-death, through that act of self-abnegation and surrender to Narayana.

Meanwhile, since his body and mind had grown out of Rakshasa urges and developed with the help of demonic sustenance, he ignored the Divine in him, which was calling for merger in the Divine Rama. He relied on his Rakshasa nature and awakened its sinister possibilities and powers. The Divine and the Demonic facets of his personality rose and sank alternately, moment after moment. So he convinced himself at last that the two brothers were Royal Princes and no more. He resolved that he would kill them both and bring away the lady of whom he was so enamoured. He promised his sister that he would avenge the injury inflicted on her in that manner. He announced that the Assembly was adjourned. He ordered his aides to bring to the Audience Hall the imperial chariot for his journey. He took his

seat in the chariot with no companion beside him. (*RKR Part II p.42-45*)

ABDUCTION OF SITA⁹:

Ravana hurried to the “seashore dwelling” of Maricha, and sat by his side, detailing to him the events that had happened. He ordered Maricha¹⁰ to play his part in the execution of his plan. But Maricha said that he had borne the brunt of the might of both Rama and Lakshmana once already. He¹¹ told Ravana that they are not of the common run of Princes. He advised him against such wild enterprises. But passion¹² had made Ravana blind to the dictates of duty and morality. So he threatened to punish Maricha if he did not yield to his will. Maricha decided within himself that it was better to die at the hands of Rama than of the Rakshasa that Ravana was. He agreed to the proposal that Ravana laid before him, and got ready to play his part in the conspiracy.

⁹ Based on certain evidences, scholars have made a few observations. The conversation that Ravana was having with Sita while abducting her, gives a hint of the age of the characters in the epic, in that era. Ravana told Sita, “My age is now 2000 years, your husband Rama is just 40 years of age and you own age is 39 years. (*SSB 2002 p.112*)

¹⁰ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu - Ravana decides to seek Maricha’s help:*

¹¹ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu - Maricha advises Ravana to desist from such acts:*

See also - **Maricha witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama**

¹² See Chapter, *Sita - Story of Sita’s previous birth*

Ravana proceeded to the Dandaka Forest, with Maricha following closely. On the way, Ravana explained to his companion the strategy he had conceived. He directed Maricha to transform into a lovely golden deer. He wanted him to frisk about, in that alluring form, before the hermitage where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were. Maricha had to assent, since he had no way of escaping from his ire. Ravana told him: Rama will try to capture you, and will follow you and you should lead him far into distance, and thence, you must yell in painful agony, ‘Oh Sita! Oh Lakshmana’ in a voice exactly that of Rama.”(*RKRV Part II p.45-46*)

Maricha¹³ thought to himself: “If I do not obey Ravana I will definitely die at his hands. On the other hand, if I come to You, Rama, as a golden deer, You will chase me and I will certainly die at Your hands. Either way death is inevitable. It is better to die by Your hands than those of wicked Ravana.” So praying, he agreed to carry out the wish of Ravana. (*SSB.1996 p.52*)

Marich¹⁴ convinced himself that whatever the sin he perpetrated would disappear, the moment Rama’s arrow strikes at him while he was fixing his eyes on Rama’s form with His sweet name on his tongue - How fruitful his life would become and he would be lucky (*RKRV Part II p.50*)

¹³ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu* - **Prefers a death by the Divine Hands:**

¹⁴ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu* - **Maricha feels blessed and free from sin:**

Maricha then turned himself into an enchanting golden deer and played about in the vicinity of Rama's hut in Panchavati. Sita was fascinated by the deer. (*SSB1996 p.52*)

At that very moment, Ravana was transforming himself in appearance and apparel; for he was awaiting just this chance. He became in outer form a Rishi; but his intention, in spite of his innate power to terrify by his very name both gods and demons, was to steal like a sly dog. Casting his eyes all around him, he entered the hermitage, surreptitiously, with a trembling heart. When he attempted to enter by the front door, the mystic lines that Lakshmana had drawn across seemed to raise tongues of fire at him. He feared that his plan might fail and that something even worse might happen to him. So, he stood beyond the line, and shouted, "Mistress of the House! Give me some alms."

... No sooner Sita crossed the line to give the alms Ravana drew her by hand and lifted her away into a waiting chariot and sped fast- Sita¹⁵ screamed out for help cried out 'Oh Rama! Lakshmana! Come and save me from this wicked monster'. Sita admonished Ravana of destroying his people and dynasty. She warned him¹⁶...She also called upon Rama and Lakshmana to rescue her. (*RKR Part II p.55-57*)

¹⁵ Ten headed Monster Ravana – he had stolen Sita like a dog and like a fox, he was running away with his prey. (Part II p. 116-117)

¹⁶ See Chapter, *Sita - Abduction of Sita*

Ravana fights Jatayu:

The monarch of eagles, Jatayu, heard the plaintive cries that rose from that moving chariot. He recognised the voice of as that of Sita.He resolved to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the holy act of saving Sita from the demonic grasp, and using all his energy and skill for that act of service. Circling overhead, Jatayu shouted, ‘O Sita! Have no fear, I shall destroy this cruel villain and release you. I shall place you in the Presence of Rama.’” He flew across the chariot’s path, and hit Ravana many times with his sharp beak causing him bleed profusely. he gave Ravana excellent advice to correct himself, before it was too late. “Ravana! This is a step that would bring you no good. Release Sita and go safely home. Uttering these words of golden advice, Jatayu flew along with the speeding chariot for some distance; Sita derived great consolation listening to the words of Jatayu¹⁷. She was comforted when she heard these sentiments so well expressed. (*RKRV Part II p.57-58*)

He (Ravana) then mortally wounded Jatayu, when the bird obstructed him in the sky to prevent the abduction of Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.52*)

LANKA

Is this land which we now call Lanka the same as the one which existed in the Treta Yuga as the land ruled by Ravana at the time

¹⁷ See Chapters, *Jatayu - Advices Ravana:*

of Ramarajya? No, this is not so. At that time, Lanka was hundred miles away from the tip of India and at that time, it was at the equator. As time went on and as we moved from the Treta Yuga to the Kali Yuga, this particular land which was on the equator drifted hundreds of miles northwards. When we look at this island which we now call Lanka, we find that it has shifted to north of equator. It was recorded in the Greek history that this island which we now call Lanka was completely submerged under water when the oceanic catastrophe called the Atlantis occurred. The Greeks were no ordinary people. They were very advanced in sciences and were knowledgeable in many fields. They were describing the fact that Lanka was submerged in the ocean and drifted away and this phenomenon was being accepted by them. (*SRBM p. 86*)

Unique features of 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 were 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.50 -51*)

Ravana was one who was endowed with all wealth and prosperity. He lacked nothing in terms of comforts and luxuries. He had mastered the 64 categories of knowledge. His capital, Lanka, rivalled *Swarga* (heaven) itself in its grandeur. (*SSS Vol.24 p.205*)

The entire Lanka used to reverberate with the chanting of *Vedas*. Many demons were well versed in *Vedas* and used to recite them. But these people did not practice even an iota of what they repeated. (*SSB 1996 p.79*)

How Hanuman saw Lanka

Splendid in the sunlight, he (*Hanuman*) found many gardens and parks as well as pleasure centres which made Hanuman forget where he was. He was amazed at the variety of multi-coloured birds that fluttered to and fro in clusters within the parks. Seeing the unique grand houses, the long wide streets, the attractive gardens, etc., in that City, Hanuman was moved with wonder and doubt—doubt whether it was a replica of Heaven itself. Wherever one cast his eye, one saw well-built Rakshasa soldiers parading streets, Rakshasa women, famed for their skill and powers to assume whatever form they wanted were found by Hanuman indulging in licentious sports. Devas, Naga,

Gandharva and human damsels enslaved by Ravana were pining in the palaces, awaiting the day of release.

He¹⁸ entered many mansions to find out whether she (*Sita*) was anywhere therein. He saw be vies of women, fallen on their beds, intoxicated by drink and dance and floored by the banalities of luxury (*RKRV Part II p.122-123, 129*)

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.51*)

Lanka on fire:

Hanuman¹⁹ saw an orchard and plucking some tasty fruits, he ate his fill.... A Rakshasa guard wanted to frighten him ... He gave blow to Rakshasa guard which felled him to the ground who ran and reported to his gang head.... the news reached Ravana... It struck as an evil omen to Ravana... The

¹⁸ See Chapter, *Hanuman* – **Hanuman searches for Sita:**

¹⁹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* – **Hanuman decides to teach the demons a lesson and proceeds to lay to utter waste, the beautiful *Asoka* gardens. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana:**

formidable forces sent by him could not harm Hanuman-- Ravana sent his own dear son, Akshayakumara, at the head of thousands of seasoned Warrior-Rakshasas. But Hanuman slaughtered this host in a trice and Ravana had to mourn the death of his beloved son. The entire land shivered in fear at the news of the death of the Prince and the decimation of his army..... Ravana sent word for Meghanada²⁰, and commissioned him to destroy this new invader. He placed at his disposal a huge army of several thousand Large number soldiers were killed by Hanuman... Meghanada was felled by a blow. He rolled, spouting blood..... So; he resolved to resort to the sacred arrow of Brahma that he had with him--- He knew that Brahma, the first of the Trinity, had told Ravana that he would meet his death at the hands of man and monkey.... He decided to prevent that calamity. Meghanada had to release Brahmastra.... Hanuman did not counteract it. He reverentially prostrated before it. So, it was easy for Meghanada to bind him with the Serpent Rope.

Hanuman was captured and was brought before Ravana; an interesting conversation took place between the two²¹., Ravana was holding court in a gigantic hall of the palace²². At last, he reached the Audience Hall of Ravana. (***RKR*** ***Part II p.144-147***)

²⁰ See Chapter, *Meghanada* - **Meghanada's interlude with Hanuman:**

²¹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **Interesting Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman**

²² ***SSB 2002 p.117***

Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman:

Ravana sat on a high throne. Finding Ravana who was full of evil, seated so high, Hanuman thought that being a devotee of Rama he should not be at a lower level. He increased the length of his tail, coiled it like a seat, sat on it, and rose much higher than Ravana’s throne. Hanuman then felt satisfied that he had occupied a pedestal higher than that of Ravana. (*SSB 1996 p.57*)

Ravana laughed aloud at the absurd figure of the monkey; but the next moment, he was overcome by fear of impending death. However, anger was the overriding emotion at that time in him. He asked, “Hey, you monkey! Who are you really? Whose is the might that you have been exhibiting and using? Why did you destroy this orchard and this park? Though bound, you have no sense of shame. You look around with your head high up. Come, give me the right answers.” (*RKR Part II p.148*)

Ravana looked at the captive Hanuman and asked, “You are a monkey.... Who has sent you here, O foolish fellow?” Hanuman was no ordinary being! He replied using the same language, “Foolish fellow! The same hero who chopped off the ears and nose of your sister has sent me here!” Ravana was angry at this. He threatened Hanuman, “You impudent fellow! No king has dared address me in such derogatory terms! “Why do you address me so disrespectfully²³? Watch your tongue, or I shall silence it forever!” Hanuman shot

²³ *SSB 1996 p.57*

back, “May be none has dared to demean you like his. I am Rama’s servant and I will definitely talk to you in this tone for you deserve nothing better! (SSB 2002 p.117/118) I am at liberty to address you, a sinner, thus. “There then ensued a furious exchange of words between Ravana and Hanuman. (SSB 1996 p.57)

Hanuman said, “My only desire is to carry out the orders of my Master. Listen to me carefully. Give up all sense of personal pride and reputation. Reflect on the grandeur of your clan, the family to which you belong. Remember, you are the great-grandson of Brahma. You are the grandson of the great Pulastya. You are the son of Visravas. Give up this delusion of accumulating pomp and power; adore in your heart the Destroyer of Fear from the hearts of those devoted to Him, the Crown Jewel of the Ikshvaku Dynasty, the precious Gem of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama! Surrender to Him, take refuge in Him. Even Time shivers in fear before Him. It is not good for you to harbour enmity towards Him. Listen to me. Place Sita at the Lotus Feet of Rama, and meditate on the Grace that flows from those Feet. Strengthened by that Grace, Rule over the state of Lanka, forever and ever. Make the glory of your grandfather, Pulastya, reach the far corners of the world, without blemish, so long as the sun and moon illumine the sky. The fair name of your line should not be tarnished by you in the least. Give up your pride and your delusion. Oh, Emperor! Rivers taking birth on mountain ranges get flooded in the rainy season and roll furiously along. Within weeks, they run dry with just a trickle of water. Your power and wealth will soon dry up and

vanish. Adore Rama as the source of power and wealth. Then, they would never get dry; for He is the inexhaustible spring of peace and prosperity. He is ever full. He won't lose, but you will benefit from Him. Oh Ravana! I am telling you with nothing held back, with an open mind. No one can rescue the unfortunate person who is blinded by hatred towards Him. Accept my advice.”

These words of Hanuman were soft and salutary. They were full of wisdom and morality. But Ravana was not prepared to benefit by the counsel. He said, “Fool! Dare you advise me what to do? Fie on you, fie! Death has drawn near you; or else, you would not have the courage to lecture thus so long in my presence. Enough of your prating, keep your mouth shut!” Hanuman did not obey. He retorted “Ravana! These words of yours spell your doom. Alas, you have become insane. You will know the truth of my diagnosis as time passes. In a few days you can know to whom Death is drawing near, to you or to me. (*RKR V Part II p.149-150*)

Ravana could not tolerate the impertinent and arrogant behaviour of Hanuman, “You monkey! No one not even kings dared to address me in such humiliating language, I will see your mouth is shut right now,” Hanuman retorted, I am the servant of an Emperor who rules fourteen *lokas* (worlds). You cannot do anything to me.” (*SSS Vol.42 p.141*)

Vibhishana explains to Ravana the Code of conduct of a king – killing of an ambassador contrary to accepted conduct:

Ravana was enraged beyond control. He rose, spouting fire and slapping his thighs in challenge he roared an order to his henchmen to kill the impertinent monkey. Everyone rushed to where Hanuman sat bound in snake ropes. Just at that moment, Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, entered the Hall, followed by his retinue. He prostrated before his elder brother and said, protestingly, "Master! It is not right to kill an emissary. *Raja dharma* will not approve the deed." (*RKR Part II p.150*)

"This is quite contrary to the accepted code of conduct of a king. To kill an ambassador or to punish one who has come as a messenger on behalf of someone else is not the right code of conduct for a king of the country". Vibhishana tried to explain to Ravana this principle by which he should not punish one who has brought a message and Vibhishana tried to get Hanuman released. Ravana, in fact had so many other bad qualities and bad ideas in him, and he often undertook to do things which he should not have done. (*SSB 1977 p.115-116*)

"Punish him in any other manner, but do not pronounce the sentence of death." The ministers of Ravana supported this stand and declared that what he had suggested was the noblest truth. Ravana laughed in scorn at their absurd ideas of right and wrong. Still, he climbed down and said, "Well, mutilate him and send him off." (*RKR Part II P.150-151*)

Ravana felt frightened, looking at the power and prowess of Hanuman. He thought that when a mere monkey had so much courage and strength, the followers of Rama must be much greater than him. Ravana decided to humble Hanuman by setting fire to his tail, for the tail is very dear to a monkey. Yards of cloth were brought to wrap around the monkey's tail, and it was set on fire. Hanuman leapt from mansion to mansion, setting fire to every house with his burning tail. (*SSB 1996 p57*)

When Hanuman set fire to Lanka and went back, Ravana started worrying that Rama would definitely arrive, any time from then. He considered the possible defeat at Rama's hands. These were the effects of his own guilty conscience! It led him hallucinate all such scenarios and did not give him a moment's peace! (*SSB 2002 p.118*)

PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE

Ravana assesses the damages and seeks suggestions:

At the Audience Hall, Ravana called the ministers together, and invited them to give expression to their estimate of the situation. "You are aware of the calamities that were inflicted by that messenger of Rama. What preparations are necessary? What are your suggestions for the future? Tell me quite frankly, without the slightest fear." The ministers looked at each other. They sneered in repressed laughter, but no one dared speak.

Suddenly, Kumbhakarna, immersed in sleep for months, and who was therefore unaware of the conflagration at the time of the visit of Hanuman, emerged from his sleep and rushed into the Audience Hall. He shouted at his elder brother, “Hello! You boasted that there is no hero equal to you in all the three worlds. You challenged the worlds and dared anyone to face you. Now I hear a tiny little monkey entered the City and burnt it to ashes! Shame! Shame on you! How did you allow it to escape alive?” With these words of jeer, he left the hall, and hastened home.

At this point, Minister Atikaya rose from his seat and addressed the Emperor thus: “Master! We shall obey your commands. If only we have a gracious look from your eyes falling on us, we can destroy all men and monkeys and wipe them out of the face of the earth. Why assert more?” He sat down with a grunt of satisfaction.

Then, Meghanada, the general endowed with the power of adopting any form he likes, rose to speak. “Supreme Master!” he said, “Your might and majesty resound all over the world. The gods are your bondsmen. Why should we speak of the fate of men in your Presence? For who can be stronger than these gods?” His words were soaked in pompous pride. The atheistic sons of Kumbhakarna, the highly egotistic brothers, Kumbha and Nikumbha also spoke in the same strain. Akampana and other warriors also added their tunes to the same song. Off and on, the irrepressible Mahodara stood up and rapped his thighs as if he was proclaiming his eagerness to join the fray. Of course, every one of them was infected with an inner fear, though they did not exhibit it in their speech or their countenances. The result was

that Ravana was rendered happy, and their aim to hearten him was realised.

Lastly, one Rakshasa rose and tried to catch attention. He said, “Emperor! I shall dress myself as a Brahmin and approach Rama and Lakshmana wherever they are. I shall invite them for lunch; and when they come into my hermitage, I shall bind them hand and foot. If you approve of this stratagem, I shall attempt it.” Ravana was very pleased with his ministers and others. (*RKR* *Part II p.162-163*)

Vibhishana’s advice to Ravana

Meanwhile, Vibhishana²⁴ had entered the Hall. Ravana looked at him and asked him, “Brother! What is your opinion on this question: these men and monkeys?” Vibhishana replied, “Most compassionate brother! I shall answer as best I can, without any frills or feints. I only pray that you listen patiently and carefully. Rama is not an ordinary person. He is Death to the God of Death. Give up your hatred of such a Divine Person, and pray to be accepted as His servant. Return his consort to Him and earn His Grace. I am falling at your Feet and pleading with you with all the force I command.” Hearing him, Malyavantha, an old and revered Minister, nodded in agreement.

But Ravana was greatly incensed at the advice given by them both. He reprimanded them hotly. He ordered that they be removed from the Hall. At this, Malyavantha got down from his chair and hurried home.

²⁴ See Chapter, *Vibhishana* - **Vibhishana’s Advice to Ravana:**

Vibhishana too offered his prostrations to his elder brother and, with folded palms, he expostulated, "O King!you condemn as enemies those who offer good advice and try to promote your good. Sita is like the Night of Destruction for the Rakshasas. And, you have no compassion towards her. Please agree to my request. Return Sita to Rama. I am sure that will endow you with all happiness and auspiciousness".

At this, Ravana rose suddenly from his throne and exclaimed. "Fool! Death has drawn very near you. You could be alive till this moment only on account of my grace. Now you are counting my enemies as your benefactors. I cannot understand why you have developed respect and loyalty to them. Is there on earth anyone living who cannot be subdued by the strength of my shoulders? Eating the food I give, living in the house provided by me, residing in my territory, how dare you extol my enemies? Thorny bushes grown to protect the fort have become harmful to the fort itself. You have spread too much to be useful. Go, go to some hermitage and teach your lessons on morality and goodness." Thus saying, he pushed Vibhishana at his feet away from him with a kick. However angrily he was kicked, Vibhishana persisted long in praying to him, his hands holding the very feet that were kicking him, "King! I am going to take refuge with Rama. I have done my best to save you. I have nothing to repent for. I have not done any wrong." With these words, he left the Hall... (*RKRV Part II p.163-166*)

Messenger sent by Ravana:

Meanwhile, a messenger sent by Ravana was sighted by Vibhishana and the Vanaras bound him and took him to where

Sugriva, their Ruler was. Sugriva ordered that his limbs be cut off. When the Vanaras prepared themselves for the execution of that order, the fellow raised a hue and cry. He shouted in his pain, “Oh Vanaras! I swear by Rama! Do not cut off my nose and ears.” His pathetic cry was heard by Lakshmana. He asked that the Rakshasa be brought to his presence. He spoke softly to him, and admonished the Vanaras for torturing a Messenger deputed by Ravana. He wrote a letter and placed it in his hand, with the words, “Give this missive to Ravana. Repeat to him the words I now utter: Oh, Demolisher of the fortunes of your own clan! Change your heart at least this day, and fall at the feet of Rama. Rama will pardon you. Do not decimate and destroy the Rakshasa tribe in order to prop up your wiles. Know there is no other means available to you to avoid the Death that is imminent.” With these hard and heavy warnings, the Messenger was sent back to his master. The fellow was overjoyed that he could escape alive. He shouted, “Jai to Lord Ramachandra,” and fell at Rama’s feet before he hied back home.

At the Court of Ravana, he related the events that had ensued and started describing with uncontrollable delight the majestic charm of Rama. He gave Ravana the letter Lakshmana had entrusted him with. Ravana enquired about his brother, Vibhishana, and asked how he fared. “Fie upon him,” he ejaculated, “His days are numbered. Death will swallow him soon. He is a pest, bred in this granary. He left this Lanka and joined the camp of my foe. Misfortune will haunt him until he dies.” He turned to the fellow and asked him, “Under this pretext, you visited their camp. Did you not tell them of our military might and adamant resolve? Tell me also what you learnt about their resources and

capabilities.” The messenger, Suka²⁵, stood before the throne with folded palms, and said, “Lord! I pray that you extend some grace to me and listen calmly and with forbearance to what I say. The very moment your brother sealed friendship with Rama he was crowned Emperor of Lanka by him! Knowing that I reached their camp as your messenger, the Vanaras caught hold of me and tortured me in various ways. I swore in Rama’s name and called upon him to save me. Therefore, they allowed me to come away un-mutilated, with my nose and ears intact. Had I a thousand tongues, I cannot describe the might of those Vanara armies. What a galaxy of heroic warriors are they! There are Vanaras of many different colours, of all ages and grades, of gigantic stature and strength. One shakes in terror when one casts his eyes at them. Why, even to picture them in the mind or think about them is a terror-striking experience. Imagine the might of that one Vanara who killed your son and reduced the City to ashes! It is all the result of their being reflections and echoes of the invincible might of Rama himself. Even the tiniest brat among the monkeys becomes, by that token, a horrifying monster. There are monkey warriors with various names, and each of them is endowed with the strength of many herds of elephants. Dwivida, Mainda, Nila, Nala, Angada, Vikata, Dadhimukha, Kesari, Kumuda, Daja, Gavaksha, Jambavantha—these are the Generals. Every one of them is equal in might and military skill to their Ruler, Sugriva. There are hundreds of thousands more among them, who are of equal might. Their number is beyond calculation. Their fury and ferocity can

²⁵ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **The might of the Vanara force described to Ravana by Suka:**

destroy earth, heaven and the nether regions, as if these were but heaps of straw. Lord, I heard that their number is eighteen *Padmas*. Each Padma has a valiant General at its head. Emperor, I did not find a single Vanara, from the highest to the lowest who doubted their victory; nor was there anyone who had the least trace of nervousness on the eve of the march. They are all tightening their muscles to pound this City. They are only waiting for the signal from Rama. They have not had it so far.

“Whether the ocean yields to them and gives the right of way or not, they are determined to build a causeway of stones, and succeed in their venture. They are baring teeth and gnashing them, boasting that they would squeeze Ravana out of shape and reduce him into a handful of pulp. Fear strikes everyone who listens to their exultant roar and challenging call. The instant they hear the name Ravana uttered within earshot, they get so enraged that they pluck giant trees, root and branch, and brandish them in angry demonstration of hate. They are swaying and swinging, surging and shouting, in their eagerness to consume this City. They have equally redoubtable bears too among them. To crown all, they have Rama as their leader, capable of overwhelming millions of ‘Death-deities.’ Hundreds of thousands of Aadhisessa, each of which is blessed with a thousand heads and tongues, cannot do full justice if asked to describe the heroism and military skill of Rama. With one arrow shot from his bow, he can dry up even the Ocean.”

The reaction of Ravana to this report of the spy and messenger was a peal of wild laughter. He said, “Fie on you. Giving ear to the prating of the monkeys that surround him and of that arch

coward, Vibhishana, you are extolling that fool so high. It is sheer nonsense to describe the strength and heroism of mere monkeys. Enough, enough, can *monkeys* ever be so strong! I have heard enough, long ago, of the power and might of this Sugriva; and what can this poltroon Vibhishana, who has become his minister now, do? Can he contribute any wealth, victory or resources to Rama?”

The messenger could only pine within himself and bewail the lack of intelligence that Ravana was exhibiting. He folded his palms in obeisance and stood silent. Then Ravana tore the envelope of the missive that Lakshmana had sent, and after perusing it, handed it over to his minister. He said, “You are like the *thithiri* bird afraid that the sky will fall upon its young fledglings! Poor thing! It covers the little ones holding its head over them as a cover! Can the sky ever fall and kill the birds? Can these anchorites, these ritual-ridden priests, who try to frighten me by a shower of words, ever succeed?” Suka, the messenger, watched the heroics of Ravana for some time. Then he intercepted with the words, “Lord! What I have now said is the full truth. Read well and carefully the contents of that letter and act, without any sense of resentment or pride. Listen! Give up the hostility you have developed. Rama is very tender of heart and compassionate. He is the master of the three worlds. If only you approach him, he will take you under his protection and guard you from harm. He will pardon all your wrongs. Surrender Sita to him. Give heed to my prayer.” The envoy pleaded plaintively that Ravana save himself from ruin.

While he was pouring out his pleas, Ravana's eyes reddened with anger and shame. He roared in protest, "What! Do you take me to be a criminal! Did I send you, Oh fool, to go and surrender at the feet of those prattling babies of the forest? Audacity and impertinence cannot go further," and rising from the throne, he kicked the fellow out of the Hall. The Rakshasa, Suka, fled to the camp of Rama and sought refuge.... Rama, as the very embodiment of compassion, called to his presence the leaders of the Vanaras, and directed them to welcome their new brother, Suka. He too was overcome by gratitude and declared that his life had reached its goal. (*RKRV Part II p.171-176*)

Ravana's Curse and Mandodari's advice²⁶:

Very soon, news reached Ravana that the enemy was at the gate..... he roared through *all the ten* (throats), in anger and hate. He did not remember that it was a bad omen to speak through the ten throats! There was a curse²⁷ laid on him long ago, that when he spoke through all the ten his end would draw near. Within a few seconds of the roar, he recollected the curse and was frightened at the fact.

He moved into the Queen's apartments, for, he was afraid the Ministers might read from his fallen face that he was overcome by the awareness of the curse. He saw Mandodari, the Queen, in the apartment. Her eyes discovered that Ravana had become

²⁶ See *Endnotes No.4* - Ravana ignored the counsel of many:

²⁷ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **Curse on Ravana that when he spoke with all his ten throats his end would come near**

forlorn. She decided to administer wise counsel²⁸ to him. Mandodari was in tears when she spoke. She rolled at the feet of her lord, appealing to him to be warned in good time and to take immediate measures to rescue himself and his empire, his people and his fame.

Ravana raised her to her feet and wiped her eyes. He said, “Dear one! Why are you agitated thus? Wherefrom all this fear, this lack of courage? There is no one more powerful than me in the world. The rulers of the eight directions have been defeated by the might of my arm. Death dare not step near me²⁹. Do not yield to fear. You are extolling that weakling Rama in my hearing unaware of the depth and extent of my might.” With these words, he left the Queen and entered the Audience Hall, where he promptly sat on the Throne. (*RKRV Part II p. 182-186*)

Ravana Prepares for the Battle; Counsel of his son Prahastha ignored

Meanwhile, Ravana sent for his ministers and set about making preparations for the battle that was imminent. “Rakshasas!” he accosted, “The Vanaras, the Jambavanthas, and the men who are now attacking us are not even a morsel for our maws. Do not lose courage, hesitate or argue. Plunge into the fight. Get ready,” he yelled. But Prahastha stood up from his seat, and with folded palms, he said, “Rakshasas! Let us not desert the right path.

²⁸ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **Mandodari pleads with Ravana to prostrate before Rama and seek pardon**

²⁹ Ravana asked freedom from death at the hands of all deities, but did not ask for freedom from death by, humans because he considered them trivial beings. (*SSS Vol.29 p.146-147*)

Lord! These ministers of yours speak words that are in line with your desire.³⁰ But that will not ensure success. One solitary monkey crossed the ocean and coming into our City performed many a wonderful feat. At that time, these ministers and these armies could not put an end to his destructive antics. You say monkeys are but morsels for our maws. Well, when that monkey was here, where were those maws? Did they have no hunger? When it burnt the City into a heap of ashes, these ministers had evidently no appetite to eat it! Lord, the words that fall from the lips of these ministers might appear very pleasant to you now but they will bring about dire calamities as time moves on. Think about all this in the quiet hours. Rama has struck camp on our Suneela Mountain. He came over the sea through a bridge they constructed. He has with him an army of uncounted numbers of Vanaras. Can such a person be a mere man? Give up that surmise if you believe so. Do not prattle as the tongue, that is let loose, talks. Do not welcome into your ears the rhetoric of these ministers. Do not also condemn me as a coward, afraid of battle. Believe in me and in the aptness and urgency of my advice. Take Sita with you now and surrender her to him, praying for pardon. That step will save us and save Lanka. We can then claim that we have rescued our tribe from destruction. This is the triumph

³⁰ **He lent his ear to priya (pleasant) and sealed his fate:**

There are two things that draw man's mind, *hitha* and *priya* (the beneficial and the pleasant). Prefer the beneficial to the pleasant, for the pleasant might lead you down the sliding path into the bottomless pit. Vibhishana spoke *hitha* to Ravana, but he lent his ear to the *priya* that his sycophantic ministers spoke. He exiled his brother and honoured his courtiers; he sealed his fate by this preference of *priya* and *hitha*. (SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.52-53)

we can achieve. Or else, face defeat and disaster. Get ready this very moment. Your renown will last as long as the Sun and Moon endure. Do not acquire a name that will be execrated so long as the Sun and Moon endure.”

Ravana replied in dire anger and sheer bravado. He was trembling with rage at the unpalatable advice that Prahastha gave him. Raising his voice to a wild roar, he admonished Prahastha in a torrent of abuse. “Fool! Who taught you this trickery? Whence did you derive such wisdom? They say, sparks originate in bamboo clusters! You are born in my clan.” Ravana gnashed his teeth wildly. He shouted harsh and vulgar abuse. Finally, he kicked Prahastha out of the Hall. But before going out, Prahastha clarified his stand condemning his father and his overweening pride which had rendered him blind. Ravana, he said, would be the cause of the destruction of the dynasty. He consoled himself that for one who is mortally stricken and is awaiting his last breath, no drug can be of any use. “So my good advice appeared futile to my father,” he told himself. He proceeded straight to his mother and related all that happened. Both agreed that there was nothing they could say or do, which would turn him on to the right path. So they sat together and were lost in the contemplation of Rama and his majesty. (*RKRV Part II p. 186-188*)

Interaction between Ravana and Angada, the son of Vali, sent as an Envoy to Lanka:

Rama..... together (with) the minsters of Sugriva and other leaders.... agreed unanimously that Angada, the son of Vali and

the Heir-apparent of the Vanara Kingdom, be sent as an Envoy³¹ to Ravana, before launching the siege of Lanka.

Angada then moved into the City, with Rama installed in his heart and his Form ever in his mind. He fearlessly stepped into the Audience hall of Ravana..... Angada said, “I am the Envoy of Rama.”“Oh Ravana! You and my father were friends of old. Therefore, with your welfare in view, I have come at the orders of Rama to give you sound advice. You brought away the ‘Mother of all the Worlds, the Daughter of Janaka.’ You are unable withstand pride and lust and greed. At least today, at this moment, if you realize the fact of your iniquity and act as I am telling you, Rama will pardon you. Decide to do so as I suggest, without delay. Or else, with your own hand, you will bury in this soil your clan and the kingdom.”

Ravana exclaimed, “Oh vilest of Vanaras! You are indeed a fool. Perhaps you do not know that I am a foe of your God’. What is your name? What was the relation between me and your father? Don’t be blind to the consequences of your speech.”

Angada laughed aloud at the excited reply from Ravana... said, “Ravana! Your days have come to an end. You will soon be reaching your old friend Vali. He can tell you there the consequences of opposing Rama. Equipped with twenty eyes, you are nevertheless blind. Burdened with twenty appendages

³¹ See Chapter, *Angada - THE INTERACTION BETWEEN RAVANA AND ANGADA, THE SON OF VALL, SENT AS AN ENVOY TO LANKA:*

called ears, you are deaf..... Kidnapping the wife of another person, devouring the messenger duly sent by your elder brother, Kubera. These are heights of your political morality!

Ravana resumed his talk. He said, “Angada! Know that I am the hero, the redoubtable stalwart, who lifted the Kailasa peak by sheer physical power and courage. This Ravana is the person who laid, not flowers but his own heads, plucked by him from his body, as offerings at the Feet of Siva. This is the devotee whose might has been acknowledged by Siva himself. This is the warrior whose name strikes terror in the bravest, whose picture spreads panic. Stop your prattle praising yourself and your patrons.”

Angada interrupted this tirade and cut in with his own. “Ravana! Will anyone praise a lion for destroying a frog? Surely, the attempt by Rama to kill you is too low for his status and dignity. You are a vicious, vile, vulgar sinner, who must meet death at the hands of mere monkeys only.”

Ravana commanded, “Bind this monkey. Don’t allow him to depart. Eat him up,” and hastily retired to the inner apartments. Lift him by the legs and throw him on the floor. Splinter his head.” At this, Meghanada rose from his seat and holding Angada by his legs pulled him with great force in order to make him fall. Many others rushed forward to help him. However many they were, they could not move the feet even a wee bit. At last, Ravana himself attempted the impossible task. He held Angada by his legs and wanted to lift him and throw him forcibly on the floor. Angada shook his feet in order to loosen the hold.

The impact of that gesture was so unexpected and so strong that Ravana hit the floor and lost consciousness. His glory and splendour were destroyed. The sense of shame spread over his faces and he looked like the moon in broad daylight, pale and poor. Angada left to the Presence of Rama to report of what happened. (*RKR V Part II p.190-197*)

Ravana ignores the last pleas of Mandodari:

Ravana entered the apartments of the queens, overwhelmed by shame and fear. Mandodari³² noted the pallid crestfallen appearance of Ravana. She said, “To cultivate enmity towards Rama will bring disaster to the kingdom itself. You could not step across the line drawn by Lakshmana. How then could you hope to defeat them in battle? Your powers and might are but dry leaves before them. Your followers could not overpower the messengers they sent. Can you ever hope to overwhelm them when they invade this land in their billions? You could not stir Angada’s feet even a hair breadth, and yet, you hope to capture and bind billions of such Vanaras... What could you do now to throw out Angada, the envoy, who entered the Audience Hall? There are in their camp thousands, nay, lakhs of Vanaras, mightier and more destructive than this one. Listen to my words, give up this demonic passion. Go and surrender to Rama.” These words of counsel reminding Ravana of happenings in the past, struck his heart like sharp arrows. (*RKR V Part II p.197-199*)

³² See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **MADODARI’S ADVICE IGNORED:**

Ravana tries to trick Sita:

Meanwhile, a new day dawned. Ravana entered the Audience Hall as the very personification of Vicious Pride and installed himself on the Throne. Inside his head were revolving fast and furious the words of both Angada and Mandodari. Plans, fears, schemes, and surmises rolled inside him, like the earth and sky rotating round him. But none of them was along right lines, for the day of destruction of the demon clan of Rakshasas was drawing near.

Ravana accosted a Rakshasa named Vidyutjihva, and said, "Fellow! Use your magic skill and bring before me the 'head' of Rama as well as his 'bow and arrows.' Seeing them, Sita must believe them genuine. She must be plunged in grief!" Vidyutjihva rose from his seat in a trice and moved out of the Hall. He made a correct replica of the 'bow and arrows' of Rama as well as of his head. Ravana was pleased at the exactness of reproduction. With them, he himself proceeded to Ashokavana, where Sita was kept in confinement. Holding them before her, he said, "Oh Sita! See, these are the bow and arrows, this head of the very person whom you are pining for and extolling, night and day. I have annihilated the Vanara hordes. Lakshmana has saved himself by fleeing from the field. In order to convince you that all this has really happened, I have brought before you this head, this bow and these arrows. Look at them." With these words, he placed them before her. Sita was hit by grief for just one moment; but she reminded herself that there was no one, in the fourteen worlds, who could pluck that head. She knew that this was a mean trick played to terrorise her and she brushed aside the threats. She said "Ravana! Surely, your destruction has

arrived. Or else, such abominable thoughts would not have come into you. You have no courage even to approach Rama. How then could you ever hope to kill him? Even in a dream, you cannot realise that hope. This is a dirty magic trick which fails to deceive me.” Sita poured scorn and insults on Ravana.

Meanwhile, loud exultant shouts of “Jai,” “Jai for Lord Rama,” “Jai for Lord Rama,” were heard from all around. The Vanaras had entered the City from all directions!

Ravana hurried back into his palace and the Audience Hall. The good woman, Sarama, wife of Vibhishana, then came near Sita and consoled and comforted her. She said, “Mother! This Ravana is a trickster and all that he does is subterfuge. No one can dare hurt Rama; just now, he has triumphantly entered Lanka with his Vanara hordes. Lanka is being shattered into shreds by the very shouts of the Monkeys.” (*RKRV Part II p.201*)

THE SIEGE

With Rama in their hearts, the Vanaras armed with boulders and trees rolled forward in terror-striking floods. Lanka was reputed impregnable, but the blessings of Rama helped them to break into it. The Eastern Gate was stormed by the forces under Nala. The Southern Gate was breached by the millions under the command of Angada. The Western Gate fell before the onslaught of the army led by Hanuman. The Northern Gate was guarded by Ravana himself, and Rama fought with him there.

The Rakshasas had taken up positions over walls and turrets and bastions of the fort, just as clouds on the peaks of the Meru Mountain. They were beating drums and blowing trumpets. Their shouts of “Victory for Ravana” confronted the confident shout “Victory for Rama, the Lord.” The boulders that the Rakshasas were hurling on the Vanaras attacking their walls and attempting to scale them, were seized ere they fell by the Vanaras and hurled back with fatal effect on the very Rakshasas crowding the walls. The advance of the Vanaras gained in momentum as the fight progressed. They killed the Rakshasas wherever and whenever they caught them. As a giant storm scatters the clouds into the four directions, the mounting onslaught of the Vanaras so dismayed the Rakshasas that they fled into the distance and the City was shrouded in despair.

Women, old men, and children began blaming Ravana for bringing about the calamity that had descended on their heads. Some Rakshasas gave up the fight, and fled with their wives and children, in order to escape certain death. Noticing such groups, Ravana gnashed his teeth in anger and yelled, “Cowards, backing out of battle! I shall cut you into pieces with my Diamond Sword!” At this, a few of the fleeing Rakshasas stayed in the fray. Meanwhile, the Vanara heroes penetrated the enemy lines and reinforced by their contemplation on Rama they entered the inner fortress of Ravana himself, and succeeded in razing it to the ground. They plucked a pillar of gold and wielding it as a weapon, started their orgy of destruction. Every Rakshasa they encountered was given a terrible beating. Then, his head was severed and cast away, with such force and such aim that it fell right in front of Ravana himself. When darkness fell, the

Vanaras, after demonstrating their superior might and heroism before the Rakshasas, presented themselves before Rama.

The Rakshasas are nocturnal beings, so when night fell, their acclamation and fury increased manifold. Their shouts of “Victory to Ravana” fell on the ears of the Vanaras like the roar of lions. The Vanaras plunged into battle again. The Rakshasa generals, Akampa and Atikaya through their magical skill spread pitch darkness over the four quarters. Under cover of the blackness, heavy rains of dust, stones and blood were poured on the enemy forces. The Vanaras could not distinguish friend from foe. They were afraid to fight with full fury. They prayed, “Rama! Rama,” in a loud voice, so that they could gain courage and give the enemy a good fight. Rama heard their cries. He called together Angada and Hanuman and told them that the magic skill of the Rakshasas had caused the commotion. They were furious at the shameful tactics of the enemy, but Rama coolly pulled out the Agniashtra, the Fire-arrow from his sheath, and shot it into the darkness they had designed. The effulgence of that arrow destroyed the darkness, and filled the area with splendid illumination. The Vanaras and the Bears set about their task of overwhelming and destroying the enemy with redoubled energy and enthusiasm. When the triumphant yell of Angada and Hanuman were heard, the Rakshasas took to their heels and fled. But they could not escape. The Vanaras caught them by their feet and threw them far out into the sea! The Rakshasas retreated into their camp when night advanced. They had no energy left for continuing the fight. The Vanaras came into the Presence of Rama. When the eyes of Rama fell upon them, they were all refreshed and recouped, with no trace of exhaustion.

Ministers Advice Ravana

Meanwhile, Ravana summoned his ministers and addressed them thus: “This day, thousands of Rakshasas were slain on the battlefield by the Vanaras. We have now to plan our strategy to foil them.” Then up rose Malyavantha, the aged Minister who had served Ravana’s father and who was also the father of Ravana’s mother. He counselled various rightful and moral paths for his edification. “Ravana,” he began, very endearingly, “Listen to my words in calmness. Pardon me for being outright. Ever since you brought Sita here, bad omens have been witnessed. It is not possible to describe them in detail. The glory of Rama, the Supreme Person, cannot be measured and extolled adequately even by the Vedas. By opposing this Cosmic Person, this Virat Purusha, you cannot earn any good, or win any grace. You would do well to ponder over this calmly. Rama is the very Person who slew Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha. He is the repository of all virtues. Do not entertain hatred against Him. Oh Emperor! Save Lanka, I pray. Surrender Sita to Rama. Do not delay any longer. Your safety lies in immediate surrender.” Thus saying, Malyavantha bowed his head and performed obeisance to the Ruler. These words hurt Ravana. He was infuriated. He ejaculated, “You seem to be determined to enter the jaws of Death. Your senility is pleading with me to pardon you; or else, I would have hacked you to pieces. Beware, get up and go out of my sight.” Ravana hissed like an angry serpent. Malyavantha felt sorry, for he feared Ravana’s end was fast approaching. He laughed within himself at the conceit and ignorance that had blinded Ravana. He concluded that he was yielding to ruinous reasoning and foolish reactions, brushing aside the advice that

would save him and his empire, because destiny had decided to close his career. (*RKRV Part II p. 204-207*)

Meghanada assures Ravana to demonstrate his skills in war the next day - combat with Lakshmana – Lakshmana swoons and later kills Meghanada:

Meghanada rose and said, “Tomorrow, during the morning hours, you can witness my skill in war. I shall demonstrate in action much more than I declare in words.” His assurance mollified Ravana’s anger and assuaged him a little. He was filled with joy. It gave him courage and hope. He drew his son near and caressed him fondly. He patted his head and extolled, before all, the bravery and heroic heart of his son.

Meghanada³³ took up arms and advanced to attack them. Lakshmana and Meghanada were involved in deadly combat. Each appeared the other’s equal in skill and strength. Lakshmana in a spurt of terrific rage destroyed the chariot of Meghanada and killed his charioteer. Afraid that his death was imminent, Meghanada took on hand the supremely potent weapon, Sakti, that Brahma had gifted, and aiming it at the very heart of Lakshmana; he directed it to the target. The weapon hit the heart of Lakshmana, coming straight from Meghanada’s hand. Lakshmana fell on the ground, in a “mortal” swoon. Meghanada, now no longer in fear, approached the fallen hero and tried to lift the body away to his own camp. Though his strength was equal to Lakshmana’s, Meghanada could not raise

³³ See Chapter, *Meghanada* - **Meghanada promises his father to fight the battle**

the body. Lakshmana was the Primeval Serpent, come again. How could anyone however strong or any number of such ones succeed in lifting him? Only those who have won the Grace of Sri Rama could move Lakshmana!

Meghanada returned to the battle very soon. He rained on the Vanaras³⁴ this time not only sharp arrows, but spears, maces, axes, pestles, and boulders..... Lakshmana fixed sacred arrows on his bow; and invoking on it the might and majesty of Rama, aimed it at Meghanada, wherever he might be. That arrow entered the heart of Meghanada and ended his life. (*RKRV Part II p. 207-211,229-232*)

Two sons of Kumbhakarna and Prahastha³⁵ and Mahodara meet their death:

Another day dawned. War drums could be heard from the Rakshasa camp. That day the enemy generalissimo was Dhoomraksha. He fought desperately, but he was killed the next day by Hanuman.... Angada led the Vanaras against Akampa, and he was able to kill the Rakshasa general that very day. Hearing that Akampa had met his death at the hands of the enemy, Prahastha rushed into the battlefield..... Leaping on him with terrible ferocity, Nila succeeded in killing the new general, Prahastha. Mahodara came next. Hanuman jumped on him with a reverberating roar, and fought with him, tooth and nail. Soon, he was able to cut Mahodara into pieces.

³⁴ See Chapter, *Meghanada - Meghanada fights the Vanaras:*

³⁵ See Chapter, *Lesser Known sons of Ravana*

For five long days thereafter, the two sons of Kumbhakarna, Kumbha and Nikumbha, continued the fight, at the head of a phalanx of fierce Rakshasas. On the sixth day, both brothers reached the Heaven that warrior heroes attain when they die on the field of battle. But the war went on unabated ... Lakshmana killed Makaraksha, the redoubtable warrior (*RKRV Part II p.220-222*)

Ravana pleads with Kumbhakarna to lead the armies into the war - Kumbhakarna's counsel ignored-

Ravana wailed and wept when he heard that his unbeatable generals had all, one by one, fallen dead on the ground! He ran towards the place where his brother, Kumbhakarna,³⁶ lay asleep, and he attempted to awaken him by urgent and drastic means. Kumbhakarna exclaimed, “Your wicked act is inexcusably heinous. Your viciousness is bringing destruction on Lanka. Go, surrender to Rama at least now, regardless of your absurd sense of prestige!

But Ravana was in no mood to accept the blame. “Do not desert me in disaster. Prepare yourselves for leading our armies into the war. Save my life,” he pleaded.

Finding no means of escape, and overcome by affection for the brother; Kumbhakarna got ready and proceeded to the battlefield. The Vanaras spouted fire and leaped under the leadership of Hanuman. Hanuman administered a mighty blow with his clenched fist and Kumbhakarna reeled. But

³⁶ See Chapter, *Kumbhakarna – Kumbhakarna's Advice to Ravana*

recovering soon he returned the blow, and felled him to the ground, Nala and Nila joined fight Sugriva and Angada had their share of the mighty Kumbhakarna's onslaught- Rama told Lakshmana and others that the time had come when he had to enter the field- Rama aimed an arrow at Kumbhakarna and sliced off his hands at the shoulders—He rushed towards Rama with a shriek – Kumbhakarna did not fall- Rama shot another arrow which severed his head and felled it to the ground. When the head was sliced off, the trunk continued to run for some distance, and to prevent this movement, Rama shot another arrow which cut it in twain -- Suddenly, a splendour arose from the body and advancing towards Rama merged in him-- While alive, he shone like an incomparable hero on the battlefield; dead, he attained the highest state of Mergence with God -. Rama stood on the field, with a sprinkling of sweat drops on his lotus face. His body revealed a few drops of Kumbhakarna's blood that had fallen on it during the fight- Ravana bewailed inconsolably. He was a cobra that had lost its crest jewel-- Pressing his brother's severed head to his bosom, he wept aloud. (*RKRV Part II p. 223-227*)

Meghanada fights the battle and losses his life:

Meghanada, his son, tried to soothe him in various ways.... “I shall, in a trice, smash this Vanara horde out of shape. I shall confer on you joy immensely greater than the grief you are burdened with today,” he boasted³⁷.

³⁷ See Chapter, *Meghanada* - **Meghanada tries to trick Hanuman with the death of Sita**

Each one (Angada, Hanuman and Lakshmana) attacked him as if raining thunderbolts. So, using his magic skill, Meghanada³⁸ rendered himself invisible. He assumed many a mysterious role and escaped. The patience of Lakshmana³⁹ ran out at last. He fixed sacred arrows on his bow; and invoking on it the might and majesty of Rama, aimed it at Meghanada, wherever he might be. That arrow entered the heart of Meghanada and ended his life.

Ravana’s interaction with his Daughter-in-law, Sulochana:

Sulochana, the wife of Meghanada, heard the news of her husband’s death, through her maids who ran to her with the tragic information. “Until now, I believed that this small task could be accomplished easily by either Meghanada or Kumbhakarna. Now, I have observed with my own eyes the failure of their prowess. I am ashamed that Meghanada fell a victim to the attack of monkeys. Those who are killed by monkeys, how can they claim to be heroes?” Ravana said. He tried to console Sulochana. He said, “Respected Consort, give up your grief. Do not think that I am a hero of that type. I shall bring you solace, within an hour or so. You can witness on the battlefield, my terrific might. I shall pluck the heads of those who caused the death of your husband, and bring them with me. This shall be done, without doubt.” Thus Ravana boasted and raved in the presence of Sulochana. His anger burnt his frame and he was beside himself with rage.

³⁸ See Chapter, *Meghanada - Nikumbala Park and the Yajna to propitiate the evil powers:*

³⁹ See Chapter, *Meghanada – Meghanada losses the battle and his life*

Hearing his words, the wise and virtuous Sulochana said, “Oh Ten-headed One! Is there in your heart any trace of hope that you can win victory? You are sunk in the deep darkness of delusion. I had swallowed my resentment and my disappointment so long, for I felt that opposing one’s father-in-law was improper; and in this case, it is also useless to try to convince you. Your rage is the prime cause for the destruction of the Rakshasa population of this island. Let me tell you this—it is impossible for you to win this war. This is the truth, the indisputable truth.” (*RKRV Part II p.233-235*)

Sulochana rose suddenly, and wailing alone, she moved towards the apartments of Mandodari⁴⁰, the Queen, the mother of Meghanada.

Ravana could not bear the agony of Sulochana

Ravana could not bear to witness the agony of his daughter-in-law, the bereaved Sulochana⁴¹. Her words thrust his heart like sharp spikes. His grief was so heavy at the loss of such a bright and loving son that he fell on the floor and in despair beat his head on the ground. Rising up, he poured out his anguish before the Siva idol of his favourite temple. Meanwhile, the ministers of his court approached him there. They said, “Oh King, why are you grieving in vain? Sons, wives and all the rest on whom we lavish our love are all like the lightning flash that illumines the dark cloud for an instant. They come and go. Life is a flash, it

⁴⁰ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **SULOCHANA CONFORNTS MANDODARI**

⁴¹ See chapter, *Meghanada – Meghanada’s wife Sulochana laments his death*

does not last. Knowing this in full measure, it is not proper for you to sink in ignorance and bewail their loss. Now is the time to plan the future. Plan out the strategy by which we can destroy the enemy at our doors.” They tried to bring consolation and remind him of the immediate task, through various arguments. At last, Ravana folded his twenty palms and praying to Siva, he fell on the floor of the temple in reverent homage. (*RKRV Part II p.235*)

Hanuman kills Ahi-ravana:

Ahi-ravana⁴² was no other than another son of Ravana. He worshipped no other god except Devi Kamada. He told Ravana that he would capture Rama and Lakshmana and sacrifice them as offerings to Kamada Devi and bring immense fame to the Rakshasa name. With his supernatural power, he invoked the spirit of darkness and enveloped the Vanaras in thick blackness.

He changed himself into the likeness of Vibhishana and accosted Hanuman at the gate and told him that he had gone outside the camp to perform his evening prayers and that he should be allowed to enter the camp. Hanuman was taken in by those words and that form, which were to his ears and eyes the same as Vibhishana’s. He allowed him into the camp.

He recited the Mohana Mantra, which would make whomsoever he wants swoon and become unconscious. That made the Vanara heroes sleep even more soundly. Then, he bound Rama and

⁴² See Chapter, *Ahi-Ravana, The King Of The Nether Region*

Lakshmana and carried them off to his region in the bowels of the earth, the region called Patala.

Hanuman entered the City of Ahi-ravana. At the very entrance, he had to fight and overcome Makaradhwaja, the guard in monkey form. Hanuman was able to win his confidence and get from him inside information about Rama and Lakshmana and their fate. He noticed a florist entering the gate with a fine big garland of fragrant flowers. Resolving that this was the best chance to reach the place he wanted to, he assumed suddenly a molecular form and occupied the garland the florist was carrying. The garland was delivered to Ahi-ravana himself.

Ahi-ravana offered various rich dishes as sanctified food to the idol. Hanuman ate up the dishes as they were placed before the idol. Rama and Lakshmana, who were really Divine Beings playing the role of humans, had discovered that it was Hanuman who had eaten the food offerings placed by Ahi-Ravana before the Deity, and that knowledge induced them to take on to the impending events with great good humour. Seeing them smiling and light-hearted, Ahi-Ravana was awfully enraged. The Priest informed Ahi-ravana that the code of political morality requires that the victims be permitted to pray, if they so desire, to their guardian for peace after death.

Hanuman jumped from the garland, assuming his terror-striking Form and grasping the sword that was in the hand of the Goddess, he felled Ahi-ravana to the ground and hit him all over, hacking him to pieces..... Hanuman fixed Rama in his mind and with a shout, Jai Rama; he caught the head in one hand and with

the other sliced the neck.... Before they could join, he threw the head into the blazing fire, in the sacrificial pit, before the Idol.

Hanuman Proclaimed Makaradhwaja ruler of Patala and advised him to be ever grateful to the Brothers and to be always loyal and devoted to them. He had Rama and Lakshmana seated on his shoulders and, at one jump, he rose from Patala and landed safe in the midst of the Vanara hordes eagerly looking for them with their million eyes. (*RKR V Part II p.235-244*)

Ravana laments the loss of his son and his kith and kin:

Ravana came to know that Rama and Lakshmana had been brought back by Hanuman from the kingdom of Ahi-ravana. He heard the tragic news of the death of his son, Ahi-ravana. He collapsed and fell on the ground. He lamented his loss, long and loud. Tears flowed in streams from his eyes. Mandodari, the Queen, came to him and tried her best to console him and reduce his grief. He did not give ear to her words. He only grew more and more enraged at her soft counsel. Ravana mustered courage and rose suddenly, to meet a Minister who presented himself at that time. His name was Sindhuranatha. He was a respected elder, far gone in years. He was a very wise man, who was in close proximity to Vibhishana, when he was formerly in Lanka. He advised him on various moral virtues and on the mortality of men and things. Ravana did not listen to his words. He even treated them with patent disgust. The Minister was sad when he saw his reaction. He felt, “In times of misfortune, intelligence too gets warped. Poor fellow! He is heading towards disaster and so, even sweet counsel tastes bitter to him.” Still, out of compassion, he continued with his words of sympathetic advice.

Ravana said to himself: “Now my kith and kin have been decimated. There is no one left alive.” (*RKRV Part II p.244-245*)

Hanuman Kills Narantaka:

An aged Minister said, “Why do you say so? You have another surviving son, Narantaka, who has with him 72 *crores* [a crore is ten million] of Rakshasas. Call him for support.....Ravana was delighted at these words. He sent the messenger, named Dhoomakethu, with instructions to bring with him the clever Narantaka⁴³ .

Narantaka proceeded, on the spot, with his hordes and as soon as he reached the field he fell upon the Vanara forces. Hanuman spied him from far. Narantaka placed arrows on his bow and let them off against Hanuman..... Hanuman lifted him aloft and turning him around fast, threw him deep into a Nether Region named Rasatala. Millions of his Rakshasa followers were thrown into the sea. (*RKRV Part II p. 245-246*)

TEN HEADS ROLL

When Ravana heard the news of this holocaust, he exclaimed, “Whoever expected that the war would end thus? Whoever expected that it would be so calamitous a disaster?” The news of Narantaka’s death spread terror throughout Lanka. Many wise scholars approached Ravana, the bereaved father, and sought to give him consolation and comfort. But their effort was but a

⁴³ See Chapter, *Ahi-Ravana, The King Of The Nether Region*

waste of time. Their advice did not enter the heads of Ravana. When Ravana recovered himself, he heard the wailings of Narantaka's wife, and that made him angrier still. He forgot himself in the flames of vengeance and anger. The night ended and day dawned, even though Ravana did not notice it. The Vanaras gathered at the four gates of the City and were, as usual, getting ready to storm them and enter. Ravana assembled the Rakshasa warriors and addressed them thus: "Soldiers! If your hearts shudder at the prospect of battle, it is best you leave the ranks this very instant. Do not flee when the battle is on. If you do so, I shall slaughter you with my own hands." Threatening them thus, he felt they would fight to the last. Then, he ordered that the war drums be beaten and trumpets blown. Like darkness intensifying mountain peaks, the Rakshasa warriors marched forward in serried ranks. A series of bad omens assaulted them. Ravana who boasted of his physical prowess did not pay heed to them. The weapons he held in his grasp slithered down. The charioteer who had taken his seat fell from his perch. The elephants and horses marching forward to battle started wailing aloud. All around, dogs and foxes set up a cacophony of grief. Owls hooted ominously as if announcing the doom that loomed over Lanka. (*RKR V Part II p.247-248*)

Army of Ravana:

The Rakshasa forces—cavalry, elephantry and infantry—marched forward to meet the enemy at the gates. The earth exuded tremors when the forces trampled hard on it. The splendour of that army was indescribable. The army led by Ravana shone like the army that the God of Spring leads every year, with all its colour, music, and joy. Drums, trumpets, bugles

and pipes played around in a majestic stream of heroism and adventure. Meanwhile, the Monkeys and Bears pounced on the Rakshasas and fell upon them, like a host of heavy mountains whose wings were clipped by the arrows of some strange power. They attacked them like the minions of Death. Their most efficient weapons were teeth and nails. They threw hills and huge trees on the foe. By their leonine roar, “Victory to our Lord, Sri Rama,” they made the elephant hearts of the Rakshasas shudder in mortal fear. Very soon, the battle became a series of duels between the Rakshasas and the Vanaras. The cry, “Victory to Rama” was met by the cry, “Victory to Ravana.” The Rakshasas fought like the emissaries of Death. The Vanaras bled from many wounds. They pounded the enemies heavily with their fists. They tore them to pieces with their teeth. They kicked them in the ribs with their feet. They held them in their grip and tore them apart. They pulled out their entrails and wore them round their necks. Ravana saw with alarm the decimation of his army. He took up his bow and shot arrows at the soldiers of his army fleeing for life from the field of fury. The Vanaras were inspired when they saw Ravana filled with anger at his own warriors. They yelled in joy and leaped towards him in large numbers. They aimed peaks and trees at him. Ravana turned all round him and encouraged his soldiers to stand firm. The Vanaras fled in all directions unable to meet the onrush. They wailed, “Oh Lord, Sugriva! Sugriva, save us, save us.”

Earth and sky were darkened by the showers of arrows sent by Ravana. The Vanaras ran to the far corners of the land. Chaos prevailed in the camp. Lakshmana noticed the situation. He girded up his loins and armed himself with his bow and sheaf of

arrows. Prostrating before Sri Rama, he rose with his blessings and proceeded to the field of battle. (*RKR V Part II p.248-249*)

Fight between Lakshmana and Ravana:

Lakshmana accosted Ravana. Ravana yelled in anger and let loose sharp arrows at Lakshmana. But Lakshmana cleverly cut them into a thousand splinters..... In addition Lakshmana shot fiery shafts at Ravana⁴⁴ and they succeeded in cutting to pieces the chariot of Ravana as well as his charioteer. Ravana directed against Lakshmana the terrible mighty missile that was conferred on him by the First of the Trinity, Brahma Himself. When the missile hit him, Lakshmana rolled to the ground. Hanuman saw the fall, and he hastened to the side of Lakshmana, shouting imprecations against Ravana. Ravana administered a heavy blow on Hanuman with his clenched fist. It made Hanuman reel in pain, but he steadied himself. He returned the blow even more power-filled than the one he had received from Ravana. Meanwhile, Lakshmana recovered from the swoon and rose ready for the fray. Ravana had to be helped into another chariot having become unconscious again. His charioteer cleverly drove the chariot in the direction of Lanka itself. (*RKR V Part II p.250-251*)

⁴⁴ See Chapter, *Lakshmana- Lakshmana’s encounter with Ravana:*

Ravana orders Patalahoma⁴⁵ and the Vanaras defile and destroy it:

He ordered that a special destruction-yielding, victory-ensuring ritual called Patalahoma be performed so that he could defeat the enemy at his door. What a big fool was he! Can he ever achieve victory in a fight with Rama? Those who were spying his activities on behalf of Vibhishana carried the news of the Patalahoma to him and he was alerted in time. Vibhishana approached Rama without delay, and falling at his feet said, “Lord! Now Ravana is engaged in a ritual, the same as the one which Meghanada began in the past. This ceremony too has to be defiled and desecrated by the monkeys so that Ravana might be deprived of the benefits he hopes to secure through it. In case this Homa is allowed to reach its conclusion, without interruption, it will be very difficult to defeat Ravana.”

Very soon day dawned. In accordance with the orders of Rama, Angada and Hanuman proceeded to the Ritual Enclosure with a large following. They jumped and leaped in great hilarity and surrounded the palace of Ravana. “Sacriligious sacrificer! Fleeing from battle and finding safety at home, are you sitting cosily performing meditation?” Angada dared go very near him and deal him a kick with his foot. Ravana was engaged in preparatory silence and “meditation.” Even the slightest movement or distraction of attention would make him unfit and unholy, so that the Homa he was to perform for achieving victory would be rendered infructuous. Angada and the monkeys took

⁴⁵ Patalahoma (paathaalahoma): Ritual to ensure victory. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

liberties with him. Some of them dug their teeth into him. A few tugged at his crown of hair. That was the limit. Ravana became fiercely angry. He rose to his feet and catching hold of a few monkeys, he twirled them fast over his head and tried to smash them on the ground. But he could not move even a little step. This became a matter of greater shame. Soon, a regular scramble and struggle ensued between Ravana and the Vanaras. The ritual ceremony he had planned could not be gone through. Ravana was sunk in grief..... Ravana was badly disappointed that he could not succeed in performing the Yaga

But he had to resolve dutifully to proceed to the battle field. As soon as he started from his palace, bad omens greeted him. Kites flew in and out on his head and his hands, and his crown slipped from its place. He paid no regard to the warnings. He ordered that the war drums be beaten and the clarions sounded. Hundreds of thousands of Rakshasas gathered when that signal was given. The army proceeded to wage a mortal battle against Rama. (*RKRV Part II p.251-252*)

Vanara army annihilates the Rakshasa armies:

Rama was informed of all that had happened. Vibhishana and others were happy at the consummation of their strategy. Rama equipped himself with the arrow-case and took the bow in his hand. With his long arms and broad chest, the splendour-filled embodiment of charm stood on the battlefield, the very picture of heroic might. The gods assembled overhead and offered reverent homage to the Saviour of Humanity from the Rakshasa hordes. The Vanara army followed Rama, arrayed in perfect order and alert to command. Like the thunder-spitting clouds bringing

destructive floods on the earth on the Day of Deluge, the Vanara hordes moved fast towards the Rakshasa forces, bent upon annihilation of the enemy. The mountain peaks that the combatants threw against the enemy fell with the noise of thunder. In an instant, the chariots, elephants and horses of the Rakshasa armies were destroyed. Thousands and thousands of Rakshasas fell on the ground. Blood flowed as rivers. Ravana lost all his warriors. (*RKRV Part II p.251-253*)

Lanka was enveloped in great sorrow as the warriors started killing the demons. Even the people who did not commit any wrong became victims of this war. The sinner may be one, but punishment falls on all those around him. Does the roaring fire in a forest burn only the neem trees and spare the mango trees since they are sweet? The fire consumes every tree that comes in the way. The Jasmine in a forest wafts its fragrance to all those around it. Similarly, war kills the good as well as the bad people. (*SSB 1996 p.67*)

Gradually Ravana started losing each one of his celebrated generals⁴⁶. He felt he was alone, and that the monkeys and bears were many. So, he decided to draw on his magic powers. He exercised magic on all except Rama. But Rama willed otherwise. Through His Will Ravana saw wherever he turned vast ocean of Vanara hordes, with Rama and Lakshmana in the vanguard, leading the forces. At this, Ravana realised that his magic could not produce any effect. Soon, Rama called to his presence the Vanaras and told them in grave seriousness: “You are all

⁴⁶ *SSB 2002 p.125*

exhausted by the long and hardy battle. Go and take rest. Now, watch the fight between Rama and Ravana.” (*RKRV Part II p.253*)

Ravana’s encounter with Rama:

No sooner had he said these words than Ravana encountered Rama with a challenging roar. At this Rama smiled and said in a soft voice, “Fool! First listen to the words of moral counsel I am giving. There are three types of men in the world. The first are like the patali tree, which blossoms finely, but the blossoms do not turn into fruit. Those who indulge in mere speech and do not practise a mite of what they talk are of this type. The second group are like the plantain tree. It gives flowers and fruits, both. Those who speak and act, practise what they assert, these are of this type. The third type is like the jack tree—it has no flower. It has only fruits. The best types of men do not prattle or boast or talk high. They are silent workers who act with no boast. You are a mere braggart. Your immoral rule has brought ruin on your race.”

Ravana was not in a mood to swallow these imputations. He said, “What? Dare you teach me?” and he poured out a stream of abuse. (*RKRV Part II p.253-254*)

FINAL BATTLE AND RAVANA’S DEATH:

Ravana shot a bunch of hard-hitting arrows on Rama⁴⁷. Rama replied with the Fire Arrow. The arrows of Ravana were burnt to

⁴⁷ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, **Heroism And Heroic Warrior – War Begins - Ravana beheaded**

ashes by the weapon that Rama released. Ravana directed against Rama millions of sharp-edged wheels and three-pronged spears. But the hopes of his wicked heart were not fulfilled. Rama thereupon lifted his redoubtable bow and shot a stream of deadly arrows, which flew straight at Ravana like irresistible messengers of death and cobras eager to inject their fatal venom.

Rama noticed that as soon as one head was sliced off by his arrow, another grew in its place. Ignoring his impending death, Ravana was immersed in pride. He challenged Rama in great exultation. It was a ghastly sight. The heads that rolled to the ground were shouting, “Where is that Rama? Where is Lakshmana? Where is that Sugriva?” The heads that remained on the trunk were gnashing teeth and asking for Vibhishana, and pouring abuses on him. They said, “Brother of mine! Shame on you for awaiting the news of your brother’s death, so that you may succeed him on the throne! You are not a hero. You are a cowardly ascetic. Fie on you. No one should look you in the face.”

Soon the lost heads reappeared and Ravana fought most fiercely and with unequalled valour. Lakshmana, Sugriva and Angada watched him and admired his prowess. Finally, Rama resolved that the end of Ravana should no longer be delayed. Nala, Nila and other Vanara heroes were casting rocks at Ravana, and hurting him greatly. But the dusk of evening intervened and the battle ended for the day.

Ravana filled the next day of the battle with his magic mystery. The battlefield was filled with his creations: ghosts, eerie beings

and sprites with bows and arrows. In whichever direction the Vanaras advanced, they were met by high walls of fire. The monkeys and bears were astounded. A thick rain of sand fell without stop on the Vanaras forces. Ravana roared in glee at the plight of his enemy. Lakshmana, Sugriva and others were incapacitated. The warriors prayed pathetically to Rama to come to their help. Rama was besieged by many “Hanumans” created by Ravana’s magic. Each “Hanuman” carried huge mountain peaks. They also attempted to bind Rama in the knots of their tails! But Rama shone unconcerned and unharmed, blue like a fresh blossom in the midst of all the carnage and confusion. He knew that it was all the frail product of Rakshasa magic. He laughed within himself at the efforts of Ravana to mystify him. With a single arrow shot from his bow, he destroyed all the varied effects of that magic skill.

The battle that ensued between Rama and Ravana was fought with incomparable and unexcelled fury the battle between Rama and Ravana has that battle alone as equal to it. The battle lasted for eighteen days. Rama was not in the least exhausted by the fighting. (*RKR V Part II p.254-257*)

It was proving to be impossible to vanquish Ravana. It was once again Vibhishana⁴⁸ who revealed to Rama the secret of Ravana’s invincibility and directed where the arrow had to be shot. He said, “Rama! There is no sin in betraying such a wicked person. His death is highly beneficial for the world. I do not aspire for or

⁴⁸ See Chapter, *Vibhishana - LOVE FOR THE DIVINE TRANSCENDS ALL KIN*

desire to rule the kingdom of Lanka. But this evil Ravana must be killed,” Rama followed Vibhishana’s directions and shot his Arrow. (*SSB 2002 p.124/125*)

Ravana Killed:

Rama shot a bunch of thirty-one arrows at the same instant on Ravana. They darted like deadly cobras. One arrow entered the “nectar jar” that Ravana had underneath his navel. The rest, the thirty, sliced off his heads and hands. When the heads and limbs rolled on the ground, they hopped about and rose and fell in frantic dance, for some little time and then lay quiet. Thus Ravana⁴⁹ rid himself of life and reached heaven. The day was the fourteenth of the bright half of the Chaitra month. That instant, a host of heavenly drums resounded from the sky. The splendid spirit of Ravana merged in Rama. (*RKRV Part II p.257-258*)

Ravana sends out a message to people:

At the point of death, Ravana sent the following message to his people: “Oh my people do not follow my example. I am the personification of all evil qualities. Falling into excessive desires, I have lost my progeny. Instead of establishing a good name for myself, I have destroyed my entire kingdom. Ultimately, I have ruined myself. Rama achieved universal fame and I have ended up accumulating ill-fame⁵⁰.” (*SSS Vol.34 p.71*)

⁴⁹ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, **Heroism And Heroic Warrior – War Begins - Ravana beheaded**

⁵⁰ The scriptures offer many ideals for people to live by. Ravana, who went badly astray, realised his folly in the end. He said, “O people of this world! By yielding to lust and anger, I have brought ruin to one and all, including my family. I could not conquer hatred and jealousy and thereby lost all my relatives. Unable to understand the Fundamental

Mandodari laments the death of Ravana:

Hearing that Ravana had died, his queen Mandodari⁵¹ collapsed on the floor. When she recovered, she hastened with her maids to the corpse of Ravana and wailed aloud.

Mandodariwondered what had given him the fatal blow. How could he, who had mastered the Four Vedas and Six Vedangas, and who was severely strict in observances of various rites for the propitiation of the Gods could meet with ignominious end? Being shrewd and loving woman, she realised soon the cause of her husband’s downfall. (*SSS Vol.7 p.291*)

His Queen, Mandodari lamented over her husband’s defeat and death, at the hands of a mere man leading a host of monkeys! She had learnt from the Sastras that death caused by drowning or by the fall from a tree or through monkeys, converts ghosts that wander in the realms of darkness. So, she wondered why such a fate overtook the great Scholar, the pious devotee that Ravana was. Then she remembered that the spark of lust that he harboured in his heart had burnt all that Scholarship and all that

Truth, I lost my sons too. Do not repeat my mistake.” This was the warning given by Ravana just prior to his death. Noble Souls are very powerful because they have completely grasped the basic truth. Ravana was mighty. He was one of great penance. He had acquired multiple capabilities — physical, mental, and even spiritual. But ultimately, of what use were all these various achievements? No use at all. Becoming a slave to attachment and hatred, he had, in the end, to suffer and perish. There was not a trace of Love in him. If, on the other hand, one instils Love in one’s heart, one can emerge victorious even under the most adverse circumstances. (*SSB 2000 p.81/82*)

⁵¹ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **MANDODARI’S LAMENTATION**

piety into ash! He was not able to control his senses or sublimate the sensory urges. A bullock that does not yield to the yoke, a horse that resists the reins, a car without brakes and a person who knows no self – control, are all equally heading towards disaster! (*SSS Vol.7 p.336*)

She lamented ‘Alas! You only suppressed your desires; you did not uproot them.’ The low desire of lust sprouted fast, when temptation was strong. When rains came, what was dry yellow land became green, on account of the seeds and roots below the surface; they had not been pulled out and destroyed! (*SSS Vol.7 p.291*)

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT:

Ravana taught a great lesson to the world. He exclaimed: “Oh men! Do not live as I have lived and ruin your lives.” What is the root cause of Ravana ruin? Unable to conquer his desires, unwilling to get rid of his impulses, he ruined his entire clan. His sons were killed. His brother and other kinsmen were killed and ultimately his country itself was reduced to ashes. Ravana confessed: “In the end I ruined myself.” This was the message Ravana gave to his countrymen in his last moments. (*SSS Vol.30 p.91*)

Lust and Desire bring about catastrophe:

Ravana died. It was a piteous scene. Men and women were widowed were weeping over the corpses of their husbands. Likewise children who were orphaned in the battle field were weeping over the bodies of their parents. Grief was writ large on the face of everybody in Lanka. What was the cause for all this? It was Ravana’s lust which was the cause for the calamity that befell Lanka. Even a single fly is to bring a catastrophe. A whole potful of milk turns into poison if you mix a drop of poison. Although there were good people in the kingdom, Ravana contaminated it totally by his venomous behaviour. Even a small flaw can be fatal. The ants may be small, but they can

kill a big serpent. Similarly, the mistake may be minor, but it can be disastrous. The seed may be small, but it has the potentiality of growing into a gigantic tree. The seed has the capacity to grow up into a tree, to yield fruits and thorns as well. Hence, caution should be exercised to sow only a seed that yields fruits and not thorns. Similarly, a flaw should be eliminated in the initial stage itself, since it is difficult to exterminate it when it assumes gigantic proportions. That is why *Upanishads* laid down: “*Tasmai Namah Karmane*” – salutations to the work. Why should we salute Karma? We should make our actions pure, sacred and pleasing to the Lord. The Vedas also laid down that all must be performed only for the pleasure of the Lord. Actions performed for the pleasure of the Lord will protect us one day or the other. (*SSB 1996 p.81-82*)

Only by suppressing desires does a man manifest his humanness. A man, who is unable to put an end to his desires, puts an end to himself. (*SSS Vol.30 p.91*)

Practice the knowledge acquired:

The ten heads of Ravana symbolized four *Vedas* and six *Sastras*. In the decisive battle, Rama severed Ravana’s heads since he did not put into practice the knowledge he had acquired. Mere learning of sacred texts and chanting of Vedas will not bring about any transformation. In order to drive home this message, Rama cut off with his arrows Ravana’s ten heads. It is only right in the end. Just before his spirit left his body Ravana did recognise his faults and repented for them and became sacred thereby. All that God preaches is for the benefit and welfare of humanity. Therefore, it is enough if one puts into practice at least one of the teachings of the Vedas. It should be a natural trait for everyone to put practice the divine teachings. (*SSS Vol.37 p.214*)

Ravana constantly worshipped Iswara (God). It is not enough if you worship God, you should put His words into practice. You should give up all wicked qualities. When Ravana was about to breath his last, Rama summoned Lakshmana and told him, “The one of great penance and wisdom is going to die. Go and listen to his last words.” Obeying the command of his brother, Lakshmana went close to Ravana and listened to his words carefully. Ravana

said, “I achieved whatever I wanted, but only three of my wishes remain unfulfilled. I wanted to convert the salt water of the sea surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wanted to make those who suffer in hell enjoy the comforts of heaven. I wanted to connect hell and heaven with a ladder. But, I went on postponing them and ultimately could not accomplish them.” Lakshmana returned to Rama and told the last words of Ravana. Rama smiled and said, “Lakshmana, what is the use of repenting in the end? The moment he wanted to do good, he should have done so immediately.” (*SSS Vol.31 p.278*)

Revere your Mother:

We should never make our mother shed tears. In other countries also there is a belief that where women are made to cry prosperity will vanish. Your duty therefore is to see that you do not hurt your mother in any way whatsoever. The entire clan of Ravana came to ruin because he made Sita weep. (*s-p. 1/8*)

Procrastination is thief of time:

Realising that Ravana would pass away in a few minutes many sages, scholars and noble men came to Ravana and asked him, “O Ravana! You performed many good deeds as well as evil deeds. What is it most memorable thing that you have discovered in your life?” To this Ravana replied, “Sirs! Do not delay the noble acts you want to perform at any time. Put into action whatever noble thoughts and feelings that arise in your heart instantaneously. Procrastination is the thief of time. It is dangerous to delay. At one time, I thought of connecting the earth and heaven with a ladder. I wished to turn the saline water surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wished to bring comfort and solace to the residents of Hell. Though I decided to do these things, I delayed acting. Therefore, I could never succeed in doing them. Translate into action whatever good resolve arises in your minds. We waste our time in postponing the good deeds. We should be ever ready to put into action all the good thoughts that arise in the mind.” This is the noble advice that Ravana gave to people who came to him at the fag end of his life. Since he delayed the performance of good deeds, it brought disaster to him. (*SSB 2002 p.100-101*)

Conquer Jealousy Ego and Anger:

Although one may possess considerable amount of strength in the material sense of the word, if he does not have the adhyatmic or the spiritual power,

there is every chance of losing all that he has. Ravana did possess a considerable amount of worldly power and even moral power and was a devotee of God. Yet, he fell to the lowest depths because of some of his bad qualities like jealousy and anger. (*SSB 1977 p.114*)

He could invade the city of Kubera, defeat him and take away the Pushpaka Vimana. This shows that in him there was a quality of jealousy. He could not bear Kubera being greater than him. Not only this, he invaded the city of Mayura his father - - in – law, defeated him, took away all his attendants and annexed his city which was the principal city of Lanka. Here one should recognise that if there is a room for such bad qualities to grow, even though they begin in a small way, in the end like white ants they will destroy the entire life. Sometimes, because of weakness, or in a state of excitement, one does things which one should not do and in the end he will have to repent. (*SSB 1977 p.162*)

(Ravana was) a *Duraatma* (an evil–souled being) (*SSS Vol.22 p.67*)

When bad ideas fill your head, your thoughts and your intelligence will become blunt. Because Ravana had the three bad qualities of jealousy, anger and ego filling his head, he was deprived of all chances of success although he had several powers. For one who is suffering from ego, the power of discrimination between transient and what is permanent will be missing. One who develops jealousy will lose kindness and the ability to give freely. One who develops anger will lose all opportunity for reaching the heights of glory and his own possessions will disappear. His reputation and his strength will disappear at the moment when they are most needed. Those who are near to him will become distant from him. For one who develops pride, everything will become bad. Those who suffer from anger cannot achieve any result. They will also feel ashamed at the critical time.

Ravana was ruling over a kingdom and his capital city would compare well with heaven. But because of his bad qualities, he lost his own happiness, his kingdom and everything that he had. In fact, he destroyed his own dynasty and family. He knew all the codes of conduct of a king and he knew everything and yet he was behaving like a monkey. He knew several things,

but because he was not putting his knowledge into practice, he became worse than one who has no knowledge at all. (*SSB 1977 p.115*)

In our daily life, we exhibit several bad qualities like anger, jealousy, and comparing ourselves with others. These bad qualities should be given up and sacrificed. Because Ravana had these qualities which go contrary to the *purusharthas*, he became a *rakshasa*. Ravana may have been a devotee, may have been a very learned, but in spite of this because he had these four bad qualities which are contrary to *purusharthas*, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *Moksha*, he became a sinner. To such people, whatever dharma you may preach, it will appear as if it is wrong. (*SSB 1977 p.161-162*)

Master the Senses:

Even Ravana acknowledged the nobility of Rama before he breathed his last. He gave a message to the people in his last moments, “Oh people, I lost my sons, brothers, my entire clan and kingdom as I could not control my desires. Do not become slaves to the senses, like me. Follow the ideal of Rama and sanctify your lives” (*SSS Vol. 32 Part II p.71*)

Cleanse the heart and control the senses:

One can escape from the house on fire, but not from the senses, which are ignited by the fire of evil qualities. (*DD 19.11.99 p.3-4*)

The light or the lamp however can only dispel: the darkness outside but cannot remove the darkness that envelopes the heart as a result of attachments and aversions carried from previous lives. Not all the blaze of light which filled Lanka when Hanuman set it on fire could remove the darkness from Ravana's heart. Because his heart was filled with lust and hate, no light could penetrate it.

Even as the lamp needs a container, oil, wick and a matchstick to light it, for lighting the inner flame, one needs a container in the form of renunciation (*Vairagya*), the oil of devotion (*Bhakti*), the wick of mental concentration, and the matchstick of true awareness (*Tatwajnana*). Even if any one of these four is lacking, the light of self cannot be lit. (*SS August 1987 p. 209*)

During the war in Lanka, Rama saw one day a powerful effulgent figure before Him. Vibhishana told Rama that it was none other than Rama's enemy, Ravana. Seeing him, Rama felt that but for his bad qualities, Ravana, who was so powerful and great, would not have come to such a pitiable end. Whatever may be one's scholarship or intelligence, without the strength of character they are likely to dehumanise man. You must fortify yourself with the strength of character, along with the acquisition of knowledge. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by a righteous person. (*SSS Vol.22 p.3-4*)

REASONS FOR RAVANA’S DESTRUCTION:

Man seeks to earn contentment and joy by subjugating the forces of Nature to his fragile will. But all efforts to establish mastery over *Prakriti* (nature) or command it, or employ it for personal aggrandisement are bound to fail, are certain to recoil on man with deadly impact. In India, the story of the Ramayana is well known. In that story, Ravana coveted Sita, daughter of Earth (that is to say the Nature). He did not evince any attachment to the Lord of nature, that is to say, Rama, (God).He sought to gain nature, and not the master of nature (Rama—the husband of Sita). The penalty he paid was terrible; he perished in flames of his own foolish passion. The vast empire he built up so laboriously lay in ruins. He fell amidst corpses of the heroes who had rendered him unswerving loyalty. Ravana was a great scholar; he had climbed the highest pinnacle of asceticism and won many supernatural powers. But since he did not bend before the master of Prakriti (Nature) he suffered irreparable damnation.

When his steps are towards God, man has no reason to fear; but, when they are turned away from Him, fear haunts him at every turn. God is the source of joy. People yearn for joy, but they accept the genuine the counterfeit joy given by the senses. No one knows that nature is but vesture of God. There is nothing real except He. (*SSS Vol.6 p.191-192*)

Craved for the Prakriti – the objective world - discarding Purusha

Believe that Dharma or Moral Rectitude will never play false; it will ensure joy than can be gained through all other means. Rama destroyed Ravana; it was victory of one head over ten; Concentration over distraction. Ravana

craved for Prakriti⁵² (Sita) discarding the Purusha which gave it values and meaning viz., Rama. If you crave for Prakriti, the objective world, you degrade yourself, you deny your reality, and you join Ravana's brood. Do not imagine that the lord is outside Prakriti, or even of you, who are really a part of Prakriti. He is in you, beside you, before you. He is the eye of eye; the I of your I Yearn for Yoga or Union with Him. (*SSS Vol. 3 p.182*)

Ravana defied Lord Rama and tried to acquire Sita

Ravana defied Lord Rama and tried to acquire Sita. Who can hope to win over Nature, which is God's property? It is an exhibition of ignorance to dream of winning over Nature. None can obtain success in this task. What was Ravana's situation at the end? He was the cause for the total destruction of his family, brothers, sons and the kingdom itself. Hence, prior to acquiring Nature, one must secure God's Grace. If the Nature is the body, God is the Soul residing in it. A body without Soul is of no use. The body has value only as long as the Soul remains in it. Whenever there is any ailment in any part of the body, is it able to set it right by itself? Not at all! God controls all the three – the doer, task and the action as well. Amongst His many names, God is also called as the One who bestows the fruits of actions. You are merely performing the assigned, but it is God who is presenting you with the results of action. Fools who do not recognise this truth conjure up dreams of winning over Nature. They think that their physical, intellectual and scientific prowess is sufficient to achieve this task. (*SSB 1996 p.87-88*)

Ravana wanted to die in Rama's Hands:

Ravana was a great scholar, a great devotee. Though he abducted Sita, he never touched her. It was only to provoke Ramachandra, to make him furious and very angry. Then, He would fight him – and Ravana prayed to die at His hands

But Rama is not a simple man to fight about simple issues such as water or border disputes. Unless there was a threat to Dharma (righteousness), He

⁵² Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Swayamvara – Winning Sita - Prakruthi Marries Paramatma - The confluence or coming together of two divine aspects is for the welfare of the world.*

would not interfere. So the Sita kidnapping provoked Him to wage war. Thus He killed Ravana. This was a man who wanted to die at the hands of Rama. So why say, 'He is a bad man' (*Alarm Bells –Divine p .40-41*)

Ravana ignored the three types of advice –Sujnaana- Vijnaana – Prajnaana

Ravana was a most powerful king, fully accomplished in all the arts, with mastery of the Vedas⁵³. He had performed a severe penance. But, because he used all his talents for his selfish purpose, he met with an ignominious death. He was warned by his wife Mandodari, who was a paragon of virtue, standing for Sujnaana (right knowledge), that he was not following the righteous path as he had stealthily kidnapped Sita, wife of Rama. She questioned him whether he would keep quiet if his wife had been kidnapped. She thus taught Sujnaana (beneficial wisdom). But Ravana ignored her advice.

His brother, Vibhishana, tried to teach him Vijnaana (discriminatory wisdom) by telling him that he was not using his Buddhi (intellect) in the right way and was doing a reprehensible act which was unbecoming of an emperor like him. Ravana ignored this too.

Later, Hanuman advised him in terms of Prajnaana (Supreme Wisdom). He told Ravana that in spite of his Vidya (vast scholarship and knowledge), he had failed to recognise the Atma as the reality of an individual and with body consciousness he was indulging in a despicable act, losing control over his

⁵³ The story of *Ramayana* shows how one who began his career with lust, developed hatred and enmity towards God and mined himself. Ravana was a great scholar. He had mastered sixty-four types of *vidya* (knowledge). He was the first one who invented an aeroplane called Pushpaka Vimana. He had mastered the language of animals, birds and insects. There was nothing wanting by way of knowledge in Ravana. In terms of wealth and prosperity his kingdom excelled heaven itself. He did a lot of penance to acquire mastery over the physical world. In spite of all these, he had faith only in the phenomenal world and not in the Divine. He did not choose to enquire who was behind all creation. (*SSS Vol.25 p.312*)

senses and mind. He had brought Sita, the Mother of the Universe, with a base motive.

Ravana paid no heed to the three types of advice and as a result courted disaster. The life of one who acts out of selfish motives is in the hands of others, while the one with a pure heart and selfless motive, seeking the welfare of the world, has his life in his own hands. Rama was an example of this. (*SSS Vol.26 p.255-256*)

Rajasic Mahatmas vs. Satwic Mahatmas:

Ravana is a mahatma; Thataki, described as an ogress is also a mahatma! That is to say, they had superhuman prowess, and mysterious powers. All are Divine; God is the inner motivator of everyone. They are mahatmas not only in the sense that all mahatmas; they are Rajasic mahatmas, enslaved by their emotions and passions, quick to hate and slow to forget the slights inflicted on them. Rama and Lakshmana are Satwic mahatmas, embodiments of prowess and powers that righteousness and virtue can endow. A red hot iron hammer can be hammered into shape, by a cold iron hammer, can't it? So too, a person's red hot emotions and passion can be hammered by the hammer that knows no heat of anger or hate. That is the reason Rama was able to defeat Ravana and destroy him. Why? The very word Satwa means strength, power, vigour, vitality. For, virtue is power, goodness is power. A person is angry, because he is weak; he is a bully, because he is a coward, he utter lies, because he is sure he deserves to be punished and he is too weak to welcome it gladly. (*SSS Vol.7 p.83*)

CHARACTERISATION OF RAVANA:

GOOD QUALITIES:

Master of Vedas

He was the master of the four Vedas and the six spiritual sciences. (*SSS Vol. VIII p. 5*) Ravana was a great person who had mastered the Spiritual Texts and who was earnest in Spiritual Observances. Every morning, he used to go

round the many Temples of Siva.He was praised and depicted as having ‘Ten Heads’! (*SSS Vol.7 p.336*)

Maharshi

Even in Ravana, who is generally taken to be a bad person, Valmiki has shown certain good qualities. In some places good qualities of Vali also were described by Valmiki. As has been stated earlier, great saints are equal minded. Because of the saintly character of Valmiki, he showed the weakness of Rama and he showed the good qualities of Ravana. He was selfless person. He was called *Maharshi*; because of he could see the past, present and future. It is only a great saint or a Maharshi that he is entitled to write poetry. Poets like Valmiki and Vyasa were Maharishis. Because of this, whatever they had written has come to be regarded as permanent truth and it remained so for all the time. (*SSB 1977 p.9*)

A great Scholar

Ravana was a great scholar. He mastered the four Vedas and six Sastras. In spite of this knowledge of scriptures, was there any transformation in him? No. Instead of developing *Daivatwa* (divine qualities), he developed *Danavatwa* (demonic qualities). The ten heads of Ravana symbolise four Vedas and six *Sastras*. Rama severed Ravana’s ten heads since he did not put into practice the knowledge he had acquired. Learning and chanting of Vedas will not bring out any transformation. By cutting the heads of Ravana, Rama propagated this truth in the world. Ravana did not have ten heads in a literal sense. In fact, four Vedas and six Sastras represented his ten heads. The message that Rama conveyed was that mere acquisition of knowledge is of little value. All that God teaches is for the benefit and welfare of humanity. It is enough if one puts into practice at least one of the teachings of the Vedas. All your knowledge is useless if you do not put into practice. Ravana learnt this lesson when he was on the deathbed. Only then did he realise his mistake and repented for it. By sincere repentance he attained purity and sacredness. (*SS. April 2005 p. 110/111*)

Vast knowledge of spiritual texts:

Ravana had vast knowledge of spiritual texts. His ten heads represent the learning he had from the six Sastras and four Vedas. But, he never did put that

knowledge to any use. He craved for the possession of *Prakriti* only; he wanted to master the world of matter, the objective world. He was master of material sciences. But, he was not tamed by the Spirit. He had no realisation of higher values of the Spirit. He had discarded the Purusha – Rama; he was content with the possession of Lanka of *Prakriti*, represented by Sita. That was why he fell.

When people do not place faith in the Atma but pursue the senses only, the danger signal is up and the Lord sends a Messenger or comes Himself, if a great step in reconstruction has to take place. (*SSS Vol.3 p.205*)

State Craft:

Greed is the monstrous evil that drags man down. When Ravana lay dying, Rama directed His brother, Lakshmana, to go to him and learn from him the secrets of successful statecraft! (*SSS Vol.25 - p4*)

“Look here, Lakshmana, Ravana is not an ordinary man. He is a great worshipper of Lord Shiva, he is a great scholar, and he is great king. Go and learn political administration from him” (*Alarm Bells! Divine p.23*)

Ravana taught him that a king who is eager to win glory must suppress greed as soon as it lifts its head, and welcome the smallest chance to do good to others, without the slightest procrastination! He had learnt the lesson through bitter experience! (*SSS Vol.25 p.4*)

Mightiest Potentate

Ravana was the mightiest potentate of his day, as Valmiki describes him. His capital was an impregnable fortress, filled with rare treasures. (*SSS Vol. 8 p.5*) None could equal him in wealth. Kubera (the treasurer of the gods) was his own brother. He had a fortress of gold. There were wide avenues in his kingdom, and tall mansions. Pearls decorated the walls. Such was the wealth that he had. But, of what use was it all? He had no character. Ultimately, he had no leave all his riches and go. Hence, you must first develop character. True education develops character. There is absolutely no use of wealth in the hands of a person without character. He will experience the same fate of Ravana.

*He who enjoys not happiness,
Will find a long life useless to him.
Even if a lake full of water is placed before the dog
The miserable creature will not derive very satisfaction! (SSB 1996 p.108)*

Invented the aeroplane:

Ravana or Hiranyakasipu..... lacked good qualities and developed hatred and enmity towards God. Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. Ravana was the one who invented aeroplane. He had mastered the language of animals, birds and insects. But, people value purity of heart more than these achievements. It is the foremost duty of every individual to keep his/her senses under control. *(DD 19.11.99 p.3-4)*

Ascetic Practices

Ravana was great and was also habituated to perform tapas. By continuous penance, he earned the grace of Iswara and secured boons from Him. On one occasion when he was engaged in deep penance, Brahma appeared before him and asked Ravana what boon he wanted. Then Ravana asked of Brahma to grant him a boon by which he will not be killed by any human being or animal. *(SSB 1977 p.154-155)*

Ravana decided that he must overpower the rulers of the world and realising that he could do so only by winning divine Grace, he went over to the depths of the forest and selected a favourable, auspicious spot for his ascetic practices.

The asceticism of Ravana was so intense and satisfying that God Brahma was compelled to appear before him and offer to grant him whatever boon he desired⁵⁴ *(RKR Part I p.28)*

Good vs. Greatness

A good man by his good conduct achieves greatness. Ravana sought to achieve greatness, but did not strive to lead a good life. *(SSS Vol.30 p.91)*

⁵⁴ See under this Chapter, the para - **RAVANA AND DASARATHA:**

BAD QUALITIES:**Murkha (a senseless man)**

You have to make a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. When Valmiki was asked by Lava and Kusa why he described Ravana as *murkha* (a senseless man), although he was the master of all the *Vedas* and *Sastras*, while describing Rama as a high-souled person, he said: "Ravana was a well-versed scholar, but did not, practice what he knew. Rama was a *Jnani* (a wise one) who lived up to what he had learnt. By controlling His senses, Rama led a life of truth-and righteousness." Education that is used only for selfish ends is no education at all. Education should be used for promoting the welfare of others. Ravana sought only his own pleasure. Rama dedicated His life for the welfare of all. (*SSS Vol.22 p.22-23*)

Ten heads of Ravana:

Who was Ravana? Ravana is described as a demon with ten heads. These ten heads are the six vices, namely desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and jealousy and Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (will) and Ahamkaara (Ego). Since these ten are present in every human being, all men are Ravana indeed! Whoever beheads all these ten heads in fact becomes a Rama. It is God alone who can behead ten heads! When a man surrenders himself to God, all these ten heads will go and he will merge in Rama. (*SSS Vol.25 p.186*)

Sinner:

One should not commit sin, when one is aware that it is a sin. This was the fatal flaw of Ravana; he committed sin, with the full knowledge of it. Action, if performed innocently, is not a sin. (*SSB 1996 p.82-83*)

Ravana knowing what he was doing was wrong did the wrong thing:

Wherever the word 'Swa' occurs,' it pertains to the heart or the Atma or the place of Brahman himself. This establishes that any work or any sentence that comes from the depths of your heart is a form of truth. Therefore when we take the sacred place where Brahman resides as the basis, then every word that we utter becomes a true work of Brahman. This 'Swasthana', the place which is the place of Brahman will give only words of truth. For illustrating this, a very good example has been provided in Ramayana. Ravana recognised

and understood that taking away Sita was wrong and in spite of knowing that he was doing wrong he did the wrong thing. Since he committed the sin knowingly, he was put to great many difficulties later on.

If there is a person who has recognised the truth and understood the truth and yet adopts a bad path contrary to the dictates of his own heart, then the fact that he has taken to a wrong act must be due to qualities like anger or jealous.. Such qualities must have prompted him to do the wrong act. One night, Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, went to Ravana to tell him that what Ravana did was wrong. Vibhishana held his brothers' hands in great endearment and said that the sin which Ravana had committed has brought distress to all the citizens of Lanka. He said that because of Ravana's sin, there were snakes and cobras going about in every house where there should have been only recitation of Vedas. In the temples where Siva should have been worshipped, there were all kinds of insects and bad signs were seen because of the sin committed by Ravana. That there were insects in the food offered to God and that in places where Siva was worshipped, there snakes were consequences of the fact that Ravana, though well versed in all the Vedas and knew what was righteous conduct, committed the sin. Only when an attempt is made to refrain from committing a sin, do we do justice to human life. Even if individual commits the wrong, it spreads to his entire house to his family. If the King of a land commits a sin, then the entire land becomes a sinful land. This is why we say '*Yatha Raja thatha praja*'. The happiness and joy of the people depends on the happiness and prosperity of the king. The country's good, bad and prosperity depend on the rulers of the country. If our country which is known for its immortal spirit and which is the embodiment of the spirit of Brahman and of all that is good, has today fallen to a desperate and frustrated situation, there is no doubt that our rulers are responsible for this. If you young people are desirous of rectifying this bad situation into which our country has fallen, you must be able to practice good thoughts, do good deeds and have a strong determination to remove the evil in our country. Recognising the importance of truth, righteousness and morality and not being able to put them into practice is the greatest sin. (*SSB 1974 p.71-72*)

He had no faith (Atma Vishwasa)

Since Ravana had no faith (*Atma Vishwasa*). He plunged into abysmal depths. Even his *Tapas* (Penance), turned into *Tamas* (dullness). *Tapas* should strengthen one's faith, but this did not happen in the case of Ravana. (*SSB 1996 p.85*)

Could not bear happiness of others

Ravana could not bear the happiness of other people. The normal human nature should be to become happy by looking at the happiness of others. There are many people in the world who, like Ravana, take a lot of interest in any happiness that may come in the way of other people and who cannot bear others being happy. (*SSB 1977 p.162*)

He was Valorous – Harboured hatred –rendered his life miserable

Whatever penances, japas or sacrifices people do, they are unable to get rid of unhappiness. The reason is they have not been able to get rid of their hatred. Ravana was a valorous person, with many talents and accomplishments. But because he was filled with hatred, he could have no happiness. By harbouring hatred man renders his life miserable. “The angry man fails in every one of his enterprises” (Telugu saying). Anger brings in its train all kinds of ill- fame. Hatred by infamy, he can have no happiness. (*SSS Vol.30 p.206*)

Lack of power to discriminate:

The paradox of human behaviour is that, having the power of discrimination to identify good and bad, man is not able to get away from bad pursuits. This is due to the weakness of the human mind, which is in turn the result of desire and anger. Take the example of Ravana, who was a great scholar and master of many arts.

Ravana looked at Sita with a bad vision. The eye is a sacred organ. Good vision generates good thoughts. In Ravana, the bad look created bad thoughts, which led to his downfall. (*SSS Vol.26 p.127*)

Deceitful and Untruthful:

Ravana, in the story of Ramayana, is teaching to the world that no one should have such bad qualities as he had. Ravana was a wicked person and he

adopted trickeries. He spoke untruth and told Rama that he brought the head of Sita while he actually brought only an artificially created head of Sita, a deceit. He told that he killed Sita and brought the head. Since Rama was all-knowing, he realised that this was a trick and told Ravana that it could not be the truth. Similarly, he did the trick of getting the head of Rama and showing it to Sita and telling her that he had killed Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.162*)

The two principles of sathya and dharma are the very opposites of Ravana's propensities-(*Divine Discourse 2/4/2001*)

Victim of Lust, hatred and greed

The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavatha are three monumental works which point out the disastrous consequences which result when one is a victim of *Kama* (lust) or *Lobha* (greed) or *Krodha* (hatred).

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

If the quality of *Kama* comes close to a person, even his good qualities will be removed and subdued. Ravana was a great sage. He was a devoted person. Towards the end, because of the bad quality of *Kama* or lust, he had done some things which destroyed his entire dynasty and friends. (*SSB 1977 p.103*)

JANMANTARA KARMA - QUALITIES AS CONSEQUENCE OF KARMA

Ravana knew all about good conduct and dharma. What is the use of knowing what good conduct and dharma are if it is not to put into practice?

It is not as if there are no good qualities in Ravana. When he was fully immersed in the thought of God, he was prepared to sacrifice even his entire body. He was truly a follower of dharma and protector of dharma. The bad qualities of Ravana did not come as natural qualities to Ravana. All the bad qualities and bad thoughts came to Ravana because of certain curse to which he was subjected at one time. For such a curse, his own karma was

responsible. The kind of work and karma will determine the consequences. The kind of seed that we put in will determine the tree and the fruit that we can get out of it. Unknowingly and in some ignorance, we do some bad things. Whether we do such bad work knowingly or unknowingly, the consequences are inevitable. This is the nature of Karma. (*SSB 1977 p.155-157*)

Bad in us is symbolic of Ravana and Good in us is Rama.

In spite of listening to all and reading all that, is one's conduct and mind have not changed even an inch, it simply means that stagnation is the result of our *Janmantara karma*. Ravana had a guru called Sukracharya who acquired proficiency in all different kinds of action. His warriors and leaders of his army were very strong and proficient in the art of warfare. His wife was a good lady with good qualities. In spite of the fact that he had such good teaching from such a guru and a good wife and a strong army, he did not change his methods, and this simply means that it is the result of his own *Janmantara Karma*. He was living in utter foolishness. In his foolishness, he would not accept any advice from any one. This foolishness is something which is a great enemy of a human being. We must also remove this aspect of foolishness in us. On certain occasions, Ravana used to appear as a good *satwic* person and on the other occasions; he used to appear as an innocent person. Sometimes he used to appear as a great devotee. In reality, there is no one greater than him in the matter of wickedness. He would not hesitate to harm even his own wife or son. Vibhishana, his own brother, was a satwic person. Yet he showed no kindness to him. He simply drove him away. The wife of Vibhishana touched his feet of Ravana and begged him in many ways to save Vibhishana. This lady, who was the wife of his own brother, should be like his daughter, yet he gave so much trouble to her. The significance of all these things is that we should not simply think that Ravana was just a person with that name. The bad qualities and the cruel ideas that are in us are symbolic of the aspect of Ravana. The good in us is symbolic of Rama. It is only when we can get these two aspects confront each other and get Rama to defeat Ravana can we imagine that the coronation of Rama within us is possible and has taken place. (*SSB 1977 p.163-164*)

Ravana had fallen from the yogic heights he had reached in his previous lives and so, he was roaming about as a Rakshasa; really speaking, he was a great

devotee of God. He was aware, deep within his consciousness of the Universal Absolute, named Narayana. He was not unaware of the fact that Rama was Narayana Himself come in human form in order to destroy all traces of demonic wickedness on earth. However, since there was no other route for him to reach Narayana, he had to cultivate wanton wickedness and violent hatred, and invite Rama to kill him; of course, this might be called a type of devotion that is stupid and infamous. But, his inner aim was to cross the ocean of Birth-death, through that act of self-abnegation and surrender to Narayana. *(RKR Part II p.44)*

Meanwhile, since his body and mind had grown out of Rakshasa urges and developed with the help of demonic sustenance, he ignored the Divine in him, which was calling for merger in the Divine Rama. He relied on his Rakshasa nature and awakened its sinister possibilities rose and sank alternately, moment after moment. So, he convinced himself at last that the two brothers were Royal Princes and no more; he resolved that he would kill them both and bring away the lady, of whom he was so enamoured. He promised his sister that he would avenge the injury inflicted on her in that manner. *(RKR Part II p.44-45)*

BEAUTY AND RAVANA’S PERCEPTION OF BEAUTY:

Beauty is related to the heart.

Once Ravana felt very angry. He could not control himself. He went to Lord Shiva and said, “O Lord, how biased you are! How narrow-minded you are! You endowed ladies with such beauty, charm and exquisiteness and created man like a shapeless log of wood. What is the reason for this? The Lord Shiva laughed and said “O madcap! You are drawing such comparisons only because you don’t know what beauty means. Tell me; where in women is elegance of peacock’s feather in peahen? Where is the grandeur of the humped back of bull, in the cow? Hearing this Ravana shut his mouth. Therefore, god bestows beauty where it is required and to those that require it. Beauty is related to the heart. If your heart is pure, you look beautiful in the eyes of all and give happiness to all. If your heart is impure, only profane things will attract you. *(SSB 2002 p.206-208)*

The Beauty of Nature is but a reflection of the Beauty that is God.

But, like all images, it is not substantial. Flowers fade, clouds scatter into new patterns, physical charm is but a flash that disappears in a moment - but, Divine Beauty is eternal, full, and free. That Sundaram is Satyam, unaffected by the passage of Time, unchanging with the location; that Sundaram is the real is Shivam, the only good that is. Pursuing paltry physical beauty leads man astray; it is as calamitous as the pursuit of trivial joy.

Shivam is Goodness; the Body is for realising Goodness, which is total goodness. But, the body is not itself goodness or good; it is an instrument giving weaker in the process. The father says proudly, my son is growing fast, but really, this life is ebbing fast. The body is valuable, only on account of its use in realising God. (SSS Vol.8 p.128)

RAVANA AND HIS BROTHERS – REPRESENT THE THREE GUNAS:

Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana are brothers. (DBG p.212)

Ravana and Vibhishana, two brothers born of the same parents, had diametrically opposite natures because of the food they grew upon. Ravana relished *Rajasic* food while Vibhishana stuck to *Satwic*. (SSS Vol.16 p.106)

Not only this, towards the end of his life. When he was threatening Sita, he told her that he will give her two months' time and if in that period she would not change her mind, he would cut her head, cook and eat the flesh out of her head. Ravana was one who did not at all understand what food meant. His food consisted of unsacred meat and drink. (SSB 1977 p.122)

The three *gunas* represented the three brothers of Ravana. The embodiment of *Thamo guna* is Kumbhakarna, of *Rajo guna* is Ravana and of *Satwa guna* is Vibhishana. These three *gunas* are brothers, but if you allow the first two into your heart, they will cause a lot of harm. When you enter the Kingdom of Liberation, you will have to remove *Satwa guna* also. (SSS Vol.17 p.151)

In the case of the Rakshasa brothers, Rama destroyed Kumbhakarna and Ravana who represented the *Tamo guna* and *Rajo gunas*, and made Vibhishana, who symbolised the *Satwa guna*, the ruler of Lanka. It is only when we destroy the *Tamo* and *Rajo gunas* within us we can make the *Satwa guna* reign in our hearts. This is primary duty of every human being. This should be our ideal. It is by imbibing these great qualities of Rama and regulating our lives in this way, we will be able to divine ourselves. (SSS Vol.23 p.47-48)

The preceptor for *Rajo Guna* is Ravana, the king of the demons. The preceptor for *Tamo Guna* is Kumbhakarna, the demon who slept most of the time. Vibhishana is the preceptor for the *Satwa Guna*; he was also of the family of demons, but he surrendered himself at the feet of Rama and chose the side of the good. All three, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana are brothers. If you allow Ravana and Kumbhakarna into your heart, they will lead you into endless harm and grief. If you want to enter the kingdom of liberation, you must remove all three from your heart. All three belong to the same family and there is a brotherly relationship between them. That is why Vedanta has been teaching that you must transcend all three Gunas and offer them to Shiva, who will keep a watch on them with His three eyes and render them harmless with His three-forked trident.

What is the best way to remove the Gunas? If a thorn were to enter your foot, you need not take a big sharp knife to remove it; you just take another thorn and remove the first with the second. Once that has been accomplished, you throw away both thorns, without making any distinction between them. In that way you have to remove the *Tamo Guna* with the help of the *Rajo Guna*. Then you have to remove the *Rajo Guna* with the help of the *Satwa Guna*. Finally, you give up, the *Satwa Guna* also. Before you can enter into the kingdom of God-realization, you have to cast out all three Gunas. If any *Guna* remains it will keep you out of this kingdom of liberation. (DBG p.212)

After crossing the sea of *Moha* (infatuation), Rama encountered in Lanka the three brothers representing the three qualities of *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. He crowned Vibhishana of the serene temperament, King of Lanka, and

destroyed Ravana and Kumbhakarna who symbolised Rajasic and Tamasic qualities. (*SSS Vol.25 p.185*)

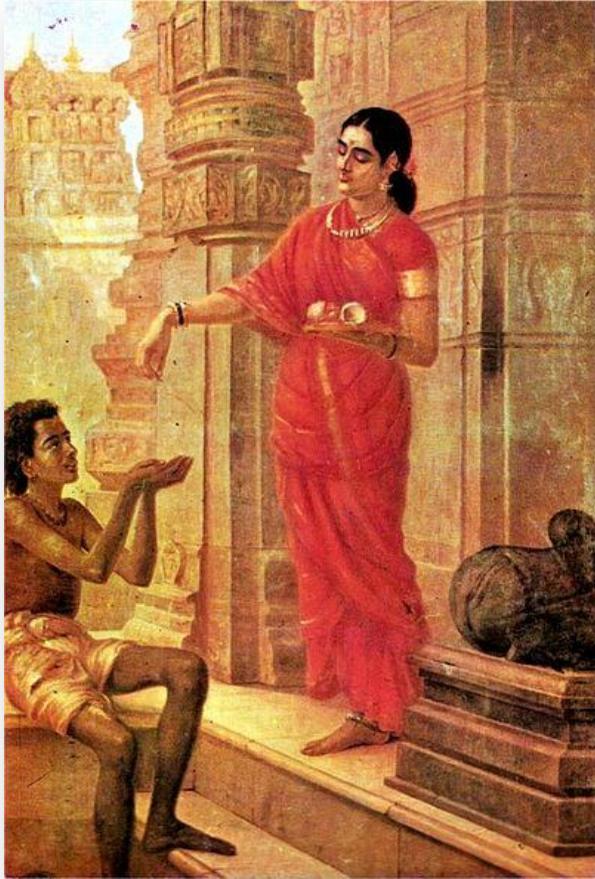
VIJAYADASAMI

Vijayadasami is the day when evil-minded Ravana, who was well versed in all the sciences and very powerful, was destroyed. Vijayadasami is also the day when the Asura King Ravana was destroyed and Sri Rama was crowned at Ayodhya. (*SSS Vol.21 p.245*)

Indian culture and spiritual traditions have always awarded a high place to women, since upon her rested the strength of the entire social fabric. She is a companion and guide of her husband and the first teacher of her children--- an example for their social attitudes, a model for their speech and a guardian of their health and mental happiness. She is called the ardhangini (half body) of the husband. There are many temples where God is worshipped as *ardhanaareeshwara* (half woman and half man) --- the right half being male and the left half female. The honour and glory of a country is held to be in the hands of the woman.

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

13.2 MANDODARI



Source of the Photo:

Mandodari – giving alms

Artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)

Title **English:** Lady Giving Alms

Description **English:** An aristocratic lady coming out from temple and giving alms.

Medium oil on canvas

Source/Photographer <http://abhisays.com/art/selected-paintings-of-raj-ravi-varma-part-3.html>

MANDODARI

Mandodari is the Queen Consort of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, according to the Hindu epic Ramayana. The Ramayana describes Mandodari as beautiful, pious, and righteous. She is extolled as one of the panchakanya ("five virgins"), the recital of whose names is believed to dispel sin.

Mandodari is the daughter of Mayasura, the King of the Asuras (demons) and the Apsara, Hema. Mandodari bears three sons: Meghanada (Indrajit), Atikaya, and Akshayakumara.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

MANDODARI

Mandodari⁵⁵: Ravana's wife, queen of Lanka. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁵⁵ Also spelt as Mandodhaaree

BIRTH

There lived a rakshasa by name Mayura. He had built a beautiful city for himself. That city was more beautiful than the city of Indra. The daughter of Mayura was Mandodari. Ravana married Mandodari. She had many qualities like *shanti*, kindness and *prema* and Ravana never had any one of them in him. (*SSB 1977 p.155*)

SHE WAS AN IDEAL WIFE

From the time of marriage, Mandodari tried her best to communicate her good qualities to Ravana and save him but Ravana made no attempt to change his bad qualities. As a man reaches his end, his bad qualities will also go on increasing. So also Ravana's bad qualities began to increase. (*SSB 1977 p.155*)

While abducting Sita, Ravana was taking her across the ocean to Lanka. He was highly materialistic and hence wanted to impress Sita with glimpses of his riches, power, opulence and acquisitions. With this intention he took Sita into the inner apartments of his palace. But Sita refrained from looking at any of these with utter disdain. Mandodari was very sad at the turn of events. She advised Ravana thus, "Oh! Lord! Why are you inviting you own doom? Rightly it is said that as the time of destruction approaches, discrimination departs (*Vinasakale viparita Buddhi*). Why did you have to bring here such a chaste and pious lady like Sita? This is our fate. You are not making attempts to understand the true nature of mother Sita. For that you need to know and control yourself first. She definitely

cannot stay in the inner palace. Instead select a peaceful location and put her there.”

Paying heed to Mandodari’s advice, he set up a small house in the *Asoka Vana* for Sita to live in peace. Mandodari is ranked as an ideal wife, because, like a minister who warns his king against danger, she gave timely advice to Ravana and made sincere attempts to dissuade him from going astray. She told him, “Lord! Instead of doing ‘*Ramachinta*’ (thoughts about Lord Rama) you are doing ‘*Kamachinta*’ (indulging in lustful thoughts). From now on you will never face good times again. Your doom is approaching. This is the reason why you are entertaining such wicked, destructive thoughts. You should never cause a woman weep and make her shed tears. If you do so, for every tear that she sheds, you will have to shed a thousand. Never hurt a woman.” Thus Mandodari tried her best to make Ravana realise his folly.

Mandodari implores Sita to save her Evil Husband:

One day, Mandodari herself went to Sita. She implored, “O daughter of Mother Earth! Accept my salutations. You are a chaste noble lady. You are highly sacred and pure. My husband is an evil man. His evil deeds are dragging him to his destruction. It is said that

*“With good feelings, man enjoys happiness:
With evil feelings, he himself becomes evil.”*
(Telugu Poem)

His bad intentions are making him evil. Please forgive him and save me from widowhood.”

This episode of Mandodari pleading with Sita is not chronicled in any prevalent version of Ramayana. Meanwhile, Sita was totally lost in the contemplation. Mandodari's pleas or Ravana's threats did not even register in her mind. (*SSB 2002 p.114-115*)

Mandodari, the queen of Ravana, strived hard to save her husband. She gave wise counsel to him but Ravana paid no heed to her. When husband takes to evil ways, virtuous wife acts as his wise minister to put him on the right path. Mandodari was one such wife. *Bharya* (wife) is not the one who provides worldly pleasures to her husband; she is the one who does good to him by leading him to the path of wisdom and righteousness. Mandodari was a true *Sati* (wife) who tried to mend the ways of her *Pati* (husband). (*SSS Vol.37 p.102/103*)

HER ADVICE TO RAVANA

*The wife should advise her husband well when he indulges in evil;
She should be like a Minister who advises the King properly.*

Women should follow the example of Mandodari, who always struggled to mend the ways of her husband, Ravana. (*SSB 1996 p.45*)

Ravanasura was a very wicked person. Mandodari could live long with him because of her forbearance. Mandodari used to advise Ravana in many ways. She used to tell him if the same

thing had happened to him, how much he would have felt. ‘You should not go after the wife of another person. Is there anything wrong in Rama getting angry? Don’t you think they would feel just as you would feel? You just correct yourself. Don’t try to make your fault as something very big’. **(DTB4 -P17)**

Mandodari strove hard to change the wicked ways of her husband, “You do not know who Rama is. He is the very incarnation of Lord Narayana and Lakshmana is the incarnation of Aadhisessa. Return Sita to Rama and fall at His feet,” she said, but Ravana refused to pay heed to her advice. **(SSB 1996 p.66)**

Mandodari said, God is the Ultimate Divine Master and Everything in Creation belongs to Him. All beings are His property. The Sahasrara flower (representing the Mind) is His property, and it must be offered to Him alone. Mandodari said, “Ravana, Sri Rama is God Himself and Sita is the embodiment of Mother Supreme. You have committed a heinous crime in abducting Sita. What right do you have to take away what belongs to someone else? Repent at least now for what you have done. Go to Rama, fall at His Feet, seek His pardon, and restore Sita back to Him.” But alas, when disaster beckons, the mind gets perverted; so Ravana ignored Mandodari’s advice and later paid the price for his rashness. **(SSB 2000 p.103-104)**

"Return to Rama the Acme of chastity, the Diadem of the Virtuous, the Incomparable Jewel of beauty, Sita." Then let us crown our son as Emperor of this realm and spend the rest of our days in peace and plentiful joy in the immediate presence of Rama. Ah! How fortunate is your brother! He is moving in the

cool shade of Rama's grace. It is not too late. At this very moment, hasten towards Rama, which is at the very entrance of Lanka and fall at his feet, praying for pardon." (*RKRV Part II p.185*)

Mandodari tried to din sense into Ravana’s head. She said: “Oh Ravana, you are indulging in heinous and lowly deeds. You are bringing untold suffering and misery to many pure and noble ladies. The heinous sins in which you are indulging in will boomerang on you.” She continued; “You cannot escape the inexorable law of Karma. I am plagued by all sorts of apprehensions about you and about us, though I am the daughter of a great emperor, my son Indrajit an invincible hero, and you are my master. Be careful for women are like fire. Do not insult women by evil looks, evil words, and evil deeds, for it is great sin.” Ravana did not take the words of Mandodari seriously. On the other hand he laughed at her⁵⁶. (*SSB 1996 p.77-78*)

Mandodari asks Ravana to assume the form of Rama:

There is a small example for this in the *Ramayana*. Ravana made several attempts to get Sita for himself. He had put on different appearances. But Sita avoided coming into the hands of Ravana. She was always thinking of Rama. Having realised this situation, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, told him that if he wanted to aspire for the hand of Sita, there was no use putting on different appearances. She said that the only chance of success is in Ravana putting on the appearance of Rama himself. Then, Ravana replied that if he could really put on the sacred

⁵⁶ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, **Heroism And Heroic Warrior – War Begins - Ravana beheaded**

appearance of Rama, he would not get such evil thoughts in his mind at all! When you look like Rama, you will get the thoughts and ideas appropriate to Rama and not those of Ravana. (*SSB 1973 p.168*)

Ravana, in fact, had so many other bad qualities and bad ideas in him, and he often undertook to do things which he should not have done. Many times, he made attempts to kill even Sita. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, tried to teach Ravana that to kill a woman is very wrong, and that he was committing a great sin. The bad qualities that were in him made him take always the wrong path and subjected him to many difficulties. On one occasion Mandodari went to her husband and asked him, “You know all the dharma, and all the codes of right conduct. With all your wisdom, why is it that you are doing wrong things? What is the matter? How can you explain? What is the inner meaning of your behaviour? Not only this, you have all the capacity and you have all the strength to assume any form that you like. On the day when you brought Sita to Lanka, you were in the form of a sanyasi and you deceived her. Why are you taking all this trouble in order to win over the sacred Sita? If only you assume the form of Ramachandra, then Sita would be yours. Why did you not adopt that path?”

Then Ravana replied that Ramachandra’s form was a sacred and divine one. If he really took that form, how will he have bad qualities at all? This means Ravana knew very well that the qualities which one will have should be appropriate to his form. Because he had the form of a *rakshasa*, the qualities of a *rakshasa* were showing up. Today, people have a human form.

They appear like human beings but behave like *rakshasas*. There is some contradiction in this situation. Since we have taken the human form, sacred qualities which are appropriate to a human being should thrive within us. In words we may say that we are human beings, that we are devotees, that God in the form of *Atma* is present in us, but to put these statements into practice has become very rare. The first thing we should do in this context is to correct our practice. Through our efforts, we can achieve any great thing. The kind of conduct which we accept and go through in our daily life will only be reflected by our life. (*SSB 1977 p.115-116*)

HANUMAN’S ADVICE TO MANDODARI:

Ravanaordered that Hanuman’s tail be set on fire after wrapping it with clothes dipped in oil. The tail of Hanuman was set on fire. Hanuman did not keep quiet. With the burning tail, he jumped from one building to the other and thus set the entire city on fire. Beautiful and palatial buildings with precious stones went up in flames within no time. Even Mandodari’s palace was engulfed by flames. She came out. People ran helter-skelter, here and there. Not a single building was spared from the raging flames. (*SSS Vol.42 p.116-117*)

Queen Mandodarisummoned the soldiers guarding the Palace, and ordered them to give refuge therein to women and children. She confessed her fears and poured out the grief she suffered. “Alas! The foolish obstinacy of Ravana is causing the extinction of the Rakshasa clan. This blow will end only with the holocaust. I and brother-in-law, Vibhishana advised him a great

deal. We prayed with folded arms. He refused to pay heed. We lamented that it will end in the destruction of every single Rakshasa. But as they say, ‘When extermination is near, discrimination flees far.’ Bad times are approaching him, and so, he is behaving in these nefarious ways.” Wherever she turned her eyes, ferocious tongues of flame glared at her. Hanuman too was very much before her eyes, jumping about in the midst of the flames. From every household there rose the cry, “Hanuman, save us.” “Spare this house.” With folded palms, they prayed, “Take pity on our children.” The wife of Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of Ravana, ran forward with her prayer. “Oh, Messenger of Rama! My husband is submerged in deep sleep. Do not set fire to our home. Save my husband from being burnt to death.” (*RKRV Part II p.152-153*)

Hanuman then advised Mandodari, “Mother, it is the sin committed by your husband that is responsible for this devastating fire and consequent loss of so many lives and property. Please tell your husband not to commit such heinous sins hereafter. If you can thus save your husband, it amounts to saving yourself and the rakshasa clan” People have to suffer the consequences of their actions. God is only a witness. Good and bad, one gets the fruit of his actions. (*SSS Vol.42 p.117*)

MANDODARI IMPLORES RAVANA TO PAY HEED TO THE OMNISCIENT ONE:

In Lanka every Rakshasa was struck with anxiety about what was in store for him in days to come. They were afraid of the disaster that was imminent. They were convinced they could not

escape the calamity. They could communicate their fears to each other only in whispers since they were mortally afraid of Ravana. In Lanka every Rakshasa was struck with anxiety about what was in store for him in days to come. They were afraid of the disaster that was imminent. They were convinced they could not escape the calamity. They could communicate their fears to each other only in whispers since they were mortally afraid of Ravana.

Wherever groups of Rakshasas collected in Lanka, the talk centred round the calamitous damage inflicted by the messenger of Rama. They wondered, “When the servant is capable of such tremendous heroism, what would be the measure of the onslaught the Master can inflict?” They pictured Rama as capable of immeasurable attack. Their fears were communicated by her maids to Mandodari, the Queen of Ravana. Her mind was filled with apprehension and anxiety. She realised that the fear was based on a correct estimate of the happenings. She waited for a propitious moment when Ravana would be in a receptive mood, and could be spoken to while alone. Getting such a chance, she said, “Lord! Do not develop enmity with the Omniscient One. You yourselves expressed the opinion that Rama is not an ordinary person. Your army could not wreak vengeance when sister Surpanakha was disfigured. It could not harm him or move him to repentance. Now he has with him millions of redoubtable Vanara heroes. What can our Rakshasa warriors achieve against him now? They could not even bind and punish the messenger who got entry into this kingdom. That is the extent of the misfortune that has beset us. When one servant caused such horror and despair, how much worse would be the calamities that millions like him could bring about? Therefore,

pray listen to my appeal. Send Sita back to Rama, in the care of brother Vibhishana, or with your Ministers. Sita too is no ordinary woman. She is exemplarily chaste. She is the very embodiment of spiritual energy that results from the righteous nature. Causing grief to such a person can bring you no good. Accede to my pleading. Return Sita to Rama. When that is done, all will be good for you and for our Rakshasa race. Or else, as the serpent swallows frogs, the arrows of Rama will swallow the Rakshasa hordes. Give up stubbornness and pride. Offer Sita at the feet of Rama.” She fell at the feet of Ravana with this pitiable importunity.

Ravana, the conceited ignoramus, looked at Mandodari, and replied with a loud peal of laughter. He said, "Fie on you! Tender women are scared soon; that is their very nature. Their words rising from fear will turn even fortune into misfortune. When the monkeys arrive at our doors, the Rakshasas would certainly gobble them up. The gods shudder in mortal terror when my name is uttered within hearing; why are you afraid of these tree-dwelling brutes? Fie on your fears! Get thee gone from here". Saying thus, he proudly moved into the Hall, appearing like personified audacity. As soon as he left, Mandodari bewailed to herself, "Alas! Destiny is devising a mighty tragedy. What has it decided for me? It is terrible even to guess what it is". Burdened with grief, and at a loss to, plan what else to do, she restored to her rooms and rolled on her bed, agitated by a multitude of thoughts. (*RKRV Part II p.160-162*)

Curse on Ravana that when he spoke with all his ten throats his end would come near:

Very soon, news reached Ravana that the enemy was at the gate. Though possessed of ten throats, Ravana was using only one throat so far to communicate with others; but now he roared through *all the ten*, in anger and hate. He did not remember that it was a bad omen to speak through the ten throats! There was a curse laid on him long ago, that when he spoke through all the ten his end would draw near. Within a few seconds of the roar, he recollected the curse and was frightened at the fact. But however much he attempted to control the other throats, his voice came out of all the ten. The Rakshasas who noted this strange occurrence inferred that his destruction was imminent, now that Rama and his Vanara armies had entered Lanka. They sat amidst their wives and children and lamented that their lives would end that day or the next. They decided to use the little time they had at their disposal in merrymaking and pleasure. When calamity approaches, discrimination departs, says the proverb.

Even when he knew that the curse was coming true, Ravana dismissed the warning, and told himself that nothing evil would happen to him. He moved into the Queen's apartments, for, he was afraid the Ministers might read from his fallen face that he was overcome by the awareness of the curse. Ravana sank within himself through anxiety and agony. "Will they, as when my sister fell into their hands, slice off the noses and ears of my ten heads? Or will they slice off the heads themselves?" These fears haunted him.

Mandodari pleads with Ravana to prostrate before Rama and seek pardon:

He saw Mandodari, the Queen, in the apartment. Her eyes discovered that Ravana had become forlorn. She decided to administer wise counsel to him. She held his hands in hers and in a soft, smooth and sweet voice, she said, “Lord! Please listen to me, give up your anger; pay heed to my words. Think them over carefully. Those whom we can win over by reverence and devotion, we should not plan to win by hatred and opposition. In such circumstances, we have to resort to intelligent reasoning. It will not bring any good if we oppose such sacred persons. You cannot achieve victory if you encounter Rama. The glow-worm cannot vanquish the Sun. Listen to me. Take Sita, at least this moment, and while returning her safely, prostrate before him and pray for pardon. Do not ruin your life and destroy Lanka and sacrifice the lives of its women and children. Persisting in your resolve to fight is not in line with the devotion and dedication to God that you are famous for. If you hold fast to this horrid decision, even Siva, whom you have pleased hitherto, is sure to give you up. Good deeds alone can win the grace of God. How can God reward and appreciate such heinous acts?”

Mandodari spoke in this strain for a long time trying to mend his ways and to save him from destruction. “Lord! You are as dear to me as my own life. Pay heed. Rama is no ordinary human prince. He is the very person who destroyed Madhu and Kaitabha come again. He killed Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu. He is the Lord who trampled on the head of Emperor Bali. He demolished the pride of the thousand-armed Karthaviryarjuna. Then why boast of the prowess of your mere twenty? He is

worshipped by the entire world. He is of the most auspicious form. A long time ago, you had yourselves told me that Brahma had told you that God would incarnate as Rama in order to relieve the earth of the burden of cruelty and vice. Do you not remember? Aware of all this, how is it that you do not give up this path, and recognise the truth? Return to Rama the Acme of Chastity, the Diadem of the Virtuous, the Incomparable Jewel of beauty, Sita. Then let us crown our son as Emperor of this realm and spend the rest of our days in peace and plentiful joy in the immediate presence of Rama. Ah! How fortunate is your brother! He is moving in the cool shade of Rama's grace. It is not too late. At this very moment, hasten towards Rama who is at the very entrance of Lanka and fall at his feet, praying for pardon."

Mandodari was in tears when she spoke thus. She rolled at the feet of her lord, appealing to him to be warned in good time and to take immediate measures to rescue himself and his empire, his people and his fame. Ravana raised her to her feet and wiped her eyes. He said, "Dear one! Why are you agitated thus? Wherefrom all this fear, this lack of courage? There is no one more powerful than me in the world. The rulers of the eight directions have been defeated by the might of my arm. Death dare not step near me. Do not yield to fear. You are extolling that weakling Rama in my hearing unaware of the depth and extent of my might." With these words, he left the Queen and entered the Audience Hall, where he promptly sat on the Throne. Mandodari noticed his movements and the trend of his thoughts. She said to herself, "What a fool! This is the inevitable fate of persons who do not give up their false pride. Good counsel cannot enter their minds. When one is suffering from fever, sweet things taste

bitter. He is now having the poisonous fever of pride. Therefore, nectarine counsel is rejected by him, as if it is poison. What more can I do now?" She pictured in her mind the calamities and sorrows that were in store for Lanka. She felt that, before witnessing and sharing in all that misery and grief, it would be better to end life itself. With a heavy heart and with thoughts of Rama filling her, she went into her room and threw herself on the bed. (*RKRV Part II p.182-186*)

MADODARI'S ADVICE IGNORED:

Ravana entered the apartments of the queens, overwhelmed by shame and fear. Mandodari noted the pallid crestfallen appearance of Ravana. She said, "At least, now, give up your foolish tenacity. To cultivate enmity towards Rama will bring disaster to the kingdom itself. You could not step across the line drawn by Lakshmana. How then could you hope to defeat them in battle? Your powers and might are but dry leaves before them. Your followers could not overpower the messengers they sent. Can you ever hope to overwhelm them when they invade this land in their billions? You could not stir Angada's feet even a hair breadth, and yet, you hope to capture and bind billions of such Vanaras! I am pained that, in spite of all experience already available, you are still holding on obstinately to your resolution. Our son was killed. Your city was reduced into a heap of ash. Your parks were uprooted. Countless Rakshasas were thrown up like balls and killed by the fall. Where were your strength and skills at that time? Boastful declarations can inflict no harm on these Vanaras." "Lord," Mandodari pleaded, "Pardon me for

these words. You are badly mistaken when you consider Rama a mere man. He is the Master of the Universe. He is an invincible hero. You are already aware of the extent of his might and valour, aren't you? Recollect the facts related by Angada, quietly within yourself. Remember! You were seated in the gathering of kings in the Hall of Janaka, to exhibit your strength and skill; but you failed even to shift a little the position of the Bow of Siva. Rama lifted it as if it was a spurt of playfulness and cast it aside in broken halves. This demonstration of might was seen with your own eyes. If you still do not give up your foolish tenacity, it is an indication that your destruction is imminent. What could you do when the nose and ears of your own sister, Surpanakha, were sliced off? Are you not ashamed to proclaim and boast about your strength and your heroism, after all these experiences? Rama killed Vali with a single arrow. Was Vali an ordinary foe? Rama has now come with his army of Vanaras and encamped on the Suvela Hill. Rama is the very embodiment of Righteousness and Morality; or else, why should he send an envoy to you, as he has done, to advise you how you can still save yourself? This envoy has tried to turn your mind towards accord with Rama. But you do not give up your sense of pride. You do not appreciate the moral sense that moves Rama. You do not understand the virtues that animate the supremely sacred Person who has sent the envoy. You are causing the downfall of your own kingdom! What could you do now to throw out Angada, the envoy, who entered the Audience Hall? There are in their camp thousands, nay, lakhs of Vanaras, mightier and more destructive than this one. Listen to my words, give up this demonic passion. Go and surrender to Rama.” These words of

counsel reminding Ravana of happenings in the past, struck his heart like sharp arrows. (*RKRV Part II p.197-199*)

SULOCHANA CONFORNTS MANDODARI

Sulochana, the wife of Meghanada, heard the news of her husband's death. wailing alone, she moved towards the apartments of Mandodari, the Queen, and the mother of Meghanada. Reaching there, she fell at the feet of her mother-in-law and said, "This calamity has been brought about by your husband and not by anyone else. You too cannot escape such a calamity, which is sure to befall this day or the next." Her torn heart poured out words that were harsh and cruel. Mandodari too was pained when she contemplated the evil desires of Ravana and his pride at his own wickedness. She wept at the realisation that the words of Sulochana were awfully true. The two women sat silent for long, and later they described to each other the virtues and excellence of Rama and the patience and chastity of Sita and told themselves that if only they could get a glimpse of that divine person their lives would be rendered worthwhile. (*RKRV Part II p.233-235*)

MANDODARI'S LAMENTATION

The battle that ensued between Rama and Ravana was fought with incomparable and unexcelled fury. Dogs howled, foxes moaned, donkeys brayed. Birds and beast set up piteous wails. Balls of fire dropped from the sky. Sudden bursts of flame

became evident in all directions. The heart of Mandodari, the Queen, beat loud and fast. Every idol in every home and temple in the island shed tears in plenty.....Rama shot a bunch of thirty-one arrows at the same instant on Ravana...Ravana rid himself of life and reached heaven... Hearing that Ravana had died, his queen Mandodari collapsed on the floor. When she recovered, she hastened with her maids to the corpse of Ravana and wailed aloud. She collected the heads and was stricken with grief at the tragic fate of her lord. She recited with fond reminiscence the exploits of Ravana in the past. “Lord! You had overwhelmed and subjugated the entire Creation. The Rulers of the eight directions had fallen at your feet, praying for protection. Of what avail was all that glory! Of what avail were the austerities and asceticism that you underwent. You had to endure this fate in spite of all the might you had won. This blow fell upon you since you turned away from Rama. You could not conquer the promptings of lust. He who becomes a slave to lust cannot escape dire punishment, be he as powerful as even the God of Death, Kala. Blinded by lust, you could not avoid this tragic end. Lust led you to ignore Rama and invite this calamity on your head. Ravana! Rama has incarnated with the purpose of destroying by the fire of his anger the forest of Rakshasa vice. I disclosed this to you many times over, but a cruel fate rendered you deaf to my importunities. I told you that he is no mere man. You relied foolishly on your physical prowess, your clever intellect, your vast treasures and the vast numbers of Rakshasas you ruled over. Did I not plead with you, holding your feet in my hands, to surrender to Rama, the Ocean of Mercy, and thus save the Rakshasas from annihilation? My pleadings were not welcome to you. You were engaged constantly in inflicting injury on others, an activity

which gave you great joy. You seldom attempted to confer benefits on others. Your urges were ever towards sinful deeds and thoughts. In spite of this, Rama has conferred his blessing and your spirit has merged in him. What great compassion is this! You died at his hands. This is a fortune that few can achieve. Why, Rama came into this world in human form for the special purpose of killing you. The royal road to the destruction of the Rakshasa race was laid by the Rakshasa Ruler himself! This will be known as your greatest achievement! This is the supreme example of your protective skill! Is this the final result of all your austerity and spiritual Sadhana? Rama! Have you done this to prove that no one can escape the consequences of his deeds? What greater example for that law can there be? This calamity brought about by him is here for all to see and learn from,” (*RKRV Part II p.258-259*)

When Ravana fell dead, his queen Mandodari lamented over his body; “You conquered every enemy of yours, except your own lust! You were pious, you were learned, you subdued even the most powerful foes – but, you allowed yourself to be enslaved by desire. That brought about your downfall.” (*SSS Vol.6 p.79*)

Mandodari.... wailed in agony, “Lord! I had warned you several times no to meddle with chaste and pious married women. I told you not to cast lustful eyes on spiritually accomplished women. You are now reaping the consequences of your sins. You have accumulated plenty of vices. I tried to dissuade you. But you would never pay any attention.” It is rightly said,

*“Good advice is never accepted
Though given with a great heart.*

*Evil counsel is immensely attractive to the ears
How will such people ever realise Me?”*
(Telugu Poem)

Of what use is one’s accomplishment if one does not listen to good advice? He is bound to be ruined. Ravana too could not escape this fate and he paid for it with his life. **(SSB 2002 p125-126)**

Mandodari wailed for long, sitting by the side of her lord. Mandodari had realised through her wisdom that Rama was Parabrahma Itself, the Universal Over soul, the Absolute. The gods, watching her from heaven, were elated at her outlook and attitude at this hour of grief. **(RKRV Part II 259-260)**

*What is the use of our higher learning?
Who can erase fate’s writings on the forehead!
When evil thoughts arise in the mind,
Man becomes blunt and useless.*

Did Ravana gain anything by mastering the sixty four disciplines? Learning should lead to Wisdom. Man is the architect of his misfortune. When Ravana collapsed on the battle field, Mandodari, his queen, went to the dead body and lamented: “Oh Ravana! What has happened to all your learning now? I was telling you very often to mend your ways. It is shameful for a great Emperor like you to be troubled and tortured at the hands of monkeys. However, I am happy that you have died by Rama’s hands.”

Vibhishana came at that juncture to see Ravana's body. At first, Mandodari started scolding Vibhishana. Then, realising her mistake she said: "Oh Vibhishana, there is no use in scolding you. Very often you counselled your brother well, but your advice did not enter his head."

*When the head is empty anything can be filled in it;
How can one fill a head which is already filled with
stuff and nonsense?
Unless the dross in the head is drained away,
How can one fill it with pure feelings?*

Mandodari wanted to run to Sita and seek her forgiveness. She then said to herself; I ought to have gone to Sita a long time back; what is the use of my going to her now?"(SSB 1996 p.81)

Vibhishana was moved by the wailing of Mandodari. He agreed that what she said and felt were correct. Rama and Lakshmana approached Vibhishana and consoled him. They directed him to perform the funeral rites for his deceased brother. And according to that order, he too carried out all the prescribed rites and rituals, at the proper places and with correct ceremonial. Mandodari and other women also offered water offerings, sanctified with mantras and til. Every item of the funeral rite was gone through in correct order, without any hitch or disturbance, by Vibhishana who was all the while comforted and consoled by Rama. Rama said that when the curses Ravana had invoked on himself by his sins had ripened and fulfilled themselves, he was killed, and so, there was no reason why the death should be lamented. (RKR V Part II p.260)

Ramayana gives an example of the power of ‘Thought’. Ravana was a great person who had mastered the Spiritual Texts and who was earnest in Spiritual Observances. Every morning, he used to go to the round of many temples of Siva. He had mastered the Four Vedas and the Six Sastras and so he was praised and depicted as having ‘Ten Heads’. His Queen, Mandodari lamented over her husband’s defeat and death, at the hands of a mere man leading a host of monkeys! She had learnt from the Sastras that death caused by drowning or by the fall from a tree or through monkeys converts the dead into ghosts that wander in the realms of darkness. So, she wondered why such a fate overtook the great Scholar, the pious devotee that Ravana was. Then she remembered that spark of lust that he harboured in his heart had burnt all the scholarship and all that piety into ash! He was not able to control his senses or sublimate the sensory urges. A bullock that does not yield to the yoke, a horse that resists the reins, a car without brakes and a person who knows no self-control, are all equally heading towards disaster! (*SSS Vol.7 p.336*)

13.3 MEGHANADA OR INDRAJIT

MEGHANADA

Indrajit was born to Ravana and his wife Mandodari, the daughter of Mayasura. He was named "Meghanada" because his birth cry sounded like thunder. He defeated Indra, the king of the Devas, after which he came to be known as 'Indrajit' ("the conqueror of Indra").

At a very young age, Meghanada⁵⁷ became the possessor of several supreme celestial weapons, including Brahmastra, Pashupatastra, and Vaishnavastra, under the guidance of Shukra, the guru of the daityas (demons). He was married to Sulochana, the daughter of the King of the Serpents Shesha Naga.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

MEGHANADA

Meghanada⁵⁸: Ravana's son and general. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

LINEAGE:

⁵⁷ Also known as Indrajit - Conqueror of Indra; Meghanada (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

⁵⁸ Also spelt as Meghanaadha

Indrajit, the son of Ravana ... had defeated Indra himself. He was the eldest son of Ravana. (*SSB 2002 p.124*)

He (Ravana) had a son by name Indrajit⁵⁹, who conquered the mighty Indra, the king of gods (*SSS Vol.31 p.385*)

Meghanada's interlude with Hanuman:

Hanuman⁶⁰ saw an orchard and plucking some tasty fruits, he ate his fill.... A Rakshasa guard wanted to frighten him ... He gave blow to Rakshasa guard which felled him to the ground who ran and reported to his gang head.... the news reached Ravana... It struck as an evil omen to Ravana... The formidable forces sent by him could not harm Hanuman-- Ravana sent his own dear son, Akshayakumara, at the head of thousands of seasoned Warrior-Rakshasas. But Hanuman slaughtered this host in a trice and Ravana had to mourn the death of his beloved son. The entire land shivered in fear at the news of the death of the Prince and the decimation of his army..... Ravana sent word for Meghanada, and commissioned him to destroy this new invader.

He placed at his disposal a huge army of several thousands. Meghanada ascended his chariot and led the heroic army in great pomp. As they marched along, earth and sky were astounded at their might and their angry tread. Their war cry rent the heavens. All who witnessed that pageantry and panoply were struck with wonder and admiration.

⁵⁹ Also spelt as Indhrajith (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

⁶⁰ See Chapter, *Hanuman* – **Hanuman decides to teach the demons a lesson and proceeds to lay to utter waste, the beautiful Asoka gardens. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana:**

Hanuman watched their march and heard their trumpeting with absolute unconcern. He sat unmoved, on a little branch of the spreading tree, and enjoyed the antics of the Rakshasas until they drew near. The soldiers rained arrows on Hanuman from all sides. With one ear-splitting roar, Hanuman jumped down and plucking a giant tree by its roots, he waved it round, beating off the rain of arrows that tried to reach him. The arrows were swept off so fast that when they hit back the Rakshasas who shot them, the impact killed them in such large numbers that very few were left to carry on the fight. Meghanada was felled by a blow. He rolled, spouting blood. So, he resolved to resort to the sacred arrow of Brahma that he had with him. He knew that Brahma, the first of the Trinity, had told Ravana that he would meet his death at the hands of man and monkey. He decided to prevent that calamity. The Brahmastra was released with appropriate ritual formulae. Hanuman had great reverence for the weapon that is sanctified by such mantras and dedicated to Brahma. So, he did not counteract it. He reverentially prostrated before it. So, it was easy for Meghanada to bind him with the Serpent Rope. *(RKR Part II p.146-147)*

Meghanada boasts his father's spirit⁶¹:

Meghanada, the general endowed with the power of adopting any form he likes, rose to speak. "Supreme Master!" he said, "Your might and majesty resound all over the world. The gods are your bondsmen. Why should we speak of the fate of men in your

⁶¹ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **Ravana assesses the damages and seeks suggestions:**

Presence? For who can be stronger than these gods?” His words were soaked in pompous pride. (*RKRV Part II p.162-163*)

Meghanada promises his father to fight the battle:

Meghanada⁶² rose and said, “Father, do not hesitate. Tomorrow, during the morning hours, you can witness my skill in war. I shall demonstrate in action much more than I declare in words.” His assurance mollified Ravana’s anger and assuaged him a little. He was filled with joy. It gave him courage and hope. He drew his son near and caressed him fondly. He patted his head and extolled, before all, the bravery and heroic heart of his son. (*RKRV Part II p. 207*)

Meghanada fights the Vanaras:

All were sunk in anxiety and terror about the calamity which might overtake them any moment. Even as they were rolling in fear, dawn spread over the east. The Vanaras and the Bears laid siege to Lanka from all directions. Confusion and panic raised their heads. Their roars echoed from the sky. The Rakshasa warriors too had to take up arms and oppose them. They had no other alternative. The rain of rocks and hills that fell on the City from the walls around was fought back with arrows and other weapons from billions of Rakshasas. They too shouted and yelled, reverberating the sky as on doomsday. But the huge peaks and hilltops that the Vanaras threw at them reduced the Rakshasa hordes into a mass of lifeless pulp.

⁶² See Chapter, *Ravana - Meghanada assures Ravana to demonstrate his skills in war the next day - combat with Lakshmana – Lakshmana swoons and later kills Meghanada:*

Enraged at the news that the Vanaras had rushed into the City, Meghanada took up arms and advanced to attack them. The hordes that followed him beat their war drums and sounded their clarions. Meghanada was famous as Indrajit, for he had once overwhelmed in battle no less a person than Indra, the Ruler of the Gods. He was the chief among Lanka's generals and a terrible warrior. The Vanaras lost courage when they espied him on his chariot. Sighting the flight of the enemy forces, Meghanada shouted in joy and stringing his mighty bow, he shot a rain of arrows upon them. Drawing the string right back to his ear, he shot the arrows fast and furious. They flew like winged serpents in all directions. So the Vanaras were afraid to face him. They lost the urge to fight and retreated. Some were felled by arrows, others fainted and fell. Witnessing the pitiable plight of the Vanaras, Hanuman was overcome with rage. He hastened towards Meghanada, full of fury appearing as the God of Death Himself! He plucked a mountain peak that was nearby and threw it at the Rakshasa leader. As soon as he saw the peak rushing towards him like the messenger of Death, Meghanada used his magical skill to rise up into the sky. His chariot, the horses and the charioteer were all crushed underneath that peak as it fell exactly where it was aimed. Meghanada designed many other magic stratagems.

But his design to create terror in Hanuman was as ineffective as the attempt of a miniature snake to terrorise the King of Eagles, Garuda. He showered fire from the sky. He rained blood. He spread thick night, when day was bright. The darkness was so dense that one could not see his own palm spread before his eyes. The Vanaras were confused and rendered despondent by

such tactics. They felt that their end had come. (*RKRV Part II p. 208-209*)

Meghanada’s combat with Lakshmana:

Lakshmana joined Hanuman, and with his mighty bow and sharp arrows he fell upon Meghanada. Ravana heard that Lakshmana had jumped into the fray and so he hastened to send strong reinforcements to support his son on the field. The Vanaras fought without respite, armed with tree and rocks. Both sides fought ferociously with unabated fury. Most of the fight centered round duels between warriors and leaders. The Vanaras hit with their clenched fists and bit with their sharp teeth. This caused the death of a vast number of Rakshasas. They clipped with their nails many a head from the shoulders on which they rested. They pulled many a hand from the sockets in which they were fastened. The yell of victory with which the Vanaras announced their triumph resounded among the Nine Islands. Headless corpses of the Rakshasas continued to run along the directions which the Rakshasas had taken while alive. Seeing this eerie phenomenon, the Vanaras broke into ribald laughter. The roads that criss-crossed over the vast field of battle were filled with streams of blood.

Lakshmana and Meghanada were involved in deadly combat. Each appeared the other’s equal in skill and strength. Indrajit decided to defeat Lakshmana by magic stratagem rather than by the tactics of war. But even these were foiled and his plans ended in failure. Lakshmana in a spurt of terrific rage destroyed the chariot of Meghanada and killed his charioteer. Afraid that his death was imminent, Meghanada took on hand the supremely

potent weapon, *Sakti*, that Brahma had gifted, and aiming it at the very heart of Lakshmana; he directed it to the target. The weapon hit the heart of Lakshmana⁶³, coming straight from Meghanada's hand. Lakshmana fell on the ground, in a "mortal" swoon. Meghanada, now no longer in fear, approached the fallen hero and tried to lift the body away to his own camp. Though his strength was equal to Lakshmana's, Meghanada could not raise the body. Countless warriors came forward to help him; but numbers were of no avail. Lakshmana was the Primeval Serpent, that bears the Cosmos on Its Thousand Hoods, Aadhisessa, comes again. How could anyone however strong or any number of such ones succeed in lifting him? Only those who have won the Grace of Sri Rama could move Lakshmana! (*RKRV Part II p.210-211*)

Meghanada tries to trick Hanuman with the death of Sita:

The Rakshasas lost strength, night and day. Ravana bewailed inconsolably. He was a cobra that had lost its crest jewel. Meghanada, his son, tried to soothe him in various ways. "Tomorrow I shall demonstrate before you my heroic might. I shall, in a trice, smash this Vanara horde out of shape. I shall confer on you joy immensely greater than the grief you are burdened with today," he boasted.

Very soon, dawn broke. Ravana was informed by messengers that the bears and monkeys had surrounded the City. This drew the indomitable warriors among the Rakshasas into the struggle. They marched forth to meet the enemy. (*RKRV Part II p. 227*)

⁶³ See Chapter *Lakshmana - Battle with Meghanada*:

Both sides blew their trumpets. That day Ravana's son *Meghanada* used all his magical powers to inflict injuries on the monkey hordes. Vibhishana knew well the wizardry of the Rakshasas. He shattered all the special missiles used by *Meghanada* and infused courage among the monkeys. (*SSS Vol.29 p.143*)

The whole of that day, the fury was indescribably frightening. Meghanada ascended his magic chariot and rose into the sky. His challenging roar thundered like clouds in the doomsday sky. That roar felled the Vanaras to the ground, as if by a mighty blow. The earth shuddered at its echo. In a moment, he contrived a pseudo-Sita and, seating her in the chariot, he came down along the battlefield! Hanuman noticed this before everyone else. And accosting him, Meghanada shouted, “Listen, Hanuman! This Sita, to recover whom, you are waging this war; I am killing her this moment. Look, with her death, this war must end,” and drawing his sword, he cut her to pieces and cast them away; Hanuman was plunged in vengeful rage. He called upon the Vanaras to fight on, with no thought of survival, and exterminate the Rakshasa brood. The Vanaras attacked them so ferociously that the Rakshasas fell back into the City.

Hanuman approached Rama and reported to him the wicked deed performed by Meghanada. As soon as he heard the news, Rama pretended to be affected by it. He was not unaware of the fact that it was a pseudo-Sita contrived through the magic skill of the Rakshasas. Still, he acted as if he was just a “man among men.” Lakshmana too was down with despair. He grieved at the loss of the Mother of all the Worlds, and sat despondent at the futility of

continuing in this world. Hearing reports of what had happened, Vibhishana rushed to the presence of Rama. He said, “Master! You know the truth of this. The entire incident is a fake. Sita is alive and guarded with great care. Ravana alone can have access to the place where she is kept under guard. Meghanada has only designed a ‘Sita’ and killed her in order to deceive us into despair. Among us Rakshasas such tricks are very common. I know how they revel in such mean stratagems.” Rama and Lakshmana were happy when they heard him, and they appreciated his exposure of the secret tactics of the Rakshasas. *(RKR Part II p.227-229)*

Rama observed: “When Vibhishana came to me seeking asylum, all kinds of objections were raised against our accepting him as one of us. Do you see how helpful he is to us now?” *(SSS Vol.29 p.14)*

Meghanada battles the Vanaras and Jambavan

Meghanada returned to the battle very soon. He rained on the Vanaras this time not only sharp arrows, but spears, maces, axes, pestles, and boulders. The Vanaras heard terror striking shouts and commands reverberating all around them. “Beat,” “Hold,” etc., but they could not see who were obeying those orders and beating them, hacking them and holding them fast! It was an eerie experience which spread confusion among them. They were unable to decide whence the danger came and where they had to turn for refuge. Even redoubtable heroes like Nala, Nila, Angada and Hanuman were filled with fear. Meghanada aimed arrows at Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana and pierced their bodies. But they fought against him nevertheless with unabated

fury. Meanwhile, Meghanada engaged Rama himself in battle. He showered hissing serpent-arrows on him. It was the renowned Dragon Weapon, the Sarpastra.

Rama, the Supreme Actor come in the Human Role, the mighty Hero who destroyed Khara, Dushana and their phalanxes, allowed himself to be bound by the effects of that powerful weapon, the Sarpastra! In order to give due respect to that Divine Dragon and to demonstrate its potency, he permitted it to harm him! This may seem strange, but this is the story of Rama, come with attributes, qualities and limitations. So people with limited capacities of thought, word and deed cannot discover this Truth. The Vanaras were rendered helpless and worried, because Rama had been overpowered by the weapon of the Dragon. Meghanada was overjoyed. He rushed among the Vanaras, spouting vulgar abuse.

Jambavan saw him. “Oh you Vicious Worm! Stop,” he cried. Meghanada brushed him aside, saying, “Fie on you, I had ignored you so far, as too old to deserve attention. Of what avail are your words to me? Move away.” He threw a trident at Jambavan, which was luckily caught by him and thrown back at Meghanada himself. The aim was so correct and the throw was so forceful, that the trident hit him straight on the heart. The wounded man circled round himself a few times and fell on the ground. Jambavan rushed to where he fell. He held the feet together and swung him round very fast before he dashed him on the ground. “Now say whether I am an old man. Judge whether I have strength of youth or the weakness of old age.” Jambavan challenged Meghanada. Meghanada did not die. He rose with

great difficulty and moved away. He had not fulfilled his boast, and so, he felt ashamed to show his face before his father. (*RKRV Part II p. 229-230*)

Nikumbala Park and the Yajna to propitiate the evil powers: He (Meghanada) went straight to a garden named Nikumbala, where many Rakshasas had performed penance and endured austerities in the past.

Four courtiers of Vibhishana who were watching incognito the movements of the enemy leaders came to know about this and they reported the fact to him. He hurried to Rama and said, “Master! I listened to a bit of news just now. Meghanada is about to perform a malignant *Yajna* (sacrifice) to propitiate evil powers. If he completes the ceremonials, it will be hard to defeat him. We will have to hurl obstacles.” Rama appreciated the suggestion, and was pleased with his words. He summoned Hanuman and Angada and told them. “Brothers! Go! Disturb and disorganise the Yagna which Meghanada is observing.” He turned to Lakshmana and said, “Lakshmana! You have to defeat this fellow on the field of battle. Note that gods are grieving on account of his iniquities.” No sooner had he ordered so, than Vibhishana, Sugriva and Hanuman—the three—collected a huge force of Vanaras and followed Lakshmana in order to give him support. Lakshmana armed himself with the bow and the ever-full arrow-sheath, and after prostrating before Rama, he moved out of the camp, with Rama installed in his heart. Angada, Nala, Nila and other generals walked behind Hanuman.

When they reached the Nikumbala Park, they found the Sacrifice already on and the flesh and blood of buffaloes being offered in the ritual fire. They started disturbing the ceremonies. Meghanada did not however desist. (*RKR V Part II p.230-231*)

Meghanada was offering many human beings as sacrifice at the *Yajna* that was being performed at the foot of a blackberry tree. So long as *Meghanada* remained under that tree he could wield extraordinary powers. Vibhishana told *Hanuman* and Lakshmana to see that *Meghanada* was kept away from that tree as much as possible. Hearing this, *Meghanada* got very angry. He burst out: "Oh Vibhishana! Are you betraying my secrets and the secrets of Lanka to the enemy? You are a traitor to your race." He went on berating Vibhishana in this manner. (*SSS Vol.29 p.143-144*)

Vibhishana makes *Meghanada* understand the Truth

Vibhishana retorted indignantly: "*Meghanada*! It is natural for Rakshasas to be abusive as they like. But, remember that Rama is the very embodiment of peace. He is pure of heart, utterly free from selfishness. It is not possible for Rakshasas to understand the truth about such a Divine Being. Rama has entered Lanka for rescuing Sita and not for seizing the country. How can one who gave up Ayodhya itself voluntarily covet Lanka? Rama has no desire for anything. For a long time I had been warning Ravana that is a grievous sin to kidnap another, man's wife and appealed to him to restore Sita to Rama. However, Ravana, paid a deaf ear to my word. He is destroying by his own hands his kingdom and his clan. Who is to be blamed for this? Is it me or your father?"

Meghanada asked, "If my father did not listen to your words, you should have remained silent and not allied yourself with our enemies. Is this kind of treachery justified?"

Vibhishana gave a fitting reply: "*Meghanada!* You are an ignorant fool who knows nothing about truth and untruth, right and wrong. I am one who is well aware of the rules of right conduct. It is unworthy for a person to remain silent in the face of wickedness. Such inaction can destroy an entire society." (*SSS Vol.29 p.144-145*)

Then (Vanaras) they began to loudly caricature the hymns uttered by them to propitiate the Forces, but that did not persuade the priests to stop the rituals. The infuriated Vanaras rushed into the sacrificial area, and catching *Meghanada* by the hair, they pulled him to the ground and kicked him. (*RKRV Part II p.231-232*)

Meghanada and Vibhishana in the battlefield

Meghanada began performing a *yajna* to destroy Rama, and Lakshmana. Earlier, in the battle between *Meghanada* and Lakshmana, the latter had fallen unconscious after being hit by *Meghanada's Asthra* (missile). Lakshmana regained consciousness after the application of a herb from the Sanjivini mountain brought by Hanuman from the Himalayas. Lakshmana resumed the battle with *Meghanada*, carrying himself on the shoulders of Hanuman. Vibhishana took both of them to the place where *Meghanada* was performing his *Yajna*. *Meghanada* was offering many human beings as sacrifice at the *Yajna* that was being performed at the foot of a blackberry tree. So long as

Indrajit remained under that tree he could wield extraordinary powers.

Vibhishana told Hanuman and Lakshmana to see that *Meghanada* was kept away from that tree as much as possible. Hearing this, Indrajit got very angry. He burst out: “Oh Vibhishana! Are you betraying my secrets and the secrets of Lanka to the enemy? You are a traitor to your race.” He went on berating Vibhishana in this manner. (*Divine Discourse on 26/5/1997*)

Meghanada losses the battle and his life:

Meghanada took hold of the trident and pounced upon them. Angada and Hanuman fell on him, and were hit with the trident. The blow was so hard that both of them rolled on the ground. Lakshmana came to their rescue. He broke the terrible trident in two. Angada and Hanuman recovered soon and hit Meghanada with all their strength. However, the Rakshasa did not quail. He did not show any sign of the impact. Lakshmana rained deadly arrows on him, as if he were the God of Death come to kill him. Each one attacked him as if raining thunderbolts. So, using his magic skill, Meghanada rendered himself invisible. He assumed many a mysterious role and escaped. The patience of Lakshmana ran out at last. He fixed sacred arrows on his bow; and invoking on it the might and majesty of Rama, aimed it at Meghanada, wherever he might be. That arrow entered the heart of Meghanada and ended his life. (*RKR V Part II p.232*)

He was killed by Lakshmana in a fierce battle. (*SSB 2002 p.124*) Since, he had in his mind, during the last moments the image of

Rama and Lakshmana, Angada, Hanuman and Vibhishana extolled his bravery and the way he died. Hanuman lifted his body lightly on his shoulders and carrying it to the City Gate of Lanka, placed it there and returned. Lakshmana approached Rama and prostrated at his feet. Rama was pleased at his success. He listened to the detailed narrative of the events at Nikumbala Park. He fondled his brother with great affection. (*RKRV Part II p.232*)

Meghanada's wife Sulochana laments his death

Sulochana, the wife of Meghanada, heard the news of her husband's death, through her maids who ran to her with the tragic information. "Until now, I believed that this small task could be accomplished easily by either Meghanada or Kumbhakarna. Now, I have observed with my own eyes the failure of their prowess. I am ashamed that Meghanada fell a victim to the attack of monkeys. Those who are killed by monkeys, how can they claim to be heroes?" Ravana said. He tried to console Sulochana. He said, "Respected Consort, give up your grief. Do not think that I am a hero of that type. I shall bring you solace, within an hour or so. You can witness on the battlefield, my terrific might. I shall pluck the heads of those who caused the death of your husband, and bring them with me. This shall be done, without doubt." Thus Ravana boasted and raved in the presence of Sulochana. His anger burnt his frame and he was beside himself with rage.

Hearing his words, the wise and virtuous Sulochana said, "Oh Ten-headed One! Is there in your heart any trace of hope that you can win victory? You are sunk in the deep darkness of delusion. I

had swallowed my resentment and my disappointment so long, for I felt that opposing one's father-in-law was improper; and in this case, it is also useless to try to convince you. Your rage is the prime cause for the destruction of the Rakshasa population of this island. Let me tell you this—it is impossible for you to win this war. This is the truth, the indisputable truth.” Sulochana rose suddenly, and wailing alone, she moved towards the apartments of Mandodari⁶⁴, the Queen, the mother of Meghanada. Ravana could not bear to witness the agony of his daughter-in-law, the bereaved Sulochana⁶⁵. Her words thrust his heart like sharp spikes. His grief was so heavy at the loss of such a bright and loving son that he fell on the floor and in despair beat his head on the ground. (*RKRV Part II p.233-235*)

⁶⁴ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - **SULOCHANA CONFORNTS MANDODARI**

⁶⁵ See chapter, *Ravana*- **Ravana could not bear the agony of Sulochana**

13.4 AHI-RAVANA, THE KING OF THE NETHER REGION (PATALA)

AHI-RAVANA

Ahi-Ravana is the king of Patala⁶⁶ (the underworld). Ahi-Ravana was a demon magician, who was called by Ravana (his father) for help in the struggle against Rama's army. Ahi-Ravana kidnaps Rama and Lakshmana, whom he intends to offer as human sacrifices to the Goddess. The divine brothers wait passively to be rescued by Hanuman, who is this story's real hero.

When Hanuman realizes what happened, he goes to Vibhishana. Vibhishana says, alas if Hanuman does not rescue them fairly quickly, Ahi-Ravana will sacrifice both Rama and Lakshmana to Chandi. Hanuman goes to Patala. The door to Patala is guarded by a creature, who is half Vanara and half reptile. Hanuman asks him who are you and the monkey says, I am Makaradhwaja, your son! This confuses Hanuman, since he did not have any child as he was an adept Brahmachari. The son explains, while you were jumping over the ocean, a drop of your sweat fell in the ocean and in the mouth of a fish called "Makaradhwaja". This is the origin of my birth.

⁶⁶ Patala (Paathaala): Deepest hell; one of the seven regions under the earth; the abode of serpents and demons (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

After defeating his son, Hanuman enters Patala. He encounters Ahi-Ravana and MAhi-ravana. They had a strong army and Hanuman is told by Chandrasena that the only way to vanquish them is by blowing of 5 different candles located in 5 different directions, all at the same. So, at this point, Hanuman assumes the form with 5 heads (Panchmukhi Hanuman) and he quickly blows of the 5 different candles and thus kills Ahi-Ravana and MAhi-ravana. Throughout the saga, both Rama and Lakshmana are rendered unconscious by a spell by the demons

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

AHI-RAVANA:

Ahi-Ravana⁶⁷: A son of Ravana. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Ahi-Ravana was ... another son of Ravana... living in the nether regions. (*RKRV Part II p.235-236*) Ahi-Ravana worshipped no other god but the Devi Kamada.

Ahi-Ravana meets Ravana:

(*After*) the destruction of the Rakshasa population of this island (*and the death of his son, Meghanada, Ravana's*) grief was so heavy at the loss of such a bright and loving son that he fell on the floor and in despair beat his head on the ground. Rising up, he poured out his anguish before the Siva idol of his favourite temple. Ravana folded his twenty palms and praying to Siva, he fell on the floor of the temple in reverent homage.

⁶⁷ Also spelt as Ahi-Raavana

When this happened on the earth above, Ahi-ravana, living in the nether regions became aware that Ravana was suffering a great burden of sorrow. He thought within himself, “How could this be? He has all the world under his control and within his grasp! No one can defeat him.” Immediately, he meditated on Her (Devi Kamada) and She revealed to Her votary the place where Ravana was, at that time. So, he could appear before Ravana, in the Siva Temple itself. He fell at Ravana’s feet, announcing his name while doing so. He enquired the reason why the father was so disheartened.

Ravana related to him all that had happened since the nose and ears of Surpanakha were sliced off by the brothers. This account made Ahi-Ravana very sad. He said, “The path of morality is adored by everyone in the world. By straying away from that path and preferring the path of immorality, fear enters the heart. Instead of paying attention to the past and future, and the likely course of events, you have plunged into this foolish fatal war. As a consequence, you have destroyed your clan and your dynasty. You do not know the heroism and the power that lies dormant in ‘man.’ You have counted the greatest among them as the least and the lowest. Yet I wish to tell you one thing now. I shall capture Rama and Lakshmana and take them with me to the nether regions. I shall sacrifice them as offerings to my Kamada Devi. I shall thereby bring immense fame to the Rakshasa name.” With these words, he prostrated before Ravana, and made obeisance to Kamada Devi.

AHI-RAVANA CAPTURES RAMA AND LAKSHMANA

Ahi-Ravana enters the camp of Rama tricking Hanuman:

Then he entered the camp of Rama. With his supernatural power, he invoked the spirit of darkness and enveloped the Vanaras in thick blackness. No one could see his own palm, held before him! Such was the thickness of the pitch darkness around all. The Vanaras were extremely vigilant in camp. Even Death dare not enter the place. Hanuman, the Vanara guard, elongated his tail to such an extent that he could encircle the camp with it many times over, until the coils one over the other became a high wall, of the size and strength of a mountain barrier. Hanuman himself sat alert at the only gate through which entrance into this impregnable fort was possible.

Ahi-Ravana saw the caudal fort and was stricken with great fear. He could not conceive of any strategy to out-manoeuvre this defence. Suddenly getting a brain wave he changed himself into the likeness of Vibhishana and accosted Hanuman at the gate. He told him, “Friend, I must go into the Presence of Rama. With his approval I had gone outside the camp to perform my evening prayers and rites. I have finished them now. If I do not go without delay, I would incur the sin of disobeying His command. So, allow me to enter the camp.” Hanuman was taken in by those words and that form, which were to his ears and eyes the same as Vibhishana’s. He allowed him into the camp. He found Nala and Sugriva fast asleep; since they were exhausted by the day’s fighting. Rama too was sleeping, with his hand clasping the hand of his brother Lakshmana. The pseudo-Vibhishana who was approaching him was not unnoticed by Rama. He had incarnated,

adopting, in sport, the human frame and his purpose in so doing was to destroy the entire Rakshasa species and wipe them out. His task will remain unfinished if the descendants of Ravana survived in the nether regions. So, he played the role, as if he did not know the trick that Ahi-Ravana was about to indulge in. Others cannot understand his ways. He knows where, when and by which means, one has to be exterminated. He plays his drama in his own way.

Ahi-Ravana carries away Rama and Lakshmana:

The Rakshasa recited the Mohana Mantra, which would make whomsoever he wants swoon and become unconscious. That made the Vanara heroes sleep even more soundly. Then, he bound Rama and Lakshmana and carried them off to his region in the bowels of the earth, the region called Patala.

After some time, the Vanaras woke up and were plunged in dismay when they found that Rama and Lakshmana were not beside them. The place where they had slept had become a deep pit. The entire camp was soon filled with cries and groans. The Vanaras were rendered as miserable as the sky without the moon, or lotus blooms without water. The Vanaras started moving in all directions to seek out the brothers and recover them. Many ran towards the shore of the sea. Many searched the borders of the campus. No one could discover any clue. The Vanaras lost hope and courage. They were overcome by sorrow and despair. “All the Rakshasa warriors have been destroyed. Ravana alone has survived. His days too were nearing the end. At this juncture, this misfortune has overtaken us.” The Vanaras lamented their fate in this manner. Sugriva, the King of the Vanaras, himself fell

unconscious on the ground. Vibhishana had not heard about this incident. He was returning with wet clothes on, from a sea bath, after performing his morning rites. The Vanaras ran towards him and revealed to him that Rama and Lakshmana could not be seen in camp. Vibhishana was struck with sorrow for one instant; but, since he was conversant with the tricks that the Rakshasas could play, using their supernatural powers, he guessed the plot correctly. “Come. Let us go into the camp,” he told them. This gave them some little consolation. When he talked with Hanuman at the gate, he was surprised and shocked. Hanuman asked, “Why? You passed through this gate into the camp a while ago. You asked me permission to do so.”

Vibhishana recognizes the trickster as Ahi-Ravana and asks Hanuman to go to Patala:

It was now clear to Vibhishana. He could picture in his mind what had happened. So he addressed the Vanaras thus: “Vanaras! There is no need to be anxious. Ahi-ravana, the son of Ravana, is a master in such tricks. He is living in Patala—the nether regions. Judging from the depth of this pit, I am sure it is he who has carried Rama and Lakshmana to his own place underground. I have no doubt on this point. For, no one else can assume my form. Do not be disheartened. It is best that someone from among us, who is mighty, proceeds thither.” Vibhishana looked around and sighting Hanuman, he said, “Hanuman! Your physical and mental strength are known all over the world. Go immediately to Patala and bring back these Oceans of Mercy, Rama and Lakshmana. Vibhishana described also the route that Hanuman had to take to reach Patala, where Ahi-Ravana stayed. Sugriva, Angada and Jambavantha clasped Hanuman to their

breast and shed tears of joy. Hanuman solicited permission from his Royal Master, Sugriva and, while starting on his mission, told the Vanaras “Do not fear. Do not be anxious in the least. Whoever he is, I shall destroy him, even if I have to sacrifice my life. I shall stand before you with Rama and Lakshmana pretty soon. Be assured.” With these words and with the acclamation, Jai Rama, Jai Rama (Victory to Rama, Victory to Rama) emanating from his tongue, Hanuman started off.

Hanuman in Patala:

Reaching the Patala region, he rested awhile under a tree. He heard two birds sitting above him, conversing aloud. Hanuman knew the language of birds. So he sat listening to their talk. “Dear One,” spoke the bird, “Ahi-Ravana has brought two brothers Rama and Lakshmana, and he has made all preparations to sacrifice both of them to Goddess Kamada just now. He will cast these holy bodies away, after the sacrifice. We can feast on those sacred bodies to our full content. This day is a festival day for us.” Hanuman rose suddenly from under the tree; like a cobra whose tail has been trodden upon, he hissed with rage, and leaped forward like a giant flame. “Alas! I fear what has happened already to my Lord,” he wailed.

He entered the City of Ahi-ravana. At the very entrance, he had to fight and overcome Makaradhwaja, the guard in monkey form. But seeing that he was a monkey, he explored his genealogy and history. Hanuman was able to win his confidence and get from him inside information about Rama and Lakshmana and their fate. He also came to know from him that the brothers were to be

taken at dawn to the temple of Goddess Kamada, for being offered as human sacrifice to Her.

Hanuman’s interaction with Makaradhwaja:

Hanuman asked Makaradhwaja, the Monkey Guardian of Patala, where the two brothers were kept by the cruel Overlord of the Nether Regions. He gave him all the details. However, he insisted that he will not allow him to enter the area, for; he had to obey his master and be loyal to him and to his interests. “Whatever the suffering I have to endure, I shall not let you in,” he said. “If I show you special consideration for the reason that you too are a monkey, I will thereby be dishonouring the entire monkey species, as unreliable and ungrateful. My lord, Ahiravana, is as much adorable to me as your lord, Rama, is to you. However near you may be to me, I shall not waver or deviate. I must do my duty and carry out his command. You can get in only after defeating me in combat,” he said challengingly. Hanuman appreciated his sentiments and his sense of duty. He was happy that Makaradhwaja had taken the proper attitude. He took up the challenge and entered into the fight. After some time spent in fierce combat, Hanuman decided that protraction was not desirable. So, he twisted his tail around the body of Makaradhwaja and cast him far out in the distance.

Hanuman assumes a molecular form

Hanuman boldly entered the City. He noticed a florist entering the gate with a fine big garland of fragrant flowers. Resolving that this was the best chance to reach the place he wanted to, he assumed suddenly a molecular form and occupied the garland the florist was carrying. The garland was not rendered any heavier. It

was as light as ever. The florist had no idea of what happened. Everything was as before, for him. The garland was delivered to Ahi-Ravana himself. He took it in both his hands and placed it round the neck of the image of Kamada in the temple. He also offered various rich dishes as sanctified food to the idol. From his vantage point on the garland round its neck, Hanuman ate up the dishes as they were placed before the idol. The Rakshasas saw the food disappearing, and they were delighted that their Goddess had deigned to accept their devotion. Ahi-Ravana too was happy at the thought that “this day my prayers have been answered. My fortune has reached its summit.”

Meanwhile, Rama and Lakshmana, the brothers, were brought in, decorated in the manner in which sacrificial animals are decorated. Gigantic Rakshasa warriors were holding them by their arms on either side. Hanuman saw them being made to stand by the side of the sacrificial altar. Hanuman bowed obeisance to Rama from where he was, and filled his mind with adorations for Him. The guards placed the brothers right in front of the Idol, and held sharp swords near their necks. Ahi-Ravana said that the sacrificial offering of the lives of the two brothers must take place immediately after the waving of the Holy Flame, and that they ought to be ready to execute their task, without a moment’s delay. Rama and Lakshmana, who were really Divine Beings playing the role of humans, had discovered that it was Hanuman who had eaten the food offerings placed by Ahi-Ravana before the Deity, and that knowledge induced them to take on to the impending events with great good humour. Seeing them smiling and light-hearted, Ahi-Ravana was awfully enraged. He said, “Well, if the few moments more of life that

you are granted give you so much of joy, I do not grudge it. Be happy while you can. A while later, you can smile in the realm of Yama, the Ruler of the Dead.” He paid no regard to the brothers, but continued to relish their fate and utter harsh words to wound them even more. At this, the priest rose and paying respects to his master, informed him that the code of political morality requires that the victims be permitted to pray, if they so desire, to their guardian for peace after death. The Rakshasa Chief rose from his seat and announced, “Princes! If you have any well-wishers, this is the time to express gratitude for them, since you have only a few moments to live.” Rama and Lakshmana looked at each other’s face and smiled.

Ahi-Ravana killed, Makaradhwaja crowned ruler of Patala:

That very moment, Hanuman let out a terrific roar. Hearing it, the Rakshasas imagined that their Goddess had manifested Herself and was expressing Her anger. Hanuman jumped from the garland, assuming his terror-striking Form and grasping the sword that was in the hand of the Goddess, he felled Ahi-Ravana to the ground and hit him all over, hacking him to pieces. But his body was of diamond strength and he had won a mysterious boon which made the bits get together and become whole, as soon as they were separated. At last, Hanuman fixed Rama in his mind and with a shout, Jai Rama, he caught the head in one hand and with the other sliced the neck. Before they could join, he threw the head into the blazing fire, in the sacrificial pit, before the Idol.

Just then, Makaradhwaja managed to reach the temple and the presence of the Goddess. On seeing him, Hanuman recovered the

golden crown from the head of Ahi-ravana, and placed it on his head; he proclaimed him ruler of Patala and advised him to be ever grateful to the Brothers and to be always loyal and devoted to them.

Rama and Lakshmana back in midst of the Vanaras:

He had Rama and Lakshmana seated on his shoulders and, at one jump, he rose from Patala and landed safe in the midst of the Vanara hordes eagerly looking for them with their million eyes. Vibhishana and others could not contain the joy that overwhelmed them when they saw the Brothers safe and sound before them. They fell at the feet of Rama and Lakshmana. They clasped Hanuman in their arms and shed tears of gratitude. The Vanaras praised Hanuman in a thousand different paeans. They lifted him on their shoulders. They fed him and fondled him. They embraced him, poured their love on him. Vibhishana stood before Rama and said, “Lord! What shall I say of your *Leela*, your Sport? You alone can reveal to us the meaning of your acts and activities. You have come with the resolution to wipe off the Rakshasa denizens even in the Nether Regions. All this stage-acting, is, I know, to fulfil that resolution.”

Ravana laments the death of his son, Ahi-ravana:

Ravana came to know that Rama and Lakshmana had been brought back by Hanuman from the kingdom of Ahi-ravana. He heard the tragic news of the death of his son, Ahi-ravana. He collapsed and fell on the ground. He lamented his loss, long and loud. Tears flowed in streams from his eyes (*RKR V Part II p.2350-245*)

Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant; but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable. Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses, and brave the hammer-blows and sword-thrusts of the path fraught with danger.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

13.5 LESSER KNOWN SONS OF RAVANA

LESSER KNOWN SONS OF RAVANA

Ravana had seven sons from his three wives: Akshayakumara, Atikaya, Devantaka, Indrajit, Narantaka, Prahasta and Trishira.

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Akshayakumara (Akshakumara) was the youngest son of Ravana and the brother of Indrajit. In the Ramayana, when Hanuman started destroying the Asoka Vatika after talking to Sita, Ravana sent him at the head of a Rakshasa army to take care of it. It is mentioned in the Ramayana that when the news of Hanuman's destruction of Asoka Vatika reached Ravana's Court, Ravana looked at his young son, Akshayakumara. A warrior of just sixteen, he took the gaze of his father as his command and left for battle in his flying chariot.

He fought valiantly with Hanuman, aiming various weapons at him. Though highly impressed by the young prince's valour and skills, finally Hanuman had to kill him. Ravana was filled with grief at this news.

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Atikaya was the son of Ravana and his second wife Dhanyamalini in the Ramayana epic. Atikaya was the younger brother of Indrajit and was extremely powerful. Once upon a time when he infuriated Lord Shiva atop Mount Kailasa, the deity hurled his Trisula (divine trident) at Atikaya, but Atikaya caught the Trisula in mid-air and folded his hands before the lord in a humble manner. Lord Shiva was pleased at seeing this, and benevolently blessed Atikaya with the secrets of archery and divine weapons.

Due to his extraordinary skills and superiority, he had to be slain by Lakshmana by using a Brahmastra, the supremely powerful arrow obtained by the blessings of Lord Brahma. The secret was revealed to Lakshmana by the elemental God of Wind, Vayu at the behest of Lord Indra, that otherwise invincible armour of Lord Brahma was granted to Atikaya that could only be pierced by a Brahmastra.

Atikaya and his brother Trishira, are believed to be incarnations of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, who were killed by Vishnu at the creation of the world

.....

In the epic Ramayana (which happened in Treta Yuga), Narantaka and Devantaka are the rakshasa (demon) sons of the evil demon king Ravana. Narantaka was in charge of an army consisting of seventy-two crore (720 million) rakshasa. He with his army was eventually killed by the Vanara Hanuman. Devantaka is killed by Angada during a war.

Prahastha was the younger brother of Indrajit, who died at the hands of Lakshmana on the first day of the Battle between the forces of Rama and Ravana on the Soil of Lanka

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

AKSHAYAKUMARA⁶⁸

Hanuman⁶⁹ saw an orchard and plucking some tasty fruits, he ate his fill.... A Rakshasa guard wanted to frighten him ... He gave blow to Rakshasa guard which felled him to the ground who ran and reported to his gang head.... the news reached Ravana... It struck as an evil omen to Ravana... The formidable forces sent by him could not harm Hanuman-- At this, Ravana sent his own dear son, Akshayakumara, at the head of thousands of seasoned Warrior-Rakshasas. But Hanuman slaughtered this host in a trice, and Ravana had to mourn the death of his beloved son. The entire land shivered in fear at the news of the death of the Prince and the decimation of his army. (*RKR V Part II p.144-146*)

⁶⁸ Akshayakumara: Ravana's son. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁶⁹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* – **Hanuman decides to teach the demons a lesson and proceeds to lay to utter waste, the beautiful Asoka gardens. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana:**

PRAHASTHA⁷⁰

Ravana sent for his ministers and set about making preparations for the battle that was imminent. “Rakshasas!” he accosted, “The Vanaras, the Jambavanthas, and the men who are now attacking us are not even a morsel for our maws. Do not lose courage, hesitate or argue. Plunge into the fight. Get ready,” he yelled. But Prahastha stood up from his seat, and with folded palms, he said, “Rakshasas! Let us not desert the right path. Lord! These ministers of yours speak words that are in line with your desire. But that will not ensure success. One solitary monkey crossed the ocean and coming into our City performed many a wonderful feat. At that time, these ministers and these armies could not put an end to his destructive antics. You say monkeys are but morsels for our maws. Well, when that monkey was here, where were those maws? Did they have no hunger? When it burnt the City into a heap of ashes, these ministers had evidently no appetite to eat it! Lord, the words that fall from the lips of these ministers might appear very pleasant to you now but they will bring about dire calamities as time moves on. Think about all this in the quiet hours. Rama has struck camp on our Suneela Mountain. He came over the sea through a bridge they constructed. He has with him an army of uncounted numbers of Vanaras. Can such a person be a mere man? Give up that surmise if you believe so. Do not prattle as the tongue, that is let loose, talks. Do not welcome into your ears the rhetoric of these ministers. Do not also condemn me as a coward, afraid of battle. Believe in me and in the aptness and urgency of my advice. Take

⁷⁰ Prahastha: Son of Ravana and minister of Ravana. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Sita with you now and surrender her to him, praying for pardon. That step will save us and save Lanka. We can then claim that we have rescued our tribe from destruction. This is the triumph we can achieve. Or else, face defeat and disaster. Get ready this very moment. Your renown will last as long as the Sun and Moon endure. Do not acquire a name that will be execrated so long as the Sun and Moon endure.”

Ravana replied in dire anger and sheer bravado. He was trembling with rage at the unpalatable advice that Prahastha⁷¹ gave him. Raising his voice to a wild roar, he admonished Prahastha in a torrent of abuse. “Fool! Who taught you this trickery? Whence did you derive such wisdom? They say, sparks originate in bamboo clusters! You are born in my clan.” Ravana gnashed his teeth wildly. He shouted harsh and vulgar abuse. Finally, he kicked Prahastha out of the Hall. But before going out, Prahastha clarified his stand condemning his father and his overweening pride which had rendered him blind. Ravana, he said, would be the cause of the destruction of the dynasty.

He consoled himself that for one who is mortally stricken and is awaiting his last breath, no drug can be of any use. “So my good advice appeared futile to my father,” he told himself. He proceeded straight to his mother and related all that happened. Both agreed that there was nothing they could say or do, which would turn him on to the right path. So they sat together and

⁷¹ See Chapter, *Ravana - Ravana Prepares for the Battle; Counsel of his son Prahastha ignored*

were lost in the contemplation of Rama and his majesty. (*RKRV Part II p.186-188*)

Prahastha rushed into the battlefield raising a great hue and cry. Nila took him on; and remembering ever more keenly the name of Rama, he engaged him furiously. Leaping on him with terrible ferocity, Nila succeeded in killing the new general, Prahastha. (*RKRV Part II p.221*)

NARANTAKA⁷²

He heard the tragic news of the death of his son, Ahi-ravana. He collapsed and fell on the ground. He lamented his loss, long and loud. Tears flowed in streams from his eyes. Ravana said to himself: “Now my kith and kin have been decimated. There is no one left alive.” Just then, an aged Minister said, “Why do you say so? You have another surviving son, Narantaka, who has with him 72 crores [a crore is ten million] of Rakshasas. Call him for support. Send a messenger immediately. He can destroy the enemy. You need have no doubt.” Ravana was delighted at these words. He sent the messenger, named Dhoomakethu, with instructions to bring with him the clever Narantaka. The messenger described the tragedies that had overtaken Lanka and communicated the urgent appeal Ravana had made for his help. He proceeded, on the spot, with his hordes and as soon as he reached the field he fell upon the Vanara forces. Hanuman spied

⁷² Narantaka (Naraanthaka): Demon son of Ravana. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

him from far. He went forward to confront him. On seeing him and his terror-striking form, Narantaka was struck with fear. He asked Dhoomakethu who he was and was told that he was Hanuman, the invincible hero who had killed all his brothers. Hearing this, Narantaka became even more ferocious. He placed arrows on his bow and let them off against Hanuman; but, he caught them all by the hand and broke them to pieces. He came very close to Narantaka and pounded his breast heavily with his clenched fist. He lifted him aloft and turning him around fast, threw him deep into a Nether Region named Rasatala. Millions of his Rakshasa followers were thrown into the sea. He broke into smithereens the chariots in the army of Narantaka. The charioteers were also decimated. (*RKRV Part II p.244-246*)

You can win the Grace of the Lord only by dharma. Dharma induces the spirit of self-surrender and develops it. Without the training that the practice of dharma gives to your senses, your feelings and emotions, you cannot have steady faith and steady detachment. The Lord is Dharma conceived as a personality. Rama is known as Vigrahavan Dharma (Righteousness personified). If you step across the bounds of Dharma and play foul, you cannot win the game of life.

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

14. RAVANA'S BROTHERS

Man did not come here to sleep and eat; he has come to manifest, by disciplined processes, the divine in him. That is why he is called vyakti (individual), he who makes Vyatka (clear) the Sakthi (power) that is in him--- the Divine energy that motivates him.

For this purpose he has come endowed with this body and the intelligence needed to control it and divert it to useful channels of activity. You must achieve this by Dharmnishtha and Karmanishtha---steady pursuit of morality and good deeds.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

14.1 KUMBHAKARNA

KUMBHAKARNA

Kumbhakarna is a rakshasa and brother of Ravana in the Indian Ramayana epic. Despite of his monstrous size and great hunger, he was somewhat described of having a good character, though he killed and ate many Hindu monks just to show his power.

He was considered so pious, intelligent and brave that Indra was jealous of him. Along with his brothers, Ravana and Vibhishana, he performed a major yajna and penance for Lord Brahma. When the time came for asking a boon (blessing) from Brahma, his tongue was tied by goddess Saraswati (acting on Indra's request). So instead of asking "Indraasana" (seat of Indra), he asked for "Nidraasana" (bed for sleeping). It is also said he intended to ask for Nirdevatvam (annihilation of the Devas), and instead asked for Nidravatvam (sleep). His request was granted. But his brother Ravana asked Brahma to undo this boon as it was in reality a curse. So Kumbhakarna slept, and was awake for six months, when he ate everything in the vicinity, including humans.

During the war, Ravana went into battle and was humiliated by Rama and his army. He decided he needed the help of his

brother Kumbhakarna, who was awakened with great difficulty. He woke up only after one thousand elephants walked over him.

When he was informed of the circumstances of Ravana's war with Rama, he tried to convince Ravana that what he was doing was wrong. However, he chose to fight in the battle due to his loyalty to his brother. He was killed by Rama. When Ravana heard of his brother's death, he fainted and proclaimed that he is truly doomed.

Kumbhakarna had two sons, Kumbha and Nikumbha, who too fought in the war against Rama and were killed.

Kumbhakarna is certainly one of the most interesting characters in the Ramayana epic. Whereas most characters perfectly embody either virtue or vice, Kumbhakarna is a more complex figure. Able to realize the mistakes and wrong-doings of Ravana, even trying to intervene and moderate at certain times, he is unable to openly oppose him, feeling bound by his warrior ethics. When he was finally defeated, he annihilated in Lord Rama and got salvation.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

KUMBHAKARNA

Kumbhakarna: Younger brother of Ravana, who slept for six months at a time. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

HIS BIRTH:

Ravana was born to parents by name Brahma and Kaikasi. He had two brothers, with names Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. (SSB 1977 p.154)

Kumbhakarna's nature:

Kumbhakarna was the embodiments of the dull temperaments. (SSS 1996 p.84)

Kumbhakarna was a *Tamasic* enemy. A *Tamasic* person is one who mistakes good to be bad and bad to be good. (SSS Vol.25 p.184)

Kumbhakarna (was) the embodiment of the *Tamasic*⁷³, the dull, the self-destructive, (and) the lethargic traits. (SSS Vol.19 p.70)
Kumbhakarna, who stood for *tamasic* quality, spent his entire life eating and sleeping. (SSS Vol.31 p.277)

Ravana had a brother, Kumbhakarna, who was very powerful. (SS 11/98 p.289)

The three boons granted by Brahma:

Once Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana performed a severe penance to invoke the presence of Brahma. Brahma appeared before them and asked them what they wanted. He said he would grant them whatever boon they wanted⁷⁴. Kumbhakarna wanted

⁷³ Kumbhakarna was the embodiment of *tamo guna* (lethargic, dull quality). (SSS Vol.31 p.277)

⁷⁴ Amrita means immortal; it does not follow that he who takes in amrita will live eternally; even avatars cast off the body, when their task is accomplished. It means fixing the mind on Reality, becoming aware of

to ask that he should be never at anyone's mercy--*nirdhaya*⁷⁵. But by a slip of the tongue⁷⁶ he asked for *nidhra* (sleep)⁷⁷. Brahma declared: "So be it." (SSS Vol. 29 p.146)

Then onward, Kumbhakarna became a great sleeper. A person devoid of compassion is not human (*manava*), but a demon (*dhanava*). (SSS 1996 p.74)

We should not be devoid of compassion at any time. It is said:

It is by dint of devotion that one should find fulfilment in life

Whether he is a prince or a pauper, a fool or a scholar,

It is by dint of devotion that he should find fulfilment.

Whether he performs penance holding his nose,

Whether he dons ochre robe or holds his breath,

the Imperishable Entity that one is and merging the consciousness in it. Look at the rakshasas! Ravana and Kumbhakarna went through extreme austerities for thousands of years. God manifested Himself before them and granted them the boons they prayed for. But, since the austerity did not win for them purity and cleanliness, virtue and humility, they continued as ever, monsters of violence and wickedness. They had no trace of the *Satwic* (poised state) in their make-up. They had the Grace of God in such a large measure; God appeared, inquired and granted. But, they behaved even worse than before! They denied by their lives the Grace they won. (SSS Vol.6 p.112)

⁷⁵ A heart bereft of compassion, that is, *Nirdhaya* (devoid of compassion). (SSS 1996 p.98)

⁷⁶ Ravana's brother Kumbhakarna was blessed with a timely twist of the tongue (SSS Vol.4 p.173)

⁷⁷ He asked for *nidhra* (the power to sleep), instead of *nigraha* (the power to slaughter)! *ibid*

*Whether he is adorned by ornaments and necklaces,
It is by dint of devotion that he would find fulfilment. (SSB
1996 p.74)*

LANKA ON FIRE:

Ravanaordered that Hanuman's tail be set on fire after wrapping it with clothes dipped in oil. The tail of Hanuman was set on fire. Hanuman⁷⁸ did not keep quiet. With the burning tail, he jumped from one building to the other and thus set the entire city on fire. (*SSS Vol.42 p.116-117*)

The wife of Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of Ravana, ran forward with her prayer. "Oh, Messenger of Rama! My husband is submerged in deep sleep. Do not set fire to our home. Save my husband from being burnt to death."

The house where Kumbhakarna⁸⁰ was asleep, and the house of that super most among devotees, Vibhishana were the only two that were not erased by the fire. (*RKR V Part II p.153/154*)

Suddenly, Kumbhakarna, immersed in sleep for months, and who was therefore unaware of the conflagration at the time of the visit of Hanuman, emerged from his sleep and rushed into the Audience Hall. He shouted at his elder brother (Ravana), "Hello! You boasted that there is no hero equal to you in all the three worlds. You challenged the worlds and dared anyone to face you. Now I hear a tiny little monkey entered the City and burnt it to

⁷⁸ See Chapter Hanuman - **Hanuman sets Lanka on fire:**

ashes! Shame! Shame on you! How did you allow it to escape alive?” With these words of jeer, he left the hall, and hastened home. (*RKRK Part II p.162*)

THE SEIZE

Waking Kumbhakarna from sleep:

(Ravana) ran towards the place where his brother, Kumbhakarna, lay asleep, and he attempted to awaken him by urgent and drastic means. Vast crowds of Rakshasas gathered near his ears and beat huge drums wildly. Ravana brought hundreds of boxers who hit the sleeping demon. Hundreds rained punches on him with their fisticuffs. Many dealt heavy thrusts on his thighs, with gigantic maces. At last, the eyes opened, and the demon looked around.

Kumbhakarna’s Advice to Ravana:

Ravana related his despair to him. He told him of the death of his own sons. That made him rise in red vengeance, as if he was the very embodiment of Time, the Universal Destroyer. He exclaimed, “Fool, can victory be ever achieved by you? You have tarnished yourselves unpardonably by the sin of stealing and bringing away Sita, the Mother of the Universe. Your wicked act is inexcusably heinous. Your viciousness is bringing destruction on Lanka. Go, surrender to Rama at least now, regardless of your absurd sense of prestige! Was it right, for a ruler charged with the high duty of maintaining righteousness and suppressing unrighteousness in his kingdom, to cast off propriety and good conduct, and abduct another’s wife? Has this the approval of ethics? Is it conducive to spiritual progress? You

have to suffer the fruits of your actions. Ravana! Rama is no ordinary mortal. Surpanakha, our sister, was maddened by lust. She planned to achieve her selfish desire and she suffered the consequence of her wickedness. She set your instinct on fire, and induced you to enact this barbarous crime. Listening to a wily woman, you cast aside all discrimination, and brought on your head this calamity by the mischief of your own hands.” Kumbhakarna laid the blame on his own brother and advised him for long.

But Ravana was in no mood to accept the blame. “Do not desert me in disaster. Prepare yourselves for leading our armies into the war. Save my life,” he pleaded.

Finding no means of escape, and overcome by affection for the brother, Kumbhakarna got ready. They placed cauldrons of toddy and mounds of meat before him, so that he might breakfast on them. Gulping the whole lot in a moment, Kumbhakarna proceeded to the battlefield.

Kumbhakarna blesses Vibhishana:

Seeing him enter the fray, Vibhishana, his younger brother, ran forward from Rama’s camp and fell at his feet in humble reverence. Rising up, he announced himself by name. Kumbhakarna beamed in joy. He embraced his brother with loving tenderness. Vibhishana was the first to speak. He said, “Brother! Ravana insulted me in open court and kicked me out of the Audience Hall. I considered all aspects of this affair and counselled him in various ways. He discarded my advice and gave ear to power-mad foolish ministers. He hurled unbearable

abuses on me, within the hearing of those persons. I could not suffer the shame of it. I surrendered to Rama; and knowing that I was helpless and innocent, he accepted me and granted me refuge.” At this, Kumbhakarna replied, “Well, brother! The shadow of Death is already on Ravana. How then can he pay heed to good counsel? Surely, you have done well to fulfil the goal of your life. You are not Vibhishana now; you are *Vibhushana* (the shining jewel, the most splendid ornament) of the Rakshasa clan! You have ennobled and purified the clan by serving so ardently the very Ocean of Happiness, the Crown of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama. Go, serve him with sincere zeal. Brother! I have to engage in battle regardless of the fate in store for me. I am also nearing Death. Ravana knows that my heart is not with him. I advise you to give up loyalty to this side or that, but confine yourself to loyalty to Rama.”

Receiving this advice and the blessings of his brother, Vibhishana returned to the presence of Rama. He told Rama, “Lord! That mountain of a Rakshasa is Kumbhakarna. He is a ferociously brave fighter. He has come to engage you in battle.”

Kumbhakarna’s Onslaught panics the Vanaras:

When the Vanaras heard these words, they were so angry that they spouted fire and leaped under the leadership of Hanuman on the enemy forces. They threw huge trees and enormous boulders at him. But Kumbhakarna stood firm and unaffected. The Vanara attack was like hitting a mad elephant with an eyelash! Boiling with anger, Hanuman administered a mighty blow with his clenched fist and Kumbhakarna reeled. But recovering soon he returned the blow, and felled him to the ground. Nala and Nila

now joined the fight. They too could not withstand the might of Kumbhakarna. Fear seized the Vanara hordes. Sugriva and Angada had their share of the mighty Kumbhakarna's onslaught and they rolled on the ground. At last, Kumbhakarna squeezed Sugriva under his arm and carried him off the field. Kumbhakarna asserted that, by carrying the King off, he had vanquished the Vanara Army.

Meanwhile, Hanuman regained awareness of the state of things. He found Sugriva was not around. He got anxious to discover his whereabouts. While being carried away, pressed under the arm of the mighty Kumbhakarna, Sugriva recovered consciousness and he tried his best to wriggle out of the hold. Hanuman found him engaged in this desperate bid and ran to render him help. However, Sugriva separated himself from his captor and started a valiant fight against him. He bit off the nose and ears of Kumbhakarna, and the monster had, as a consequence, enormous difficulty to breathe. Soon, a horde of Vanaras yelling, "Victory to Rama" "Victory to our Master," surrounded Kumbhakarna and rained rocks, hills and trees on him. The infuriated demon leaped on the Vanaras and catching whomsoever he could lay his hands on, he crunched them and swallowed them. Many were crushed to death. Thus Kumbhakarna was able to scatter the Vanaras in panic.

Rama enters the battlefield:

At this, Rama told Lakshmana and others that the time had come when he had to enter the field. His intercession could not be delayed any longer. "Lakshmana! Bring that 'inexhaustible' arrow sheath hither," he said. Bearing the command of Rama on

his head, he brought the sheath immediately and placed it in his brother's hands. Armed with the Kodanda Bow, Rama walked into the battle area, like a lion towards its prey. Lakshmana, Sugriva, Hanuman and Jambavan followed him. The arrows from Rama's bow flew fast like winged serpents straight at the foe. They spread all over the place and penetrated the four quarters. They destroyed millions of heroes and warriors in the enemy ranks. Unable to stand the onslaught of the arrows, the Rakshasas fled. The stream of arrows never got dry, every arrow that was shot returned back into the same sheath after inflicting the injury intended. Realising that Rama was out to exterminate the Rakshasa forces, Kumbhakarna was terribly enraged. He roared like a wounded lion and jumped into the midst of the fray. The Vanaras were alarmed. They fled in fear.

Fight between Rama and Kumbhakarna:

Finding that no other plan was feasible, Rama aimed an arrow at Kumbhakarna and sliced off his hands at the shoulders. At this, the monster shone like the Mandara Mountain, when its wings were sliced off by the Lord of Gods, Indra. He rushed towards Rama with a shriek. Rama drew the bowstring full behind the ear and let go a bunch of arrows that struck with deadly force all over his face. Kumbhakarna reeled at the impact but did not fall. So, Rama shot another arrow which severed his head and felled it to the ground. When the head was sliced off, the trunk continued to run for some distance, and to prevent this movement, Rama shot another arrow which cut it in twain. Suddenly splendour arose from the body and advancing towards Rama merged in him.

Kumbhakarna attains Liberation:

The Rakshasa attained liberation without performing any *Sadhana* or *Japa* (Recitation of Name) or *Thapas* (Austerity for Sense Control and Mind Control). While alive, he shone like an incomparable hero on the battlefield; dead, he attained the highest state of Mergence with God. Rama stood on the field, with a sprinkling of sweat drops on his lotus face. His body revealed a few drops of Kumbhakarna's blood that had fallen on it during the fight. It was the hour of dusk. Both armies had had a fierce hot day of ferocious fighting. They retired into their camps. The Grace bestowed by Rama reinforced the spirits of the Vanaras. Like fire fed by dry grass, the flame of their ardour rose high. (*RKRV Part II p. 222-227*)

KUMBHAKARNA'S SONS⁷⁹:

Kumbha: Kumbhakarna's son.

Nikumbha: A very powerful demon, Kumbhakarna's son.

(*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁷⁹ See Chapter, *Ravana* -Two sons of Kumbhakarna and Prahastha and Mahodara meet their death

Man is essentially Divine. However, he believes himself to be an individual, limited and temporary, because he is entangled in the characteristics of the Five Elements, namely, sound, touch, form, taste and smell. This error brings about joy and grief, good and bad, birth and death. To escape from this association with the elements, to rid oneself of the pulls of their characteristics, is the sign of Liberation, called in Sanskrit as *Kaivalya*, *Moksha* or *Mukthi*. Names may change, but the achievement is the same.

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

14.2 VIBHISHANA

VIBHISHANA

Vibhishana is a character in the epic Ramayana. He was the younger brother of the demon Ravana. Though a half-demon himself, Vibhishana was of a noble character and advised Ravana, who kidnapped and abducted Sita, to return her to her husband Rama in an orderly fashion (promptly). When his brother did not listen to his advice, Vibhishana joined Rama's army. Later, when Rama defeated Ravana, Rama crowned Vibhishana as the king of Lanka.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

VIBHISHANA

Vibhishana: Brother of Ravana; Rakshasa chief who represented pure mindedness and sided with Rama. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

BROTHER OF RAVANA:

Vibhishana was the younger brother of Ravana. They were three brothers – Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. (*SSS Vol.42 p 74*)

Ravana’s brother, Vibhishana, was a great *satwic* individual. From the time of his early childhood, he was spending all his time in thinking of the name of the Lord. (*SSB 1977 p.155*)

VIBHISHANA’S WIFE AND DAUGHTERS:

Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, and her two daughters, Ajata and Trijata. (*SSB 1996 p.58*)

BRAHMA’S BOON

Vibhishana was an aspirant par excellence. Even while he was a tender boy, he performed penance and propitiated the Lord. Lord Brahma appeared in front of him and said, “O Vibhishana! Ask whatever you want.” Vibhishana said to the Lord, “Lord! Bless me so that I lead a life of righteousness, charity, and sacrifice. My heart should overflow with compassion and it should never be hard⁸⁰.” (*SSB 1996 p.73/74*) Vibhishana said that he only wanted to have his mind fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord. He

⁸⁰ Because of this boon, Vibhishana remained totally unaffected in spite of all the raillery and abuse by Ravana and his sons. Vibhishana always remained compassionate, never yielding to hatred or anger. Because his heart was full of compassion, he secured God’s grace and proximity to the Divine. One without compassion is a demon and not a human being. (*SSS Vol. 29 p.147*)

prayed that he be given the strength by which he will always be at the feet of the Lord. (*SSB 1977 p.155/156*)

Brahma blessed him. By constant effort, Vibhishana filled his heart with the quality of compassion. That is why he could understand the Rama Principle. He lived a life of devotion, observing truth and righteousness. The name and form of the Lord correspond to truth and righteousness. *Sathya* and *dharma* are the very core of the *Ramayana*. (*SSB 1996 p.74*)

VIBHISHANA LISTENS TO RAMA BEING DESCRIBED BY SURPANAKHA WITH JOY:

While Surpanakha was describing the beauty and splendour of the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, there was one person in the Audience Hall, Vibhishana, who gave ear to the story with joy in his heart and tears in his eyes. He installed those Divinely charming figures in the temple of his heart and yearned deeply for the chance of being in their Presence and falling at their feet. “Will they receive me? Can I be saved? Do I deserve to be blessed by them?” he asked himself. He told himself: “They are Divine, for certain. They have appeared on earth in human form, in order to destroy the wicked brood of Rakshasas.” He offered in his mind all that he had and was. He began living in the constant meditation of their glory from that very moment. (*RKR V Part II p. 43-44*)

LANKA ON FIRE

Vibhishana’s home a temple of god:

Suddenly, (Hanuman’s) eyes fell upon a building that seemed a temple of *Hari* (Vishnu, whose Avatar Rama was). It had a garden of Tulsi plants all around it. Over the entrance door, the name *Hari* was carved beautifully. The house was undoubtedly a Temple of God Vishnu. Hanuman was surprised. “How came the name of Hari over this door?” he wondered, “Surely, this is a holy spot,” he decided.

He jumped on to the roof of that place and peeped through the window to find out what exactly was happening. Just at that moment, a person was stretching his limbs prior to rising from bed, pronouncing the Name of Hari. When that fell on his ears, Hanuman was extremely delighted. He was also emboldened when he knew that even in Lanka there were people reciting the name of Hari. So he felt like searching for Sita with greater courage and less apprehension. “The man of this house appears to be devout and good. Perhaps he may be able to tell me the whereabouts of Sita. He might be persuaded to befriend me since we are both loyal to the self-same Form of God.” (*RKRV Part II p. 125*)

Vibhishana’s Interaction with Hanuman:

With this idea, Hanuman changed himself into a priest of the Brahmin caste, and made his entrance into that house. Though for a moment he had some doubt regarding the stranger, Vibhishana, the owner of the house, decided that, whoever he is, he surely must be honoured since he was a Brahmin. So he came

forward and prostrated before Hanuman. “Master! Which is your native place? Where are you coming from? How could you avoid being noticed and harassed by the Rakshasas in the streets?” Vibhishana asked. He described to his guest the horrors indulged in by the Rakshasas and extolled the audacity and fearlessness of Hanuman.

Hanuman replied, “I am a servant of Hari. My name is Hanuman. I have come because Rama sent me,” and he spoke thereafter of the virtues and excellences of Rama in some detail. Hanuman noticed that while he was describing Rama, tears rolled down the cheeks of Vibhishana. “Oh, what a happy day! How great is my fortune! As soon as I rose from bed, I could hear today these glorious words which bring peace and joy,” thought Vibhishana to himself.

Hanuman interpreted these incidents as the Grace of Rama. He was wonder struck that in Lanka, the Land of Fear, there could be one such person soaked in Hari. He asked him, “Sir, how is it that you live without fear in this vile atmosphere?” Vibhishana replied, “It is due to the Grace of God. For however long He resolves that we should live, we have to live that long. There is no escape. He is the master of the objective world and so, His law cannot be overruled, or changed by anyone. Does not the tongue⁸¹ move about incessantly in the cavity of the mouth where teeth with sharp edges surround it? Who helps it to escape

⁸¹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - Example of the tongue:

being bitten⁸²? So too, I am living here. Enough about me. Tell me on what task you have been sent here.”

Hanuman realised that he was a good man and that association with such men would without doubt yield good results. As a preliminary, he asked, “Sir, what is your name? What are you doing in this Lanka?” Touched by the humility and good manners of Hanuman, Vibhishana replied, “Sir, I am an unfortunate person, the brother of Ravana. My name is Vibhishana. I am in a pathetic fix, for I am unable to recite the Name of Hari, to my heart’s content.” Hearing this Hanuman felt he had his answer. He performed one high skip in joy and said, “I am a Messenger of Rama. I have come in search of Sita.”

In an instant, Vibhishana fell at the feet of Hanuman and asked, “Sir, where is my Rama now? I am yearning long to see Him, but I lack the virtues that alone can entitle me to that gift. My tribe is the demonic Rakshasa tribe. Can I have the chance to have His Darsan? I have not engaged myself in Sadhana. I have no freedom here to practise austerities and rites. I have earned no right to the good fortune. Will I be blessed by Rama?” Listening to his appeal, the heart of Hanuman melted in sympathy. (*RKR V Part II p.125-127*)

⁸² Rama held spiritual discussions with the Vanara warriors and imparted to them many great lessons. He told them to behave like the tongue surrounded by rapier-like teeth. Obstacles litter the way of an aspirant at every stage. The tongue outlasts the teeth. Wicked people will fall off like the teeth that surround the tongue. Wicked people will leave you as the teeth leave the tongue. (*SSB 1996 p.74*)

Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, inquired from Hanuman whether Rama will accept his homage and take him under His protecting shade. He said, "I am the brother of His worst enemy, whom He has vowed to destroy; I am a member of the demonic race; I am unacquainted with the *Vedas* or *Sastras* or the rituals of the *Aryans*." *SSS Vol.7 p.275/276*)

Vibhishana said to Hanuman, "Oh Hanuman, though you met Rama just a few months ago, you have advanced very high in the realm of the Spirit. And you are enjoying the sweet proximity of Rama. But I have been chanting Rama Nama for so many years; yet, Rama has not showered His Grace on me. I have not had the *darshan* of Rama even once

To this Hanuman replied, "Oh Vibhishana, it is not that you ought to participate in the mission of Rama and serve his cause to obtain the full benefit of chanting Rama Nama⁸³. You must not only perform penance and do *Japa* and meditation, but you must also participate in *seva*. Service is the very boat of life. It is not enough if you see a fruit. Your stomach will not be filled merely by looking at the fruit. You must eat the fruit and digest it. (*SSB 1996 p.79*)

Hanuman replied: "Vibhishana! It is true that you are ceaselessly chanting the name of Rama.

⁸³ You must always keep the company of the good and the godly. It is only when you remain with good people and perform good actions that your devotion will remain firm and unshaken. Verbal utterance of *mantras* or the ritual reciting of the Lord's name is not enough. (*SSS Vol. 24 p.87*)

But to what extent are you engaged in the service of Rama⁸⁴? By merely contemplating on the name of Rama you cannot get Rama's grace⁸⁵. When your brother Ravana brought away Sitadevi, what is the help you rendered to her? Did you do anything to relieve even partially Rama's distress?" (*SSS Vol.23 p.16*)

Then Hanuman replied, "O you fool! Do you think He cares for ritual correctitude, or family status or scholarship? If so, how could He accept me, a monkey"? That settled the matter. Vibhishana was assured of Grace. (*SSS Vol.7 p.276*)

Hanuman⁸⁶ consoled Vibhishana a great deal. Relieved by these words, Vibhishana informed Hanuman details of how Sita was brought to Lanka. Hanuman refused to partake of any food or drink, since he had resolved to refrain from both until he could see Sita and communicate to her the message of Rama. He was eager to renew the search without delay. But Vibhishana advised him to proceed cautiously and slowly, and inform himself of the strength and weakness of Ravana's Empire before he left. He himself acquainted him with these points in some detail.

⁸⁴ Engage yourselves in godly activities. This was the lesson Hanuman taught to Vibhishana when he bemoaned before Hanuman that in spite of his constant chanting of Rama's name he had not been blessed with a vision of Rama. Hanuman then told Vibhishana that though he had been reciting Rama's name he had done no act of service to Rama such as comforting Sita or trying to see her during her ten months ordeal in Lanka. "*Dil me Ram! Haath me Kaam*" (Have Rama in your heart and do your duty with your hands). (*SSS Vol.24 p.87*)

⁸⁵ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - Hanuman teaches the Meaning of Devotion to Vibhishana:

⁸⁶ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - Hanuman meets Vibhishana:

Thereafter, he permitted Hanuman to leave on his errand. Hanuman was so delighted to learn that Sita *was* in Lanka that he actually forgot to ask where she actually was! (*RKRV Part II p.127/128*)

Vibhishana guided Hanuman to Ashokavana

That very moment, he saw a beautiful garden, trim and green, shining in the distance. Coming down the peak, he realised that the garden was a valley surrounded by tall mansions; he could not discover the place from the ground. Not knowing what to do next, he held fast to the house of Vibhishana and discovered him immersed in reciting the Name of Rama. Seeing Hanuman, Vibhishana rose and approached him in a friendly and pleasing manner. He asked, “Hanuman! Did you see Sita? “Hanuman expressed his disappointment, but Vibhishana gave him the information. “Hanuman, there is in this City a garden named Ashokavana. There, in the midst of terrible and mighty Rakshasas, Sita is kept. My wife and daughter are with her, doing service.” He also disclosed to him the route by which he could reach the garden and the spot. Hanuman could not stay a moment longer. He reached the garden in a trice. (*RKRV Part II p.129*)

Ravana orders that Hanuman be killed, but Vibhishana protests:

He (Ravana) rose, spouting fire and slapping his thighs in challenge he roared an order to his henchmen to kill the impertinent monkey. Everyone rushed to where Hanuman sat bound in snake ropes. Just at that moment, Vibhishana, Ravana’s brother, entered the Hall, followed by his retinue. He prostrated

before his elder brother and said, protestingly, “Master! It is not right to kill an emissary. *Rajadharma* will not approve the deed. Punish him in any other manner, but do not pronounce the sentence of death.” The ministers of Ravana supported this stand and declared that what he had suggested was the noblest truth. Ravana laughed in scorn at their absurd ideas of right and wrong. (RKR V Part II p. 150)

Vibhishana’s Advice to Ravana:

Vibhishana had entered the Hall. Ravana looked at him and asked him, “Brother! What is your opinion on this question: these men and monkeys?” Vibhishana replied, “Most compassionate brother! I shall answer as best I can, without any frills or feints. I only pray that you listen patiently and carefully. Pardon me, Oh Sovereign Lord! If you desire a good status after death, an unsullied fame while alive, prosperity and happiness here and hereafter, you must desist from admiring the beauty of women who belong to others. What can one single living being like you do to injure or obstruct the Ruler of the Fourteen Worlds? Can anyone survive after opposing Him? How can such a one prosper? Greed clouds all the virtues of a person. Lust and anger are gateways to the regions of ruin. Rama is not an ordinary person. He is Death to the God of Death. He is the regulator of Time. He cannot be affected by illness or want or weakness. He is unborn and so, immortal. Give up your hatred of such a Divine Person, and pray to be accepted as His servant. Return his consort to Him and earn His Grace. I am falling at your Feet and pleading with you with all the force I command.” Hearing him, Malyavantha, an old and revered Minister, nodded in agreement. He stood up and spoke thus: “Master! The words

spoken by your brother are just and right. Accepting his suggestions will redound to your renown. “But Ravana was greatly incensed at the advice given by them both. He reprimanded them hotly. He said, “You are both fools! Do you know what you have been doing so long? You were extolling my enemy. You are not fit to be present in this Hall, while this subject is being considered. “He ordered that they be removed from the Hall. At this, Malyavantha got down from his chair and hurried home.

Vibhishana too offered his prostrations to his elder brother and, with folded palms, he expostulated, “Oh King! The Vedas and Sastras declare that in every person’s heart there reside the twin natures of goodness and wickedness. When goodness predominates and is given full authority, the person will possess joy, peace and prosperity of all types. When wickedness predominates and is given full authority the person will be attacked by all types of adversity. Now, the vile nature is overwhelming your virtuous nature. So you condemn as enemies those who offer good advice and try to promote your good. Sita is like the Night of Destruction for the Rakshasas. You have no compassion towards her. That is the wicked trait in you. I am praying for this boon from you. Please agree to my request. Return Sita to Rama. I am sure that will endow you with all happiness and auspiciousness.”

At this, Ravana rose suddenly from his throne and exclaimed. “Fool! Death has drawn very near you. You could be alive till this moment only on account of my grace. Now you are counting my enemies as your benefactors. I cannot understand why you

have developed respect and loyalty to them. Is there on earth anyone living who cannot be subdued by the strength of my shoulders? Eating the food I give, living in the house provided by me, residing in my territory, how dare you extol my enemies? Thorny bushes grown to protect the fort have become harmful to the fort itself. You have spread too much to be useful. Go, go to some hermitage and teach your lessons on morality and goodness.” Thus saying, he pushed Vibhishana at his feet away from him with a kick. However angrily he was kicked, Vibhishana persisted long in praying to him, his hands holding the very feet that were kicking him. “King! Rama resolves on Truth and his resolution can never fail. Your time is running out. So too, the time of your followers, I am going to take refuge with Rama. I have done my best to save you. I have nothing to repent for. I have not done any wrong.” With these words, he left the Hall. (*RKRV Part II p. 163-166*)

Vibhishana joins Rama

Reciting with every breath Rama, Rama, and breathless with joy and excitement, he crossed the sea and landed on the other shore. The Vanaras who noticed him took him to be a messenger from Ravana, and they reported the arrival to their Ruler, Sugriva. Vibhishana was prevented from entering the camp. The information was conveyed to the Lord, thus: “Oh Rama! The brother of Ravana has come to have your Darsan.”(*RKRV Part II p. 166*)

Hanuman hastened to him and in an instant, made him stand before Rama. When his eyes fell on the Lotus Face of Rama, Vibhishana shed profuse tears of ecstasy. He could scarcely

stand erect. “Lord,” he gasped, and fell at the feet of Rama. “Save me, save me. I am your slave,” he prayed. “Oh Protector of the Gods! I took birth in the Rakshasa race. I am the younger brother of Ravana, who rules over the Rakshasas. My name is Vibhishana. My birth as a Rakshasa is the result of the vast quantity of sin I had accumulated. Dullness and ignorance have mastery over me. As the owl craves for night, I relish only darkness. You foster all those who surrender to you yearning for your love and grace. I have none else to whom I can run for rescue.”

Rama saw him pleading so humbly and so earnestly for being taken into confidence and saved, and He was delighted. He drew him near, and softly fondled him, patting his back in deep love. He spoke sweetly to him, and said, “My dear Vibhishana, do not worry. The very Darsan you had of me has destroyed the Rakshasa nature in you. You are to me as close as Lakshmana and Sugriva.” These words wiped away all fear from the heart of Vibhishana. Then Rama said, “Oh Ruler of Lanka, are all your followers and companions hale and hearty? How were you passing your days right in the midst of many million Rakshasas? How were you able to maintain your devotion and dedication to God in that environment?” He also enquired of him various matters relating to his activities. (*RKR Part II p. 167-168*)

Vibhishana said to Rama, “There is no limit to the atrocities committed by Ravana, though I advised him to mend his actions. I denounced the nefarious activities of Ravana and advised him not to enter into war with you. Ravana and his son *Meghanada* became furious and commanded me to leave the kingdom. They

have branded me a traitor. I prayed for the welfare of Lanka and left the kingdom. I seek none else but God. I wish to sanctify my life at the feet of God. I have been chanting the name of Rama for a long time. It is the name of Rama that brought Hanuman and me close to each other in Lanka. I don't need anything in my life except Your Feet. I do not want kith and kin. All I desire is Your proximity." Rama then said, "Vibhishana, do not be frightened. Your brother will be punished for all his misdeeds. You will soon see this with your own eyes."(SSB 1996 p.62)

At the end, Vibhishana said, "Oh Lord of the Raghu Dynasty! Lust, anger and the rest of that evil brood will infest the heart until the moment you enter it, with the bow and arrow in your hand. When your nature and your loveliness are known, they flee from the mind. Attachments and hatreds infest the dark hearts that know not the light of wisdom. Lord, I have earned the fruition of dearest dreams when I could cast my eyes on your Lotus Feet and touch them with my hands and head. My fear and sorrow have been destroyed. I have not done a single good deed any day, but yet you embraced me. Oh, how great is my good fortune!" From Vibhishana's eyes, tears flowed in streams. They were tears of joy and gratitude.

Rama intercepted his words and said, "Vibhishana, you possess all desirable excellences. Or else, you would not have earned this Darsan, this chance to touch me and contact me, and this opportunity to converse with me." At this Vibhishana was thrilled with unbounded joy. He fell at the Lotus Feet of Rama again and again. Rama told him, "Go, have a bath in the sacred waters of the sea, and return soon." Accordingly, Vibhishana left

for the seashore. Rama asked Hanuman to bring from the sea a pot of the sacred water. When Vibhishana prostrated at the Feet of Rama, after the bath, Rama took a handful of water from the pot that Hanuman had brought and, sprinkling the drops on Vibhishana's head, he declared, "I am making you by this rite the Ruler of the Kingdom of Lanka." Vibhishana rose and said, "Oh Lord! Why do I need a kingdom? I am content if I secure a place by the side of these Lotus Feet." (*RKRV Part II p.168/169*)

Vibhishana prayed, "Lord, I have not come here with an eye on the Kingdom of Lanka. All that I seek is the Kingdom of God. Make me a citizen in that Kingdom or even a servant there."(*SSB 1996 p.62*)

But Rama said, "No, you cannot escape this duty." Vibhishana replied, "I bow my head to the command I receive from you." He folded his hands in prayerful humility. The Vanaras stood all around, struck by the compassion and grace that Rama bestowed on the person who surrendered his all at His Lotus Feet. Their hearts were filled with Bliss.

Rama saw the Generals of Vanara hordes and spoke to them. "Leaders! Take this Vibhishana with you. Do not consider him as someone apart. Regard him as your comrade. He is my own." These endearing words greatly heartened Vibhishana. (*RKRV Part II p. 169*)

But Rama crowned him as the Emperor of the Kingdom flank, even though the war against Ravana had not yet commenced.

Despite this, the Vanaras kept a watchful eye on Vibhishana, lest he betray their secrets to Ravana. But Rama trusted Vibhishana to the core since Vibhishana's heart was immaculately pure. Rama accepted Vibhishana and declared, "You are Mine." (*SSB 1996 p.62*)

THE BRIDGE

Soon they moved towards the seashore. Looking at the sea, Rama questioned how it was proposed to cross it. Many among the Vanaras suggested means and methods. At last Vibhishana rose from his place and addressed Rama thus: "Lord, the Ocean owes its origin to your forefathers, Sagara and his sons. It is the family 'preceptor' of your line. If only you resolve that it should be crossed, the Vanaras can easily go across." (*RKRV Part II p. 171*)

Vibhishana requests Rama to Install a Shiva Linga:

Vibhishana came into the presence and said, "Lord, we have to enter Lanka tomorrow. So I have a prayer to place before you." Rama replied, "What is it? Tell me." Vibhishana continued, "Ravana is a devout worshipper of Siva. He has intense attachment towards that aspect of Godhead. Yet, it is certain he will meet death at your hands. I pray that, to commemorate his devotion to Siva, you may, on the eve of moving towards Lanka and entering it through this bridge, install a Sivalinga here, so that in coming centuries, when people enter Lanka along this route, they can worship the Sivalinga and remember these events. They would indeed be fortunate to have such an

experience. The Linga would be extolled by them as Rama Lingeswara, the Idol installed by Rama. Even when the bridge is eroded and crumbled by time, the spot could be identified by future generations by means of the Idol worshipped here.” Rama was happy at the suggestion. He said, “I shall fulfil your wish. You are the future Ruler of Lanka, and in order to please you, I am ready to carry out your wishes, whatever is involved.” At this, Sugriva directed the Vanaras to get all the requisites for the installation. He procured an impressive Linga sending Hanuman himself for the purpose.

Rama performed the ceremonial ablution for the Linga with water from the sea and invoked Vitality and Grace into It. Rama’s words had the effect of mantra or sacred formula. So, nothing more was needed to sanctify the Linga. The Vanaras uttered hymns and their ecstatic shouts echoed from the heavens. Amidst the Jai Jai of the hordes standing around, Lakshmana and Sugriva helped Rama to plant the Linga in position and to complete the ceremony of Consecration. (*RKRV Part II p. 181/182*)

THE SIEGE

A fierce battle raged between the forces of Rama and Ravana. Thousands of soldiers belonging to both the sides fell dead. Lanka trembled with fear. At one time, all the *vanaras* (monkeys) fell unconscious on the battle ground. Vibhishana, who watched the scene, consoled the *vanara* forces saying that it was due to the magic spells cast by the demons.

Vibhishana countered them with his own magic formula, whereupon the fallen heroes arose from the ground. Ravana then saw to it that the head of Sita fell in front of Rama. Just as Sarama had earlier consoled Sita in her plight and fear, Vibhishana now started consoling Rama, saying, “Oh Rama, who in this world can kill Sita? Who can touch Sita, the embodiment of chastity? This head of Sita is not the real one but an artificial one. “Enraged at the tricks of Ravana, Lakshmana plunged into the battlefield and fought fiercely, but in the end he fainted. Rama then started lamenting, “Oh Lakshmana, I considered you as my sixth vital breath. Today, my sixth vital breath is gone.” Rama pretended as though He wept. Vibhishana came to the spot and directed Hanuman to bring the herbs of the Sanjivini plant from the Himalayas. Since Hanuman could not identify the plant, he lifted a big chunk of the mountain and brought it to the battlefield. As soon as the herbal medicine was given, Lakshmana regained consciousness. (*SSB 1996 p.65*)

Meghanada and Vibhishana in the battlefield

Meghanada, the eldest son of Ravana, was bent upon burning Rama to ashes by performing certain sacrifices and rituals. The magic tricks employed by *Meghanada* wrought much havoc and confusion amongst Rama’s army. Vibhishana, who was well versed in the tricks of the demons, employed counter tricks and nullified the power of their magic rituals. Vibhishana drew the attention of Rama and Lakshmana to the blackberry tree under which *Meghanada* performed the magic rituals. The entire place under the tree was littered with bodies of sacrificed humans. Vibhishana cautioned Rama and Lakshmana about the magic practices of *Meghanada* and told them that they should see to it

that *Meghanada* was drawn away from that tree. He informed them that *Meghanada*'s power and strength multiplied immensely when he was in the proximity of that tree. (*SSB1996 p.70*)

Hearing this, *Meghanada* got very angry. He burst out: "Oh Vibhishana! Are you betraying my secrets and the secrets of Lanka to the enemy? You are a traitor to your race." He went on berating Vibhishana in this manner. (*SSS Vol. 29 p. 144*)

Earlier, in the battle between *Meghanada* and Lakshmana, the latter had fallen unconscious after being hit by *Meghanada*'s *Asthra* (missile). Lakshmana regained consciousness after the application of a herb from the Sanjivini mountain brought by *Hanuman* from the Himalayas. Lakshmana resumed the battle with *Meghanada*, carrying himself on the shoulders of *Hanuman*. (*SSS Vol. 29 p.143*) *Meghanada*, who watched Vibhishana helping Rama's forces on the battlefield, raged in fury. He said to Vibhishana, "You are the betrayer of Lanka; you are the destroyer of your own people." (*SSB1996 p.70*)

Vibhishana retorted, "*Meghanada*, it is a quality of bad people to waste time by indulging in tall and unnecessary talk. Many a time I advised your father Ravana to desist from evil ways. But he never paid heed to me. I tried to put sense into the head of your father by advising him that it is a sin to misappropriate another's wife. I also told him that he would bring dire disaster to himself and his people by resorting *adharma*. I forewarned your father, in the presence of Kumbhakarna and Surpanakha. It is your father who, by deliberately indulging in evil, has brought

himself and Lanka to this state. My good words had no effect. To your father, unrighteousness is the dearest thing. Untruth is his joy, wickedness is his life. How can the heart of a person laden with so much evil ever change? It is your father who is the architect of this misfortune to Lanka. The destruction of Lanka is his own doing. I am in no way the cause for all this.” Unconvinced by these words, *Meghanada* screamed, “If you did not want to support my father, you could have at least remained neutral without joining the ranks of the enemy.” (SSB 1996 p.70-71) *Is this kind of treachery justified?*⁸⁷

Vibhishana makes *Meghanada* understand the Truth

Tot his Vibhishana replied, “You don’t have the wisdom to distinguish between truth and untruth, righteousness and unrighteousness. Having realised the difference between them, I joined the side of Sri Rama. It is unjust and unrighteous on the part of a person to remain neutral⁸⁸ when *dharma* is in danger. Society should be saved from Ravana. I enjoy the divine proximity of Rama and that is my greatest treasure.”(SSB 1996 p.71)

Vibhishana retorted indignantly: "*Meghanada!* It is natural for Rakshasas to be abusive as they like. But, remember that Rama is the very embodiment of peace. He is pure of heart, utterly free

⁸⁷ SSS Vol.29 p.144

⁸⁸ Vibhishana said, “I am one who is well aware of the rules of right conduct. It is unworthy for a person to remain silent in the face of wickedness. Such inaction can destroy an entire society.” (SSS Vol.29 p.144)

from selfishness. It is not possible for Rakshasas to understand the truth about such a Divine Being. Rama has entered Lanka for rescuing Sita and not for seizing the country. How can one who gave up Ayodhya itself voluntarily covet Lanka? Rama has no desire for anything. For a long time I had been warning Ravana that is a grievous sin to kidnap another, man's wife and appealed to him to restore Sita to Rama. However, Ravana paid a deaf ear to my word. He is destroying by his own hands his kingdom and his clan. Who is to be blamed for this? Is it me or your father?"(SSS Vol. 29 p.144)

Vibhishana encounters Kumbhakarna

Kumbhakarna proceeded to the battlefield. Seeing him enter the fray, Vibhishana, his younger brother, ran forward from Rama's camp and fell at his feet in humble reverence. Rising up, he announced himself by name. Kumbhakarna beamed in joy. He embraced his brother with loving tenderness. Vibhishana was the first to speak. He said, "Brother! Ravana insulted me in open court and kicked me out of the Audience Hall. I considered all aspects of this affair and counselled him in various ways. He discarded my advice and gave ear to power-mad foolish ministers. He hurled unbearable abuses on me, within the hearing of those persons. I could not suffer the shame of it. I surrendered to Rama; and knowing that I was helpless and innocent, he accepted me and granted me refuge."

At this, Kumbhakarna replied, "Well, brother! The shadow of Death is already on Ravana. How then can he pay heed to good counsel? Surely, you have done well to fulfil the goal of your life. You are not Vibhishana now; you are *Vibhushana* (the

shining jewel, the most splendid ornament) of the Rakshasa clan! You have ennobled and purified the clan by serving so ardently the very Ocean of Happiness, the Crown of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama. Go, serve him with sincere zeal. Brother! I have to engage in battle regardless of the fate in store for me. I am also nearing Death. Ravana knows that my heart is not with him. I advise you to give up loyalty to this side or that, but confine yourself to loyalty to Rama.” Receiving this advice and the blessings of his brother, Vibhishana returned to the presence of Rama. He told Rama, “Lord! That mountain of a Rakshasa is Kumbhakarna. He is a ferociously brave fighter. He has come to engage you in battle. (*RKR V Part II p.223-224*)

RAVANA KILLED

Vibhishana came at that juncture to see Ravana’s body. At first, Mandodari started scolding Vibhishana. Then, realising her mistake she said, “Oh Vibhishana, there is no use in scolding you. Very often, you counselled your brother well, but your advice did not enter his head.”

When the head is empty, anything can be filled in it?

How can one fill a head that is already filled with stuff and nonsense?

Unless the dross in the head is drained away, how can one fill it with pure feelings? (SSB 1996 p.81)

Rama and Lakshmana approached Vibhishana and consoled him. They directed him to perform the funeral rites for his deceased brother. (*RKR V Part II p.260*)

Looking at the body of Ravana after his death, Vibhishana expressed unwillingness to perform the last rites that are usually performed. Vibhishana thought that Ravana was a very great sinner, that he was thinking badly of Rama, the incarnation of the Lord, and that it was not right to perform the obsequies of such a person. Rama, who was an embodiment of *dharma*, called Vibhishana and said, “If there is any dislike for a person that should not go beyond his death. Let it end with his death. All hatred should disappear with the death of the person.” Rama asked Vibhishana, “Will you, as a brother, perform the obsequies or shall I perform the obsequies?” As soon as he heard these words from Rama, Vibhishana realised his mistake and was prepared to perform the last rites. (*SSB 1977 p.17-18*)

Mandodari and other women also offered water offerings, sanctified with Manthras and til. Every item of the funeral rite was gone through in correct order, without any hitch or disturbance, by Vibhishana who was all the while comforted and consoled by Rama. Ram said that when the curses Ravana had invoked on himself by his sins had ripened and fulfilled themselves, he was killed, and so, there was no reason why the death should be lamented.

Rama called together in his presence Lakshmana with Sugriva, Jambavantha, and Angada, and asked them to go into Lanka with Nala, Nila and others for installing Vibhishana as the Emperor of Lanka. He directed them to proceed without delay, for the fourteen years’ exile which the father had prescribed for him would end the next day.

But Vibhishana protested and pleaded, “Why do I need an empire? Please place me instead in the immediate presence of your Lotus Feet,” he prayed. “From this day Lanka is yours. Treat Lanka as a part of Ayodhya,” he insisted. Burma did not agree. He elucidated their political principles and declared that his order was irrevocable. Then, Vibhishana prayed that he should be entrusted with the Empire by his own hands. Rama replied, “No, having observed and followed my father’s command for thirteen years, eleven months and twenty-nine days, it is not proper that on the very last day, I should go against it. I am an exile as he desired and an exile should not enter any town or human settlement. You are not unaware of this rule. “Thus saying, he blessed Vibhishana and instructed Lakshmana to go into Lanka and install the new Emperor on the throne of Lanka. (*RKR V Part II p.260-261*)

When Rama asked Sugriva and Lakshmana to crown Vibhishana as Emperor of Lanka; Vibhishana pleaded that Rama Himself should bless him on that auspicious occasion, but Rama insisted that His vow of hermit-hood prevented Him from entering an inhabited city. (SSS Vol.4 p.1)

Bowing their heads in acceptance of this assignment, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Angada, Nala, Nila, and others started towards the City and reached the palace. They placed the crown on the head of Vibhishana and put on his forehead the auspicious mark of authority. Vibhishana prostrated before the assemblage of Vanaras and acknowledging their friendly help, promised to fulfil the real purpose of his life through following their example and benefiting by their help. “I shall rule over this land as

Rama's agent. I shall not accept it as mine. I have already dedicated all of myself to Rama." He suffered great grief when he reminded himself of the cruelties and injuries inflicted by Ravana, his sons and his warriors on the Vanara hordes. He consoled himself by the thought that everything that had happened had been the "sport" of the Supreme Will, Rama. Soon, they all proceeded to where Rama was and fell at his feet in reverential homage. (*RKRV Part II p.260-261*)

Rama Sends for Sita:

Then, Rama sent Hanuman to Sita and requested him to bring Sita to the camp in a palanquin. Vibhishana had not thought of that; he was too immersed in other affairs Hanuman bowed before Sita and got a vision of Lakshmi rising out of the waves of the ocean of milk. He felt that, that Vision was enough compensation for all the births he had to undergo. (*SSS Vol. 4.p. 15*) Vibhishana followed Hanuman and said, "Mother! You must prepare yourself to see Rama. I shall get the aerial chariot ready for you." So saying, he left to make all arrangements. His spouse Sarama and daughters Trijata and Ajata made Sita wear various ornaments and decorated her. Sita was shedding tears. Though this was a happy moment, she recollected all the events of the past. (*SSB 1996 p.91*)

While the palanquin neared the camp, there spread everywhere a sublime splendour from it, which astonished the *vanara* (sub-human or monkey) hordes. Rama sent word that Sita may alight and walk the remaining distance, so that they may fill their eyes with her glory. (*SSS Vol. 4 p.15/16*)

Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana took Sita, Rama and Lakshmana along with their entourage to Ayodhya in the *Pushpaka Vimana*. (SSS Vol.39 p.242)

THE SERVICES OF VIBHISHANA’S WIFE AND DAUGHTERS:

Ravana kept three ladies to guard Sita during her incarceration in the Ashokavana. One was Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, younger brother of Ravana. The other two ladies were Ajata and Trijata who were none other than daughters of Sarama; they were very considerate towards Sita, keeping up her sagging morale all the while by their comforting words. Sita wondered whether such good people also existed in Lanka. In fact it was due to their consoling words and protection that Sita could bear her ordeal courageously. Though Sita was imprisoned in Lanka, Ravana did not dare to touch her. He knew that he would be reduced to ashes if he touched her without her consent. He was all the while pleading with her to accept him. When Ravana stooped to the level of denigrating Rama and threatened her, she even without even looking at his face, plucked out a blade of grass and threw it before him saying, “You are a mean fellow. You are not worth even this blade of grass. How dare you denigrate Rama in front of me, you vile and vicious wretch!”(SSS Vol. 41 p. 115)

Vibhishana’s wife Sarama took upon herself the task of serving Sita. She had several conversations with Sita and tried to give her strength. She said, “Mother! I am indeed fortunate to serve such a holy person like you. Your pure character alone can lend some peace to Lanka. Ravana’s no ordinary king. He is exceptionally

wicked and it is our misfortune that you have fallen into his clutch. Sarama did her best to thus console Sita and lift her spirits. (*SSB 2000 p.115-116*)

Sarama, wife of Vibhishana, said to Sita: “Mother, there is none in the world who can slay Sri Rama. Ravana has many magicians who resort to trickery and deceit. The head of Rama is not the real head. Ramachandra is safe and happy. This is simply an artificial head and you should not worry.” She then placed her hand on the artificial head of Rama; the head vanished instantly. (*SSB 1996 p. 64-65*)

Trijata’s Dream

Trijata was a pious devotee, who had both worldly wisdom and spiritual experience. (*RKR V Part II p. 131*)

One night Trijata, daughter of Sarama had a foreboding dream. The dream vividly showed Lanka as being totally dry and arid. It showed all the trees as having withered and fallen. The royal palace was seen reduced to ruins and Ravana was staggering about without even water to drink. She understood that what she foresaw to be Ravana’s fate was a direct consequence of his own wicked deeds. At the same time, she was helpless and could do nothing but feeling sad. (*SSB 2002 p.116*)

Among the ladies belonging to the demonic community appointed to guard Sita in the *Ashokavana*, there were two by name Ajata and Trijata. They were the daughters of Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. One day while consoling Sita, who was weeping, Trijata told her “Mother! Last night, I had a

dream. I saw one monkey entering Lanka and setting the city ablaze. I also saw very clearly that Rama invaded Lanka, killed Ravana and took you to Ayodhya.” Ajata too counselled Sita saying, “Oh! Mother! It is true. I too had a similar dream. You need not be sorry anymore.” (*SSS Vol.39 p.240*) Vibhishana was crowned the emperor of Lanka. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, the name of Rama was resounding. Then Rama sent for Sita. Sisters of the Rakshasa clan! Take note, I never get dreams. I haven’t seen any so far. So if I dream at all, know it will certainly come true. It will happen just as in the dream. Moreover, the realisation, in actual fact, of the dream will not take long. Things must happen just as I dreamt, within four or five days.” (*RKRV Part II p. 131-132*)

Both of them gave a lot of love and kindled faith in Sita. In fact, their father Vibhishana was a devotee of Rama. Hence, his daughters too developed devotion towards Rama. (*SSS Vol.39 p.240*)

Sarama feels blessed to be of service to Sita:

One day, Sarama approached Sita, fell at her feet and prayed, “Mother! This has been a unique good fortune that I have had. My daughter also has been blessed by this opportunity. My husband is a person of sound character. He is also a devotee of Rama. He has surrendered himself to Rama at the seashore. I am thrilled that our entire family has had this unique opportunity of being at Rama’s service.” Sita felt a little consoled when she heard this from Sarama; she realized that she had someone she could trust, near her. (*SSB 2002 p.115-117*)

Sarama and her daughter are shown the ring brought by Hanuman:

Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana and her daughter, Trijata, came to the tree and fell at the feet of Sita sitting disconsolate thereunder. They enquired about her health. Since they were partial towards her, Sita spoke to them about how the dream of Trijata had come true, and how a monkey had actually entered Lanka in accordance with it. Sarama and Trijata showed extreme enthusiasm and excitement when they heard the account of what had happened. They plied Sita with questions, in their eagerness to know all details. Sita showed them the monkey perched on the branch and the Ring it had brought. They both pressed the ring on their eyes in reverent adoration. (*RKR V Part II p. 137*)

Hanuman found that these three ladies were the only friends of Sita in Lanka. It was due to the solace and assurance provided by them that Sita survived. (*SSB 1996 p.58*)

CHARACTERISATION OF VIBHISHANA:

Satwic Character:

Vibhishana symbolized *satwa guna* (serene, pure quality). It was only the *satwic* Vibhishana who could get the grace of Rama. (*SSS Vol. 31 p. 267*)

Because Vibhishana had a *satwic* mind and a *satwic* heart, he could reach Ramachandra. Vibhishana gave up and broke his connections with his brother, his property and his wealth and reached the feet of Ramachandra. He decided that all his wealth and all that belonged to him could be sacrificed for the purpose of getting the grace of Ramachandra. If one has complete faith in God, one can achieve any difficult task. (*SSB 1977 p.156*)

God's main address

God is your Protector. Protection by God is the talisman for you. God will do anything for you. Thyagaraja said:

*O Lord! Who can adequately praise you?
I am waiting and waiting for your compassion.
Feel compassion for me.
You restored to Your preceptor his son.
You released Vasudeva and Devaki;
You blessed Draupadi with an endless supply of cloth.
You protected the Pandavas.
You quenched the yearning of Kuchela.
You transformed the ugly Kubja into a beauty.
Even Lord Brahma cannot satisfactorily describe Your glory.
I am waiting and pining for Your Grace.*

Once, Narada went to Lord Narayana and asked, “O Lord! Where do you live? Which is Your main address?” The Lord replied, “Vaikuntha, Kailasa, and Swarga are My temporary branch-residences. My permanent residence is the place where My glory is sung by My devotees.” The Lord is the resident of our hearts. Let us find Him there. *(SSB 1996 p.74/75)*

Complete Surrender

Vibhishana was capable of that complete surrender (to the Divine Grace and the Power above) and so he was accepted by Rama and assured quickly. *(SSS Vol. 6 Second Edition p. 56)*

Surrender in God gives Protection:

When Vibhishana came to the feet of Rama and asked to be permitted to surrender, Rama called the attention of those who were with Him, namely Sugriva, Angada and Jambavan. Vibhishana was coming from a distance, loudly proclaiming that he was coming with a view to surrender to Ramachandra. Rama told others that no matter who Vibhishana was and what his motives were, since he was coming to surrender, it was His duty to protect him. Once you decide and say that you belong to the Lord, then what does it matter who you are or where you come from? It follows that the Lord is yours. *(SSB 1977 p. 166)*

Man can accomplish anything if he surrenders to God. When he submits himself to the will of the Divine, there is no task he cannot accomplish. Kuchela, a boyhood friend of Krishna, approached Krishna for help on the basis of his old friendship. How did Krishna help him? The *Bhagavatha* bears testimony to what Krishna did for Kuchela. The *Ramayana* tells the story of what Rama did for Sugriva after the latter became a friend of Rama and sought His help. Sugriva was able to regain his kingdom. What did Vibhishana get after his constant remembrance of Rama and the ordeals he experienced in Lanka? Relieving him of his troubles, Rama crowned Vibhishana the ruler of Lanka. (*SSS Vol. 31 p.60*)

But Vibhishana saw that He was the Lord in human form and he ran straight to him for protection and surrendered unconditionally at his feet. So he was accepted without the faintest demur by the Lord, even though those around Him expressed apprehensions. (*SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.62*)

Vibhishana is another example of full surrender. Ravana had a gang of courtiers and ministers who catered to his whims and flattered his vanity; and while each of them advised him to challenge Rama in open war and keep Sita for himself, Vibhishana, his own brother, chastised him for his wilfulness and lust and urged him to save himself, his kingdom and his kith and kin by restoring Sita unharmed to her Lord. When Vibhishana went over to Rama, Rama knew that he had a pure heart that could not survive in the poisonous atmosphere of Lanka. So He took him and saved him. The Lord likes to be called *Aartha-thraana-paraayana* (protection of, and devoted to, the distressed and oppressed) more than any other name, for He is most happy when He rescues those in agony. (*SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.128-129*)

The real coronation is that of Vibhishana, performed under the auspices of Rama, a status won through surrender and sacrifice. . (*SSS Vol.5 p.300*)
Vibhishana waited and waited for the hour of God. At last, that hour arrived, and he was crowned by God Himself. (*SSB 1996 p.85*)

Rama told others that no matter who Vibhishana was and what his motives were, since he was coming to surrender, it was His duty to protect him. Once you decide and say that you belong to the Lord, then, it follows that Lord is

yours? The Sugriva asked. If Ravana himself came and asked for pardon would Rama do the same thing? Rama said that if Ravana did get such a good idea in him, He will surely protect him and make him the king of Ayodhya itself.

For us, to think that this aspect of surrender is appropriate only to older people, and that young students do not have to concern themselves with it is totally wrong. This is the appropriate age when you should surrender to God. When you grow older, you will then be able to achieve great things with God's grace. (*SSB 1977 p.166*)

When Vibhishana sought Rama's refuge, Sugriva, Jambavantha opposed saying, "Swami, You should never believe these Rakshasas. There must be some ulterior motive behind this act of Vibhishana. So ask him to return to Lanka." Then Rama replied, "Once someone says. 'I am Yours', whoever he may be; I will take care of him. So I will not reject Vibhishana," This is the testimony of God's Love. Once you say "I am yours", then live up to it with strong faith. Thereafter God will take care of you at all places, and under all circumstances. I expect and bless you so that you develop strong faith, give up vices, join good company entertain sacred feelings and attain Divinity, (*Dasara discourses 1998 p.101*) (*SSS Vol.31 p.364*)

The Company we keep:

Vibhishana was a *satwic* person. When Vibhishana went to surrender to Rama and seek his protection, people like Sugriva, Angada and others, who were with Rama, asked whether Vibhishana, who was the brother of Ravana, would also not have the same bad qualities which were characteristic of his brother. The reason for this suspicion and for getting a bad name was the company in which Vibhishana lived. (*SSB 1977 p.157*)

Good company takes one near to God

In the Ramayana, we see that by his association with Hanuman, Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, was transformed into a devotee of the Lord. On the other hand, 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*)

Since, we are in the world of *pravritti*, even a *satwic* person can change into a *rajasic* person. Since Vibhishana (*satwic*) was in the company of Ravana (*Rajasic*) and Kumbhakarna (*tamasic*), he had to lament a lot. Vibhishana waited and waited for the hour of God. At last, that hour arrived, and he was crowned by God Himself. (*SSB 1996 p.85*)

Only by dedicating himself to the service of Rama, together with chanting His name, can he (Vibhishana) experience *Sayujya* oneness) with Rama (*SSS Vol.16 p.337*)

The bad qualities that were in Ravana were spreading and giving their evil results to the entire Lanka and they spread even to Vibhishana who was a *satwic* person. When Vibhishana went to surrender to Rama and seek protection, people like Sugriva, Angada and others who were with Rama asked whether Vibhishana, who was the brother of Ravana, would also not have the same bad qualities which are characteristic of his brother. The reason for this suspicion and for getting a bad name was the company in which Vibhishana lived. In this context, we should take care in choosing our company. We should take care to see that we will absorb the good qualities from the society in which we live in. If we join bad people and Keep Company with the bad people, in a few days we will also get into bad habits. When we join the good people and keep good company with them, we will also absorb good qualities from them. (*SSB 1977 p.157*)

By his association with Hanuman, Vibhishana, brother Ravana was transformed into a devotee of the Lord. (*SSS Vol. 18 p.191*)

The Supreme Devotion of Vibhishana

*When divine feelings do not surge in the heart,
Man becomes infected with two flaws.
He conceals his countless blunders, and
He criticises even minor mistakes of others.*

The portraits of two personalities are very striking in the *Ramayana*. They are those of Sugriva and Vibhishana. Vibhishana went in quest of Rama, while Rama Himself went in search of Sugriva. Sugriva realised Rama's greatness

and goodness only after meeting Him, while Vibhishana knew of Rama's excellence even before he met Him. (*SSB 1996 p.69*)

God above all is the destiny of human life

Nothing should come in the way of your seeking God. You must be prepared for any sacrifice or face any opposition for the sake of God. Prahlada faced the wrath and hatred of his father Hiranyakasipu in adhering to his faith in Narayana. Vibhishana renounced his brother Ravana when the latter stood in the way of his devotion to Rama. If a mother stands in the way of your devotion to God, you must be prepared to give her up, as Bharatha did when Kaikeyi sought to separate him from Rama. Meera was prepared to renounce her husband rather than give up her devotion to Krishna. Emperor Bali rejected the advice of his *Guru*, Sukracharya, when the latter advised him to retract his gift to Vamana (Vishnu). These are the examples of the devotees who did not flinch in vindicating their devotion to God. The realisation of God is the goal and destiny of human life. (*SSS Vol.20 p.82*)

The righteous Vibhishana

Next day, both the armies prepared themselves for the battle. At the break of dawn, Ravana's forces sounded battle drums, and Rama's forces too sounded their battle drums, fiercely. This time, the second son of Ravana entered the battle. He cast magic spells which caused much confusion in the *vanara* flanks. Vibhishana, who knew all the tricks of the demons, countered the magic spells employed by the demons, and saved the forces of Rama. Rama said, "Oh Lakshmana, all of you did not want to accept Vibhishana as a friend in the beginning. But today, he is of the greatest use to us. He is great. He is unique." Rama correctly assessed the greatness of Vibhishana.

Vibhishana was a staunch supporter of *dharma*. When he found that his brother Ravana was indulging in unrighteousness, he denounced his ways and tried to correct him. He did not want to be a party to sin and unrighteousness. (*SSB 1996 p.68*)

One night, Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, went to Ravana to tell him that what Ravana did was wrong. Vibhishana held his brother's hands in great endearment and said that the sin which Ravana had committed had brought

distress to all the citizens of Lanka. He said that because of Ravana's sin, there were snakes and cobras moving freely in every house where there should have been only recitation of the *Vedas*. In the temples where Shiva should have been worshipped, there were all kinds of insects and bad omens were seen because of the sin committed by Ravana. That there were insects in the food offered to God and that in places where Shiva was worshipped, there were snakes were all consequences of the fact that Ravana, though well versed in all the *Vedas* and knowing what was righteous conduct, still committed sin. It is only when an attempt is made to refrain from committing a sin that we do justice to human life. Even if a single individual commits the wrong, its consequence spreads to his entire household and to his family. If the King of a land commits a sin, then the entire land becomes a sinful land. This is why we say "*Yatha Raja thatha praja*". The happiness and joy of the people depend on the happiness and prosperity of the king. The country's welfare and prosperity depends on the rulers of the country. If our country, which is known for its immortal spirit and which is the embodiment of the spirit of Brahman and of all that is good, has today fallen to a desperate and frustrated level, there is no doubt that our rulers are responsible for this. If you young people are desirous of rectifying this deplorable situation into which our country has fallen, you must be able to cultivate good thoughts, do good deeds and have a strong determination to remove the evil in our country. Recognising the importance of truth, righteousness and morality and still not being able to put those values into practice is the greatest sin. ((*SSB 1974 p. 71/72*))

Rama remarked: "Do you see, Lakshmana, how mistaken you were? Even among Rakshasas there are good people. Vibhishana is the supreme example. Such persons do not need any protector. They are protected by their own Righteousness." The next day, the battle started in the morning. Both sides blew their trumpets. That day Ravana's son Indrajit used all his magical powers to inflict injuries on the monkey hordes. Vibhishana knew well the wizardry of the Rakshasas. He shattered all the special missiles used by Indrajit and infused courage among the monkeys. Noticing this, Rama observed: "When Vibhishana came to me seeking asylum, all kinds of objections were raised against our accepting him as one of us. Do you see how helpful he is to us now?" (*SSS Vol.29 p. 143*)

Vibhishana was a noble person

Vibhishana desired only to promote the prosperity of Lanka and the welfare of the Rakshasas. He was not interested in getting the crown. Ravana and Indrajit derided such a high-minded noble person. (*SSS Vol.19 p.146*)

Kshama develops courage

Vibhishana provides the classic example. It was through *Kshama* that he acquired the courage to defy Ravana and cross over to the side of Rama. He arrived in Rama's camp chanting 'Rama, Rama, Rama'. Seeing Vibhishana in the distance, Rama immediately raised His hand as a gesture of grace and protection. However, the people around Rama said, "Lord, that person is a *rakshasa*, a demon. He is the brother of your enemy. You must therefore not grant him protection." Meanwhile, Vibhishana kept on telling Rama, "I am Yours, I am Yours." Rama then said, "The moment a person tells Me 'I am Yours,' that person shall receive My protection, come what may." Such was Rama's determination; you too must have similar determination in every spiritual endeavour of yours.

One day during the Lanka War, there appeared a young man on the battlefield. Vibhishana drew the attention of Rama to this warrior saying, "Rama, this person is mighty, powerful, and valorous. He is stronger than most, and You must slay him without fail." In response, Rama despatched an arrow felling the *Rakshasa* warrior; the young man was dead. Vibhishana then went near the dead body and began weeping profusely. Rama gently lifted Vibhishana and said, "What is all this? Why are you crying over this man?" Vibhishana replied, "This is Neeludu my only son.

I urged You then to kill him since he was with the enemies but now, my emotion as a father is overwhelming me. I am unable to bear the sight of the death of my dear son right before my eyes. So, please grant me the power of patience and forbearance so that I can rise above such tragedies." Notice how unique is Vibhishana's prayer. He said to Rama, "*Kshama* is my *sathya* and *dharma*; it is also Rama for me! *Kshama* is my God and I cannot ever afford to forget it." This episode reveals how even great men suffer pain if they lose their grip over *kshama*. On the other hand, with *kshama*, there are no limits to what can be achieved. (*SSB 2000 p.235/236*)

Cultivate Spirit of Patriotism

You should give up *dehabhimanam* (attachment to the body) and cultivate *deshabhimanam* (spirit of patriotism). After Ravana was annihilated, Lakshmana prayed to Rama to rule over Lanka. He said, “Brother, it is not proper on our part to disturb Bharatha, who is ruling over Ayodhya. Moreover, the kingdom of Lanka is more affluent and beautiful than Ayodhya. So, it is my humble prayer that you should become the king of Lanka.” Vibhishana too fell at the feet of Rama, saying, “Swami, I surrender myself, my wealth and the kingdom at your Lotus Feet.” But Rama was not carried away by the affluence of Lanka. He said, “*Janani Janma bhumischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi* (the mother and the motherland are greater than even heaven). I cannot leave my mother-land even if it is not that affluent as Lanka.” This shows the love and respect Rama had for his motherland. (SSS Vol. 33 p. 57-58)

The value of gratitude

Rama thanked Vibhishana, who had helped Rama in wading through the webs of illusions created by the demons and who had done great service to Rama. (SSB 1996 p.102)

Failure to resist evil is an offence

Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, could not put up with the wrong deeds being done by Ravana. Opposing these actions, he tried to correct Ravana in all possible ways. But when his efforts failed and he had no alternative, he sought refuge at the feet of the embodiment of *Dharma*, Sri Rama. The prime offender was Ravana alone. But in the war with Rama, all the *Rakshasas* who supported him or sided him, perished with him. They paid the penalty for their abetment of his crime.

Whoever may commit an offence, whether a son, a relation or a close associate, one will be free from the taint of being accessory to the crime only if he opposes the wrong action and tries to correct the offender? If on the contrary, he allows it or encourages it to be done; he will be guilty of abetment. (SSS Vol.19 p.187-188)

He was of demonic lineage and lived and moved among Rakshasas. He was aware that what his elder brother (Ravana) had done (by kidnapping Sita) was wrong. Knowing this, he warned Ravana in various ways. He repeatedly told Ravana: "This is wrong. You should not do this. It is not good for you." Vibhishana felt that it was his duty to warn Ravana (against his evil ways). Ultimately, failing to convince Ravana, he chose to give up his brother and seek asylum with Rama.

Always Speak Sweet Words

Vibhishana was always calm and composed and was free from hatred, jealousy and anger unlike his elder brother Ravana. The third brother Kumbhakarna was eating and sleeping all the time. The very name Ravana signified anger, jealousy and hatred whereas the name Vibhishana indicated peace and quietude. A man's name influences his nature. (SSS Vol. 42 p.74-75)

What is beneficial may not be pleasing

The Message that will confer strength, peace, hope and fulfilment, surely is *hitha* (beneficial), though it may not be *priya* (pleasing). A patient has to take drugs and put himself through regimen that is beneficial; he cannot ask for only sweet medicines and comfortable regimen which please him. The Doctor knows best. He has to be obeyed, for the sake of recovery. The ministers of Ravana spoke only what was pleasing to him; they were afraid and so, they proved dangerous counsellors. Vibhishana, the brother, alone gave him the beneficial drug, the drug which would have cured him; but, since it was not *priya*, Ravana rejected it and fell into perdition. . (SSS Vol. 6 Second Edition p.45)

Man suffers from fever of the senses

There are two things that draw man's mind, *hitha* and *priya* (the beneficial and the pleasant). Prefer the beneficial to the pleasant, for the pleasant might lead you down the sliding path into the bottomless pit. Vibhishana spoke *hitha* to Ravana, but he lent his ear to the *priya* that his sycophantic ministers spoke. He exiled his brother and honoured his courtiers; he sealed his fate by this preference of *priya* over *hitha*. The true doctor is interested in curing you of all illness and so, he advises *hitha* to restore your health; the *Guru* is such a

doctor. Obey him, even when his prescription is unpalatable, for, you can be cured only by him. (*SSS Vol. 6 Second Edition p. 52/53*)

Develop a pure unsullied mind to get peace

Vibhishana was capable of that surrender and so he was accepted and assured quickly. It took Sugriva much longer to reach that stage, for he had some personal aims to realise, through Rama and his faith in him was clogged by doubts. Has he the skill he professes to possess? Can he kill such a formidable adversary as Vali? He surrendered to Rama only when his doubts were cleared. (*SSS Vol. 6 Second Edition p.56*)

Sadhakas have to be careful about food consumed

Ravana and Vibhishana, two brothers born of the same parents, had diametrically opposite natures because of the food they grew upon. Ravana relished *Rajasic* food while Vibhishana stuck to *Satwic*. What exactly is *Satwic* food? Food that confers *Ananda* to the body, mind and heart is *Satwic*, that which sustains holy living; that which keeps one light, even at the end of the meal. The *Satwic* are satisfied with one meal a day. *Rajasic* nature demands continuous feeding on hot stuff tasting sour, salty or pungent. *Tamasic* appreciate cold, stale, acrid tastes. The grosser parts of the food consumed are eliminated. The less gross parts build up muscles and bones. The subtle parts make up the nerves and the mind. Therefore, *Sadhakas* have to be extra careful about the quality of food they consume.

Fellow-feeling is difficult when the same quality of food is not preferred. When both live on *Rajasic* food, though they may have the same nature, friendship cannot last. Envy and hatred will soon break the bond. The *Satwic* nature will free man from these evils and purify his mind, preparing him for the journey to God. For, God is *Satwa* (pure). (*SSS Vol.16 p.106/107*)

LOVE FOR THE DIVINE TRANSCENDS ALL KIN

How the love of the Divine manifests itself in a devotee is illustrated by the example of Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. Vibhishana submitted himself to many indignities at the hands of Ravana out of the love he had for Rama. In the battle against the *Rakshasas* in Lanka, Rama and *Lakshmana* destroyed many of the great *Rakshasa* warriors on the first two days. On the

third day a formidable warrior stood before them. Vibhishana told Rama: "If you conquer this warrior, the whole of Lanka will be yours. He is a greater warrior than even Ravana." Rama fought with this mighty Rakshasa the whole day, but could not vanquish him. Rama was on the point of giving up the battle for the day. At this stage-, Vibhishana, who was behind Rama, said: "This is not the time to give up the fight? You must rally all your strength and destroy the enemy. You should not miss this chance. I am telling this out of my love for you." Egged on by Vibhishana, Rama continued the fight and destroyed his opponent.

The formidable warrior fell on the battlefield. The moment he learned that the warrior was dead, Vibhishana also collapsed on the ground. Recovering himself after chanting the name of Rama, Vibhishana got up and confessed to Rama: "Swami! This is a mark of weakness on my part. I should not have succumbed to such weakness. Having filled myself with your love, how could I succumb to such weakness?" Rama observed: "That's all right. But why did you collapse so suddenly?" Vibhishana replied: "Swami! This happened because of bodily attachment. It was due to parental affection. That mighty warrior was my son." He was Vibhishana's son! See what Vibhishana did. To ensure the victory of the Lord, Vibhishana did not hesitate to get even his son killed in battle.

God is greater than son

Rama asked Vibhishana: "Why did you do this? Is it not wrong on your part? Why did you not tell me at the beginning itself that he was your son?" Vibhishana replied: "When you are facing an enemy, you should not worry about any kind of relationship on the battlefield. In this war there is no room for considerations of relationship. When anyone takes up arms against you, he ceases to be a relation. Whether it is mother, father, son or anybody else, when he figures as an enemy especially against God, there can be no question of relationship. I have completely surrendered to you. I am your servant. I must be primarily be concerned about your victory and not about any temporary kinship. The only truth for me is your will." It is this abounding love of Vibhishana for Rama, which contributed to Rama's victory. Love for the Divine should be inextricable bond. All other worldly attachments are impermanent. *Tamasic* bonds are like iron chains. *Rajasic* bonds are copper

chains. *Satwic* bonds are like chains of gold. But, whether the chains are of iron, copper or gold, they are chains all the same. The nature of the metals may vary, but the chains are shackles nevertheless. Vibhishana declared: "I have no use for any of these bonds. I am content with the pure love of Rama." It is to demonstrate to the world the supreme quality of total love for the Divine that Vibhishana acted in this manner. Vibhishana is a *satwic* (Supremely sacred) friend of Rama. Despite his long intimacy with Rama, Lakshmana was not in the same category. He was a *satwic* brother, not a *satwic* friend. Sugriva was a *Rajasic* friend. Jambavan was a *tamasic* friend. Vibhishana, though he belonged to the Rakshasa brood, stands out as a *satwic* friend (pure and selfless). It is in this unalloyed purity that love shines. It is utterly invaluable. (*SSS Vol.29 p.217-219*)

See also under Section, *Rama* - **Comparisons** -

- **VIBHISHANA VS BHISHMA**
- **VIBHISHANA AND SUGRIVA**

You need not escape into a forest to gain silence and the chance of uninterrupted spiritual practice.

You can make the place where you are, a citadel of silence; shut off the senses; let them not run after objects.

Your home becomes a hermitage; your saadhana will then move on, without any obstacle.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

14.3 KHARA AND DUSHANA

KHARA AND DUSHANA

Khara was a man-eating rakshasa in the Indian Ramayana epic. He was a younger brother of Ravana, and was killed by Rama when he attacked Rama after Surpanakha's humiliation

Rama had killed Khara and Dushana and their army of 14,000 Rakshasas (demons).

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

KHARA AND DUSHANA

Khara: A giant demon chieftain in Ravana's tribe.

Dushana⁸⁹: A demon chieftain in Ravana's tribe. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

BROTHERS OF SURPANAKHA:

(Surpanakha)...the sister of ... Khara and Dushana. (SSB 1996 p.51)

⁸⁹ Also spelt as Dhuushana

ENCOUNTER WITH THE RAKSHASA HORDES:

Surpanakha cries piteously:

In the forest, Lakshmana cut off the nose and ears of Surpanakha. (*SSS Vol.34 p.74*) She went straight to the demon chieftains, Khara and Dushana in the Dandaka forest and wailed, “How can you bear silently this insult and injury dealt to your sister? For what purpose have you stored so much of valour and might? It is better you burn them into ashes. Are you masculine? Can you call yourselves so? Shame on you and your boast of heroism.” They could not understand what had happened to her, and who had deformed her so piteously. (*RKR V Part II p.31*)

Khara and Dushana enquire as to who inflicted the injury:

They asked her, “Sister! Who inflicted this injury? Tell us. We shall wreak vengeance with all our might.” At this, Surpanakha started retelling her story. She began with an elaborate description of the charm and captivating beauty of Rama and Lakshmana. Hearing this, the brothers got wild and inquired why she was wasting her time and theirs with that superfluous prologue, “Tell us, who injured you? Who defaced you?” Then, she informed them all what had happened in the forest. (*RKR V Part II p.31-32*)

Khara and Dushana march with army to avenge the deformation to their sister:

Khara and Dushana were highly incensed at the plight of their sister whose ears and nose had been slit. They collected an army of fourteen thousand ogres and marched in hot haste towards Rama and Lakshmana, the brothers who had punished her in that manner. The ogre warriors were so indomitable that they could

not be defeated even in dreams. They knew no retreat or defeat. They were invincible in battle. Like winged mountains, they moved fast along the valleys in terror-striking groups, while the earth shook under their feet. Each of them was armed to the teeth with a variety of deadly weapons.

From a distance, Surpanakha pointed out to her brothers the hermitage where Rama was. To arouse the ogres into a final frenzy the army shouted, in unison. “Kill, catch, murder,” and ran forward. When they approached the hermitage, the brothers challenged Rama, crying out at the top of their voices, “Oh Most Wicked, Oh Most Unfortunate! You dared deform our sister, did you? Now, try if you can, to save your life from extinction!”
(RKR Part II p.32-33)

Rama asks Lakshmana to take Sita to a cave and stand guard:

Rama was already aware of their approach. He directed Lakshmana to keep Sita away, in a cave, and be on guard. “Do not worry about me in the least! Nothing ill can ever happen to me,” Rama said. Lakshmana knew the might of Rama and so, he obeyed implicitly. He had no doubt at all about Rama’s victory; He led Sita into the cave and stayed there itself, with his bow and arrow ready for any emergency. *(RKR Part II p.33-34)*

Rama stands like a Lion:

Rama stood before the hermitage, smile lighting up his face and his Kodanda bow, well stringed, ready for the fray. Rama passed his hands gently over the matted hair on his head. At this, the ogres saw billions of blinding flashes emanating from the crown

of hair. His arms appeared to their eyes as huge multi-hooded serpents. As a lion glares at an elephant, and bares its teeth relishing the victory that was already assured, Rama, the Lion, stood defiant and terrible before the pack of frightened elephants. (*RKRV Part II p.34*)

None of the ogres raise their weapon against Rama:

The cries, “Here is the person who deformed her,” “Hold him,” “Catch him,” “Kill him,” rose over the tumult. But no one dared come forward to put that cry into action. However much they were prodded and encouraged, not one of them could muster enough courage to approach Rama. The curses and cries of the ogres filled the forest, and wild animals in panic ran helter-skelter seeking shelter. A few ran into the cave where Sita was. Lakshmana sympathised with their agony, and allowed them in, so that they might rid themselves of fear and anxiety. He gave them refuge and welcomed them in. For, he knew that they were in dire distress.

The ogres who surrounded Rama were so overcome by his beauty and charm that they did nothing but stare at the glory and the splendour. Many revelled in descriptions of his grace. Many were lost in admiration and appreciation. All were bound to Rama through love and reverence. Not one of them could or did raise a weapon against him or cast an angry look! (*RKRV Part II p.34-35*)

Surpanakha tells Khara and Dushana not to kill Rama after praising his beauty:

Surpanakha too joined in the praise. She said to Khara and Dushana, who were standing wonder-struck near her, “Brothers! What incomparable beauty is standing before us! I have never seen till now such charm, such grace, such pure harmony, such melodious physique. Do not kill him, but catch him just as he is and present him to me.”

The brothers too were similarly entranced. They replied, “Sister! We too have never set eyes on such an embodiment of beauty. The nearer we approach him, the faster he binds himself to us, the more we are fascinated by his charm. We do not have even an iota of anger or hatred towards him. The longer we look upon him the more profuse the joy that wells up within us. Perhaps, it is this feeling that is called *Ananda* by the sages living here.”
(RKR Part II p.35)

Khara sends a messenger to Rama:

Khara did not like to converse with Rama, himself. So he sent a messenger to him, to find out from him who he was, what his name was, where he came from, why he entered the forest and took residence therein, etc.

The messenger neared Rama and asked him the questions he was directed to place before Rama. Rama smiled at this behaviour. He said, “Listen fellow! I am a *Kshatriya*, come into this forest to hunt wild animals like your master. I am not afraid even of the God of Death. If you feel you have the capacity, come, give me battle and win. Or else, return home, every one of you, and save

yourselves from destruction. I shall not kill those who run away from the field.” This statement was carried by him back to Khara and Dushana, and it was related to them correctly. (*RKRV Part II p.35-36*)

The battle commences:

At this, the brothers took up their arms, the spears, axes, pestles, bows and arrows, and yelled until the skies were booming with the echo. They showered their missiles upon Rama. Rama cut them into pieces with a single arrow from his bow. Other arrows flighted amongst them by Rama did as much havoc as fire or lightning could do. The ogres retreated before the onslaught, crying out in pain, “Oh Mother,” “Oh Father,” “Alas,” “Save us” and so on in sheer agony and despair.

Seeing them fleeing, Khara, Dushana and their youngest brother Trishira, called out, “Rakshasas! Do not flee from the fight. Whoever is found running away will be killed on the spot, by our own soldiers.” At this, they planned within themselves, and said, “Well, it is far better to die at Rama’s hand, than at someone else’s or anywhere outside his Presence.” (*RKRV Part II p.35-36*)

Rama uses the Sammohana arrow- Khara and Dushana die:

So, they came back to their ranks and moved forward towards the place where Rama stood. But they were in no mood to give battle. They were so fascinated by the personal charm and splendour of Rama that they stood entranced gazing at the Divine Beauty. Meanwhile, Rama let loose the arrow called

Sammohana⁹⁰, which had the effect of deluding the enemy and confounding them. As a result, each soldier saw his neighbour as the person he had been deputed to destroy. Khara and Dushana had exhorted them to kill Rama, and so each one fell upon the other, shouting, “Rama is here,” “Here is Rama.” They killed each other in great glee. The entire place was cluttered up with the severed limbs of the ogres. Blood flowed in streams through the forest. Vultures and crows flocked around, eager to fill themselves with the carrion. Fourteen thousand ogres faced one person on that day in that field! The ogres died, every one of them, crying, “Rama,” “Rama” when they fell. Khara and Dushana too died, along with their loyal henchmen. (*RKRV Part II p.36/37*)

All reconfirm the divinity of Rama:

The ascetics and sages who witnessed this scene of terror realised the unique valour of Rama and felt happy that the end of Ravana too was certain at the hands of this redoubtable hero. They were confirmed in their belief that Rama was the Almighty Providence who had come to wipe out from the face of the earth the entire race of ogres or Rakshasas, and thereby ensure the peace and prosperity of mankind.

⁹⁰ Sage Viswamitra had given to Rama all the mighty weapons he had acquired. Rama discharged one such powerful arrow from his bow. That one arrow multiplied into hundred arrows, the hundred became thousand and the thousand in turn became forty thousand arrows and annihilated the Rakshasa army in a trice. Demigods from heaven hailed the victory of Rama and showered flower petals on him. When this news reached Ayodhya, Bharatha, Shatrughna and the mothers were overjoyed. (*SSB 2002 p.94*)

As soon as the fierce engagement ended, Sita and Lakshmana came near Rama and prostrated before him. Rama raised Lakshmana gently from the ground and described to him the fate of the fourteen thousands and their masters, during the battle that lasted barely half an hour. He detailed the incidents with evident joy and interspersed the narration with many a smile and chuckle. (*RKR V Part II p.37*)

15. OTHER RAKSHASAS

Man must achieve the unity in thought, word and deed. But man today is fast developing the animal and demonic qualities. Man today has performed wonders in the field of Science and Technology.

There is a belief that science is opposed to spirituality. Science by itself tends to make man's life artificial. Demonic qualities like envy, greed, selfishness and ostentation are today dominating men's minds. Selfishness has grown beyond limits in men. Behind every action there is the desire for personal gain. Man is attached to worldly things out of selfishness. The world will make genuine progress only when men give up self-interest and self-centredness.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

15.1 THATAKI



Source of this Painting:

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

THATAKI

Thataki⁹¹ was a yakshini (female yaksha) in Indian mythology. Her father Suketa, a yaksha king performed tapasya (Principle and practice of physical and spiritual austerity and discipline to achieve a particular aim) for an offspring. Suketa had desired a son, but Lord Brahma blessed him with a strong and beautiful daughter.

She was Ravana's grandmother. She was married to Sunda. She had two sons Maricha and Subahu. When Sunda was killed due to a curse from the sage Agastya, Thataki attacked the sage along with her sons. The sage cursed them to become demons (Rakshasas). The curse particularly transformed Thataki into a man-eater with an ugly and fierce figure.

After being cursed by Agastya, Thataki started living in a place near the habitations of Malaja and Karusha in a forest near the River Ganga opposite the confluence of the River Sarayu. The area came to be known as the Forest of Thataki. She terrorized the people, devouring anyone who dared to set foot in that forest.

⁹¹ Spelt variously as Thataki, Tataka or Tadaka

When Rama and Lakshmana accompanied the sage Viswamitra to protect his sacrificial rituals, they had to pass through her forest. The sage asked Rama to slay the monster Tataka, but Rama demurred, because he did not want to slay a woman. However, when it was explained to him that evil has no gender, his mind was eased and he slew the demoness with his arrows.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

THATAKI

Thataki⁹²: Fierce demoness mother of Maricha and Subahu; wife of Sunda.

Thataki and Maricha ruin the wealthy little kingdoms - Malada and Karosa⁹³:

Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana entered a thick dark forest. It aroused a sense of terror. Rama asked the Master, “No sign of man having ever traversed this forest is seen!” Before he could get the answer, an eerie succession of roars from the angry throats of a huge herd of animals—tigers, lions, leopards and a host of lesser wild life—captured their attention. It appeared as if the earth was being torn asunder! They also saw wild animals engaged in mortal fight with others, some running into thickets, away from the scene of violent death. The forest was the home of close-grown trees that reached the skies and spread their shades

⁹² Also spelt as Thaatakee

⁹³ Karosa (Karuusha): Region in central India. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

thick over the ground—the banyan, the deodar, the pine, the holy fig.

There was no path to guide the feet. They had to clear a track for progress. Lakshmana could not contain his curiosity; he asked Viswamitra, “Master! Who rules this fearful forest? What is its name?” The Master replied, “Lakshmana! Where this jungle has grown, there were formerly two little kingdoms, Malada and Karosa. They shone like the region of the gods. In fact, people spoke of the area as having been specially created and fostered by the gods. They relate a story about the place. When the God Indra killed Vritra, He suffered the contamination of sin and as a consequence, he was stricken with insatiable pain of hunger. Indra was brought in that pathetic condition by the sages to this region, and given a bath in the holy Ganga. After that immersion, they poured on His Head pots and pots of Ganga water, uttering all the while, holy hymns and formulae. With that, the sin (of killing a person of high caste) was washed away.

“Brahma was delighted that the contamination (Mala) as well as the cry (Karosa) of hunger ended. So, He named these kingdoms as Malada and Karosa. The kingdoms, too, rose to fame with his blessing. The gods willed that the two areas be resplendent with grain and gold, and all means of plenty and prosperity.

“Meanwhile, a cruel ogress named Thataki appeared in this region and she started laying waste the rich and peaceful land. She was a Yakshini who could transform herself into any form she liked. It is rumoured that even as she was born, she was endowed with the prowess of a thousand elephants! She brought forth a son named Maricha. He had the might and heroism of

Indra himself. Mother and son jointly caused tremendous havoc and disaster. The jungle in which that vile ogress lives is at a distance of a yojana (nine miles) and a half from here. She reduced these two wealthy valleys Malada and Karosa into this dreaded wilderness. Out of fear the cultivators of its fertile fields fled in terror at her approach and so the jungle crept on and on. The thickly populated cities and villages were deserted and ruined, leaving no trace of human habitation. She could not be captured or destroyed, for, she could escape from all attempts to destroy her. No one has yet dared to put an end to her depredations. I cannot think of anyone except you (yes, my deepest intuition says so); no one except you can destroy this monster possessing such overwhelming might. These two, the vicious mother and son, lead and guide the demons to disrupt and pollute the Yajnas and sacred rituals of the hermits.”

The words of Viswamitra moved the feelings of Rama. He could not contain within himself the anger that surged up. With great humility and reverence, he said, “Oh great among ascetics! I have heard that the Yakshas are of poor might. (*RKRV Part I p 101-103*)

Thataki’s birth – marriage and Agasthya curse:

Rama said ‘Besides, this Thataki is a female; hers is the weaker sex. How could she terrorise entire populations so? Wherefrom did she acquire all this power? How could she reduce this region to rack and ruin when it has been blessed by Brahma and the Gods? This is indeed astounding. It is something that is beyond the bounds of belief.’ Viswamitra said, “Rama! I shall explain. Listen! There was, in the past, a Yaksha named Sukethu. He was

as rich in virtues as in prowess. He had no child to succeed him and so, he practiced severe austerities to propitiate the Gods and receive their blessings. At last, Brahma was pleased with his austerity. He appeared before him. He blessed him that He will get a daughter, with extraordinary strength, cleverness and skill. Sukethu was elated at this boon, though it was to be a daughter, not a son.

“Sukethu returned and a daughter was born to him, as anticipated. The child grew fast and strong. Though it was of the weaker sex, through the grace of Brahma, it had the might of a thousand elephants. She was moving about, with no law or limit, as if she owned all she saw! She was a very charming girl and so, Sukethu, sought far and wide for an equally charming groom. Finally, he secured one. His name was Sunda, and Sukethu gave her in marriage to him. Three years later, she gave birth to a son. He is Maricha, about whom I told you. Mother and son have become invincible in combat. Sunda started off on his demonic adventures and attempted to ruin the Yajnas of sages and so, he incurred the wrath of the great Agasthya. He hurled a curse on the vile fellow, which killed him and saved the sages from further grief. In revenge, Thataki took her son along, and fell upon the hermitage of Agasthya. Agasthya had forewarning of this attack. So, he cursed them both to be reduced to the status of ogres. This enraged them more.

They roared abuses and advanced frightfully with blood red eyes against Agasthya! Agasthya felt that delay would be dangerous. He cursed Thataki that she should lose her charm and become an ugly fright! He willed that she become a cannibal! She was not

subdued by the curse, but she continued the attack with renewed ferocity. So, Agasthya escaped from the ravage and went to a safer place. Angered by this disappointment, Thataki spent her ire on this region (Malada and Karosa) destroying crops and gardens and reducing it to a big jungle.” (*RKRV Part I p.103-105*)

RAMA KILLS THATAKI

Rama questions the propriety to kill a woman and Viswamitra elaborates on Rama’s manifestation:

Rama said, “Master! Since she was born as a consequence of Brahma’s boon, and as a gift for austerity, she had all these skills and strength. She misused them and drew upon herself the wrath and the curse. The sin of killing a woman is, as mentioned in the scriptures, very heinous, isn’t it? Agasthya must have let her off with the curse of ugliness, for this very reason. Or else could not the great sage, who caused the husband to die, kill the wife also? I have heard that warriors should not be so mean as to kill women. Tell me what I should do now. I am prepared to obey.” (*RKRV Part I p.105*)

No sin when the act is done for the promotion of Dharma

Viswamitra was happy that Rama put these qualms dictated by Dharma. “I am not ignorant of the fact that the killing of a woman is a heinous sin. Nevertheless, the protection of

spiritually progressive men—the Brahmins, the virtuous, as well as cows—this is important⁹⁴.

Dharma is intertwined with these three. There is no sin when the act is done for the promotion of Dharma and the removal of Adharma. Don't you know the dictum, '*Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah*'; Dharma saves those who save it? This is not violence used for one's aggrandizement. (*RKRV Part I p.105-106*)

Viswamitra had also been establishing the truth contained in the statement that sin is not something distinct and unconnected with one's actions. Sin arises only from the kind of work and action that you do. God is not found elsewhere. God can be found only by the good deeds and good actions that you do. When we talk of 'rakshasas' and wicked people, they are not to be found elsewhere, as separate entities; they are living in our own hearts and arise from our own action. (*SSB 1977 p.147-148*)

Thataki Killed:

Rama held the bow in his hand, and tested the tightness of the string, producing a sound that echoed and re-echoed from the ten directions. The entire jungle was awakened. Wild animals fled far and wide. Thataki was shocked by the unusually loud and

⁹⁴ To protect the pious, the righteous and the holy persons engaged in sacred activities there was nothing wrong in destroying even women. There is nothing wrong in repudiating one's mother, father, husband or preceptor if they come between the devotee and God. When Kaikeyi came between him and his devotion to Rama, Bharatha utterly denounced her. One must be prepared to sacrifice everything for God. (*SSS Vol.31 p.77*)

awesome sound. She was inflamed with rage at this disturbing phenomenon. She rushed towards the place wherefrom it emanated! Rama saw the monster moving towards him like a mountain lurching or a huge wild elephant charging. He smiled and told Lakshmana, “Brother! Look at this mass of ugliness! Can common man survive the sight of this devilish personality? The very appearance is terrible! What are we then to say of its might? And it is a woman! My mind does not fully cooperate with me when I resolve to kill it! I believe this monster will die if its hands and legs are cut apart, that may be enough to destroy it.”

Thataki was rushing towards Rama with outstretched arms, so that she could grasp him and put him into her mouth like a piece of cake! She was roaring wildly and in terror striking excitement. Viswamitra was praying, with eyes closed, that the brothers may not suffer harm in this combat. Thataki moved nearer and nearer to Rama, but with greater and greater reluctance, for, in his presence, she felt a strange kind of shock. Once or twice, she went near Rama, but she had to retreat fast. She jumped about in fury, angry at herself! The dust kicked up by her rendered the area dark and suffocating. Rama, Lakshmana and Viswamitra stood silent and inactive for a while. Thataki was an adept in the art of delusion and destruction. She created a heavy rain of rocks. Rama now decided that the ogress should no longer be allowed to live on earth. She cannot be pardoned on the score of femininity! So, he drew his bow and shot an arrow at the body of the invisible Thataki identifying where exactly it was at the time. At this, she rushed once again at Rama. Her two arms were cut down by his arrows. She fell on the ground, crying in agony and

pain. Lakshmana cut off her limbs, one by one. But, Thataki could adopt form after form, as she liked. So, she gave up one form and assumed another quickly and reappeared fresh and furious before them! She pretended to be dead, but soon came up alive! She adopted a variety of forms at the same time and started her old trick of the shower of rocks. She exhibited her wicked talents and evil tricks. Rama and Lakshmana received a few injuries, however watchful they were. Seeing this, Viswamitra felt that there should be no more delay, and that she must be killed straightaway. He said, “Rama! Do not hesitate. This is not the moment to consider her womanhood and show concessions. Removal of her limbs will not benefit. So long as there is life these Rakshasas can adopt any number of forms. Therefore, kill her! When evening approaches, her dark rage will swell even more. After sunset, it becomes impossible to encounter Rakshasas, whoever might attempt to do so. She must be destroyed within the hour.” Saying this, Viswamitra uttered some sacred Manthras that ensure protection and great safety.

Rama too directed his own thoughts and through his power of guiding arrows in the direction from where the sound emanates he recognised where Thataki was and shot an arrow fast at that target. The arrow had the effect of binding her limbs and preventing her from making the slightest movement. At this, Thataki shrieked most ferociously, and putting out her terrible tongue, attempted to fall upon Rama and Lakshmana and crush them under her weight. On this, Rama decided that delay will invite worse consequences. He shot a fatally sharp arrow right into the chest. With that, she rolled on the ground and gave up her life. (*RKRV Part I p.109-110*)

The earth showed a huge crater where she fell. Trees were uprooted by the impact of the gigantic mass, when she rolled in agony. Her last gasp of breath was so weird and loud that the wild beasts of the forest fled. Herds of animals ran helter skelter. When the awful demoness fell dead, Viswamitra called Rama near, and stroking his hair lovingly, said, “Son, were you afraid? No! No! How can the saviour of all the worlds be afraid? This feat is the foundation stone. It ensures the stability of the mansion. Come, you are tired. The sun too has set. Perform the evening worship and rest awhile. Come with me.” He took them to the river, and later, he told them, “Children! We shall rest here for the night and we can proceed to our hermitage at dawn.” They spent the night listening to the stories that Viswamitra related. The Master also revealed to them their own faculties and latent majesty.

Viswamitra said: “Rama! I am delighted at your heroism! When you were overcoming that demoness Thataki, I comprehended the truth of your being the Absolute. Really, I am very fortunate.” (*RKR Part I p.111*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS:

Thataki described as an ogress is also a Rajasic Mahatma

In killing an ogress, Rama is accused of committing *Strihathya* (the sin of killing a woman). But it is not so. He was destroying the *Tamo guna* which she symbolised. (*SSS Vol.23 p.47*)

15.2 MARICHA AND SUBAHU

MARICHA AND SUBAHU

Subahu is a rakshasa character in the Ramayana. He and his mother, Thataki, took immense pleasure in harassing the munis of the jungle, especially Viswamitra, by disrupting their yajnas with rains of flesh and blood.

Viswamitra approached Dasaratha for help in getting rid of these pestilences. Dasaratha obliged by sending two of his sons, Rama and Lakshmana, to the forest with Viswamitra, charging them to protect both the sage and his sacrificial fires. When Subahu and Tataka again attempted to rain flesh and blood on the sage's yajna, they were both killed by Rama.

Maricha was a rakshasa who played a small but important part in the Indian Ramayana epic. He was thrown into a remote island by the arrow of Lord Rama when he tried to interrupt Sage Viswamitra's yagna. After that he became very afraid of the very mention of the name Rama. (Rama is described as Maareechaadinipaataka Ram in the Nama Ramayana, a Sanskrit verse eulogising Rama)

Later in the epic, Ravana strives to kidnap Sita and so asks for Maricha's help. Maricha turns himself into a golden deer.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

MARICHA AND SUBAHU– THE RAKSHASAS:

Maricha⁹⁵: Demon son of Thataki, uncle of Ravana. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Subahu⁹⁶: One of two sons of the demoness Thataki, the other being Maricha. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

The Rakshasas are no ordinary foes! Reports say that among them are Sunda, Upasunda, Maricha, Subahu, etc. These are atrociously cruel. Their physical appearance is indescribably horrid. (*RKRV Part I p.89*)

SONS OF THATAKI:

Maricha and Subahu (are) sons of Thataki. (*SSB 1996 p.25*) She (Thataki) brought forth a son named Maricha. He had the might and heroism of Indra himself. Mother and son⁹⁷ jointly caused tremendous havoc and disaster. (*RKRV Part I p.103*)

⁹⁵ Also spelt as Mareecha, Maareecha

⁹⁶ Also spelt as Subaahu

⁹⁷ See Chapter *Thataki* - **Thataki and Maricha ruin the wealthy little kingdoms - Malada and Karosa**

Rama hurls Maricha far away and the inner meaning of letting Maricha go:

The sage Viswamitra took Rama (and Lakshmana) for the protection of his *yaga* from the depredations of Thataki and her sons. Maricha was one of the sons. After Rama had killed Thataki, Maricha appeared to disturb the *Yaga*. (*SSS Vol.23 p.43*)

Rama, through His Divine Vision, knew where the leading ogres, Maricha⁹⁸ and Subahu were, and he released the Manasa arrow in that direction. It struck the breast of Maricha, and stopped any further mischief from him. Next he shot the Agniastra (Fire weapon) at Subahu and it got lodged in the heart of Subahu. Rama understood that if their corpses dropped on the holy region the hermitage itself will be polluted. So to prevent that sinful contact, the arrows of Rama carried the vicious bodies hundreds of miles afar and cast them into the ocean! Maricha and Subahu shrieked and groaned in unbearable agony and struggled desperately amidst the waves; but they did not die. (*RKRV Part I p.117*)

Rama then released the *Agniastra* on Subahu, who collapsed on the ground then and there. Rama followed this up by launching the *Vayu Astra* on the followers of Subahu who then melted into thin air instantaneously. (*SSB 1996 p.25*)

⁹⁸ See Chapter *Viswamitra* - The Yagna at Siddhashram and the destruction of Maricha and Subahu

After killing the rakshasas Thataki and Subahu, Maricha was allowed to go free and we must examine the inner meaning of this situation. If Maricha was also killed and was not allowed to go free, there would not have been the possibility of Ravana taking away Sita. If Ravana did not take away Sita, there would not have been the killing of Ravana himself. Thus, there is always a master plan behind every act in Ramayana⁹⁹. (*SSB 1977 p.141*)

MARICHA’S ROLE IN SITA’S ABUDUCTION BY RAVANA:

Ravana decides to seek Maricha’s help:

Ravana convinced himself at last that the two brothers were Royal Princes and no more. He resolved that he would kill them both and bring away the lady of whom he was so enamoured. He¹⁰⁰ promised his sister that he would avenge the injury inflicted on her in that manner. He hurried to the “seashore dwelling” of Maricha, and sat by his side, detailing to him the events that had happened. He ordered Maricha to play his part in the execution of his plan. Ravana proceeded to the Dandaka Forest, with Maricha following him closely. On the way, Ravana explained to his companion the strategy he had conceived. He directed Maricha to transform himself, by means of his demonic

⁹⁹ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, **Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - INTERPRETATIONS - DIVINE MASTERPLAN IN EVERY ACT IN RAMAYANA:**

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter *Ravana*- **RAVANA AND HIS SISTER, SURPANAKHA**

powers, into a lovely golden deer. He wanted him to frisk about, in that alluring form, before the hermitage where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were. Maricha had to assent, since he had no way of escaping from his ire. Ravana told him: "Rama will try to capture you, and will follow you and you should lead him far into the distance, and from thence, you must yell in painful agony, 'Oh Sita! Oh Lakshmana,' in a voice exactly like that of Rama." Then, keeping the chariot afar, both moved towards the hermitage. (*RKRV Part II p. 45-46*)

He (Ravana) told Maricha: "You are a pre-eminently capable person. You can understand demons and deal equally with the Divine. You are capable of assuming any form. You must therefore go to the Dandakaranya forest and separate Rama from Sita." (*SSS Vol.23 p.44-45*)

Maricha advises Ravana to desist from such acts:

But Maricha said that he had borne the brunt of the might of both Rama and Lakshmana, once already. (*RKRV Part II p.45*) At that stage, Maricha told Ravana: "This is a disastrous proposal. It is said that men who are destined for destruction develop disastrous ideas. No one can conquer Rama. You can never hope to acquire Sita in all your life. Rama is God incarnate. Give up this suicidal idea."

Maricha describes Rama's power and beauty

Maricha was one of those who realised the omnipresence, the omnipotence and the Divine greatness of Rama. Rama aimed an arrow at him which threw him off miles away. That experience made Maricha realise the Divine puissance of Rama. He declared

that he had not seen anyone who could equal Rama in power. He explained to him the unique powers of Rama even as a young lad. He told Ravana: "Oh Ravana! There is no one in this world that is as powerful as Rama. There is no parallel to him anywhere. (*Pumsaam Mohana Roopaya*) His unexcelled beauty is beyond words. His form fascinates even men. I have beheld his divine beautiful form." (*SSS Vol.23 p.43-44*)(*DD3-4-1990*)

Maricha witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama

Maricha, who had earlier witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama, tried to reason with Ravana, saying, "Ravana, you do not know the matchless strength and prowess of Rama. There is none equal to Him in the world. Your power and prowess are infinitesimally small when compared with the infinite power of Rama. You will only bring about the destruction of your life and kingdom!"

Inflamed by the words of Maricha, Ravana roared: "O Maricha! You are giving too much credit to the hapless and helpless humans who are roaming in the forest. Sita is fit to be with me for I am omnipotent and omniscient." Ravana then sternly warned Maricha that he would kill him, if he did not obey him. (*SSB1996 p.52*)

He (Maricha) told Ravana that they are not of the common run of Princes. He advised him against such wild enterprises. He argued long and lovingly with Ravana, to dissuade him.

But passion had made Ravana blind to the dictates of duty and morality. So, he threatened to punish Maricha if he did not yield to his will (and he would be beheaded.)¹⁰¹ (*RKRV Part II p.45*)

Prefers a death by the Divine Hands:

Maricha¹⁰² thought within himself. "Either way, my life is in danger. Rather than die at the hands of this wicked Ravana, it is better for me to meet with my death from the Divine hands of Rama." It was with the desire to be slain by Rama that Maricha agreed to obey Ravana's command. It was thus a Rakshasa who first recognised the divinity of Rama. It was later that Viswamitra announced Rama's divinity. (*SSS Vol.23 p.45*)

Maricha decided within himself that it was better to die at the hands of Rama than of the Rakshasa that Ravana was. He agreed to the proposal that Ravana laid before him, and got ready to play his part in the conspiracy. (*RKRV Part II p.45*)

Maricha feels blessed and free from sin:

Ravana and Maricha were arguing how best to enter the hermitage to execute their nefarious design. Maricha was disgusted at the passion and perversity of Ravana, but he did not have the courage to deny him his own complicity. He had no inclination to die at the hands of such a wicked person. So, he accepted the role Ravana granted him and agreed to do as he wanted. Maricha changed his form into a fascinating golden deer, a form that was certain to attract the admiration of Sita and

¹⁰¹ *SSS Vol.23 p.45*

¹⁰² See Chapter *Ravana* - **ABDUCTION OF SITA**

Rama. He thought within himself; “Ah, what an auspicious day is this that has dawned! I am about to be blessed in a few moments with the vision of the three most charming individuals on earth! On me will fall the looks of Sita. Then, Rama will follow me, with bow and arrow in hand. Ah, how fortunate am I! I am the servant, who has to tread on the footsteps of Rama; but my Master will follow me now. Of course, I know that I am engaged in a most heinous action; but I am forced into it. I do not act according to my will. I am being forced into it, and so, I am free from sin. Whatever sin I have perpetrated, when Rama’s arrow shot by Rama’s hand strikes me, this artificial form will disappear. That will be my happy destiny. Can all aspire for such an end, can all people achieve it? And I will have another piece of good fortune. When I draw my last breath, my eyes will be fixed on Rama! That Divine Beauty will be in front of me. The sweet Name will be on my tongue! Ah, how fruitful has my life become! I do not find anyone luckier than I.” (*RKRV Part II p.50*)

Maricha takes on the form of a golden deer:

Maricha thought to himself: “If I do not obey Ravana I will definitely die at his hands. On the other hand, if I come to You, Rama, as a golden deer, You will chase me and I will certainly die at Your hands. Either way, death is inevitable. It is better to die by Your hands than by those of wicked Ravana.” So praying, he agreed to carry out the wish of Ravana. Maricha then turned himself into an enchanting golden deer and played about in the vicinity of Rama’s hut in Panchavati. (*SSB 1996 p.52*)

Maricha dwelt on these sweet thoughts, as he walked slowly towards the hermitage. The all-knowing Rama and the all-knowing Sita were both awaiting his appearance. The deer approached, hesitatingly and with evident trepidation, the precincts of the cottage. It fixed its looks on Sita and Rama and stood for a while. Then, it frisked and skipped a few paces and peering into a bush of creepers, it entered it out of sheer curiosity, only to come out of it in a trice.

Sita's desire to play with it and exhibiting great attachment to the mysterious deer-

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana noticed its antics and admired its appearance. Seeing that it had a golden skin, they decided that it was a strange species of deer. They noted its special characteristics and were fascinated by its charm. Sita said, "If only I could have this deer with me, I could spend time happily in its company. When you two are engaged in things concerning you alone, I could be happy playing with this unique pet. Please catch this bright little animal for me. Can you not fulfil this tiny wish of mine, so that I can entertain myself when alone, fondling it and watching it play about?" Sita¹⁰³ appealed thus, exhibiting great attachment to the mysterious deer.

Noticing this, Lakshmana rose from his seat, saying, "Mother! I shall get it for you." Rama stopped him. ... Lakshmana did not know the drama that was being enacted with this as the prologue. He said, "Lakshmana! It has to be caught, without inflicting any wound or injury. So, I have myself to pursue it and catch it. I

¹⁰³ See Chapter, *Sita* - **ABDUCTION OF SITA**

have myself to fulfil this wish of Sita.” At this, Lakshmana was silenced and he sat down, as directed by Rama.

Moreover, since the subsequent scenes of the drama were known to both Sita and Rama, Rama kept it to himself, while he said: “Lakshmana, this forest is the dwelling place of Rakshasas... Do not leave Sita alone, under any circumstance. This deer might escape me and flee into the distance. I have to catch it alive; so, it may take some time for me to accomplish this task. Or use your intelligence and physical prowess as suits the occasion, and save Sita from any danger that might threaten her while I am away.”

Rama shoots the fatal arrow to fell Maricha:

Rama then stalked the strange deer and went beyond sight. The deer did not cast its looks forward, but ran fast with its head bent backwards, its eyes cast on Rama, the pursuer! Seeing this behaviour, Rama was delighted. Rama knew that the deer was Maricha himself, his great devotee who had experienced and realised the Rama Principle and the Rama Power. So Rama too fixed his eyes on the deer and followed its gait with great interest. The deer came within reach one moment, but it sprang afar with one leap, to attract Rama to a little more distance. Rama seemed to be enjoying this tantalising pursuit. But after some time spent thus, Rama fitted an arrow on his bow and aiming at the deer he released it straight on the target.

When the fatal arrow struck him, Maricha exclaimed in agony, “Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana!” and collapsed on the ground.
(RKR Part II p.51-53)

Chance to be killed by Rama's arrow

The Gita Speaks of *bhakti*, *karma*, as *yogas* and by *yoga* is meant what *Patanjali* intended it to mean: (*Chitta vithithi nirodhah*, that is, stilling of the agitations of the Mind-stuff). Vishnu is the supreme exemplar of this calm, for He is “*santhakaram bhujaga sayanam*”, the very picture of peaceful calm, though reclining on a thousand – hooded serpent; the snake being the symbol of the objective world with its poisonous fangs. Being in the world but not of it, not bound by it- that is the secret. Maricha gave up even the urge to live when he got the chance to die at the hands of Rama, with the eyes fixed on the charm of that Divine Form. He knew that Rama was, as he said, ‘*Vigrahavan .Dharmah*’ – Dharma is cognisable form. So he thanked for the chance given to him to him to be killed by Rama's arrow. (*SSS Vol. 6 Second Edition p.131*)

All religions have accepted the timelessness and the Omnipresence of God. So, it is strange that even those, who accept this truth, display such narrowness of mind. For, hatred between people professing different religions leads ultimately to the destruction of faith in religion itself. Those who are bent upon destroying religion must be utterly thoughtless. What has to be destroyed is religious bigotry, not religion itself.

To despise other people's religion out of love for one's own religion, is like demonstrating one's love for one's mother by denigrating the mothers of others. One should realise that other people have the same regard and devotion for their faiths, as one has for one's own religion. Young men of today should, while cultivating attachment to their own religion, respect the beliefs and practices of all others.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

15.3 AJAMUKHI AND KABANDA

AJAMUKHI AND KABANDA

AJAMUKHI AND KABANDA

Kabanda: A mountain-sized demon who attacked Rama and Lakshmana.

Ajamukhi¹⁰⁴: A demoness. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

AJAMUKHI

Rama moved towards the south picturing in his mind the regions of the South and the ordeals of Sita.

On the way, a demoness called Ajamukhi espied them and was entranced by their personal beauty. She said to herself, “Ah, what loveliness of body! What loveliness of body! What a feast to the eye! I must wed them and win happiness.” So resolving, she clasped the hand of Lakshmana and drew him towards herself. Lakshmana inferred that she too was stricken with the malady of Surpanakha, and he treated her with the same contempt. He cut off her limbs and taught her a severe lesson.

¹⁰⁴ Also Spelt as Aja-mukhee

The forest through which they passed was as terrible as the demons they found there. It was infested with wild animals that roared, howled and growled most fearfully. Even the roughest heart would quake in fear at the scene and the noises.

KABANDA

While Rama and Lakshmana were moving in the forest in search of Sita, they accosted a strange person who had his face in his stomach. Seeing his form, they concluded that this person was a demon. Rama and Lakshmana went to the demon and asked him, “Who are you? You do not have any head. How do you live? How is it that you don’t have a neck as other people have?” The strange person creature answered, “O Sir! My name is Kabanda¹⁰⁵. I have hands that can extend to ten miles. They can grasp any prey that I desire to eat. I fill my stomach without moving much. Who are you? You have entered this dense and terrible forest? You see, to be tender beings. You look like princes. To which kingdom do you belong?” Rama who always spoke the truth replied, “We have come here in obedience to the command of our father. I suffer from the pangs of separation from my wife. Someone has kidnapped her. Can you tell us where she is and what happened to her?” “Then Kabanda told Rama, “O Sir! First burn me to ashes. I will give you all the information you need.” They killed him and burned his body. A handsome being arose out of the ashes and told them, “I was

¹⁰⁵ Kabanda, a mass of distortion and disfiguration. He was a monster, with no head. His arms were inordinately long. He had his mouth in the centre of his stomach! He was a terror in that forest, devouring whatever he could get in the sweep of his arms. (*RKRV Part II p.69*)

forced to assume this ugly form due to the curse of sages. I was told that whoever burnt me to ashes was verily God himself. O Rama! Your Sita is in Lanka. She is a lady of great chastity. Whoever dares touch her will be burnt to ashes. Very soon you will see Sita in Lanka and will go back to Ayodhya. My words never fail. You may seek the help of Sugriva. May you enjoy comfort and solace soon,” After saying these words, he vanished. *(SSB 2002 p.100-101)*

He opposed their advance and shook the forest with his unearthly guffaw. He attempted to snatch Rama and Lakshmana¹⁰⁶, but Rama slew him ere he could succeed. By killing him, Rama saved the forest-dwellers from a dreaded foe.

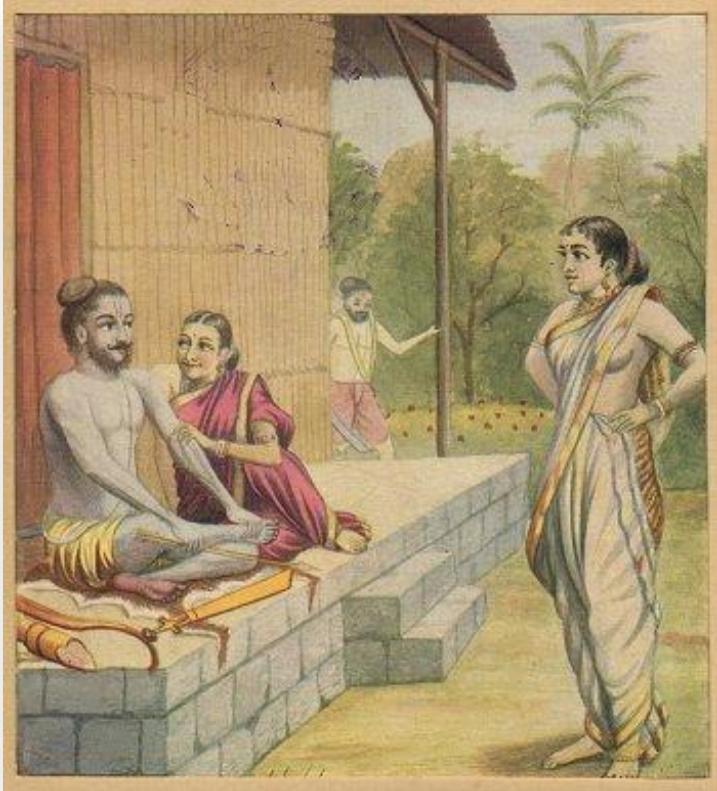
On the point of death Kabanda realised who his enemy was. He recognised Rama. He said, “Master! You have this day liberated me from the shackles of a curse that had reduced me to this ludicrous and cruel role. My sins have been exonerated by the vision I have of you.” While falling at the feet of Rama, Kabanda said, “Your mission will succeed, without delay or obstacles. You will certainly triumph over the forces of wickedness.” *(RKR Part II p.69-70)*

¹⁰⁶ See chapter, *Lakshmana - Encounter with Kabhanda*

Know that the basic reality is God, Omnipotent, and Omniscient Omnipresent. Become aware of it and stay in that awareness always. Whatever the stress and the strain, do not waver from that Faith. Or you can earn that awareness by reminding yourselves of it with every breath of yours. How you can so remind yourselves, you may ask. By means of any one of His Names, any Name that is fragrant with Divine Pre-fume, any Name that is reminiscent of His Beauty His Grace and His Power.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

15.4 SURPANAKHA



Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist Balasaheb Pant Pratinidhi (author dead before 1952)
(April 13, 1951)

Title Surpanakha Asks for Rama's Love

Description Surpanakha Asks for Rama's Love Painting by
Balasaheb Pant Pratinidhi

Date 1916

Source/Photographer

- Chitra Ramayana
- <http://www.kamat.com/database/pictures/30023.htm>

SURPANAKHA

Surpanakha is one of the most important characters in the Ramayana. Indeed, Valmiki comes close to claiming that if there had been no Kaikeyi and no Surpanakha, then there would have been no Ramayana and no war with Ravana. In fact, Surpanakha was the arrow that set in motion the chain of events leading directly to the destruction of Ravana. Surpanakha, therefore, like Kaikeyi before her, often gets the blame from Hindus as being the evil genius behind, and the sole cause of the Ramayana war.

The youngest child of Rishi Vishrava and his second wife, Kaikesi, Surpanakha was given the name of "Minakshi" (the fish-eyed one) at birth. As beautiful as her mother Kaikesi and her grandmother Thataki had been before her, Surpanakha grew up to marry the Asura Dushtabuddhi. Initially, Surpanakha's husband enjoyed high favour with her brother Ravana, the King of Lanka, and they were privileged members of Ravana's court, but the three fell out eventually due to Dushtabuddhi's scheming for more power. Ravana had Dushtabuddhi killed, an act which earned Ravana his sister's great displeasure.

The widowed Surpanakha spent her time between Lanka and the forests of Southern India, visiting her Asura, forest-dwelling relatives, from time to time. According to the Valmiki Ramayana, during one such visit, she met the exiled Rama, the young Prince of Ayodhya, and was immediately smitten by his youthful good looks. Rama, however, spurned her advances, telling her that he was devoted to his wife, Sita, and that he would never take another wife. Rama then slyly suggested that she approach his younger brother, Lakshmana, with her proposition. Lakshmana reacted in a similar manner, deriding Surpanakha and telling her that she was not what he desired in a wife. Realizing eventually that the brothers were making fun of her, the humiliated and jealous Surpanakha attacked Sita but was thwarted by Lakshmana, who cut off her nose and sent her back to Lanka.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SURPANAKHA

Surpanakha¹⁰⁷: Ravana's wicked sister. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

FAMILY

“I am the sister of the brave Ravana. I am also the sister of Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana, Khara and Dushana. My name is Surpanakha.” (*SSB 1996 p.50*)

¹⁰⁷ Also spelt as Shuurpanakhaa

SURPANAKHA ARRIVES IN PANCHAVATI

Surpanakha introduces herself:

One day, while Rama and Sita were entering their hut in Panchavati, guarded by Lakshmana, a lady was seen walking toward them. Though Rama and Sita did not see her, the ever-watchful Lakshmana¹⁰⁸ spotted her and asked, “Who are you?” The lady ignored him and went straight to Rama. Rama too asked the same question. The lady countered by asking a question herself, “What does it matter to you as to who I am? By the way, who are you?” Rama then introduced Himself as the son of Dasaratha. The lady responded by introducing herself, “I am the sister of the brave Ravana. I am the sister of Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana, Khara, and Dushana. My name is Surpanakha.”(SSB 1996 P.65-67)

Rama and Lakshmana fun tease Surpanakha:

When Rama asked her to explain the purpose of her visit, she replied without a trace of modesty that she wanted to marry Him! Rama and Lakshmana could not help smiling at the behaviour of Surpanakha and decided to have some fun at her expense. Rama said to her, “Oh lady! You are the very embodiment of beauty. It is not possible for Me to marry you since I have a wife of My own. See there! That young man will be a fitting husband for you, since he is not accompanied by his wife.” Taking Rama seriously, she went to Lakshmana and said, “Lakshmana, are you ready to marry me?” To this Lakshmana replied, “Yes, I am ready. But I do not wish to reduce you to the lowly status of a

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter, *Lakshmana*- Encounter with Surpanakha:

servant. Since I am the servant of Sri Rama, you too will become the servant of Sri Rama if you marry me. You are the sister of Ravana who is of a great royal lineage. It is not proper on your part to become a servant by marrying me. Hence, marry my Master Sri Rama, instead of wishing to marry me.”

Rama asks Lakshmana to cut off her ears and nose:

In this way, the two brothers had fun teasing Surpanakha¹⁰⁹. Surpanakha who deemed herself most beautiful, approached Rama saying, “Rama! Does Sita possess the beauty that I do? She looks emaciated. Look how beautiful I am. Rama and Lakshmana laughed within themselves at this¹¹⁰. (*SSB 2002 p.207*)

After some time, Surpanakha became enraged. She thought, “It is because of the presence of Sita that Rama is not interested in me. If she is not there, Rama will certainly yield to my request.” (*SSB 2002 p.95*)

Surpanakha came to Rama and said, “If You permit me, I will kill Sita and Lakshmana so that both of us can live happily in this forest.” Saying this she rushed toward Sita in order to swallow her. Rama sent a signal to Lakshmana by looking at the sky. The intelligent Lakshmana¹¹¹, who had a thorough understanding of

¹⁰⁹ *SSB 1996 p.50-51*

¹¹⁰ Everyone considers himself/herself good looking but may appear ugly to others. So, they did not want to argue with her. They told her “We don’t match your good looks. Please find someone who is as beautiful as you are.” It is easy to criticize but very difficult to analyse. But in this world many criticise divinity in many ways. (*SSB 2002 p.207*)

¹¹¹ See Chapter, Lakshmana - Lakshmana reads the signs made by Rama:

the signs and gestures of Rama, concluded that Rama was asking him to cut off her nose and ears, since the sky signifies sound and sound in turn signifies ears. *(SSB 1996 p.50-51)* Lakshmana rushed towards the demonic woman with his sword drawn. He dragged her down to the ground; and shouting that her effrontery must be punished, he slashed off her ears and nose. *(RKR Part II p.31)*

Surpanakha raised such aloud wail that the forest quaked and quivered. She assumed her real shape as an ogress yelled, “Is this just? How can you deform, so cruelly, a woman who has come to you? I shall bring my brother Ravana here and inflict retribution for this cruel act.” With this, she disappeared quickly into forest. *(RKR Part II p.31)*

Surpanakha goes to her brothers, Khara and Dushana:

Surpanakha was now devoid of her ears and nose. She screamed furiously, calling her brothers Khara and Dushana to her rescue. *(SSB1996 p.51)*

The earless, nose-less widow, Surpanakha, with her bleeding face walked in front of the entire force, eager to take revenge. She was leading them to the patch of green where she had met the brothers.

But she spelt an inauspicious beginning for the campaign. Hers was the bad omen for the expedition. A bleeding face, a widow, a defective—these are considered bad omens. Surpanakha was all these. The Rakshasas were not aware of the pros and cons of the signs and omens for starting on a march towards the

battlefield. They relied on their physical and material might, and their nefarious stratagems. It is for this very reason that they are always unable to stand before the might of Divine and *Dharmic* forces.

For, who can withstand the power generated by the observance of *Dharma* and the Grace of God? They never paid attention to Righteousness or Divinity. They concentrated all their energies and skills on equipping themselves with physical might. Proud of their weapons, their muscles and their wickedness they strode forward into the forest, blowing their trumpets, roaring like lions, bellowing like wild elephants, yelling about their exploits and gyrating wildly in their wild dances. They never realised that their onslaught was comparable only to the onslaught of a sparrow on an eagle! From a distance, Surpanakha pointed out to her brothers the hermitage where Rama was. (*RKR V Part II p.32-33*)

In a trice Rama wiped out Khara, Dushana¹¹², and a host of terrible demons who accompanied them. (*SSB1996 p.51*)

SURPANAKHA IN LANKA

Her Monstrous appearance:

Surpanakha lost no time to appear before her brother, Ravana, rending the air with her weeping. *She was bleeding from her*

¹¹² See Chapter, *Khara And Dushana*

wounds¹¹³. Hearing it the Rakshasas of Lanka were frightened that some calamity had overtaken their land. They came out into the streets and started discussing in groups what the reason could possibly be. Surpanakha barged into the Audience Hall of Ravana, the Rakshasa Emperor, and spouted angry invectives, to the astonishment and anxiety of everyone present.

Her appearance was monstrous. Her body was covered with blood; her words were poisoned by anger. Ravana understood that someone had inflicted great injury on her. (*RKRV Part II p. 40*)

Surpanakha tells Ravana that the rakshasa clan was being wiped out at Panchavati:

Ravana was shocked at her plight. He roared from his throne, “Sister! Tell us in full what happened.” Surpanakha replied, “Brother, if you are a genuine Rakshasa, if the superhuman powers gained by you after years of asceticism are real, then come; the moment has arrived to use your valour, your courage and your heroism. Arise! Do not ignore the calamities that await you and let things go by, lost in the intoxication that drink provides. “You have paid no attention to events that are taking place at Panchavati, who has come there, for what purpose, and for what task. Princes determined to destroy the Rakshasas have entered the Dandaka Forest. They are felling to the ground *lakhs* (100,000) of Rakshasa soldiers. They have cut to pieces the brothers, Khara and Dushana. They have wiped out of existence, in the wink of an eye, thousands launched against them. Their

¹¹³ *SSB 2002 p.95*

heroism is beyond description. Their personal beauty—Ah!” Here, Surpanakha halted and stood silent, contemplating the splendour that had enraptured her. Hearing her story, Ravana became uncontrollably furious. (*RKR Part II p.40*)

Ravana Furious but Surpanakha retaliates:

He gnashed his teeth. He slapped his thighs as if in a burst of challenge. “What? Did those vile persons kill Khara and Dushana? Perhaps they did not know my name that I am behind them as their support. Perhaps they have not heard of my might and vengeance.”

Ravana continued to boast aloud retailing to the people present his exploits. Surpanakha interrupted him, saying, “Oh Mass of Wickedness! When your arch enemy is dancing on your head, you are sitting here like a coward, extolling yourself and your invincibility! This is no sign of an emperor worthy of his throne. Perhaps, you do not know that *sanyasins* are ruined by the company they keep, emperors are ruined by the ministers they employ, wisdom is ruined by desire for appreciation, and the sense of shame is destroyed by imbibing drink. Well brother, do not neglect fire, illness, an enemy, a snake and a sin on the ground because it is small and insignificant. When they grow big, they are bound to inflict great harm. Therefore hasten, do not hesitate.”

These words of Surpanakha poured the poison of hatred into the ears of Ravana. At this, Kumbhakarna, the other brother who was present, asked Surpanakha with a smile on his lips, “Sister, who sliced your ears and nose?” With a loud wail, she replied,

“Alas! This wicked deed was done by those very Princes.”(*RKRV Part II p.40-41*)

Surpanakha's description of Rama

Ravana then consoled her, to some extent. He then asked her, “Sister, the nose is on the face. The ears are on the sides of the face. They cannot be sliced at one stroke. Now, tell me, were you sleeping soundly, when they cut them off? This is indeed surprising.” The people present also wondered how it could have happened. (*RKRV Part II p.41*)

Surpanakha replied: “Oh brother! What shall I say? All the time I was looking only at the beautiful form of Rama¹¹⁴. While I was gazing on his face, I was not aware of what was being done to me. All my senses were paralysed while I was lost in seeing the charming form of Rama. (*SSS Vol.23 p.44*)

Surpanakha *continued*, “Brother, I lost all awareness of my body, why, of the region where I was when those soft sweet hands touched me. When my eyes were drinking the charm of their beautiful faces, I was not conscious of what they did. The very sight of those princes rendered me so entranced that I lost all awareness of myself and the surroundings. What shall I say of the ecstasy I derived by conversing with them! They bubble over always with joyful smiles. They know no other attitude or reaction. Even masculine hearts will surely be fascinated by their charm. They are really enrapturing representations of the God of

¹¹⁴ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter - *Characteristic Of Rama - Standards Set For Everyone – Physical Characteristics*

Love. I have never so far set eyes on such beauty. Fie upon our Rakshasa prowess, our vile stratagems, our abnormal figures, our ugly appearance! We are indeed disgusting. Look upon them but once. You will swear I am right. Why? Khara and Dushana who died in the battle were reluctant to fight with them. They were protesting and pleading with me: ‘How can we feel enmity and fall upon these embodiments of auspiciousness and paragons of beauty?’”(RKRV Part II p. 41-42)

Their handsome and regal bearing enraptured me. It was as if I lost all my consciousness and remained rooted to the spot.” In this way, she kept eulogizing the two princes’ noble bearing and virtues. (SSB 2002 p.96)

Ravana tries to find out about Panchavati:

The courtiers and ministers assembled in the Hall listened to this description with awe and delight. Her words confounded even Ravana. The picture of Rama that she drew was something that gave him great joy and peace, when he contemplated on it. Deep within him, he felt an urge to cast eyes on that inspiring embodiment of divine charm. As he listened to his sister, the anger that had raised its hood within slowly slithered away. He decided to investigate calmly what really happened at Panchavati. (RKRV Part II p. 42)

So, he addressed his sister thus: “Sister, tell me, do those two brothers live at Panchavati all alone? Or, are there others with them? Have they no followers, companions or courtiers?” (RKRV Part II p. 42)

Surpanakha describes Sita:

Surpanakha replied “No. They have no band of bodyguards or kinsmen or warriors. The elder of the two, named Rama, has a woman with him, who is endowed with superlative beauty. She is even more charming than they. She is the very Goddess of Love, in human form. The two brothers are resident at Panchavati, with this woman. They roam about freely and without fear in the forest glades and valleys. In fact, I have never so far set eyes on such perfect feminine beauty. The likes of her does not exist on heaven or earth.”(*RKRV Part II p. 42*)

Ravana sends an army of Forty thousand:

Ravana burned with fury when he heard her and at once dispatched a force of forty thousand demons to destroy Rama. Meanwhile, Lakshmana thought that it was not wise to keep Sita there, since there would be an encounter between Rama and the demons. He took Sita to a cave and stood guard at its entrance, while Rama fearlessly faced the forty thousand demons. He discharged an arrow, which multiplied itself into forty thousand arrows and attacked the demons, annihilating them all in no time. (*SSB1996 p.51*)

The Cause for the *Ramayana*

Surpanakha’s anger and frustration increased on seeing the death of the vast army of demons at the hand of Rama, and she now resolved to bring about the death of Rama and Lakshmana at any cost. She said to Ravana, “Brother, Sita, the wife of Rama, is the most beautiful lady I have ever seen. She is a lady worthy to be your wife. Somehow or other, bring her to your palace. This would be the greatest achievement in your life.”

*People do not hear noble words,
But they eagerly hear evil words.
How can these people ever realise You?
Of what avail is all their intelligence?*

Evil people easily succumb to evil words. The words of Surpanakha created a storm in the mind of Ravana. He worked hard at hatching a plot to abduct Sita and make her his wife. He summoned Maricha to help in the abduction of Sita. He asked him to don the guise of a golden deer and draw Rama away from Sita, so that he could abduct Sita. Maricha, who had earlier witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama, tried to reason with Ravana, saying, “Ravana, you do not know the matchless strength and prowess of Rama. There is none equal to Him in the world. Your power and prowess are infinitesimally small when compared with the infinite power of Rama. You will only bring about the destruction of your life and kingdom!”(SSB 1996 p.51-52)

Ravana seeks the Help of Maricha who refuses but Surpanakha further poisons the mind of Ravana:

Then Ravana went to Maricha and sought his help for killing Rama. Maricha knew the power and strength of Rama. So, he described the power and strength of Rama truly to Ravana. Maricha made it quite clear to Ravana that Rama is not an ordinary person and that Rama is God Himself; and with His power and strength, He can achieve anything. As a result of such a description, it is quite natural, however brave and however courageous an individual may be, that some kind of fear will naturally enter his mind. In that context, Ravana turned back and

returned to Lanka. While Ravana was in that hesitant mood, Surpanakha went again to Ravana and told him that while he is brave and beautiful, while he had everything in his favour, that he is not able to get Sita for himself is something which is difficult to understand. Thus, she poisoned Ravana's mind¹¹⁵. (*SSB 1977 p.14-15*)

THE TWO ARCH-ENEMIES OF MAN – INNER PERCEPTIONS

The sufferings depicted in the Ramayana are due to two characters that make only short appearances, but represent the evil force of lust and anger--- Surpanakha and Manthara. They poison the minds of Ravana and Kaikeyi respectively and set the stage for the tale of grief. (*SSS Vol.5 p.344*)

Kama and *Krodha* (lust and anger) are the two arch-enemies of man which undermine his divine nature and drag him down into the mire. The Ramayana story is woven round the anger of Manthara and the lust 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 coolly into the nature of the urge, the manner of the promptings, the type of the consequences for you and others. Reason out these things, in silence and solitude. (*SSS Vol. 5 p201*)

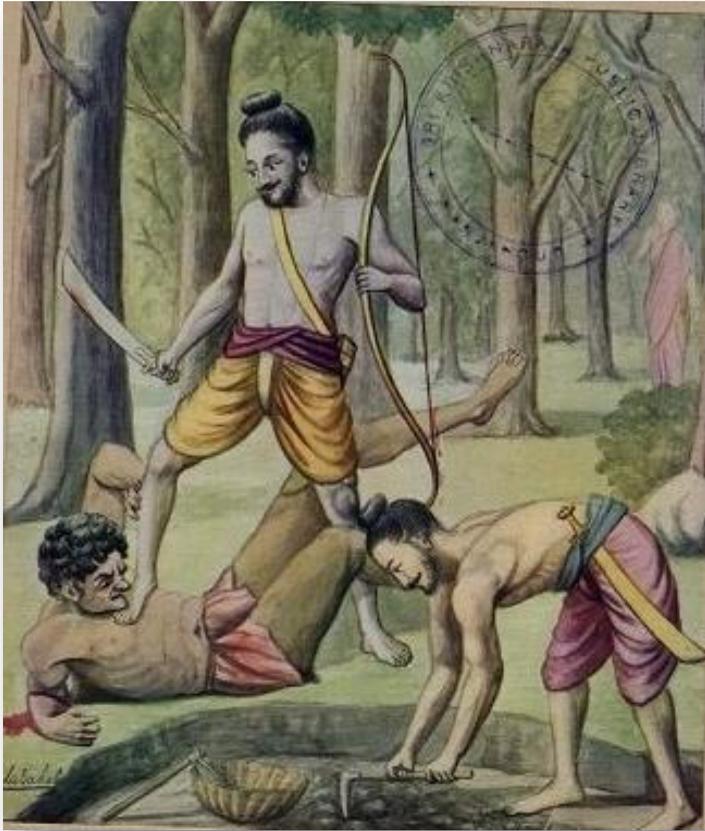
Rama's impending coronation, her anger increased by leaps and bounds, and she desperately sought an outlet. The *Krodha* (anger) of Manthara and *Kama* (desire) of Surpanakha are the cause for the entire *Ramayana*. The anger of Manthara sent Rama to the forest and the desire of Surpanakha sent Sita to Lanka. (*SSB 1996 p.36-37*)

¹¹⁵ "Even more beautiful than Rama is Sita." She told Ravana that after seeing the beauty of Sita she got the feeling that Ravana alone was worthy of Sita and that she did not deserve to stay in the forest. As she spoke in this strain, Ravana's passion was stirred. (*SSS Vol.23 p.44*)

Lakshmana gave appropriate punishment to Surpanakha – Two qualities Kama and Krodha represented by Surpanakha and Manthara-responsible for all troubles:

When Rama, along with Lakshmana and Sita, was spending his time in exile on the Chitrakoota mountain, it so happened that Surpanakha came and saw Rama and wanted to marry him and have him as her husband. For this bad desire of hers, Lakshmana gave her an appropriate punishment. Then she went back to Ravana and did all that was necessary by which to excite Ravana to go and get hold of Sita, who was leading a life of devotion to her husband. Although Ramayana is a very large book, is an extensive epic, you will find that these two names, Manthara and Surpanakha, who really have a considerable responsibility, have not been shown in any extensive manner anywhere in Ramayana. They appear only in one or two insignificant places. But these two, although they appear very insignificant in the totality of the story, move the whole story of Ramayana through. For Rama, who used to live in Ayodhya to go to the forest, for Sita who used to live in the forest with her husband Rama, to go to Lanka, Ravana's place; the responsibility for both these happenings is on Manthara and Surpanakha. Having stated that for the whole of Ramayana, Manthara and Surpanakha are responsible, we have to recognise that these two are not just individuals. Surpanakha signifies desires with attachment. Manthara signifies anger with vengeance. These two are the 'Kama' and 'Krodha'. These two, the Kama and Krodha or lust and anger are responsible for all kinds of difficult experiences which we have in our lives. (SSB 1972 p.83-84)

15.5 VIRADHA



Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist 1. Ramachandra Madhwa Mahishi,
2. Illustrated by Balasaheb Pandit Pant Pratinidhi (dead before 1952 (April 13, 1951) - see en: Bhawanrao Shrinivasrao Pant Pratinidhi)

Title Killing of Viradha

Description On their way to forest Ramachandra and Laxman killed many vicious demons. One day, Viradha the powerful demon caught them unawares and started chasing. Viradha had a special power in that he could not be killed with any weapon. Knowing this fact, Rama grounded and stood on him. Laxman dug a moat, and Viradha was buried live.

Date 1916

Source/ 1. Chitra Ramayana
2. <http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/mythology/ramayan/30022.htm>

Photographer

VIRADHA

Viradha is minor character from the Aranya Kanda of the Ramayana. He is rakshasa living in Dandaka forest that briefly kidnaps Sita in an episode that has been described as "strongly [prefiguring Sita's] later abduction by Ravana, the central event of the book and the pivotal event of the epic."

Rama and Lakshmana begin to battle the monster, but though they shoot it with many arrows, the arrows pass straight through him and leave him unharmed (Aranyakanda, Sarga 3). The monster reveals that he has a boon from Brahma which makes him invincible to weapons. So the brothers kill the rakshasa by first breaking his arms, then burying him alive in a grave. When the monsters arms are broken, he begins to praise the brothers for liberating him: he had, in a previous life, been a celestial being named Thumburu, and had been cursed by Kubera to live as a fearsome monster until he is killed by Rama. The brothers bury him, and he apparently goes back to his former celestial abode.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

VIRADHA

Viradha¹¹⁶: Fierce ogre; killed by Rama in the Dandaka Forest.
(*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

When *Rama, Sita and Lakshmana* resumed their journey, and passed through the forest, a monstrous form, being the frightful ogre Viradha, appeared all of a sudden and rushed menacingly towards them. Sita was naturally frightened at the apparition; but, soon, she mustered courage knowing that, when she had the Lion Rama to protect her, she had no need to be frightened at the “lame fox” that had presented itself! “Let it roar its worst,” she consoled herself. She stood behind Rama and watched developments. Meanwhile, Lakshmana shot at the monster a sharp arrow from his bow. Soon, he showered many missiles on it. When it was wounded by the arrows, Viradha transformed into a blazing fury of anger and appearing like the very embodiment of death and destruction pounced upon Lakshmana. Rama saw that his brother was getting exhausted by the struggle.

He fixed a crescent headed arrow to his redoubtable bow and shot at the ogre. The arrow shattered to pieces the formidable three-pronged spear that the ogre was flourishing. It then sliced off the head of the monster. At that very moment, a bright heavenly form emerged from the fallen corpse!

¹¹⁶ Also spelt as Viraadha

The Curse:

Viradha had been born as an ogre on earth in consequence of a curse that he had invited upon himself from his divine Master, Kubera. He was one of a group of heavenly angels, *Gandharvas*, who were serving Kubera. Kubera had, later, taken pity on him and declared that his demonic career would come to an end the moment he met his death through an arrow from the bow of Rama. He could then return as a Gandharva to the Presence of Kubera, it was said. So, the Gandharva fell at the feet of his Saviour, and extolled him with high praise, before leaving for his permanent abode.

Rama interred the huge body of the demon that lay on the ground. He also went through the rites prescribed for such disposal. Just then a shower of rain fell on the spot, as the gods above were showering tears of joy at the compassion that Rama was evincing. (*RKRV Part II p.6-7*)

The Rakshasas (demonic persons) had already attained liberation for they had the vision of God when they drew their last breaths.

“The vanaras came down to be My instruments and so they have no death, neither are they born, except at My Command,” said Rama.

Man too must become His instrument in order to escape death and birth. He has come, imprisoned in the ego, and he has to liberate himself. This can be done only by making him aware of the Universal (Adhara) basis. Like a man sunk in poverty, dwelling in a hut that is raised over a vast underground treasure, man is suffering, with a spring of joy inside him, of which he is unaware. I have come to give you the key of that treasure, to tell you how to tap that spring, for you have forgotten the way to blessedness. If you waste this chance of saving yourselves, it is just your fate.

- **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

16. OTHER CHARACTERS

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*

16.1 THE IN-LAWS OF RAMA

Satchitananda Sadgurudeva
Brahma Vishnu Maheswara
Sri Sayinadha Sadgurudeva
Brahma Vishnu Maheswara
Trigunateetha Sayi Gurudeva
Brahma Vishnu Maheswara
Jyothiswaroopu Sri Sayideva
Brahma Vishnu Maheswara | |

- *Inspired Composition by Tumuluru*

16.1.1 JANAKA



Source of the Photo:

Description **English:** "King Janaka Greets Dasaratha Before Rama's Wedding: In this scene from an earlier part of the epic "Shangri" Ramayana, Rama and his brother Lakshmana are depicted as young boys. Through a feat of divine strength, Rama has won the hand of the beautiful Sita, daughter of King Janaka of Mithila. Janaka invites Rama's father, King Dasaratha, to come to Mithila for the marriage rites. In this painting, Janaka greets Dasaratha, who has arrived with his priests and courtiers and set up his tents outside Janaka's city."

Date c. 1700-1710

Source <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/97343.html?mulR=24240>

Author unknown author

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(Reusing this file) *This is a faithful photographic reproduction of an original two-dimensional work of art. The work of art itself is in the public domain*

JANAKA

Janaka was the kings of Videha Kingdom. Their capital was Mithila, which is believed to be present day Janakpur, Nepal. The most famous Janaka was Seeradhvaj; he is mentioned in the Ramayana as the father of Sita and also there are references to him in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Mahabharata and Puranas.

Janaka was not only a brave king, but was also as well-versed in the Sastras and Vedas as any rishi. He was the beloved pupil of Yajnavalkya, whose exposition of Brahman to the king forms one chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna cites Seeradhvaj Janaka as an illustrious example of the Karma yoga.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

JANAKA

Janaka was a self-realized king; father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Rama. His ancestor was Nimi, a great emperor. *(Dharma Vahini, Revised Enlarged Edition: April 200, Glossary p.126)*

Janaka, King of ancient India became a *Jivan-Mukta* (liberated while alive) by performing his royal duties with detachment. He was also the father-in-law of Lord Rama (*SSB 1995 p.41*)

King Janaka was known as Videha, one without body attachment. (*SSB 2002 p. 144*)

Janaka Maharaja (*was the*) Master of the inner Mysteries of the highest morality. (*RKRV Part I p.305*)

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. (*SSS Vol.20 p.48*)

Janaka Past Life

On one occasion, Emperor Janaka went to sage Yajnavalkya¹¹⁷ and prayed, “Guruji! I would like to hear about my previous birth kindly tell me. “Yajnavalkya then tried to counsel Janaka saying, “Oh! Emperor Past is past. There is no use of brooding over the past. It will not do any good to you.” But, the Emperor insisted on his request being fulfilled. At last, Sage Yajnavalkya yielded. He scanned the past life of the Emperor Janaka with his Divine Vision and told, “Janaka! The woman who became your wife in this life was in fact your mother in your past life.” On hearing

¹¹⁷ Yajnavalkya (Yaajnavalkya): Great Upanishadic personage. Priest and guru of King Janaka. Taught the monistic Adwaithic doctrine of the identity of Atma and Brahman in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Yajnavalkya Kanda (Yaajnavalkya Khand): Third and fourth sections of the Brihadaranyakopanishad, which deals with the spiritual teaching of Yajnavalkya to Janaka. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

these words, Janaka was mentally upset. He thought, “Fie on me! How bad I am! I have taken my mother in my past life as wife in this life. It is unpardonable. I must give up this sinful life.” From that very day Emperor Janaka renounced his family life and entered into a life of total detachment and strove to attain Atma Jnana. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.86*)

Emperor Janaka’s Forefathers:

“My birth with this body happened through the blessings of forefathers of this dynasty. It will be justified and its purpose fulfilled only if I describe them myself to this vast gathering.”

Janaka then began the narration: “Brahmarishi! Revered Preceptors! Maharaja Dasaratha! In the very distant past, there was an emperor named Nimi who adhered firmly to the path of righteousness, and who was therefore famous for might and foresight. His son Mithi built this city, Mithila, to serve as the capital for this kingdom. He was the first sovereign of this region. His reign was very popular and his subjects were happy and prosperous. His son, Sudhavasu had a son Nandhivardhana who ruled after him. Nandhivardhana’s son was Sukethu and Sukethu’s son was Devaratha.

Brahadratha was the son of Devaratha, and Mahavira was the name of the son of Brahadratha. Mahavira had as his name indicates, vast prowess. His son Sudhrthi had a son called Dhrshtakethu. Dhrshtakethu’s celebrated son was Haryaswa. Haryaswa had a son named Maru. Maru’s son was Pratheendhaka. Pratheendhaka’s son was Keerthiratha.

Keerthiratha had a son named Devameedha. Devameedha's son was Vibudha. Vibudha's son was Keerthiratha.

Keerthiratha's son was Maharoma and Maharoma's son was Hrswarupa. He was a talented ruler, a strict adherent of Dharma. He was acclaimed as a Mahatma. He is my father. I am indeed very happy to acknowledge that my father was an ideal personage. The truth is I am now ruling happily over this Mithila City as a result of the merit acquired and handed down as heritage by my forefathers. (*RKRV Part1 p.180-181*)

WINNING SITA

Mithila:

Emperor Janaka of Mithila had resolved to perform a celebrated Yajna, expressive of the highest glory of Righteousness, and that he was praying to Viswamitra to give him joy by his gracious Presence with his disciples. Viswamitra referred to a precious bow that Janaka had in his possession, a bow that was uniquely potent, and shone with rare splendour. He declared that they must not miss seeing it. At this, Rama asked how the bow happened to reach Janaka¹¹⁸.

Viswamitra said, "If you two accompany me to Mithila, you can witness the Yajna and proceed to Ayodhya with me from there itself..... During this coming Yajna, the Bow will most probably

¹¹⁸ See Chapter, *Viswamitra - Story of how the Bow of Shiva reached Emperor Janaka:*

be on show; so, this is a good chance, certainly.” (*RKRV Part I p.121-124*)

Viswamitra walked on, in the north-easterly direction, with Rama and Lakshmana by his side. They neared a City, by evening. The sage pointed to the City from a distance saying, “That is Mithila, that vast concourse of magnificent buildings!” At this, the brothers as well as the disciples of the sage jumped with joy. They could not contain their happiness. From that spot, they walked faster. Forgetful of physical exhaustion, they quickly reached the main entrance of the City.

Wherever they turned, they saw ascetics and Brahmins engaged in the recitation of the Vedas. They saw many houses where sacrificial fires were fed with ritual offerings. Under every tree sheltering in its shade, were groups of people around the bullock carts which had brought them from the country side. There were men and women, old and young, with children belonging to all castes and professions, persons, from all stages of life assembled at every corner. It was like moving in a stream of joy. The City was packed with eager people moving criss-cross on all the roads. The sage and his followers reached the embankment of a tank which was comparatively less crowded; for, they had to decide where they were to stay, and they were not yet quite sure where. The time for evening ablutions had drawn near, and so, they kept their belongings on the bank, took their bath and finished the rites prescribed.

Since the Yajna was imminent, courtiers and warriors from the palace were moving among the monks that were arriving every

hour, trying to find out their names, the Gurus and hermitages to which they were affiliated, their spiritual status, and whether they had been specially invited for the occasion. Emperor Janaka was insisting that all such information was to be communicated to him without delay. (*RKR V Part I p.155-156*)

Viswamitra Along With Rama and Lakshmana in Mithila

When the messenger.... told the Emperor Janaka that the Sage Viswamitra had arrived, he made arrangements appropriate for the reception of the great Sage and sent the chief Brahmins, Priests and Pundits of the Court under their leader, Sathananda, to where Viswamitra was. (*RKR V Part I p.157*)

As soon as they entered the Royal Road, Emperor Janaka himself moved towards them accompanied by Ministers and courtiers and his nearest kinsmen. Janaka fell prostrate before Viswamitra saying, “Lord! I have realised today my greatest ambition. Mithila has acquired, with your arrival, a unique splendour.” He then enquired about the welfare of the Sage, his pupils and disciples. His eyes fell on the two boys, Rama and Lakshmana. They struck him as embodiments of solar effulgence. He could not find words for a few seconds. He knew not where he was at the time. With great effort, he recovered enough awareness of the surroundings to ask Viswamitra, “Master! Who are these? They strike me as the twin Gods, the Aswini devas. It looks as if they have just come down from Heaven in order to confer Grace on me. They have the tender Divine charm of those Gods. Or, perhaps, they are the Sun and the Moon come upon the Earth. How did these juvenile embodiments of beauty happen to come, walking the distance as members of the group led by you? Or,

did they develop acquaintance with you near here and come with you?” Janaka was pouring out one query after another, as if he was talking to himself, forgetful where he was or what he really wanted to know.

Viswamitra saw his plight and could not restrain his smile. He said, “These are the sons of Emperor Dasaratha of Ayodhya. Their names are Rama and Lakshmana. The valour and skill of these boys are amazing and miraculous. “The sage desired to say much more, but he thought it better to tell him all about them, after reaching the place where they were to stay. So, they walked on towards the quarters set apart for Viswamitra and his entourage. (*RKRV Part I p.157-158*)

Emperor Janaka oversees the arrangements for their Stay in Mithila:

It was a pretty little new temple-like structure situated in the centre of a lovely garden. It was tastefully decorated with greens and festoons. The place was heavy with silence. It was as if peace fell in heavy showers there from the wings of Grace from heaven itself. It was quite adjacent to the Royal Palace. Therefore, after showing them in, Janaka fell at the feet of the sage again, saying: “Your arrival has added unto me immeasurable strength and joy. I am sure this fortune came to me as a result of the merit earned in many lives. I shall now take leave. For the Yajna to begin there is an interval of twelve days, according to the Rithwiks. Please therefore stay on in this Mithila city itself and bless me.” Viswamitra assured him that he had no objection to his proposal, and removed all apprehensions on that score from the mind of Janaka. Rama and Lakshmana

looked at each other as if that was too long a time to be away! Arrangements were made to give them rest and undisturbed sleep that night. Milk, fruits and other articles were provided for them from the palace. “I shall take your Darsan at dawn tomorrow,” said Janaka while leaving. “It is not proper to delay your rest any longer, for you had a long and tiresome journey.” Janaka returned to the palace, with the pundits, priests and scholars. Rama and Lakshmana talked among themselves about the devotion and humility of the Emperor, and the Light of peace and joy that shone on his face. They sat by the side of the master and partook of the fruits and milk. Then they departed, after receiving permission, to their apartment for rest.

That night, they slept well. When daylight spread slowly over the City, the music of pipe and drum rose from their doorstep. Brahmins recited the Vedic hymns. Rama and Lakshmana rose and finished their bath and other rituals, and approached Viswamitra. The sage gave them cups of milk to drink and said, “Sons! Janaka will be here any time now. Take breakfast and be ready.” Soon, they as well as the younger pupils of the sage repaired to the apartments and partook of fruits and milk. They washed their hands and quietly gathered around their Preceptor, and reverentially sat near him. (*RKRV Part I p.159-160*)

Emperor Janaka pays homage to Sage Viswamitra

Meanwhile, it became known that Emperor Janaka was arriving with the Royal Preceptor, in order to pay homage; for, the blowing of conches and the play of the traditional nine instruments heralded the approach of the ruler of the realm. Janaka entered with the auspicious sandal paste and rice grains in

his hands, while Sathananda and the entourage entered the sacred residence. With the delight of gratitude he washed the feet of the sage.

Then, Janaka fell at the feet of Viswamitra and stood by the side of the high seat that had been placed in front of the pedestal for the sage. As soon as Viswamitra directed him, Janaka occupied his own seat. Rama and Lakshmana sat on the carpet laid to the right of their Master. Janaka said, “Great sage! Now, what is your command? I am ready to accept and honour it. Please communicate it to me.” Janaka folded his palms in prayer. At this, Viswamitra smiled, and said, “Last night, since there was no time I could not tell you in detail. I shall tell now about these Princes, Rama and Lakshmana, since you desired to hear their story. If you have no leisure now, I can tell you some other time.” Janaka exclaimed, “Master! What more important work have I than experiencing the ecstasy of conversing with you? This chance can be the fruit only of age-long austerity. I am filled with Ananda at the expectation that you will tell me about them. I consider it great good fortune.”

Janaka Experiences delight on hearing the heroics of Rama and Lakshmana:

Viswamitra narrated the incidents that had taken place from his appearance at the court of Dasaratha, up to the Yajna and the heroic way in which the young boys had stood guard and foiled the attempts of the demons to desecrate the rituals. He described the bravery and skill of the boys in their battle against the demons and praised their achievements. During the narration, tears of joy and gratitude welled from the sage’s eyes and he had

to frequently wipe them with the end of his garment. Hearing these words and filling his eyes with his majesty and the charming loveliness of the boys, Janaka experienced supreme delight, the delight he often derived in *Samadhi* (communion with Divinity)! He felt that the boys were actual embodiments of Divine Splendour.

Though he often tried to look somewhere else, his eyes thirsted only for the sight of those charming lotus-like faces which showered Brahmic illumination. Janaka suppressed with great difficulty the outward expression of his inner ecstasy and sat looking intently at them, in humility and reverence. He did not feel for a moment that he was an Emperor and that those boys were the Princes of another Imperial Monarch. He had an incredible impression that they had come down from Heaven to Earth. The feeling was strengthened and increased by the description of their superhuman might and skill. He realised that they were rare beings, akin to God himself, for they achieved successfully, even before reaching teenage, the guardianship of a Yajna, which the renowned Viswamitra could not carry through unimpaired. What a marvel! He wondered.

Then, the narrative was resumed by the Sage with the start of the journey towards Mithila. The stories related by the sage to the brothers¹¹⁹ were also explained to Janaka...*as also* the story of the purification and liberation of Ahalya¹²⁰, the Consort of Sage Gautama at the hermitage.

¹¹⁹ See chapter, *Other Characters In The Stories Narrated By Viswamitra*

¹²⁰ See chapter, *Ahalya*

Emperor Janaka asks about the arrangements and Rama's reply:

At this Emperor Janaka said, "Master! How fortunate are the parents who have such Divinely endowed sons. Oh! How fortunate am I that they stepped into my house, when the thought spurred them." He turned to Rama and Lakshmana and addressed them, "Darlings! Pardon me if the residence I have arranged for you is not quite to your liking or quite in keeping with your status. If you so desire, I am ever ready to arrange a more appropriate accommodation. If you like, I shall facilitate 'sightseeing' in the City for you are strangers to Mithila. Ask for anything you require, without reservation. I shall feel happy only when you so ask." To those words spoken with exemplary goodness and humility, Rama replied in a manner that revealed the respect he liked to offer Janaka. He said, "Maharaja! We are but boys. We do not feel anything wanting in the arrangements made. We are quite happy. There is no need to take trouble arranging somewhere else or something more, for us. If however, you have such great affection towards us, you can fulfil one wish that we have..." and without mentioning what it was, he turned towards the Preceptor, Viswamitra.

Sage Viswamitra explains the Brothers are interested only in seeing the Divine weapons of Janaka:

The sage then spoke, "Janaka, the mission on which these Princes came with me from Ayodhya was over when the Yajna I had resolved upon was accomplished without the least desecration. Rama and Lakshmana pleaded for permission to return home. Meanwhile, I received your invitation regarding the Yajna you have decided upon. So, I asked these boys also to

accompany me to Mithila. Then, Rama pleaded that, since his father had deputed him only for safeguarding the Yajna at my Ashram, he was reluctant to proceed further and be away from his father longer than permitted. But I spoke to them of many divine weapons you have, objects, which they are naturally eager to see and handle. I described the Bow that you have here, the Siva Bow, which deserves to be seen by them. I told them the story of that Bow. Then they agreed to accompany me hither, longing to see it. They have no yearning to go round the city or visit interesting places. Bows, arrows, weapons which can guard the right and punish the wicked—these claim first consideration for their attention.” Janaka felt he had no need to hear more. He said, “In that case, I shall make arrangements to have the Bow brought to the Yajna Hall soon,” and instructed that the preceptor, Sathananda be consulted about an auspicious hour when it could be brought there. (*RKR V Part I p.160-164*)

Rama wants to know how the bow came into the possession of Janaka:

Meanwhile, Rama asked Janaka, “Maharaja! If you can tell us how that Divine Bow came into your possession, we can derive great joy.” Janaka gave the details with evident joy. “Darlings: Six generations after Nimi, the great ancestor of my dynasty, the King named Devaratha ruled over this kingdom. The Gods placed this Bow of Lord Siva in trust in his palace. It had been with us since then. It is a weapon of the Gods and so, I assert it is no ordinary Bow! It weighed some thousands of tonnes! No one has held it in the erect position so far! For, who can lift that weight? Many times in the past, I tried to discover who could bend the Bow and use it or hold it for public gaze and invited

people to try. But I have yet to see one who could do it. Every king and prince who attempted the feat failed and returned humiliated. They could neither bend the Bow nor even move it ever so slightly. One day, when I was turning the sod on the grounds where I had resolved to perform a yajna, a vessel was revealed to view, in the furrow. When I removed it and examined it, I found in it a charming female child. Since the child came to us from the furrow, (Sita) we named her Sita, and brought her up as our own child. (*RKRV Part I p.164-165*)

Janaka proposes that he would give Sita in marriage to whosoever lifted the bow and strung it:

One day when she was playing with her companions, her toy rolled underneath the long box within which the Bow was kept. The more they tried to remove the ball with the help of various contrivances, the farther it rolled under the box! But our child, Sita, laughed at the discomfiture of her companions, and the palace guards. She pushed aside the box with her tender hand and recovered her toy to the astonishment of everyone! I heard about this, through the Queens who came to know of it from the wonder-struck group around Sita at the time.

“That day, I resolved to give Sita in marriage to the one who proves himself worthy to wed her, by stringing that Bow. Many a prince has since tried to lift and bend that bow, in order to win her, but all of them had to face ignominious defeat! They felt hurt and insulted. They said I had purposely humiliated them and in their resentment and despair, they grouped together and fell upon Mithila City with their combined forces. The siege lasted one full year. As a consequence, all my armoury was exhausted

and I was concerned about the fate of the City. I had no other recourse but austerity to win the grace of the Gods. The Gods were pleased. They blessed me with additional reinforcements of infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariotry. That is to say, help came to me from regions behind the besieging forces and when they were attacked from behind they were scattered. During these campaigns of vindictiveness, I was able to preserve the Bow. I guarded it like the apple of my eye. Its mysterious might is beyond description.

Rama! Ramachandra! I shall not deny you the fulfilment of your wish. If you but agree, the Bow shall be brought to the Yajna enclosure. I shall also announce that anyone who dare lift and bend it can try to do so.” When Janaka spoke so authoritatively, Rama and Lakshmana looked at each other but did not reply, for they were waiting for instructions from the Master whom they had followed so far. Just then, Viswamitra, who knew the skill and strength of the brothers, said that what Janaka proposed could be done, and that he need not apprehend any obstacle coming his way. Janaka also announced that he would give Sita in marriage to whosoever lifted the bow and strung it, for he had vowed that Sita will be wedded only to such a one. (*RKRV Part I p.164-167*)

The Bow is brought in:

Viswamitra approved that procedure too. Janaka took leave of the sage and returned to the palace. He set upon the task of taking the Bow into the Yajna Hall. A proclamation was issued that the Bow will be exposed to view and communicated to as many kings and princes as possible. The eight-wheeled vehicle

containing the box with the Bow was pulled and pushed into the enclosure by a large band of hefty heavyweights; but they could not even move it a step. So, more men of gigantic mould had to be called in to lend their hands, dragging the heavy chains attached to the vehicle and pushing it from behind. When at last the Bow moved into the sacred enclosure, the priests recited hymns of auspicious welcome.

Day dawned. The nine traditional musical instruments raised a paean of harmony that rose to the vaults of heaven. Conches were blown in peals. The auspiciousness of the day was declared through song and ritual. Emperor Janaka entered the enclosure, accompanied by a group of priests and with attendants carrying materials for ceremonial worship of the Divine Bow. Long before that moment, the enclosure was filled with kings, princes, ministers, courtiers, sages and Vedic scholars. As soon as Janaka came in, the entire gathering stood up in order to render honour to the Ruler of the Realm. The Vedic pundits declaimed aloud hymns invoking the Gods to shower Grace. Their voices rose up to heaven in exclamatory unison. Others recited passages from the Vedas. All were so filled with expectancy that they looked on in wonder, without even a wink.

Janaka announces all to come forward to lift and string the bow:

Janaka walked in reverence around the vehicle with the Bow, and offered floral homage to it, while chants were recited to propitiate it. He bowed before the Divine Bow, and then turned to the distinguished assembly. He announced: “Prostrations to the sages! I welcome all who have come to this assembly! Since

many years, my forefathers as well as many other monarchs have been, as you all know, worshipping this Divine Bow. Besides, it is already well known that no one, be he a God or Demon, Yaksha, Rakshasa, Garuda or Gandharva, Kinnara or Mahoraga, no one has so far been able to lift the Bow, hold it and string it! All who attempted have turned back, humiliated. In spite of this, this day, I have again resolved to bring the Bow into the sacred enclosure. Whoever among you assembled here does lift this bow or lifting, strings it, or stringing it, fixes an arrow onto it, or who can hold the weight of the Bow in his hands can come forward and take this chance; the Bow is before you.” With these words, Janaka bowed before the gathering with his palms folded, and sat on the Lion Throne. Viswamitra cast a glance, with a smile, at Rama. Rama quickly approached the vehicle and lifted up the iron cover with his left arm. And with his right, he raised with no concern or exertion, the Bow from its box! Holding the Bow erect he looked around, while amazement was on every face! The thousands who witnessed the wonder—citizens, kings and princes, sages and elders—raised such an applause that the sky echoed the exultation! (*RKR V Part I p.167-169*)

Rama strings the Bow and it snaps:

Soon Rama strung the magnificent Bow! With delightful ease he fixed an arrow! And he drew the string back up to the ear, in order to release it. But the Bow snapped! Everyone around was shocked into confusion and fear by the strange, unexpected explosion. Many fainted; some cried out in terror; some fled in panic. The sages uttered prayers to God. Why dilate further? The entire gathering, barring Janaka, Viswamitra and the brothers,

Rama and Lakshmana, was plunged in inexplicable inconsolable dread!

Janaka proposes to give Sita in Marriage to Rama as promised:

Meanwhile, Janaka rose from his seat, fell prostrate before Viswamitra, and said, “Master! There is no one on earth who can claim greater strength than Rama. Such strength is not of the earth. I shall fulfil my word. I shall give Sita in marriage to him who lifted, bent and broke this Bow.” (*RKRV Part I p.169*)

Viswamitra asks that the news be communicated to Emperor Dasaratha:

Viswamitra replied, “Janaka! It will be good if this news is communicated to Emperor Dasaratha and the auspicious event celebrated after he comes. This is my desire. Rama is such a deeply dutiful son that he will not agree to the marriage until Dasaratha gives his approval!”

So, Janaka had the Brahmins of the court called to his presence, along with some Ministers. He set them on the journey to Ayodhya as soon as day dawned. They sped on in their chariots, drawn by swift horses, for three days and nights, and reached Ayodhya on the morning of the fourth day. They halted the chariots right before the main entrance of the Imperial Palace, so that there could be no delay in taking the news they had brought to the Emperor. When the guards enquired their names and the purpose of their arrival, the Ministers required them to announce to the Emperor the fact of their coming from Mithila to see him.

They informed Dasaratha immediately and they were immediately called into the palace and the Presence.

In spite of old age, Dasaratha looked a Divinely splendid figure, when the Brahmins and Ministers of Mithila saw him on his throne. When they stood before that bright venerable face, they fell at his feet without any hesitation or reservation. They stood up and said, “Maharaja! We are messengers from the Emperor Janaka of Mithila. He has commissioned us to enquire and learn from you about your welfare and the welfare of your realm. We have been sent with the approval of sage Viswamitra, and with the consent of the Royal Preceptor, the great Sathananda, by Maharaja Janaka to communicate to you an important message.” (*RKRV Part I p.169-170*)

Dasaratha wants to know the reason that brought the envoys of Janaka to Ayodhya:

Dasaratha’s face was brightened by smiles. His assurance was unshaken. He was struck by the humility and good manners of the envoys from Mithila. He said, “Oh greatest among Brahmins! Oh ministers of the Mithila court! There is no deficiency in the administration of the kingdom of Ayodhya, no obstruction anywhere for rituals like Agnihotra, no diminution in the happiness of any of my subjects, no obstacle from any quarter in the path of their moral and spiritual advance. My subjects are prosperous. They are progressing steadily towards the highest goal. I am glad to tell you this. I wish to know about the health and welfare of Janaka, the Emperor of Mithila, about the uninterrupted performance, in his kingdom, of the religious rites prescribed in the Vedas. You can communicate to me without

any reservation the message you have brought with you. I am eager to hear it.”

When Dasaratha granted permission so softly and sweetly the Ministers signed to Brahmins to speak out. The Chief Priest rose from his seat and delivered the message thus: “Great Sovereign Ruler! Our Maharaja Janaka has vowed that his daughter Sita Devi will be given in marriage only to heroic might. No doubt you must be aware of this, you might also be knowing that many princes have tried to prove their prowess and returned humiliated from Mithila.

By Divine Will, your two sons Rama and Lakshmana accompanied the Sage Viswamitra, eager to see the great Yajna which our Maharaja is celebrating. It happened that your eldest son Rama won Sita Devi by means of his incomparable valour! Maharaja! What shall we say? How shall we describe it? In full view of the distinguished gathering of sages, kings and princes, Rama, who has attained the highest pinnacle of valour, lifted and held the Bow of Siva by its middle, kept it erect and strung it! More than this, he broke, as if in play, the indomitable sacred Bow into two pieces! Since Sita Devi is to be given in marriage to him who lifts the Bow of Siva, the sages who had assembled, as well as our Maharaja have decided to give her hand to Rama. “We have been sent to request and receive your assent, to offer you cordial welcome, to invite you, with the preceptor, priests, ministers, courtiers and kith and kin, and attendants and followers, to the City of Mithila. Our Maharaja desires to celebrate the marriage of his daughter after receiving your Darsan. We are sent by him to your presence, in order to inform

you of this.” The priests and ministers stood with folded hands, reverentially awaiting the reply from Dasaratha. (*RKRV Part I p.171-172*)

Dasaratha seeks the consent of the Ministers, Sages and Brahmins of the court:

But Dasaratha rolled it over in his mind with earnest care and sent for the sages Vashishta, Vamadeva and others, for consultations, before speaking a word in reply. He also invited the foremost among the Brahmins of the court. When they all arrived, he asked the party from Mithila to repeat the message they had brought. When they had listened to the news, he wanted their comments. But first, Dasaratha fell prostrate before sage Vashishta and prayed that he should give his approval. Vashishta, Vamadeva and others responded with joyous acclamations, “Most auspicious!” “Most auspicious!” They asked, “Why spend further thought on this? Make preparations for the journey to Mithila!”

The ministers jumped in joy. News of the wedding of Rama spread in a trice all over the City and into the inner apartments of the Palace, where the Queens were. The citizens raised exclamations of “Jai! Jai!” in their exultation. Attendants and servants quickly made preparations for the journey. Jewels, silk brocades and other gifts were packed in large quantities and varieties; countless chariots were loaded with them. (*RKRV Part I p.172-173*)

All longing to see the wedding started on the journey to Mithila

The Emperor and the Imperial Escort, Vashishta the Royal Preceptor, the Chief Priests and other Brahmins and Pundits, ascended their chariots and took their seats. It was as if Ayodhya itself was moving out to Mithila to witness the marriage. For all who longed to join, Dasaratha made suitable arrangements. No one eager to go was left behind! The horses seemed to share the joy that filled the hearts of the inmates of the chariots; for, they trotted fast, without slackening speed or showing signs of exhaustion. Two nights and two days they spent on the road, and the third night, they reached Mithila! (*RKR V Part I p.173*)

The men and women were filled with joy and jubilation at the prospect of the marriage between Rama and Sita. They sang many a song expressing their desire to see the marriage. In the meantime, Dasaratha accompanied by his Queens, Ministers and a host of others, arrived at Mithila. (*SSB 1996 p.28-29*)

Emperor Janaka welcomes Dasaratha

Maharaja Janaka welcomed Emperor Dasaratha at the very Entrance Gate of his City. *Emperor Janaka received them with great courtesy and extended full hospitality*¹²¹. He welcomed the Ministers, Sages and Priests as befitted their position and status. He arranged that they take rest for the night in allotted residences. As soon as the day dawned, Dasaratha sent for the Rithwiks (priests who have specialised in ritual lore), the queens and the kinsmen, and alerted them to be ready and available the

¹²¹ *SSB 1996 p.29*

moment they were wanted. Meanwhile, Janaka arrived at the mansion where Dasaratha was, and took him to the special enclosure where the Yajna was being celebrated. Seats had been allotted there for the Preceptors, the Emperor and his entourage, according to their rank and authority.

When all had occupied their seats, Janaka welcomed Dasaratha with the words: “Your coming to Mithila with these great sages and these foremost Brahmins and your kinsmen and escort augurs great good fortune for us. It marks the fruition of the good we have done in past lives. I am sure great joy has filled your mind, at the valour and victory of your son. I am about to enter into relationship with the great Raghu dynasty, resplendent with the boundless heroism of its scions. My dynasty is about to be sanctified more than ever before by this kinship. I believe this is the result of the blessings showered on me by my forefathers. Maharaja! This morning, the Yajna we have been celebrating is coming to a close. I have thought of celebrating the marriage of Sita and Rama after the conclusion of the Yajna. I plead with you to confer your assent.”

Dasaratha was thrilled with Ananda. His face was lit by bright smiles. He said, “Maharaja! You are the donor; elders declare that a gift is to be received at the sweet will and pleasure of the donor! So I am ever prepared to take the gift whenever it pleases you!” When Dasaratha spoke with such wit and wisdom, with such heart-melting warmth of affection, Janaka was overwhelmed with Ananda surging within him.

By then, Rama and Lakshmana entered the enclosure with the Sage Viswamitra. They prostrated before their father and their preceptors—Vashishta, Vamadeva and others. Dasaratha’s eyes glistened with delight as they fell upon the sons he had missed so long. He drew them to himself. He placed his hands on their shoulders. He pressed them to his bosom. Seeing the ananda of the father while fondling his sons the Brahmins and ministers forgot themselves in appreciation of the depth of his affection. They were lost in admiration.

Dasaratha conversed intimately with his sons, and listened to their sweet simple descriptions of the Yajna which they guarded from desecration by demonic forces. They told him the incidents of the journey from the hermitage of Viswamitra to Mithila city. The narrative was heard also by Vashishta, Vamadeva and other sages, as well as by Bharatha and Satrugna, Sumantra and many ministers, courtiers, and nobles. They spent the night recapitulating the wonder and mystery that formed the warp and woof of that narrative. (*RKR V Part I p.173-175*)

Preparations for the Divine Wedding:

Meanwhile, Janaka was immersed in preparations for the wedding. He was mostly in the palace itself. He invited the Chief Priest, Sathananda, to the court, and prayed to him reverentially to start collecting men and materials for the various rites preliminary to the actual wedding rite. The sage replied, “Maharaja! The Yajna concluded just today. During the next two or three days, there are, I notice a few hours that are auspicious for the ceremonials. I can give details, if you desire to know.”

At this, Janaka said saluting Sathananda and standing with folded hands, “Master! I received the assent of the Emperor Dasaratha, last night. This is indeed a sign of extreme good fortune. My younger brother Kusadhwaaja is not present here now. He was all these days very busy supplying provisions for the Yajna as and when the high priests asked for them. I am reluctant to celebrate this most auspicious ceremony without his being present by my side. I do not want to deprive him of his share of joy. I have set afoot plans to get him here quickly. I feel it would be best if we fix the day and hour after his arrival.” Sathananda responded, “Good! Good! That will make us all happy beyond calculation!” With this, he left the palace.

Janaka sent messengers with instructions that they should bring the brother to Mithila, with expedition. They found him in his capital City, Sankasya, for, they were taken thither by fleet-footed horses which sped faster than others. They reported to him the developments at Mithila, in detail. Kusadhwaaja was overcome with the flood of Ananda that surged through him. He collected his kith and kin, as well as his entourage, in great haste. He had chariots loaded with gifts and presents, offerings and precious materials.

He started off that very night and quickly reached Mithila. Janaka hastened to meet him, for, he was counting the minutes that were hurrying by. He clasped his brother in fond embrace. He was filled with inexpressible delight. Kusadhwaaja fell at the feet of his elder brother. He prostrated before Sathananda, and then all three sat on raised seats, in order to deliberate on the further course of action. They consulted among themselves and

when they decided finally on what they had to do, they sent for the highly respected elder statesman, Sudhama, and told him: “Minister of State! Proceed now to the presence of Dasaratha and pray to him to come here, to this Palace, with his Ministers, Priests, Courtiers, kinsmen and others he would like to bring with him. Bring him with due honours.”(*RKRV Part I p.176-177*)

Janaka sends for Dasaratha and asks that he and all his ministers and kinsmen be brought with due honours:

Sudhama took with him a group of courtiers and scholars and royal priests. He got ready tastefully decorated chariots to bring the Imperial Party and reached the palace where Dasaratha was staying. He submitted to him sweetly and softly, the message he had brought, and with profound obeisance, invited him to the palace of Janaka. Dasaratha was ready. He moved out with his entourage and reached the Durbar Hall of Janaka, very soon. They greeted each other as befitted the occasion and their respective status and occupied the seats laid for them. (*RKRV Part I p.177*)

Both Emperors narrate the historic glory of their clan and dynasty:

Then 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 dynasty¹²².”

¹²² See Chapter, *Ikshvaku Dynasty-The Imperial Line*

After listening to the narrative of the Ikshvaku Dynasty, from the lips of the great sage Vashishta, Janaka rose from his throne and said, “Oh Brahmarishi! When the scion of a noble clan intends to gift his daughter in marriage, he has to announce the historic glory of his clan, hasn’t he? I have resolved to follow your example and recite the story myself, for it gives me great joy to recapitulate the names of my forefathers and recall their majesty.

Janaka stood prayerfully before all. Vashishta agreed with the request and gave the permission sought. Janaka then began the narration¹²³

Proposals for Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna:

Sage Vashishta said, “Oh Royal Sage! This royal dynasty is sacred and pure. Everyone born in this line has earned spiritual illumination and has shone in spiritual splendour. They are rooted in righteousness, and withal, are in the front rank of heroes. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna are precious lamps that shed lustre on the annals of the clan.

“I must now suggest that it would be desirable to have this auspicious *Samskaara* (ceremony) of marriage celebrated for Lakshmana also, for he is the reflection of Rama. Your daughter Urmila can well shine as the spouse of Lakshmana. Do not hesitate; resolve accordingly and make the necessary preparations.” Vashishta blessed the gathering and resumed his seat. (*RKRV Part I p.179-180*)

¹²³ See heading under this chapter - **Emperor Janaka’s Forefathers:**

Janaka Said, “My brother Kusadhwaja is much more to me than a brother. I revere him as a divine personality. He is more of a friend to me than a brother. I brought him up with such love and affection that I have developed great attachment to him. Years ago, when the King of Sankasya demanded that I should yield the Bow of Shiva to him or else meet him in battle, I refused and he laid siege to Mithila City. This was the signal for a bitter war between us during which Sudhanva was killed and I made my brother the ruler of Sankasya. That City is shining bright on the banks of the Ikshumathi River. Seen from afar, it reminds one of the Celestial Chariot of the Gods, famous as the Pushpaka Vimana! Let me tell you now of another auspicious idea that the Gods have inspired in me.

“I have brought him here today so that he might share in the joy of the wedding celebrations, Brahmarishi! You commanded that Rama wed Sita and Lakshmana wed Urmila, the other daughter of mine. I accept the command with immeasurable joy. Sita is a celestial damsel and she will wed Rama as the Hero’s gift. I shall bow my head in all humility and gladness and give away Urmila to Lakshmana.

“I have another representation to make now for your consideration. Maharaja Dasaratha! You have four sons all born of the same heavenly gift of Grace. Why allow two to remain single? It will contribute to our happiness fully if they too are wedded. It is the asterism of Magha today.

This is a good day to commence the rites and have the preliminary ceremonials. The day after, under the asterism

Uttaraphalguna, I seek your assent to gift the two daughters of my brother, Mandavi to Bharatha and Sruthakeerthi to Satrugna in marriage.”

At this everyone in the huge gathering acclaimed the proposal, exclaiming, “Subham!” “Subham!” (Most welcome! Most welcome!) Their applause rent the sky. When Emperor Janaka made this suggestion about the marriages of both Bharatha and Satrugna, the sages Vashishta, Vamadeva, Viswamitra and others deliberated among themselves. Dasaratha was easily persuaded to assent and then they informed Janaka thus: “Oh King! The two Royal clans, the Ikshvaku and the Videha, are filled with holy traditions, the sanctity of which is beyond measurement. The greatness of these two dynasties cannot be measured and described by anyone, however learned or proficient. Dynasties of this status or any that can be pronounced equal to them in nobility, have not appeared on earth before. It is indeed a very auspicious event that these two are now brought together by these bonds of marriage.

“This is highly appropriate, laudable and holy. In addition, we are glad that the brides and grooms are fit in every way for each other. Janaka! Your brother, Kusadhwaja is one who knows and practises Dharma. It is really good that he too should become related to Dasaratha through the marital bond of his daughters. It is a source of immense joy. Hence, we are ready to bless the marriages of his daughters, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi with Bharatha and Satrugna. Our wish is that these Royal dynasties should be bound close by these marriages.”

Janaka and Kusadhwaaja fell prostrate before the sages overcome with delight at their wish being fulfilled. “This is no ordinary event. How fortunate we are that we have been blessed with this consummation! How lucky that the sages agreed to this proposal and eased the path. Sages will never encourage inauspicious happenings. We shall reverentially obey all your commands,” they said. (*RKRV Part1 p.181-184*)

Sage Vashishta fixes the Wedding day:

Vashishta then said, “No, why should we postpone these two weddings to the day after or some later day! Tomorrow is auspicious for all. It will be very good if all four weddings are celebrated on the same day.” Janaka replied, “I am blessed, indeed! Worthy Preceptor! Emperor Dasaratha has been, since long, your disciple, executing whatever you commanded. We brothers too, from this day, are your disciples. All our burdens are on your shoulders; direct us how to proceed, how to act, we shall unquestioningly follow.” They stood awaiting his reply, with hands folded in utter humility and reverence. (*RKRV Part1 p.184*)

Dasaratha announces that he would perform the *Nandi* and *Samavarthana* Rites:

At this, Dasaratha rose and said, “Ruler of Mithila! The virtues I find in you two I cannot describe in words! You have made excellent arrangements for the stay and reception of such a magnificent array of Maharajas and Maharishis, as well as of the vast mass of people who have thronged this City. I shall go back to my residence now and carry on the rites of *Nandi* and *Samavarthana* in full concordance with Vedic prescription.” The

brothers honoured him duly as he emerged from the hall and took leave of him at the main entrance as befitted his status. They then went to their own palaces to fulfil their assignments.

Dasaratha performed the *Nandi* (bull) rite. Very early in the day he made all the four sons perform the *Samavarthana* rite. He fixed golden ornaments on the horns of cows selected for being given away to pious Brahmins, along with costly vessels for milking them. It was a feast for the eye, the scene of the boys giving the cows away! The citizens of Mithila felt as if the deities of the four quarters were before them with Brahma in their midst. The four sons around Dasaratha appeared thus to them. (*RKR V Part I p.184-185*)

Bharatha’s Uncle comes to the wedding:

While this gift was going on, Yudhajit, the Prince of Kaikeya, brother of Queen Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharatha arrived. His father was yearning to have his grandson, Bharatha, for some time with him, and so he had hurried to Ayodhya, but he learnt there that the Royal family had left for Mithila for the marriage of Rama. His father, he said, had no knowledge of the wedding of Rama. He too had no idea that it was happening. So, he had come over to Mithila, since he could witness the marriage and also communicate the desire of the grandfather to have the grandson with him for some time. Dasaratha was glad that he could come.

Happiness all around:

That night, Dasaratha spoke endearingly to his sons and others on a variety of pleasant topics. No one in the camp slept.

Everyone was impatiently awaiting the dawn of the happy day, when each could witness the wedding ceremony of his dear princes. Each one was overwhelmed with joy as if his own son was the bridegroom or his own child the bride. Their ananda can be compared only to *Brahmananda* (Transcendental bliss); that was the measure of their love towards Rama and his brothers. *(RKR Part I p.185)*

Preparations for the wedding:

Early in the morning Janaka proceeded to the special dais on which the rituals of the wedding were to be gone through. He was accompanied by a highly spiritual splendour-showering group of sages. He then completed the preliminary rites and was awaiting the arrival of the bridegrooms and their parents and kinsmen. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna had their ceremonial baths. They wore yellow silken dresses. They had silk cloth wound round their heads. They were bedecked with many ornaments studded with diamonds and sapphires. They gave the impression that they were alluring, heart-captivating Gods who had come down from Heaven.

The auspicious hour named Vijaya was drawing near and they approached the dais preceded by musicians whose instruments struck up a melody that reached the dome of Heaven. The Councillors of the Court, the feudatory rulers, and their attendants followed them carrying huge plates of jewels, silk clothes, gold coins, and other auspicious articles essential for the ceremony. The populace gazed upon their beauty and prowess, without even winking the eye. They confided to each other that the dignity of their bearing marked them out as Divine, and not

human at all. They exclaimed, “Oh, what charm! What a surge of beauty!” Everyone was filled with amazement. “They are denizens of heaven come down on earth,” they whispered among themselves, as the bridegrooms passed between the thick rows of onlookers. Women swore that they had never cast eyes on such charming princes. Every window and terrace was packed to overflowing. At last, The Princes reached the dais, and seated themselves.

Then Janaka and his brother, Kusadhwaja, brought their daughters to the dais. They had been given ceremonial baths and elaborately and beautifully decorated as befitted brides on the wedding day. They wore veils, and followed their fathers, with thousands of maids following them, carrying fruits and flowers, heaps of red and yellow cosmetic fragrant, rice grains, jewels, and gems. It seemed as if the treasures of Mithila were flowing in a full scintillating stream in the wake of the wedding. The four brides were shining like magnificent lamps. They sat face to face, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna on one side and opposite them, Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi. A velvet cloth was held as a screen between. The residents of Ayodhya and the nobles who had come from there sat behind Dasaratha and the residents of Mithila and those invited for the wedding ceremony by Janaka sat behind him on the elevated dais. The eyes of all were drawn by the elaborate, artistic and rich decorations which distinguished the marriage *shamiana*. It was all gold, silver and flower and silk and velvet, festoons and flags, candelabras and columns, arches and finials. One could not take the eye off any of these once it drew one’s attention. The vast area was filled to overflowing with kinsmen and well-

wishers. It looked as if Mithila itself was experiencing the thrill of the wedding and enjoying the celebrations as if they were her own.

Soon, Dasaratha rose and politely reminded the Preceptor Vashishta, “Why should we delay?” Hearing this, Janaka stood before Vashishta with folded arms, praying that he should himself officiate at the ceremony. Vashishta agreed and with Viswamitra and Sathananda accompanying him, he lit the sacrificial fire, in the centre of the dais, while Vedic scholars and experts in Vedic recitation raised their voices and repeated hymns appropriate for the auspicious ceremony. They arranged around the Altar of Fire, golden plates decorated with flowers and sandal paste, full of tender sprouts of nine species of grains. There were also incense burners, sacred spoons for offering oblations in the holy flames, golden water pots, cups, and such other articles essential for the rite. They spread the holy Kusa grass thick on the floor, so that it lay as level and as smooth as laid down in the texts. Then, they began to pour oblations into the fire while reciting the hymns which assure happiness and prosperity to the brides and bridegrooms. Every rite was gone through with meticulous accuracy and correctitude. The initiatory threads were tied on the wrists of the Princes and Princesses.

The wedding¹²⁴:

The next rite was the rite of gifting the brides. Vashishta called upon Janaka to come forward. He came near the Sacred Fire Enclosure, dressed in regal splendour and wearing all the regal jewels. As directed by the sage he held the hands of Sita and placed them in the outstretched palms of Rama. His eyes streamed tears of joy. Coconut symbolising prosperity had already been placed in the palms of Rama and after Sita's hands rested on it, milk was poured on the hands by Janaka as part of the ceremony of gifting. Janaka spoke these words to Rama at that time: "Rama! Here is Sita, my daughter. She will tread your Dharmic path from now on. Accept her. She brings prosperity, peace and joy. Hold her hand with yours. She is highly virtuous and true. From this moment, she will follow you like your shadow, ever." With these words, he poured water on the hands of Rama, to set the seal on the gift.

Then he came near where Lakshmana was. He said, "Lakshmana! I am giving you this bride, Urmila, accept her," and with the prescribed Manthras, he completed the ceremony of gifting her to the bridegroom. Similarly, he approached Bharatha and pronouncing the Vedic Manthras traditionally used for the wedding, he gifted Mandavi to him as his bride. In the same manner Sruthakeerthi was gifted by him with the pouring of holy water and Vedic recitation to Satrugna. After this the scholars well versed in Vedic lore completed the customary rites and

¹²⁴ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Swayamvara – Winning Sita - Prakruthi Marries Paramatma - Marriage between Prakriti and Paramatma:*

rituals for drawing upon the wedded couples the Grace of the Gods.

Then Janaka rose and standing in the centre of the dais, he announced to the bridegrooms, “Darlings! Our daughters are to be installed as mistresses of your households. The auspicious moment has come.” As soon as he said so, with the blessing and approval of Vashishta, the four brothers held their brides each by their hand and they circumambulated first the sacred fire, and then Janaka and Vashishta the Preceptor, and prostrated before them. While they were doing so, showers of flowers fell upon them; joyous music rose from a galaxy of instruments. The distinguished gathering acclaimed the moment and scattered rice grains on their heads, wishing them all the best in life. The jubilation with which they cheered “Subham! Subham,” shook the sky. It filled all ears with delight. The gods played divine music in heaven. Elysian drums were beaten in ecstatic exaltation. The minstrels of heaven sang hallelujahs.

On the dais, court musicians sang the traditional wedding songs describing the splendour of the marriage ceremony and extolling it as on a par with the marriage of Lord Siva and Gouri. They sang it in a rich variety of *ragas* (musical tones) and melodies filling the atmosphere with vibrations of delight. The four brothers with their brides stood on the dais facing the vast gathering, and bowed in acknowledgement of their cheers and greetings: “May you be happy forever,” “May everything auspicious be added unto you.” The brothers, resplendent in their youth, heroism and beauty, proceeded with their brides into enclosures behind the curtains from where their mothers were

watching the ceremony, so that they might prostrate before them and be blessed by them. Then, they returned to the palace allotted for the stay of the Royal Party. From that day, for three days, the populace witnessed a magnificent variety of ceremony and festival, packed with joy and jubilee. The people of Ayodhya who had come to Mithila as well as the inhabitants of Mithila itself could not distinguish night from day! It was festivity without intermission. (*RKR V Part I p.185-191*)

Viswamitra leaves:

The day after the wedding, Viswamitra¹²⁵ went to Dasaratha and told him that the mission upon which he had resolved had been fulfilled. He blessed them profusely, and turning to Dasaratha, expressed his intention to proceed to the Himalayan regions. Viswamitra then went to the palace of Janaka and told him also that his desire had fructified triumphantly! He announced there too that he was proceeding to the Himalayas. At last, they laid at his feet their load of gratitude and took the dust of his feet when he left, blessing everyone. (*RKR V Part I p.191*)

Bidayi – the wedding party leaves for Ayodhya:

The third day, when Dasaratha expressed his desire to leave for Ayodhya, Janaka did not interpose any obstacle, but made all arrangements for their departure. He gathered the courtiers and attendant maids that were to accompany the brides. He collected and filled many chariots with the articles that they had to take with them. He gave as presents large numbers of elephants, chariots, horses and cows. He presented to the sons-in-law jewels

¹²⁵ See Chapter, *Viswamitra* - **VISWAMITRA DEPARTS**

and precious gems in plenty; also a vast variety of priceless gifts that could be used in daily life. With the dawn of the next day, the caparisoned chariots were ready for the journey. The women of the court were in tears; indeed, to speak the truth, all the women of the city were weeping at the departure of the four dear princesses.

Unable to bear the pangs of separation from Sita and Urmila, many nurses and maids broke down with grief. The mothers held the hands of the sons-in-law and prayed to them to treat their daughters gently and with affection. “They know no hardship or sorrow, they have grown up soft and tender,” they pleaded in pathetic appeal. They wept as if they were losing their very eyes. At last, they ascended the chariots and moved off. The City was filled with gloom, as much gloom as the ecstasy it was filled with for three days previous!

Janaka found it hard to take leave of Sita. He tried his best to curb the flow of tears¹²⁶. He accompanied Emperor Dasaratha for some distance describing to him the virtues of Sita and pleading with him to treat her with loving tenderness. With tears in his eyes, he prayed that he may be informed frequently of her welfare and happiness. He spoke also of the other brides and

¹²⁶ The return trip to Ayodhya commenced, and the people of Mithila felt intensely sad. Even Emperor Janaka who was a great *karma yogi*, himself shed tears. The people of Mithila were stunned when they saw that Janaka, who had no attachment, was crying. Explaining himself, Janaka said, “These tears of mine are not tears of sorrow, they are indeed tears of bliss.” Janaka sent a large retinue of chariots, horses, and elephants along with the four brides. (*SSB 1996 p.34-35*)

evinced great anxiety on their behalf too. Dasaratha responded most sympathetically; he spoke soothingly, trying his best to allay the agitation of his mind. He said, “Janaka! We have no daughters of our own. So, these are the daughters whom we longed to fondle so long! They are both daughters and daughters-in-law for us. There will not be anything wanting for them. All things necessary for their joy and happiness will be provided. Do not worry or grieve in the least. Return fully assured of our love and affection for them.” Thus saying Dasaratha ordered his chariot to halt.

Janaka alighted from the chariot of the Emperor and approached the brides who were seated with the bridegrooms. He consoled them in various ways to bear the pang of separation from the home where they had been reared so lovingly. He imparted courage, and quoted many Dharmic texts which enjoin loyalty to the husband and the husband’s kith and kin. He reminded them how they have to treat the servants of the household which each of them was now entering. He accepted their respectful prostrations and caressed them once again and blessed them. When he turned his back on them to proceed to Mithila, he burst into sobs. Nevertheless he ascended his chariot and moved towards home. The chariots sped Ayodhya-wards and Mithila-wards. Very soon they were miles apart. (*RKR V Part I p.191-193*)

Janaka in grief at the parting of his Divine Angel:

When Janaka reached Mithila, the apartments of the Palace were empty, with no signs of life, no shine of joy, no sound of elation. He could not be there even for an instant. Mithila was a City of

Grief. Janaka sent for Sage Sathananda and the Ministers and in order to free his mind a little from the upsurge of sorrow, he had a number of items of business discussed and settled with them. In the midst of the discussions, his mind would wander into sadness again. He used to give replies unrelated to the problems raised. At this, one minister said, “Oh King! The separation from Sita seems to have caused great grief in your heart. No father can escape this separation and this grief. Once she is gifted to the bridegroom, the father’s duty is to reduce the attachment gradually; this is a matter not unknown to your Majesty. And we know that Sita is no ordinary maiden! She is a Divine Angel. So, separation from her must cause you great agony. Oh King, the daughters are Divine; and note, the sons-in-law too have Divine Splendour. They appear to have descended from Heaven. In Mithila, everyone, young and old, had that feeling and that reverence towards them. It is really a wondrous coincidence that such bridegrooms have been wedded to such brides, worthy in every way, in physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual characteristics, in status, wealth, power, family honour, dynastic sanctity and religious faith. This cannot happen to all. Therefore, the daughters will have happiness, without the least diminution. Their lives will be filled with greater and greater joy as the years roll by.” They recalled the grandeur of the marriage celebrations and calmed the agitated mind of Janaka. They engaged themselves in consoling him and restoring his equanimity and mental peace. (*RKRV Part I p.193-194*)

GLOOM OVER AYODHYA

Vashishta sent message to Janaka on the passing away of Dasaratha

When Emperor Dasaratha passed away, the Family Preceptor Vashishta had sent a message to Janaka, and as soon as he received it, he and his queen, Sunayana, had come to Ayodhya for condoling the bereaved. They learnt there about all developments. When Bharatha arrived, and decided to proceed to Chitrakoota along with the Mothers, the Royal Preceptor, and the leaders of the people, Janaka and his queen also accompanied them. They were waiting long for a favourable chance to meet Sita and Rama. (*RKR V Part I p.459-460*)

Janaka Consoles Bharatha and Satrughna:

The brothers, Bharatha and Satrughna, went straight to Emperor Janaka and fell at his feet in exemplary reverence and said, “Lord! You have such compassion on us that you came to Ayodhya when you heard about the death of our father and of the exile of Rama into the forest. You observed our plight with your own eyes and comforted us during those critical days. You gave us appropriate advice to resuscitate ourselves. In order to fulfil your inner desire, you subjected yourself to all this strain and trouble, coming over here into this jungle. You have shared with us our grief and contributed your valuable part in the pleading we made to Rama to persuade him to return. When those pleadings failed, you consoled us and taught us to bear the disappointment and distress, and enriched us with your blessings. We offer our reverential gratitude. What more can we say or do? Your blessings are the most effective reinforcements we

require.” Janaka listened to these words uttered so sincerely and so thankfully by the two brothers. He appreciated their reactions and feelings, their character and conduct. He drew them near himself and he lovingly caressed them and stroked their heads.

He said, “Sons! May you walk along the path laid down by Rama and may you thereby win his Grace. I am proceeding to Mithila straight from here.” The ministers, feudatory rulers, Brahmins, sages, ascetics, and others who had come with the brothers, went one after another towards Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, and falling at their feet, they took leave of them and turned their faces homeward, their hearts heavy with a sense of gloom. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana went to where the mothers were and prostrated before them. They consoled them, saying, “Do not worry the least. Be engaged in the correct performance of your duties and responsibilities. Have before you ever the wishes and ideals that father has laid before us.” As for themselves, they said they would be spending happily and peacefully the period of fourteen years as a quick span of fourteen seconds, and returning joyfully to Ayodhya. These words restored the spirits of the queens. (*RKRV Part I p.473-475*)

THE BROTHERS MEET

Janaka Comforts Sita and leaves for Mithila:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana stood under a spreading tree, until the last of them left. Meanwhile, Emperor Janaka also prepared to leave, at the head of his party, for Mithila. Rama and Lakshmana prostrated before their father-in-law and mother-in-

law. Sita fell at the feet of her parents. The parents embraced her and stroked her head in fond tenderness. They said, “Daughter! Your courageous determination and your devotion towards your husband will bring us great renown. Through you, our family and clan have been rendered holy. We must have accomplished some great vow and fulfilled some great austerity or else you would not have been born in our line.” They extolled her in profuse terms and expressed their joy and exultation. They assured her, “Sita! You can suffer no want. Rama is the breath of your existence. We know that since you live in his shade, no harm can touch you. However, as a result of you two being different entities, problems and perplexities might now and then confront you. Those are but the play of destiny, just passing clouds.” Janaka presented before them many Vedantic truths to bring them comfort and contentment. Then, he too left the hermitage and took the track that led him out of the forest. (*RKR V Part I p.477-478*)

ASWAMEDHA YAGA

Rama desires to perform Aswamedha Yaga:

Rama announced that he desired to celebrate the Aswamedha Yaga¹²⁷, (the Horse-Sacrifice) mentioned in the Vedas since the Yaga would ensure the destruction of all varieties of grief.

Vashishta advised Rama thus: “Send the news of the Yaga to Emperor Janaka. He will be able to attend the Yaga with his

¹²⁷ See Chapter, *Lava And Kusha*

queen and kinsmen.” His advice was couched in persuasive and pleasant words. He also said, “Send invitations to the chief ascetics, Brahmins and Maharishis. “When the Guru agreed, Rama took him around Ayodhya, so that he might see the preparations. They were both very pleased at the decorations all over the City. The official messengers visited kingdoms far and near and presented the invitations to the rulers of those lands. *(RKR Part II p.314-315)*

Emissary leaves for Mithila and Janaka reaches Ayodhya:

One of them proceeded to Mithila, the Capital City of Janaka. Jambavantha, Angada, Sugriva, Nala, Nila and other Vanara leaders arrived. Ascetics and monks came to the City in groups. They were all welcomed and accommodated with due regard to their spiritual eminence. Soon, Viswamitra arrived. Rama honoured him, and offered reverential hospitality. Agasthya, the great sage, also reached Ayodhya. He was given proper reception and arrangements were made for his comfortable stay in the Capital. They saw the sanctified Hall where the Yaga was to be held and were delighted.

When the citizens of Mithila saw the emissary from Ayodhya, they were very happy. He informed Janaka, the Emperor, of the Yaga that was to be performed by Rama. As soon as he heard the news, Janaka rose from his throne. He was thrilled when he listened to the emissary. His eyes streamed tears of bliss. He enquired whether Rama was well and whether his brothers too were well. He replied that the letter he had brought would satisfy him on all scores and handed over the auspicious message. He could not speak more. And who can describe the condition of the

Emperor? His kinsmen were transported with delight. The City resounded to the shouts of “Jai.” The Emperor read the Message over and over. He was overwhelmed with joy. He called a courier in and ordered him, “Spread this news in cities, towns and villages throughout the empire. Announce it with the play of the ten musical instruments.” Then, he called in the Minister and handed him the Message. He received it most respectfully and pressed it on his eyes, before reading it for himself and being thrilled thereby. Bringing to mind the glory of Rama he shed profuse tears of joy. In front of every home in the city, the master of the house installed a pot of auspicious significance. The Emperor gave away countless valuables in charity to celebrate his receiving the good news. The City of Janaka was swaying in ecstasy.

Janaka arrived at Ayodhya, after the long journey from Mithila. On the way, he alighted to pay his respects to Sathananda, his Preceptor. He blessed Janaka and directed him to proceed fast to Ayodhya, accompanied by his entourage and army—the later including all the four fighting forces, chariotry, elephantry, infantry and cavalry. Janaka left behind a section of the army to safeguard the City. He assigned a palanquin for his Guru, Sathananda, and himself rode in another. When the entire party left for Ayodhya, the earth quaked. Who can count the number of generals, commanders and heroes that the army had in its ranks? Journeying thus, Janaka reached Ayodhya at the end of two days. When he knew that Janaka was approaching the City and had come very near, Rama went forward to receive him and they met in great mutual affection. A magnificent residence surrounded by a vast plain had been set apart for him. It was a charming

heavenly residence, right on the bank of the Sarayu River. Rama had deputed his brothers to receive and render hospitality to the Royal guests.

Rama fell at the feet of Janaka and rising, sat by his side, Janaka was overwhelmed by the joy that welled within him. He stroked Rama's head and accosted him softly and sweetly. Rama too replied expressing similar sentiments infelicitous language. He assigned helps and aides to look after the comforts of Janaka and his entourage. He directed Bharatha to be at the service of the Emperor. (*RKRV Part II p.315-318*)

Rama introduces his sons to Janaka:

Rama honoured Emperor Janaka as befitted his status and took the sons to his presence. He was immensely delighted when he saw his grandsons. Since Janaka was replete with wisdom, and since he was aware through his divine insight of the Divinity of Sita, he did not exhibit any surprise or wonder, anxiety or worry, over what had happened. His mind was unaffected because he knew that what had to happen had happened. His attitude was also not affected to the slightest extent by the incidents that took place. Janaka left for Mithila City filled with unbounded joy. (*RKRV Part II p.333*)

JANAKA'S QUALITIES

Grihastha:

Janaka, Aswapathi, Dileepa—these are examples of persons who gained Moksha as Grihastha (*Prasnottara Vahini p.62*)

Rajarishi like Janaka-Chakravarthi, Aswapathi, and Dileepa reached the goal while continuing in the householder stage; while in that stage, they struggled and succeeded in removing all obstacles that hindered the winning of the grace of the Lord; they had as the goal the Godhead they wanted to reach. Therefore, do not doubt it; the stage of householder is no hindrance. (*Dharma Vahini p.53*)

Kshama it was that enabled Emperor Janaka to transform from a *karma yogi* to *jnana yogi*. The power of forbearance can help you to achieve anything. (*SSB 2000 p.253*)

Jnana Yogi

King Janaka was known to have mastered his senses. He was an acknowledged expert in Jnana yoga. (*SSB 2002p. 59*)

One who lives in this world should in the first instance become human in nature. To learn the *Atma Vidya* is tantamount to knowing the Brahman. For attaining *Raja Yoga*, this is the path. The word *Yoga* indicates sacrifice and also indicates union with something that is sacred. *Raja Yoga* in particular signifies something which has a very high place. The one who attained *Raja Yoga* in a remarkable manner is King Janaka. If *Raja Yoga* to be explained in simple terms, we can say that it is a union of *bhakti* and *karma*. By involving yourself in action in accordance with the scriptural injunctions and performing it in the name of God, you will be combining *bhakti* and *karma* which will lead you to *Raja Yoga*. It is said that King Janaka was performing all his daily work in this manner and thus enjoyed the fruits of *Raja Yoga*. It is in this context that Janaka is also called by the name *Videha* that is one who has no attachment to the body. (*SSB 1974 Part II p.225-226*)

King Janaka, even while performing ordinary worldly duties such as ruling the kingdom and looking after the needs of the kingdom, found it possible to turn his thought completely towards the divine. For Janaka's ability to do this there is an example. (*SSB 1973 p.105*)

In a forest near Mithilapura there used to be a great *rishi* by name Suka¹²⁸. Several disciples used to gather round him and he used to teach them spiritual knowledge leading to the realisation of the *Atma Thathwa*. Janaka came to know of this *ashram* of Suka and went there and prayed to Suka to permit him to be one of his disciples. Suka thought it very desirable to have such an ideal king among his disciples and readily agreed to his request. He asked him to come every day at a particular time. In this manner, many days went on. **(SSB 1974 Part II p.226)**

From that day, Janaka was conducting himself as one of the disciples. One day when he did not arrive in time, Suka did not start his class and waited till Janaka arrived. He further told the other disciples that he was delaying the class for that reason.

When the sage told the other disciples to wait till Janaka arrived, they murmured amongst themselves and told each other that they had joined this great sage only because it was believed that he attached no special importance to kings and such other powerful people. It now appears that he is influenced by the king's wealth and power¹²⁹.

From that day, their faith in the *Guru* started weakening. They also became envious of King Janaka. This is something which has been known from

¹²⁸ Janaka had Suka as his *Guru* (***Jnana Vahini P.60***)

¹²⁹ In the meanwhile the students began to develop some peculiar feelings bordering on envy. Each one was telling himself that Suka was partial to Janaka because of his wealth and position. They thought that Suka was willing to wait for Janaka, the king, but never for others. Does Suka also suffer from partiality towards people in position? They were thinking that it was not proper for a *rishi* of Suka's stature to make a distinction between kings and commons. Suka in fact did not have any such feelings. He was one who attained equal-mindedness to a very high level. Suka on the particular day delayed the commencement of his discourse with the specific intention of making his disciples realise the greatness of king Janaka and his devotion. After some time, Janaka entered the class. Soon after, Suka commence his discourse. Suka was a very pious and divine person. **(SSB 1974 Part II p.226)**

ancient times. When deserving disciples are given the opportunity of going close to the teacher, others who are not eligible for such treatment become envious. It is not possible to say when and on whom such grace will fall. Some people, even if they had done a lot of good in their previous births, are reborn the moment their accumulated good work has worked itself out. This means that one should go on performing good actions and thereby rise higher and higher. On the other hand, if one thinks that he need not do any more good, he will lose the opportunity. As soon as Suka saw such envy and jealousy among his disciples, he decided to teach them a lesson. At an opportune moment, all the disciples were made to feel that the entire city of Mithilapura was in flames¹³⁰. As soon as the disciples saw that Mithilapura was in flames, each one of them began to think of the effect it would have on their houses, on their parents, on their wealth and so on. Each one began to run to the city, with a view to save and salvage what he could. But, king Janaka did not waver and did not move from his place¹³¹. Suka told Janaka that the flames appear to have spread to the palace and he asked Janaka to go and save the inmates of the palace. Janaka did not agree to do this but was only smiling, thinking that God's will shall be done and no one can change it¹³².

¹³⁰ The disciples were listening to *Atmabodha*, the lesson that the Atma alone is real and that all else in appearance, imposed on the Atma, by the fog of illusion and ignorance. (*SSS Vol. 7 p.244*)

¹³¹ But, Janaka whose capital city was being reduced to ashes sat unmoved, for, he knew that what was being consumed by fire was only an 'appearance' and not 'reality'. Suka himself asked Janaka to go and assess the damage and try to save what can be saved from the fire. But, Janaka replied that his treasure was Jnana he was getting from the Master and that he was unconcerned about the objective world, approachable by external instruments of knowledge. At this, Suka revealed that the fire was a make-believe created by him to tell others the depth of real scholarship earned by Janaka, in contrast of their superficial learning. That was the type of Guru that was the type of Shishya (disciple) which was acclaimed as the standard by ancient India. (*SSS Vol.7 p.244*)

¹³² But, Janaka was not at all disturbed, as he was deeply engrossed in Suka's teaching. He was deeply engrossed in the teachings and was

The envious students who ran to the city found that there were no flames at all and that it was perhaps only a make believe. They came back and reported this to Suka. (*SSB 1973 p.105-106*)

Suka then told that each one had only one small house in Mithilapura and they ran in great anxiety to save these houses. On the other hand, Janaka who was the king of Mithilapura was not disturbed in the least even when he was told that his own palace was on fire. Nothing could move him. Thus, the difference between Janaka who had a steady mind and all the others who had wavering minds could easily be seen. It is enough if one student, like Janaka whose attention is steadily fixed and who is engrossed in the lesson, is available. There is no point in having several students with distracted attention. That is the reason why I was awaiting Janaka's arrival. It was not because he was a king or a rich person. You should understand the reason for my being more anxious to convey my knowledge to Janaka rather than to you people with wavering minds. From this incident, you can understand that the words of elders and the teachings of great teachers are not to be ignored. They are to be taken right into your heart. You have to understand and assimilate them so that when the occasion arises, they can be put to use.

As our attention and our care begin to grow, so also the fruits of our knowledge begin to grow. It is in this context said that where there is care and where there is a desire to learn with attention, wisdom will appear. This *prema* or devotion is also like a creeper which can grow quickly. Only when we are able to absorb the fire of wisdom into our heart will it be possible for us to quickly burn away our distracting desires. (*SSB 1974 Part II p.227*)

A Jnani:

Janaka was a *Jnani* (realised soul) He used to constantly immersed in the *Advaitahanubhuthi* (non- dual experience), that a feeling that he was not separate from God. A famous lady who was well-versed in logic named Sulabha approached Emperor Janaka once and entered into an argument with him. She told him, "In the eye of your wisdom, all human beings are one.

completely lost in the thought of God. He was enjoying such supreme bliss that he forgot everything else (*SSB 1974 Part II p.226-227*)

Therefore, take me as your wife and establish the fact that scholars are equal-minded (*samadarsi*), thereby.” Janaka replied, “True! All are equal to *Jnani*. Hence no distinction can be made between man and a woman. For the very same reason, I cannot marry you.” Janaka’s reply was an eye-opener to Sulabha. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.86-87*)

A BRAHMA JNANI

King Janaka was a great Brahma Jnani (a realised soul). He was the King of Videha, which means he attached no importance to the Deha (body), It means, he was an Atma Jnani (who realised the knowledge of the self). One day after dinner, he was discussing something with his Ministers and followers. Therefore, he retired to bed late. He slowly got into sleep while his servants were pressing his feet and fanning him. His Queen was also at his bedside. The Queen, noticing that the King has fallen asleep, sent the servants out of the room. She was looking at him intently, as he was very much tired.

Which is the truth?

After sometime, the King got up from the bed and started shouting “Is this the truth? Or that is the truth?” The Queen was deeply upset over the behaviour of the King. In spite of her repeated questioning as to the reason for this sudden change in his behaviour, there was no reply from him. The only words he spoke were his continuous questioning “Is this the truth? Or that is truth?” Then the Queen called the Ministers and servants to help her ascertain the reason for the strange behaviour on the part of the King. They, in turn made enquiries. But, there was no answer from the King. For all the questions, there was only one response from the King – his query, “Is this the truth? Or that is truth?” Sage Vashishta was a triloka Jnani (one who knows all that happens in the three worlds) Therefore; he closed his eyes for a moment and tried to think about the reason for this type of behaviour from King Janaka. He realised that King Janaka had a dream in which he was dethroned and was roaming in the forests with acute hunger. There, he saw some dacoits in the forest about to take their food in a leaf – plate. He went and begged them for food and they gave him some in a leaf – plate, taking pity on him. While he was about to partake of that food, suddenly from somewhere an eagle came and snatched away that leaf along with food. He cried aloud in deep anguish that he could

not take even the food offered as a charity to him. With this, the dream ended and he was awake. When he came into the waking state he realised that as usual he was in his palace happily lying on a soft bed, with his Queen and servants doing all sorts of service for him. In the dream, he was dethroned and suffered from acute hunger and even the food offered to him in charity was snatched away by eagle. Therefore, he was enquiring whether the dream experience was real (is that the truth?) or the experience in the waking state was real (is this the truth?). (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p. 155-157*)

Vashishta Rishi came there. He studied the situation and through his divine powers he could realise the king's predicament. He said to the king "Neither this nor that is true." You experienced certain things in the dreams, as well as in the waking state. In the waking state, there is no dream. In the dream, there is no waking state. But 'You' are both in the dream state and in the waking state. So 'You' alone are true. In both the states 'You' are present and therefore 'You' are omnipresent. 'You' lived in the past, 'You' live in the present and 'You' will live in the future. The 'You' aspect is timeless and therefore is Divine." (*SSB 1993 p. 21*) You are present in the waking state and in the dream state. This is a daydream, and that was a night-dream. Neither of them is present in the other, but you are present in both. You are the Truth." (*SSB 1995 p.42*) Thus, both waking and dream states are a kind of delusion. To make efforts to recognise such discrepancies is true Vairagya, said Gitacharya. (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p. 155-157*)

Ekam Sath—the One is Real. Truth is one and its manifestations are many. This is the central doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gita*. (*SSB 1979 p.145*)

Likewise, devotees perceive the *Avatar*'s Divinity and humanness and then doubt, "Is Divinity true or is that humanness true?" The divinity that you think you see is not true; neither is the humanness. Underlying both is the sanctity of the *Avatar*. When your vision is pure, you perceive the *Avatar*'s sanctity. Divinity attracts sacredness. (*SSB 1995 p.42*)

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. (SSS Vol.20 p.48)

Brahma Jnana to be won by involvement with Prakriti:

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. Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality. The story relates that Janaka, the *Vaidehi*, (ruler of Videha, that is to say, 'without body' or 'body consciousness) offered his daughter (the awareness of *Brahman*) to Rama. 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)

One must give up the mind to attain Brahman:

Once upon a time, King Janaka sent round a message inviting scholars, sages and yogis to teach him the knowledge of Atma. He announced: In the time it takes me to climb on to my horse, one should be able to give full *Brahma Jnana* (knowledge of Absolute).” The sages and scholars were worried, as they felt “This is going to be a severe test for or scholarship and learning.” No one dared come and offer to satisfy the King’s demand.

Meanwhile, a sage by name Ashthaavakra entered the kingdom asked them: “what is the cause of all your worries? They explained their situation and he said, “Why should you scared about such a small thing? I can solve this problem.” So saying, he entered the court of King Janaka. He said to King, “King! I am ready to teach you the knowledge of Atma, but it cannot be taught in this palace which is full of *rajo* and *thamo* gunas. First I must take you to a *Satwa* area.”

They have a few horses and soldiers and left the palace. On reaching a lonely spot, Ashthaavakra told the king, “I am now going to teach you the knowledge of Atma. I am the preceptor and you are the disciple. Are you ready to accept this relationship? If you agree to this, then you have to make an offering the *shishya* has to give to the Guru (preceptor). Only after you have made your offering will I will start my teaching.” King Janaka told Ashthaavakra, “I

want to attain Brahman and I am therefore prepared to give anything you want.” Then the Guru told King: “I don’t want anything except your mind.” King Janaka answered: “I offer it to you; from now on, it is yours.”

Then the Guru brought a horse, made it stand, and asked the King to sit down on the ground in the middle of the road of his kingdom. He left the king there and retired into forest to sit quietly under a tree.

The soldiers waited for a long time for the return of the king but neither the king nor Ashthaavakra came. They wanted to know what had happened to them, and one by one, they went to find out. They found their king sitting in the middle of the road with a horse standing nearby. The king had closed his eyes and was absolutely still. Ashthaavakra was nowhere to be found. They were rather afraid at that this Ashthaavakra had cast some magic spell over the king, making him lose consciousness. They went to the prime minister and brought him to the king. The prime minister called the king. “Maharaja, Maharaja, Maharaja,” but the king did not open his eyes or respond in any way. The prime minister and courtiers were alarmed as they could not rouse the king or give him any food or drink. They were wondering what to do. Left with no alternative, the prime minister sent the chariot to bring the queen, thinking that if she called the king, he would respond to her entreaties. The queen came and pleaded. But the king remained unmoved.

Meanwhile, the soldiers went in search in search of Ashthaavakra into the forest. They found him sitting under a tree in a total peace. They took hold of him and brought him to the place where the king was sitting. Ashthaavakra said, “The king is saved, he is all right. You may see for yourself.” The ministers, the queen and others told Ashthaavakra: “He has not opened his mouth or eyes.” Ashthaavakra went to close and called him saying, “Maharaja” immediately the king opened eyes and replied, “Swami”, Ashthaavakra told the king, “The ministers and the queen have come; the soldiers and many others have come and all have tried to talk to you, why did you not answer them?”

The king replied, “Thoughts, words and deeds are associated with the mind. As I have offered my mind entirely to you, first I need your permission before uttering a word. What authority do I have over my mind? I have offered it to

you; it is yours. I won't do anything without your permission and command.” Then Ashthaavakra said, “You have reached the state of *Amanaska* (free from mental limitation)” and he asked him place his foot upon the stirrup to mount the horse. By the time he had climbed the horse and placed his other leg over the horseback, he got the experience of *Atmaanandaha* (Bliss of Divine self).

Krishna told Arjuna, ‘Offer your everything to Me; offer all your *Dharmas* (righteousness) to Me and I will take care of you and give you liberation and deliverance. Be they physical, mental, spiritual or worldly, offer all your actions to Me.’ (*SSS Vol.17 p.152-155*)

BRIHADARANYAKOPANISHAD

The Brihadaranyakopanishad is affiliated to the Sukla Yajur Veda. It has six sections, of which all except the third and fourth, describe Upasana or Worship associated with Karma or ritualistic Action. The third and the fourth sections deal with the teachings of Yajnavalkya¹³³ on spiritual Truth imparted to Janaka. The grandeur of the intellectual eminence of that sage is impressively evident in this Upanishad. For aspirants eager to reach the goal of Liberation, this part of the Brihadaranyaka offers the best guide. The sections are therefore referred to as Yajnavalkya Kanda. It is the last of the famous Ten Upanishads. On account of its size, it is named Brihath or Big; since it is best studied in the silence of the forest or Aranya, it is an Aranyaka. It instructs in Brahma Jnana and so is classed as an Upanishad. (*Upanishad Vahini p.32*)

Janaka performs a Yagna:

Janaka, the King of Videha, celebrated a Sacrifice giving away vast wealth in gifts. Many Brahmins attended this Yaga from the Kuru-Panchala territory.

¹³³ Yajnavalkya (Yaajnavalkya). Great *Upanishadic* person. Priest and guru of King Janaka. Taught the monistic *Adwaita* doctrine of the identity of *Atma* and Brahman in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. (*Sutra Vahini p.89*)

The King had a thousand cows decorated with anklets, necklaces and horns of gold. He announced that they would be donated to whoever taught him the Brahman. But such Brahmins, though great scholars in their own line, hesitated to claim the cows, through fear of failure. But Yajnavalkya was so confident that he asked his students to drive the cows to his Ashram! The other Brahmins got enraged at his audacity and started testing his scholarship and experience.

The first to come forward to challenge Yajnavalkya was the family priest of Janaka. The answers that the sage gave to his questions clarify the method of attaining the Atma encased in the pranas, through the conjoint yogas of Karma and Bhakthi. In the Yajna, the Rithwik's voice is Agni, the Kala is Vayu, the Mind of the performer is Chandra—such is the manner in which one has to grasp the meaning of ritual and free oneself from the limitations of mortality. (*Upanishad Vahini p.34-35*)

From the lowest joy to the highest Brahmanandam, each step is an increase of the feeling. Words like Paramanandam indicate only stages of *Anandam* (bliss). As a matter of fact, all types of Anandam are derived from the primary basic source of Brahmanandam. Yajnavalkya explained all this to Janaka, for he took great delight in instructing the King on all that he knew. (*Upanishad Vahini p.38*)

A Karma Yogi

Return trip to Ayodhya (after celebration of marriages) commenced, and the people of Mithila felt intensely sad. Even the Emperor, who was a great Karma Yogi, himself, shed tears. The people of Mithila were stunned when they saw that Janaka, who had no attachment, was crying. Explaining himself, Janaka said, “These tears of mine are not tears of sorrow, they are indeed tears of bliss.” (*SSB 1996 p.34-35*)

Great personages like Janaka performed Dharma-karmas (*Geetha Vahini p.54*)

Surrender and Dedication:

The Emperor Janaka believed in right action. (*SSB 1993 p.21*) It is said that King Janaka could attain the highest state by doing his daily work always in a spirit of dedication. We should cultivate the spirit of surrender, saying, “I am Thine.” (*SSB 1979 p.39*)

King Janaka was able to get liberation when he offered his entire mind and the three types of activity, thought, word and deed, to Ashthaavakra:

The one become *Amanaska*, to realise the unity with the Divine. As long as you have a mind, there is duality. Cold and heat, day and night, sorrow and joy, loss and profit – all these pairs of opposites – come about only when you have a mind. If you want to learn to treat all these thing equally, you have to offer your mind to God. That is why in Vedanta it has been said that it is the mind that is responsible for liberation or bondage. (*SSS Vol.17 p.155*)

The Court of Janaka

In the court of Janaka, there used to be a practice by which he invited great scholars and conversed with them. The kind of conversations that were permitted in the court of Janaka were of three kinds. The first type is the argument or exchange of words. The second type is *Jalpa*, and the third is *Tarka* or logic. The first kind signifies the fact that the individual pays complete attention to what he wants to say and he can adopt any method to present his view point. The second method, *Jalpa* consists of using a *Sastra* or quoting from scripture and establishing one’s view point with the help of such quotation. The third method, *Tarka* consists of using intense logic by quoting from the *Vedas* to confirm his ideas. This method is one of deep analysis and logically establishes what one wants to by quoting authority from the *Vedas*.

In this manner, arrangements were made to have three kinds of presentation in Janaka’s court. Many reputed scholars used to enter the court. People who had several titles to indicate their expertise used to participate and were wearing *Rudraksha* symbolic of their scholarship. Among them was one scholar by name Ashtaavakra, who was very young and ambitious. When he was trying to enter the court to participate in the deliberations, the elderly scholars thought that it was not befitting of them to argue with this young Ashtaavakra. Such an attitude indicates intellectual arrogance and pride of scholarship.

They tried to prevent his participation in many ways. But Ashtaavakra was very stubborn and after praying to King Janaka, he was allowed to enter the court.

As soon as Ashtaavakra entered the court, all the *Pundits* who looked at him laughed loudly. In return, Ashtaavakra also laughed more loudly. The *pundits* were rather surprised because they thought that there was a valid reason for their laughing, but they did not see any valid reason for Ashtaavakra laughing. Ashtaavakra was stopped by one of the *Pundits* and was asked to state the reason for his laughter. One of the *Pundits* said that anyone who sees the crooked body of Ashtaavakra cannot refrain from laughing. Then Ashtaavakra offered to tell the reason for his laughter if they wished to listen to it. He said that he had come to the court of Janaka to participate in the function when he heard that several scholars would be present, but he was forced to laugh when he found that King Janaka had mistaken such *charmakaras* to be real *pundits* and scholars. Ashtaavakra used the word *charmakaras* which denotes the community of cobblers and at this all the *pundits* were in the court of Janaka were enraged. Ashtaavakra said that he addressed them as cobblers because only cobblers can understand the nature of leather used for making footwear and they behaved like cobblers when they attached much importance to the skin covering the external body.

Pundits will be true *pundits* only if they are able to see inside the heart with their inner vision. On the other hand if people only look at the external from and give undue importance to it, they will belong to the same class of cobblers described by Ashtaavakra. To always talk of the *vibhuti* which I give or to talk of the things that I materialise and of the miracles that I perform is not correct. Even erudite people are not able to recognise my Divinity. Is this the result of their education? What value can we attach to their education when they are not able to see the inner and more important aspects but attach significance only to the other details? (*SSB 1974 part II p.284-285*)

The three debts to be discharged

There are also three other *Rnas* (debts), mentioned in the *scriptures*---*Pithr-rna*, *Maath-rna* and *Deva-rna*---the debt to the father, to the mother and to the Gods. Once there was a great sage named Uddaalaka, famous for his

scholarship. He had a son, Shwethaketu, and a daughter Sujatha. Among his disciples was Kaholaka, a young man who was well behaved, virtuous, devoted to the teacher and earnest in his studies? But he could not keep pace with the other bright lads and so became the target for taunts. The *Guru* loved him all the more on account of this.

Sympathy with his lot grew into Grace; Grace resulted in the *Guru* offering his own daughter in marriage to Kaholaka! While Sujatha was pregnant, Kaholaka recited the *Vedas* as laid down in the Disciplinary Rules, but within hearing of the child growing in the womb. It heard the recitation but, since it was already aware of the correct pronunciation of every syllable, whenever Kaholaka spelt a syllable wrong, it squirmed in distress. So, when the baby was born, it had eight bends, crooked in eight places, in fact! Naturally, he was named *Ashtaavakra*. (Eight Bends) When *Ashtaavakra* was still in the womb, Sujatha had persuaded her husband to seek some monetary help from King Janaka to relieve their dire poverty and when Kaholaka went to Mithila, in the midst of a big *Yaga* (ceremonial sacrifice) which the king was celebrating, he had to stay on till it was finished; later, he was forced by circumstances to join a competitive disputation with a celebrated scholar called *Vaanadena*, and accept the terms laid down by the challenger, namely, whoever gets defeated in argument was to be thrown into the sea.

Meanwhile, *Ashtaavakra*, in spite of his physical deformity, became an erudite Pandit full of intricate scholarship, even while in his teens. His father's fate was kept from the lad by both Sujatha and Shwethaketu for many years, but, one day, he was taunted by someone as one who was ignorant of his father's fate and the sad tale was revealed to the son. Immediately, he proceeded to Mithila and sought entrance into the audience-hall of King Janaka. The guards laughed when he wanted them to report to the King that a *Vedic* scholar eager for disputation with the court pundits had come. They slighted him for his tender age, but he said that age was no criterion. At last, he pleaded that his deformity, at least, entitled him to hospitality and sympathy.

Parents should encourage their sons by good example

Janaka was struck by the boy's persistence and courage; he ordered that he should be admitted and arranged for the disputation the boy sought! If I start

telling you the absurd questions that the court pundits teased him with and the replies with which Ashtaavakra sparred them with, it will take so much time that perhaps we will have to sit beyond Shivaratri even! Janaka tried his best to dissuade him; he told him that he was too young to risk death in the sea. But, Ashtaavakra argued that *Atma vidya* does not take account of the *deha tathwam*, the physical principle of the body. Vaanadena entered the fray with the deformed lad resplendent with spiritual scholarship; to the great astonishment of all, the boy gained the upper hand; the aged pundit squirmed under the questions; he failed; he had to be thrown into the sea; the deformed son of Kaholaka had triumphed over the victor who had consigned his father to the waves. The mother was delighted that her son had discharged the debt, and retrieved the honour of the line.

The father must encourage the son by example more than by precept. Prahlada told his father that only the parent who directs his progeny to God deserves obedience and respect. All others are, so far as the sons are concerned, human ogres like Hiranyakasipu. There are some parents who are sorry that their sons are coming to Puttaparthi and who dread that they would start *doing puja* or Japam or Namasmarana, and give up the habits of smoking or drinking or gambling, which they have learnt from their fathers! Such people do not know the value of Sathsanga (spiritual company), for peace and happiness. They fail to equip their children or themselves with armour against the blows of fate or fortune. (SSS Vol.4 p.295/297, DD 26-4-1965)

From ancient times the feminine aspect of the Divine has been worshipped in various ways. The Veda declares that where women are honoured and esteemed, there divinity is present with all its potency.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16.1.2 SUNAYANA

Just as faithfulness to the husband (pathivratha dharma) is for women, celibacy (brahmacharya) is for men. Just as woman should consider one person and one person only as her master and husband, man too has to be faithful to one woman and one woman only, as his mate, his wife. She has to consider the husband as God and worship him and minister to and follow his desires for the fulfilment of her duty of loyalty to the husband (pathivratha); so too, man should honour his wife as the “mistress of the home” and act in accordance with her wishes, for she is the Lakshmi of the home (Grihalakshmi). Then only can he deserve the status of “man”.

Name and fame, honour and dishonour, vice and wickedness, good and bad are all equal and uniform for both men and women. There is no such thing as woman alone being bound and men being free; both are equally bound by the rules of *dharma*. Both will fall into *a-dharma* if they behave without consideration of the claims of the four pairs of attributes mentioned above. Men are bound in certain matters, just as women are; men have no right to do certain things. There are some important pledges between the husband and the wife.

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

SUNAYANA

Sunayana also known as Sunetra was the wife of Emperor Janaka and the mother of Sita

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SUNAYANA:

Sunayana¹³⁴: Wife of King Janaka (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Queen of Mithilathe consort of the Ocean of Wisdom, Emperor Janaka (*RKRV Part I p.463*)

WINNING SITA

The Anxiety of a Mother

The citizens of Mithila were amazed by the beauty, gait and looks of the brothers. The following day the bow of Lord Shiva was to be displayed. A big function was organised. Rama came

¹³⁴ Also spelt as Sunayanaa

to the assembly along with his brother. Ravana also had come. There were several other powerful kings and emperors in the hall. On seeing such a gathering, the wife of King Janaka, Sunetra, while watching from behind the curtains started thinking thus: “There are so many handsome and valiant young princes in this assembly. Will it not be better to select one of them, marry my daughter to him and quickly discharge the responsibility? Why does the emperor need to complicate the issue by announcing that the one who bends the bow of Lord Shiva would be the eligible groom? Several heroic personalities have attempted in the past and have failed. Will these youngsters assembled here succeed? How will their tender bodies bear the burden of the heavy bow?” She was very much worried about the issue and was discussing it with her companions. (*SSB 2002 p.53-54*)

Her fears came true when no one in the assembly could even lift the bow. Finally, Sage Viswamitra signed to Rama to lift the bow. Rama went up to the box in which the bow was kept and lifted the bow. The moment he did that a severe turbulence struck and shook everybody¹³⁵. (*SSB 2002 p.54*)

¹³⁵ See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Rama lifts the bow and Lakshmana balances the Shift:**

THE BROTHERS MEET

Emperor Janaka and his queen, Sunayana come to offer their Condolences:

When Emperor Dasaratha passed away, the Family Preceptor Vashishta had sent a message to Janaka, and as soon as he received it, he and his queen, Sunayana, had come to Ayodhya for condoling the bereaved. They learnt there about all developments. When Bharatha arrived, and decided to proceed to Chitrakoota along with the Mothers, the Royal Preceptor, and the leaders of the people, Janaka and his queen also accompanied them¹³⁶. They were waiting long for a favourable chance to meet Sita and Rama. (*RKRV Part I p.459-460*)

Queen Sunayana meets the three queens of Ayodhya:

Meanwhile, Sita's mother directed a maid to find out whether Kausalya and the other Queens were available for an audience, and she hurried towards their residences. It was the eleventh day of the bright half of the Jyeshtha month. The Queens met that day, in the forest—the four of them. Queen Kausalya paid honours to Queen Sunayana, and treating her with great respect, offered her a seat. It was the first time the Queens met Janaka's consort.

As soon as Queen Sunayana saw the Queens of Ayodhya, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, she felt that even the hardest diamond would melt before their loving conversation, their tender manners and their compassionate comradeship. She found that their bodies had become emaciated, and that their heads

¹³⁶ See Chapter, *Janaka* - **GLOOM OVER AYODHYA**

were bowed by sorrow. Their eyes were fixed on the ground below their feet. They were shedding streams of tears. The three Queens extolled the virtues and excellences of Sita and Rama, but could not stop the outflow of grief. (*RKR V Part I p.460*)

Sunayana offers her consolation:

Queen Sunayana could find no words to speak. At last, she said, “Mother! Of what avail is sorrow at this stage? Providence directed things along this crooked way. A diamond-edged cutter was used to sunder the cream on the milk! We have heard of the life-giving Amrith, the heavenly nectar; but, we have not seen it. But we are privileged to see now the equally potent poison. We have the visual experience only of crows, storks, vultures and owls; but the visual experience of the Celestial Hamsa which has Lake Manasarovar as its habitat is beyond us. Queens! The sport of destiny is full of contradictions and absurdities. They are as unpredictable as the wayward sport of children.” While trying thus to console the Queens, Sunayana herself could not restrain her tears. (*RKR V Part I p.460-461*)

Kausalya says all are the consequences of Karma:

At this, Kausalya said, “Sunayana! This has happened not through the 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 anubhokthavyam, krtham 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 should 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. (*RKRV Part I p.461*)

When she 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 the Consorts of such a noble person. You are the mothers of the very embodiment of Dharma, the very personification of love, Rama, whose heart embraces all beings in compassion. You have earned everlasting fame all over the world. What you said now is the ultimate truth. Happiness and misery are the two pots balanced on back and front by the rod to which they are tied and placed on the shoulder. Everyone has to carry both in equal measure. In case one has no misery, one cannot identify happiness, can he? *Na sukhaallabhyathe sukham*. From happiness, no happiness can ensue, isn’t it?”

Kausalya said amidst her sobs, in a grief-stricken voice, “If Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reside in the forest, many calamities will happen. I know that 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. (*RKRV Part I p.462*)

Sumitra speaks highly of Bharatha:

Sumitra spoke next. She said, “Mother! Through your blessings and good wishes, our sons and daughters-in-law are as pure as the Ganga itself. Bharatha had never so far asserted that he was the brother of Rama and claimed something from him. But now he is demanding that he should fulfil his wishes, in a satwic, highly righteous manner. Even the Goddess of speech, Saraswati, will hesitate to accept the assignment of describing the virtues, the humility, the large-heartedness, the fraternal attachment, the steadfastness of that faith, the courage and inflexibility of that courage, that mark out Bharatha as a great person. Can the ocean be measured by means of a snail shell? Bharatha is at all times, under all conditions, the effulgent Lamp of the Royal Line; only, people did not realise this until now. A gem has to be examined before its value can be determined. Gold has to be tested on the touchstone, before its genuineness and fineness can be known. Let us not talk despairingly about him at this time. Our reason is now affected by sorrow and deluded by filial attachment. Sumitra wiped her tears, as she concluded her wise words of consolation. *(RKR Part I p.462-463)*

Sunayana thinks highly of the queens of Ayodhya:

Hearing her words, the Queen of Mithila, Sunayana, thought within herself, “The queens of Ayodhya are really very great, one greater than the other, in nobility. They do not praise their own children, as mothers are prone to do. They extol the virtues of the sons of co-wives. This is quite against the nature of women, as usually found in the world. How they are describing and appreciating sons born to the other wives of their husband! These queens, who do not distinguish between their sons and the

sons of the other queen, are ideal housewives for the whole world. Ah! What large heartedness! What purity and perfection in the feeling of Love?”(*RKRV Part I p.463*)

Kausalya expresses her anxiety at Bharatha’s condition

Kausalya mustered some little courage, and addressed Sunayana thus: “Queen of Mithila! You are the consort of the Ocean of Wisdom, Emperor Janaka. Who dare convey counsel to you! We prattle away in our ignorance. Yet, I pray you might tell the Emperor Janaka at the earliest, when he is in a mood to listen, these words of mine, namely, ‘Persuade Rama and make him agree to have Bharatha for some time with him. Since Lakshmana has already spent some time in his presence, let Lakshmana be sent to Ayodhya to oversee the activities and administration there, and Satrugna be directed to assist Lakshmana in his duties at Ayodhya.’ If only Rama agrees, the rest of the problems would set themselves right quickly. 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 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.” Kausalya held fast in her hands the two hands of Queen Sunayana, and appealed to her to fulfil this mission, achieve this end, and confer Ananda on them all.(*RKRV Part I p.463-464*)

Sunayana explains to the queens that Rama has come on a mission:

Sunayana was touched by the affection that filled the heart of the Queen and her adherence to the path of righteousness. She said, “Mother! Humility and virtue are innate in you. They are natural expression 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. But can a lamp illumine the Sun? Rama has come into the forest to accomplish the task of the Gods. After finishing that assignment, he will surely return to Ayodhya and reign over the Empire. The might of his arms will ensure the attainment by sub-man, man and superman, of all their dearest wishes. These tidings were long ago revealed by the Sage Yajnavalkya. His words can never be falsified.”(*RKR V Part I p.464-465*)

Conversations between Sunayana and Sita:

With these words, Sunayana fell at the feet of Queen Kausalya. Taking leave of her, and preparing to leave the place, she proceeded towards the cottage where Sita was. When she entered and saw Sita, she was overwhelmed with grief. She could not control her tears. She ran towards Sita and caught her arms. Sita consoled her mother by various means. She counselled courage and faith. She prostrated at the feet of the mother. She stood before her mother in her anchorite robes, appearing like Parvathi the Consort of Siva, during the days when she did thapas. The mother could not contain within herself the question: “Child! Are you really my Sita, or are you Parvathi?” She looked at her long and leisurely from head to foot, and was filled with wonder and joy.

At last, she said, “Oh Sita! Through you, two families have been consecrated, the family of your parents and the family of your parents-in-law. Your fame will reach the farthest horizons. The flood of your renown will flow as a river in full flow between its two banks, the two royal lines of Mithila and Ayodhya. The Ganga has but three sacred spots on it—Haridwar, Prayag and the Sagarasangama, where it joins the Sea. May the stream of your pure fame enter and sanctify each one into a holy temple.”

Hearing these words of truth that flowed from the affection of her mother, Sita blushed and bent her head, as if she was overcome with a sense of shame. She said, “Mother! What words are these? What is the relevance? What comparison can be found between me and the holy Ganga?” Saying this, she went through the gesture of prostration directed towards the Ganga, with a prayer for pardon.

Sunayana embraced her daughter, and stroked her head in tender affection. “Sita! Your virtues are examples for all women who are mistresses of families to follow and emulate.” Sita intercepted her, and said, “Mother! If I spend much time with you, the service of Rama might be delayed. Therefore, please permit me to go into his presence.” The mother too realised that her desire lay in that direction and so, she felt that she should not be an obstacle in her way. She fondled and caressed Sita profusely and said at last, “Child! Go and serve Rama as you wish.” Sita fell at her feet and left the place, for serving Rama.

Sunayana pondered long over the reverential devotion that Sita had towards her husband and her other virtues. She never took

her eyes off of Sita until she disappeared from view. She stood at the same spot, watching her and admiring her. She was awakened from the reverie by her maid who came near her and said, “Mother! Sita has gone in. It is best we now return to our residence.” Suddenly, Sunayana turned back, wiping the stream of tears from her eyes. Her unwilling steps took her to the cottage allotted to her. (*RKRV Part I p.465-467*)

Emperor Janaka and the Queen take leave:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana stood under a spreading tree, until the last of them left. Meanwhile, Emperor Janaka also prepared to leave, at the head of his party, for Mithila. Rama and Lakshmana prostrated before their father-in-law and mother-in-law. Sita fell at the feet of her parents. The parents embraced her and stroked her head in fond tenderness¹³⁷. (*RKRV Part I p.477*)

¹³⁷ See Chapter, *Janaka* - **Janaka Comforts Sita and leaves for Mithila:**

16.2 DASARATHA'S MINISTER, SUMANTRA

SUMANTRA

In the Hindu Mythology, Sumantra was the Chief Minister and Chief Counsellor of Emperor Dasaratha.

Sumantra was sent by Vashishta to summon the Maharaja to the ceremony for the crowing of Rama and when Sumantra went to the Chamber of Kaikeyi, she intervened and asked Sumantra to Bring Rama to their presence. When on the arrival of Rama, she tells him about the previous promise made by the emperor and asks him to go to the exile.

Sumantra then drove Rama, Sita and Lakshmana out of Ayodhya in the Royal Chariot and on his return to Ayodhya; he places the parting message of Rama in front of Dasaratha.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SUMANTRA

Sumantra: Court priest and prime minister of Dasaratha. *(Glossary of the Vahinis)*

From the times of Dasaratha, Sumantra remained the chief minister of the kingdom. He was very loyal to Dasaratha and implicitly obeyed him. *(SSB 2002 p.86)*

Sumantra¹³⁸ ... was sacred-hearted and highly virtuous. (*SSS Vol.35 p.110*)

Sumantra, the Prime Minister of Dasaratha (*RKRV Part I p.29*)

SUMANTRA’S MARRIAGE:

Sumantra.... 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 Kausalya¹³⁹. 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 said, “Minister! I have resolved to give her in marriage to your master himself. Please inform the king of my offer.” (*RKRV Part I p.29-30*)

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

¹³⁸ Also spelt as Sumanthra

¹³⁹ See Chapter, *Kausalya - Story of Kausalya*

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! (*RKRV Part I p. 31*)

PUTHRAKAMESHTI YAGA

One day, Sumantra approached Dasaratha and said, “Oh king! I have a plan that would solve your problems and give happiness to you and the people at large. The country will attain plenty and prosperity if you perform *Aswamedha yajna*. There is another sacred ritual called *Puthrakameshti yajna*¹⁴⁰, by performing which you are sure to beget children.” Dasaratha was happy with the advice. After seeking the approval of Sage Vashishta, he commanded Sumantra to make necessary arrangements for the performance of the *yajnas*. Sumantra requested Dasaratha¹⁴¹ to invite Sage Rshyasrnga as the chief priest to preside over the *yajnas* as he was well-versed with these types of rituals. (*SSS Vol.35 p.110*)

¹⁴⁰ See *Endnotes* No.1- *Puthrakameshti yajna*

¹⁴¹ Emperor's Prime Minister Sumantra recalled to him the advice which the Sage Sanatkumara had given 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 Rishyasringa and perform the *yaga* with Rshyasrnga as Brahma at the sacrifice." (*SSS Vol.23 p.39*)

THE GURU AND THE PUPILS

Dasaratha decides to send the children with Sumantra to learn Para Vidya:

When they (*Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna*) were in their eleventh or twelfth year, one day, Dasaratha called to his presence the minister Sumantra, who was the repository of virtue, and commissioned him to arrange for teaching the princes the spiritual Science of Liberation (the *Para Vidya*¹⁴²). He said that however proficient a person may be in secular sciences (*Apara Vidya*), *ParaVidya* alone can give him the strength to carry out his Dharma (Rightful duties). The highest moral culture must be imparted to them at this tender age itself.

Success or failure in later life was built upon the impressions and experiences gained in the early stages of life. The early years are the foundations for the mansion of later years. Therefore he said, “Take the princes around the kingdom and let them learn not only the condition of the people but also the holiness of sacred places. Describe to them the sanctity of holy places, the history of the temples and of the saints and sages who have consecrated them, and let them drink deep the springs of divinity that are hallowing those spots. I feel it will be good if they do so. As they grow, they will be prone to sensual desires and urges. Else they fall a prey to such tendencies, it is best to implant in them reverence and awe, and devotion to the Divine, that is imminent in the Universe. That is the only means to save their humanness

¹⁴² Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama As Student – Guru And Pupils - Dasaratha sends the Princes to learn Para Vidya*

from demeaning itself into animosity. And for rulers of kingdoms, it is essential. Consult the Guru and the preceptors and arrange the tour without delay.”

Elated at the prospect of the princes getting this great opportunity Sumantra had all preparations made to his satisfaction. He got ready himself to accompany them. (*RKRV Part I p. 65-66*)

Sumantra travels the length and breadth of the country with the Princes:

Days, weeks, even months rolled by! They went to every temple and sacred spot. They imbibed the holiness of each place. They worshipped at each shrine with faith and devotion, they learnt after deep enquiry the history of each place and the antecedents of the shrines. They ignored every other thought or activity during all that long period.

Sumantra was describing to them the sanctity of each place so graphically and intimately that their hearts were thrilled. The Princes plied him with questions demanding further and deeper elaboration of his narrations. Sumantra was overjoyed at the insatiable yearning of the boys, and he gave even more information and inspiration.

Thus they journeyed from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from the eastern sea to the western, spending more than three months. They had their eyes open to the sufferings of the people and the discomforts of the pilgrims in every region of the empire, and whenever they observed these, they pleaded with Sumantra, the Minister, to set things right and to provide the needed amenities.

They were responsible for the repair and improvement of many temples, the provision of drinking water wells, the planting of avenue trees, and the opening of centres for the distribution of water to thirsty wayfarers, the building of caravanserais, and the establishment of health centres. Whenever Rama expressed a desire that such amenities be provided, Sumantra never hesitated to agree. He saw to it that they were immediately provided to his satisfaction. The Princes derived great comfort that the empire had such a loyal and efficient Minister as Sumantra. They said to each other that when they had such ministers, welfare and progress were assured. (*RKRV Part I p. 31*)

The Princes return to Ayodhya:

Meanwhile, the news gatherers brought good tidings. They said that the Princes were nearing Ayodhya; they must be reaching the City within two days! Arrangements were therefore made at the main Gateway of the City to welcome into the Imperial Capital the four Princes, who had successfully gone through their long and arduous pilgrimage and earned meritorious renown by their devotion and compassion during their triumphal tour. Rosewater was sprinkled on the roads to make them dust-free. Arches and festoons were put up. On both sides of the road, women stood with plates on which they had placed lamps, with bright flames, which they desired to wave before them as they passed along.

The Princes arrived at the Gate, as announced. Lamps were waved before them. They moved along the main highway, which was strewn with petals of fragrant flowers. Parties of musicians and minstrels singing welcome songs proceeded slowly in

advance. Brahmins recited hymns invoking the blessings of God upon the distinguished scions of the imperial family. Sumantra came alongside the Princes, who were shining with an ethereal glow on their faces. When they reached the palace gates, many rites were gone through to ward off the effects of the evil eye. They were then led into the inner apartments. The mothers whose eyes were longing to look upon them were awaiting them there. The boys ran towards them and fell at their feet. They were raised up and held fast in close embrace for five or six minutes, during which they lost themselves in the thrill of joy, which enveloped both mother and son in the bliss of Mergence with the Divine! The tears that rolled from the eyes of the mothers out of the surgence of the love bathed the heads of the boys. They took hold of their sari ends and wiped the heads dry with them. They stroked the hair, they fondled the head, and they seated them on their laps, and fed them fondly with sweet rice and curd-mixed rice.

Ah! The excitement and thrill of the mothers were indescribable. The pang of separation which they had suffered for three long months could be assuaged a little, only by having the children in their care and custody, day and night, for a few days. They wanted them to relate the story of their pilgrimage, and the boys narrated in sweet, simple, sincere style the sacredness of each holy place, as explained to them by Sumantra. The Queens listened to these narratives with such ardour and faith that they too seemed to experience the exhilaration each shrine provides for the earnest pilgrims.

Dasaratha celebrated the return of the young Princes from their holy journey by offering oblations to the Gods, and arranging a magnificent banquet for all Brahmins who had successfully completed the pilgrimage to Kasi and Prayaga. He gave the latter monetary gifts too. Thus, since the day when the princes were born, it was one continuous round of festival and feast in the capital city and in the kingdom. The city of Ayodhya shone with uninterrupted rejoicing. Feasting and festive entertainment knit the populace into a family, bound by love and gratitude. Every month, the days on which the children were born (the ninth, tenth and eleventh days of the bright half) were filled with gorgeous ceremony, to mark the happy event.

Even when the boys were away on pilgrimage, these days were celebrated as grandly as if they were in the City; except for functions where their physical presence was needed, all else—the feasts, the gifts, the games, the dance—were all gone through with enthusiasm. (*RKRV Part I p.67-71*)

Transformation in the Princes:

The parents noticed a change in the boys as a result of the pilgrimage. The transformation was very surprising and they hoped that the strange ways of life they had assumed might weaken with the passage of days. They watched their behaviour and attitudes with great attention. But they continued, with no sign of diminution¹⁴³. (*RKRV Part I p.67-71*)

¹⁴³ Under Section, *Rama* See Chapter, *Rama As Student – Guru And Pupils - Vashishta teaches Rama Yogavashishta:*

He called Sumantra so that he might confer with him. He asked him whether anything had happened during the pilgrimage to put the boys out of gear or whether he had brought them back too soon when they were themselves eager to visit a few more places of interest to them.

Dasaratha tries to know the cause from Sumantra:

Dasaratha plied him with so many questions that Sumantra was filled with surprise and apprehension. His lips quivered as he replied: “Nothing happened during the journey to displease the Princes, no difficulty was encountered. Every wish of theirs was honoured and carried through. I gave away in charity as much as they wanted. I got built, wherever they suggested, houses for pilgrims; there was no hesitation or delay. They never told me about any happening which they did not like. Nor did I notice any such. The pilgrimage was one long journey of joy and adoration.”

Dasaratha knew his Minister well. He said at last, “Sumantra! You are a good man. I know full well that you are incapable of neglect or error. But for some inexplicable reason, I find the boys have undergone a transformation after the pilgrimage. They have developed a distaste for food and fun.

“However much the people around persuaded him, Rama did not answer, nor did he indicate the reason for his strange behaviour. He was immersed in his own awareness of the falsity of things. I am surprised at this. The queens, too, have taken this so much to heart that they are being consumed by anxiety.” When Dasaratha

spoke thus to Sumantra, the loyal Minister replied, “If permitted, I shall meet the children and try to diagnose the ailment.”

Sumantra tries to find out the reason for the change:

Dasaratha said, “Quite right! Proceed at once. Once we find the cause, the remedy isn’t difficult, the cure isn’t far.” Sumantra hurried to the children’s apartment, heavy with a load of anxiety in his heart. He found the doors bolted from inside, the guards standing outside them. When Sumantra tapped, Lakshmana opened the door and let him in. He closed the door behind him and conversed with the boys for long on various matters, in order to draw out from them the reason for their malady. But he could not delve into the mystery. He noticed the difference between the confiding spirit of camaraderie which he enjoyed during the months of pilgrimage, and the distance that had grown in recent months.

He pleaded with Rama with tears in his eyes, for revealing to him the reasons for his melancholy. Rama smiled and said, “Sumantra! What reason can be given for something which is my very nature? I have no wants. I have no desire.

You need have no anxiety on that score.” Unable to do anything else, Sumantra came to where Dasaratha was and sat beside him. “I feel it will be good to invite the Guru¹⁴⁴ tomorrow and consider which measures are proper,” he said and departed from

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter, *Vashishta*- All are perturbed at the change in the boys and Vashishta’s enquiry:

the presence, after taking the King's permission to leave. (*RKRV Part I p.73-74*)

PREPARATION FOR THE CORONATION

Sumantra is aghast at the Sight of Dasaratha:

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. Convey 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 the 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. He lost his moorings. He went near the King, and said, "King! This morning must find you like the sea at moonrise, heaving with ecstasy. I cannot understand why you are lying prostrate on the ground. The auspicious hour is 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 outbursts 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.”

Kaikeyi sends Sumantra to bring Rama:

When Sumantra stood hopeless, sunk in sorrow, Kaikeyi intervened and said, “Oh best of ministers! The 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. At the entrance of that palace, he saw on both sides long lines of attendants and maids, carrying huge plates containing gifts of silk, brocade, jewels and gems, garlands and bouquets, scents and sweets. It was a delight of the eye, but Sumantra did not stop to cast a look at them. When he hurried into the palace, he felt something precious lacking in all this festivity. He was overwhelmed and nonplussed. The joy that he had felt earlier had turned into sorrow.

Riding in his chariot towards Rama's Palace he had noticed how the hundreds of thousands of loyal subjects who filled the streets talked among themselves that he was on his way to bring Rama into the Coronation Hall, for the ceremony. He saw their faces blooming in joyous expectation. They scarce winked their eyes, lest they miss some incident or facet of joy. At last, Sumantra stepped without any question asked, into all sections of that seven storied mansion. As a fish dives noiselessly through the depths of a flooded river, Sumantra glided through the corridors and halls of that Palace! (*RKRV Part I p.263-265*)

Sumantra tries to interpret the words of Rama:

Within the Palace, the companions of Rama, elated and happy, ready with their bright countenances and splendid robes were waiting to accompany him to the Festival Hall. Sumantra went into the apartments that lay still deeper inside the Palace. There he saw Rama, seated on a golden cot, scattering Divine Light around him, and Sita standing by his side, gently fanning him. He shone like the Moon with the star, Chitra.

Sumantra was in a hurry. He could not brook delay. He said, "Rama! Mother Kaikeyi and your Father have both asked me to bring you quickly to the Palace of that Queen. They have sent me on that mission here. I have hurried hither for that same purpose." As soon as he heard those words, Rama turned towards Sita and said, "Sita! This is a sign of some obstacle¹⁴⁵, and not of anything else. I am not unaware of this, but I kept silent and said,

¹⁴⁵ 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:*

‘Yes’ for everything, so that Father might be happy. Father’s orders are to be honoured, lest he be pained.” While Rama was talking in this strain, the heart of Sumantra was pounding fast inside him. He was trying to interpret Rama’s words and the picture of Dasaratha lying wailing on the floor. He was now convinced that the obstacle Rama spoke of was genuine. (*RKRV Part I p.267-268*)

Sumantra asks the populace to allow the chariot to pass:

Rama moved out, accompanied by Sumantra. When they ascended the chariot waiting on the road in front of the Palace, people raised shouts of “*Jai, Jai Ramachandra Prabhu Ki Jai.*” The acclamation shook the skies¹⁴⁶.

Sumantra announced to the populace, “Now the chariot is not taking Rama to the Coronation Hall. It is taking him to where the Emperor¹⁴⁷ is. So, allow the chariot to go as fast as it should. Rama will return in a few moments, so wait here.” Sumantra explained the reason for the hurry, and drove in hot haste. (*RKRV Part I p.269*)

Sumantra is shocked at the transformation of Rama after his meeting with his father:

However, Sumantra guessed that some transformation had happened inside the palace. The guess soon grew into certainty.

¹⁴⁶ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - The Chariot takes Rama to the Palace of Kaikeyi*

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi - Rama tries to find out the cause of Dasaratha’s grief – not hesitating to bow to the order of his father*

When his eyes fell on Lakshmana, his heart suffered a shock. To add to his fears, Rama brushed aside the White Umbrella that was held over him by the attendant.

He ordered that the ceremonial whisks be not used for him. He declared that he did not deserve any more the silver chariot. On hearing this, Sumantra lost strength of body and will. He was confirmed in his worst fears. (*RKRV Part I p.279*)

ENTERING INTO EXILE

Rama asks Sumantra to go to his Father:

Rama told them (*Citizens of Ayodhya who had gathered at the Palace Gates*) that they should not grieve over the turn of events, that he would return to Ayodhya after the fourteen years of stay in the forest, and that the order of exile was only for their good, for his own good and for the good of the whole world.

Rama called Minister Sumantra near, and said, “Oh Sumantra! Proceed now to Father. Advise him and quieten him. That is the task on which you have to busy yourself.” Sumantra was overcome with grief. He stood silent, with tears streaming down his cheeks. He could not restrain his sorrow. He sobbed and wept aloud. Other Ministers who were standing around him, as well as the Aides in attendance, attempted to bring him round into a state of calmness and courage. But they were too sad to stand there. So, they went into the palace, in accordance with the directive given by Rama. The entire city was sunk deep in a vast sea of sorrow.

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.

Sumantra tries to console Dasaratha:

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 V Part I p.328-331*)

INTO THE FOREST

Dasaratha asks Sumantra to take the chariot:

“Sumantra!” Dasaratha said, “My Ramachandra is an unshakeable hero; he will not turn back¹⁴⁸. Do not delay, for if even a little time is spent in getting the chariot ready, you may miss his trail. Go, go!”

The Emperor hurried him out, with the words, “Go into the forest along with them; for, if Sita is frightened at the sight of the jungle 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! “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. (*RKR V Part I p.332-333*)

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - Dasaratha asks Sumantra to take the chariot and drop Rama in the forest:*

Sumantra seats Sita, Rama and Lakshmana in the chariot and drives off to the forest:

Bowing his head in acceptance of the Emperor's order, Sumantra 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. On both sides of the Royal Road, masses of citizens were weeping and wailing, and Sumantra tried to exhort them to control their emotions, and be calm. They crossed the City limits and moved a little distance further. The populace from the Capital ran behind the chariot, all in one panic-stricken mass, raising clouds of dust that reached the high heavens. There was no sign of road or ground. It was one vast plain of distraught humanity. Old men, women, men young and strong, Brahmins, all with one voice, screamed amidst sobs, "Rama! Rama! Take us with you! Don't leave us behind!" The streets of Ayodhya were empty. The city was as silent as a city in sleep. Darkness fell, like a heavy weight, on every roof.

Some men and women who could not travel stood like stumps, helpless on the road. Many bolted doors and spent the days suffering utmost anguish; avoiding food and drink, rolling on the floor, in whatever place they were when Rama left. Some awaited the return of Rama at nightfall, hoping that he might be induced by compassion to come back to his beloved people.
(RKRV Part I p.333-334)

Dasaratha follows them in another chariot:

Meanwhile, Dasaratha had himself seated in a chariot! He shouted aloud, “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. 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 asks Sumantra to stop the chariot carrying Rama:

Dasaratha saw the chariot of Rama speeding along the sand dunes outside the City, and he¹⁴⁹ cried out, “Sumantra! Sumantra! Rein in. Stop,” and himself commanded his charioteer to speed up. Sumantra cast his glance back and espied the chariot following his. He told Rama, “Ramachandra! Father Dasaratha is behind us. I feel it is best to stop for a while and find out what his orders are.”

Rama too saw the huge mass of citizens, and the chariot carrying his father, fast hastening behind him. He knew that if he stopped now, they would surround him and break into uncontrollable

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **Dasaratha tries to follow and catch up with Rama’s chariot:**

grief, that those who sat exhausted on the sides of the road would rise and race, impelled by anew hope, and so, it would be giving them hopes without any benefit. It will also injure the realisation of his promise. If the subjects witness the wailing of Dasaratha, it will bring him down in their estimation. Weighing all these considerations in his mind he told Sumantra, who was his charioteer, that there was no need to stop the vehicle. He said, it was best that he drove it even faster. . (*RKRV Part I p.335*)

Sumantra wants to know from Rama, the reasons for not obeying Dasaratha’s command:

At this, Sumantra prayed, with folded palms, “Rama! I have been ordered to be with you for four days only. After that period, I have to return to Ayodhya, haven’t I? On seeing me, he will certainly reprimand me for not stopping the chariot, as commanded by him. What shall I tell him in reply? Kindly keep me with you, throughout all the years of exile in the forest. I shall deem my life well and happily lived if I am allowed to be in the forest with you. If you agree, I shall not stop. I shall drive as fast as you wish. Kindly communicate your order on this.”

Rama says to Sumantra to listen to the orders of the Emperor and not to the pleas of an individual, a father:

Rama thought about the problem presented by Sumantra and its implications. He¹⁵⁰ said, “Sumantra! He, who ordered you to get

¹⁵⁰ Rama is *Dharmaswarupam* (Embodiment of Virtue); Krishna is *Premaswarupam* (Embodiment of Love). Rama was ever aware of the obligations of *Dharma* When Dasaratha, running after His chariot in mortal anguish, cried out, "Stop, stop" and called on Sumantra to stop, Rama told him not to. He said, "If he chides you, tell him you did not

into the chariot and take us in it, right into the forest, as far as it could negotiate, was your Master, the Emperor. He, who now follows this chariot, weeping and pleading with you to stop, is Dasaratha. You have to listen to and obey the command of the Emperor, not the orders of Dasaratha. You are the Minister of the country, of its Ruler; not, of an individual named Dasaratha. As individuals, between us, there is the body of affection that ties the son to his father. But as Emperor, he has imperial authority over you and me, equally. Your loyalty and my loyalty towards him are the same. You have to carry out your Duty. When Dasaratha chastises you for not giving ear to the request he is now making, tell him that you did not hear him. It is not wrong to say so.¹⁵¹ And Rama asked him to drive faster, without caring

hear him." Sumantra was in a fix. How could He say something not true? But, Rama explained, "This order to stop the chariot comes from a grief-stricken father, whereas the order to take Me to the forest came from the King, whose minister you are. You should not hear the ravings of a man who has lost his reason through sorrow; you must listen only to the commands of the King." (*SSS Vol.3 p.4*) *In such matters of principle and discipline, both Rama and Lakshmana were very strict. They are the ideals to be emulated when it comes to attaining victory and obeying one's parents' commands.*(*SSB 2002 p.64*)

¹⁵¹ Sumantra turned to Ramachandra and asked the question, "It would have been very good if I, too, had to stay with you for years together in the forest. But I will have to go back to the city and then Dasaratha will ask me, 'Why did you not stop the chariot when I asked you to stop the chariot?' What kind of answer shall I give to Dasaratha?" Ramachandra said, "Oh, say that you could not hear his words." Is that not an untruth? No, there is no untruth in these words. There are many reasons for this. Ramachandra has to go to the forest and the quicker he goes the better. If He delays going to the forest, He would be causing great sorrow and pain to His parents. There is another reason for this. In the battle between the *devas* and the *rakshasas*, Dasaratha gave a boon to Kaikeyi and he wanted her to have that boon granted. He gave that boon to Kaikeyi in his capacity as a king. In order to satisfy and fulfil the boon

to stop the chariot. Sumantra drank in with avidity the nectar of moral analysis that Rama had vouchsafed to convince him.
(RKRV Part I p.336-337)

Sumantra makes misleading tracks on the orders of Rama to deter the citizens of Ayodhya from following them:

The people who had followed him over long distances were so tired physically that, after the meal, they fell into deep undisturbed sleep. Rama knew that, on waking, they will all insist on accompanying him. So, he woke Sumantra up and directed him to get the chariot ready without the least noise and drive the vehicle so that its track may not be recognised. Sumantra recognised that there was no other way. He drove so that the tracks were confusingly complex, and even gave faint indications that the chariot had turned towards Ayodhya itself! After skilfully laying these tracks, he drove forward in the direction of the forest.

The Agony of the citizen of Ayodhya:

The new day dawned! The citizens of Ayodhya rose and looked around. There were no signs of the Royal Chariot! Nor were Sita,

that he had given to Kaikeyi, in his capacity as a king, he had banished Ramachandra to the forest. But on the day, when Dasaratha was asking the chariot to stop, with the intention of having another look at Ramachandra, he did so in the capacity of a father. He is not uttering these orders in the capacity of a king. This order is something which is connected with the relationship that exists between a father and a son, which has nothing to do with a king. He told Sumantra, “You have obeyed the orders of your king. You did not obey the orders given by my father.” We should observe the important distinction which Rama is making between king and father.*(SSB 1977 p.31-32)*

Rama, or Lakshmana in evidence. They were thrust into deep agony. They aroused the sleeping. They sought to trace the wheel marks on the ground. They ran wildly in all directions, seeking to spot the vehicle.

Many consoled themselves, saying that Rama would certainly return to the Palace, for he had seen their plight and his heart was full of compassion towards the broken-hearted. Rama would return before the lapse of two or three days, they said. The women entered on various vows and types of worship in order to propitiate the gods to persuade Rama to return to his subjects. People lived thereafter like Chakravaka birds which have no lotuses to live on, since the Sun is absent and lotuses would not bloom without its warmth¹⁵².

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reach the river Ganga

While the people were suffering thus, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reached the outskirts of the town of Stringivera, with Minister Sumantra. Rama noticed the river Ganga, and immediately directed Sumantra to stop the Chariot. He alighted and prostrated on the bare ground before the Stream of Holiness. Sita and Lakshmana as well as Sumantra got down and did likewise. (*RKRV Part I p339-340*)

¹⁵² Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - The Agony of the citizens of Ayodhya*:

Sumantra is saddened at the sight of Rama’s matted hair and the thought of leaving them:

Rama directed Lakshmana to bring a quantity of the milky juice of the ficus tree. Lakshmana moved off without murmur into the forest nearby, and without much delay, he brought with him a leaf bowl full of the juice. Rama applied the juice to the locks of hair on his head, and they turned into a thick matted lump, the like of which is generally worn by hermits. Looking on at this act, Sumantra could not restrain his sobs. He was shocked that the head which had to wear the jewelled crown was now carrying the burden of matted hair. He lamented that his eyes were destined ever to see this tragic sight.

RAMA BIDS SUMANTRA FAREWELL

Sumantra says he has orders to take them till banks of a holy river and then return- wants further order from Rama:

Sumantra’s heart was scorched by agony. “I cannot be with you any longer in the forest. It has become impossible. I have accomplished the orders of the Emperor. Fate is cutting short my stay in your presence¹⁵³. He ordered me to take you in the chariot until we arrived on the banks of any holy river, and then leave you there and return. I have the duty to inform you of this fact. Now, it is your turn to tell me what I have to do,” said Sumantra,

¹⁵³ 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 to return to the Capital. So, he turned back with tearful eyes. (*SSS Vol.10 p.15*)

standing before Rama, with head bent in sorrow, in humility, tears flowing freely from his eyes.(*RKRV Part I p.350*)

Rama says that both of them should carry out the Emperor's orders:

“Do not grieve,” Rama said, “Accomplishing the orders of the Emperor is your duty, and mine too. I am very happy that you carried out the orders he gave you. Thenceforward, I shall carry out the order that he has given me. I shall follow his directions with the greatest reverence, and in scrupulous detail. Do not delay; return to Ayodhya. My parents will be awaiting your arrival with unbounded anxiety. They are longing to hear from you the description of your journey so far. So, take the chariot back and proceed fast,” he urged.

Rama consoles Sumantra:

Sumantra pictured to himself the place he had to go back to. He pleaded pathetically, “Oh Ramachandra! Let not Ayodhya become an orphan city. The Emperor will find it difficult to hold himself together in your absence. Bharatha will find it impossible to reign.” Sumantra fell at the feet of Rama, unable to bear the weight of his sorrow. Rama lifted him up, and holding him by the shoulder, he consoled him. “Sumantra! No principle of righteousness is higher than Truth. The Vedas, the Puranas, the Epics, all assert and proclaim this, as you know. Now, I have been assigned the task of following this supreme principle of Righteousness! What great good fortune is this! If I miss this chance and lose this fortune, I and my dynasty will earn eternal infamy in all the three worlds. Infamy will burn the righteous more excruciatingly than a million deaths and cremations. Go,

fall at the feet of my father and make clear to him my determination and my joy. You must be vigilant to see that my father is not worried about me, Sita and Lakshmana.”

Rama describes the virtues of Lakshmana to Sumantra:

Guha and his followers heard these words of Rama, and were visibly affected by them. Without being aware of it, they started shedding tears. Lakshmana could not bear the anguish. He uttered a few words of anger and bitterness against those who had caused this tragedy, but Rama realised his temper and stopped him forthwith. Then, he turned to Minister Sumantra and said, “Sumantra! Lakshmana is a stripling; do not attach importance to his words¹⁵⁴. By nature, Lakshmana is endowed with very good qualities.” Then, Rama began to describe the virtues of his brother.

Sumantra passes on the Emperor’s message that Sita should return from the forest:

Sumantra raised his head and pleaded with Rama about Sita. “Lord! Janaki is tender and soft-natured. She cannot brave the travails of forest life. It is necessary to advise her to return to the city, and convince her that it is the proper thing to do. She is the life breath of Ayodhya. She is the Goddess of Prosperity for the Empire. If she cannot come to Ayodhya, the inhabitants of that City will suffer like fish in a dry tank. Let her return, and reside, as she desires, with her mother-in-law, or her parents. The Emperor has commanded me, again and again, to tell you this in these very words. When you return to Ayodhya at the end of the

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter, *Lakshmana - Conversation with Guha*:

fourteen years, Janaki could be brought from her father's palace." While Sumantra was importuning in this manner, Rama signed to Sita, as if to draw her attention to his yearning and prayer.

Sita replies that the Shadow has no separate existence:

When Sumantra had concluded, Rama addressed Sita, "Sita! Did you listen to the message of father? Go home and let my parents forget at least a part of the agony they feel at my separation. In their old age, they are too weak to put up with this terrible situation. So, it is very necessary that you go back with the minister to Ayodhya." Rama used various other arguments to persuade her to accept the request of father.

Sita replied, "Lord! You are omniscient. You know the ideal moral conduct prescribed for each section of mankind. I have no need to remind you. Please listen for a while to my prayer. The shadow has to follow the substance. Can it be away from it? Solar rays cannot exist separate from the Sun. Moonlight cannot exist separate from the moon. In like manner, this Sita shadow cannot leave and exist after leaving Ramachandra, the Rama-Moon."

Then, she turned to Sumantra and said, "Sumantra! You are to me as venerable as my father and father-in-law. You are my well-wisher. Please consider this: I do not seek any other refuge except the Lotus Feet of my Lord. The world knows that the daughter-in-law who is brought into the family cannot be any nearer than the son born in the family. That they will forget their agony at the separation of the son if the daughter-in-law returns,

is a statement that has no meaning. As regards the wealth and comfort of my father's palace, I have enjoyed them enough in my childhood days. Now, they appear to me as dry and as cheap as grass, without my Lord being with me. I have no other path, except the path which he treads. Therefore, without misunderstanding me, please agree to my words. Drop this attempt to take me back to Ayodhya. Forget it. Convey my prostrations to my parents-in-law and assure them that there is no cause for anxiety about us. Tell them that Sita is happy, many thousand times happier than when she was in Ayodhya or Mithila. I am with the Lord of my heart, and with the great hero, the best of warriors, his brother, Lakshmana. So, I am passing these days in the forest, happily, undisturbed by fear, anxiety or agitation of mind. Tell them I am not tired in the least by the journey. Tell them I am very happy, that I consider this exile a great piece of good fortune."

Sumantra overwhelmed with admiration over such supreme Qualities:

Hearing these words, Sumantra was so overwhelmed with admiration and grief that he could not look up at the face of Sita. He could not listen any more to such profoundly moving words. He could not himself find words to speak to her. He reflected on her virtues, on her pure feelings, and on her steadfastness. He deplored the fate that deprived Ayodhya of the presence and inspiration of a lady of such supreme character.

Sumantra wishes to stay back with them:

He spoke to Rama: "Rama! In that case, accept one prayer. Keep me too with you in the forest and allow me to serve you for the

fourteen years here itself.” Rama replied: “Sumantra! You are well-versed in law and the rules of morality. You are the Minister of Emperor Dasaratha, not a minister under me. It was he who has commanded you to come back. How can I permit you to stay? Even otherwise, it is not desirable that you stay away from the Emperor at this particular juncture. You are as the right hand to the Emperor. You should not pay attention to your own ananda and try to keep away from him. Go; go to him, without further delay. If you go soon, you could give me and my parents a great deal of consolation and assurance.” Rama persuaded him to go, using various other argument and examples. Finding it impossible to resist, Sumantra wept aloud and prostrated before the three. His steps were heavy and hesitant when he turned back; both his mind and his body were unwilling.

Rama caught his hand, helped him to walk up to the chariot, and ascend to his seat thereon. Rama spoke sweet and soft to Sumantra, as well as to the horses of the chariot, in order to induce them to turn and proceed towards Ayodhya.

Sumantra leaves with a heavy heart:

Sumantra drove the chariot back to Ayodhya. The horses were reluctant to retrace their steps. They turned back towards the place where Rama was, longing to be with him and loath to move away. Despite prodding and persuading, they could scarce move on. They neighed pathetically in protest. They stopped off and on craning their necks to catch a glimpse of Rama.

Sumantra too was turning back in unbearable sorrow. He wiped the stream of tears that flowed down his cheeks. He kept his head hanging as if unwilling to show his face to men. When Guha saw the plight of Sumantra, he was so overpowered with agony that he leaned on a tree, sobbing, with his head pressed against its trunk. After sending the aged Minister back, Rama proceeded to the Ganga, with his wife and brother. (*RKR Part I p.350-356*)

GLOOM OVER AYODHYA

Sumantra's encounter with Guha:

Meanwhile, the Ruler of the Nishadas¹⁵⁵ who was returning to his kingdom after accompanying Rama for some distance into the forest, saw the Minister Sumantra sitting in his chariot on the bank of the Ganga, the horses having been tied by their reins to a shady tree. Guha found Sumantra weeping and wailing inconsolably, alone. Guha himself could not control any longer the anguish he had restrained so long. He cried out, "Rama," and ran towards Sumantra. He embraced the old man and both sobbed aloud in agony, unable to put their grief into words. They stood under the tree together, but fell on the ground as if they were themselves trees felled by an axe. They lamented the fate of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana and poured abuse on Kaikeyi, the cause of the calamities.

The horses stopped grazing, and desisted from drinking water. Tears rolled from their eyes. Whenever they heard Sumantra and Guha utter the names of Sita or Rama or Lakshmana, they raised

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter, *Guha*

their heads aloft, and peered into the distance, anxious to catch a glimpse of those whom they adored and loved with as much zeal as the two men in the agony of separation. Sumantra noted the grief which was tormenting the animals and his anguish became even greater.

Some hours must have passed by in this heartrending way. At last, Guha managed to recover a little. He mustered some courage, as needs someone must. He addressed Sumantra thus: “Ah, Minister! You are profoundly intelligent, steadfast in morality and a person who has identified the Reality behind all this passing show. Fate plays strange tricks, and so, one has to learn to put up with them. Rise! Return to Ayodhya! Convey the news to Kausalya and Sumitra, who are yearning to see you and to listen to your account.” He raised Sumantra forcibly from where he had fallen. He seated him in the chariot. He brought the horses and yoked them to the central pole.

Sumantra realised that what Guha was insisting on was the correct step. Moved by a spurt of blind courage, the old man signed to the horses to move forward. His body lost strength as a result of the anguish of separation from Rama. Therefore, however much he tried he could not drive the chariot as of old. He rolled down inside the chariot and rose in his seat many times in a few minutes. And the horses? They too would not move. They were set on turning back and straining their necks to see the road behind.

Sumantra curses his fate:

Sumantra cursed himself and his fate. “Fie on me,” he said. “May this horrid life of mine be ended. This body has to be burnt into ash someday. Far better it were if, instead of dying through some disease or some worldly calamity, it died as a result of unbearable agony at separation from Rama. That would have made my life worthwhile. That would have made my fame everlasting; earning that fame is enough compensation for all the ills of life.” “No, Sumantra,” he said to himself. “Had you the good luck, you would have stuck to Rama. When bad luck haunts you, what else can you do than come away and be alive? Of what use is it now to pine and blame yourself?” Sumantra chided himself most mercilessly, in this strain.

He started again the dialogue with himself. “With what face am I to present myself in Ayodhya? When the citizens ask me where Rama is, what can I answer? When they ask me, ‘how could you come away leaving Rama in the jungle.’ what can I tell them? Will I not be overcome by shame and sorrow? Oh, my heart has become stone. Else, why has it not split into fragments at all that I have gone through?” Sumantra was disgusted at his own meanness. He wrung his hands in despair. He decided that he could not enter the City during the hours of sunlight, when people would be moving about. It would be less humiliating, he felt, to enter the City at night, after everyone had gone to bed and was fast asleep.

But soon, his inner voice told him, “What! Can the people of Ayodhya ever sleep? No, no. They cannot. It is just my foolishness and ignorance that makes me imagine they do. They

would be awake, awaiting news of the return of Rama or, at least, any news about him. I cannot escape the humiliation and the shame, whether I enter the city at night or during day. Well! For me, who did not deserve the grace of Rama, this ill fate is the proper mead. It is best I go through it and bear the burden of that blame.” Thus, Sumantra wended his way slowly and haltingly, spending time in framing questions to himself and presenting answers to them.

Ayodhya’s reaction on his return:

At last, he reached the bank of the Thamasa River. So, he decided to spend a few hours there, allowing the horses to graze a bit and himself preparing for the entry into the City after nightfall, when the people would not be about the streets, but would be safe in bed. Finally, the chariot rolled into the gate of the City and began to move through thoroughfares.

Sumantra took extra care to ensure silence from wheel and hoof. The chariot moved at the pace of a snail. But who could silence the agony of the horses? They recognised the streets through which they had taken Rama. They groaned aloud at their present fate, when their dear Rama was far, far away.

The populace of the City heard this pathetic neigh. Their ears were set to hear this piteous cry. They told each other that Sumantra had returned with an empty chariot. They ran into the streets and stood pathetically on both sides to witness the sad spectacle.

Sumantra bent his head low when he saw the crowds. Seeing him in this pitiable posture, they guessed that Rama had not returned, and swooned on the spot, falling wherever they stood. Many wept aloud. The residents of the palaces of the Queens, when they heard the neighs of the grief-stricken steeds, sent maids in haste to enquire why. They hurried in groups towards Sumantra and showered questions on him. He sat dejected and crestfallen, like a mute person, unable to find words to tell them the answers. He sat unmoved like a broken pillar, as if he was deaf and could not hear what they were so earnestly asking him. From his behaviour, the maids inferred that Rama had rejected all importunities to return. They lamented, “Oh Minister! Have you left Sita in the terror-striking forest, and come back yourself, alone?” and broke into a sudden sharp wail.

SUMANTRA’S DESCRIPTION OF HIS JOURNEY WITH RAMA

Sumantra goes to Kausalya’s chamber and see the Emperor there:

One maid was more courageous than the rest. She told Sumantra that Kausalya had ordered that he should come straight to the palace where she was. There Sumantra found the Emperor prostrate on the floor, exhausted without sleep or food, in dishevelled clothes. Sumantra mastered the surge of sorrow within him, and uttering the words “Jai! Jai,” which are traditionally to be pronounced first in the imperial presence, he stood by, shaking head to foot. Recognising that voice, Dasaratha

sat up quickly, and plaintively asked him, “Sumantra! Where is my Rama?”

Dasaratha’s grief:

Sumantra clasped the Emperor in his arms. The Emperor clung to him as a drowning man clings to a blade of grass. Seeing both of them weeping on account of immeasurable sorrow, Kausalya was submerged in grief. She could scarce breathe. She gasped and was pitifully suffocating with agony. The maids noticed this and themselves loudly lamenting the misfortune that had overtaken all, they struggled to console the queen and restore her.

Meanwhile, 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 Rama. Tell me all about them. How is Lakshmana? Alas, tender Sita must indeed be very much tired. Where are they now? Tell me.” Noting that Sumantra was not eager to reply, he shook him by the shoulders and pleaded most piteously. Sumantra was too full of shame to look the Emperor in the face. He bent his looks towards the floor, and with eyes streaming with tears, he scarce could speak. Dasaratha continued his sobs. He said, “Oh Rama! My breath is still lingering on in this frame, even though a son like you left me. The world has no sinner equal to me in heinousness. Sumantra! Where exactly are my Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, at present? Take me without delay to the place where they are. Do me this good turn. Fulfil this desire of mine. Without seeing them, I cannot live a second longer.” And like a person infatuated and desperate, he shouted

in pain, “Rama! Oh Rama! Let me see you at least once. Won’t you give me the chance to see you?”

Sumantra instils courage in the Emperor:

The maids standing outside the hall where he was lying could not sleep or take food, since they were sunk in sorrow at the Emperor’s plight. Sumantra replied, “Imperial Monarch! Rajadhiraja! You are extremely wise. You are made in heroic mould. Your abilities are profound. Your lineage is divine. You have always served ascetics and saints. You know that as night follows day and day follows night, wealth and want, happiness and misery, nearness and separation come one after the other, with a certain inevitability. Only fools are carried off their feet in joy when happiness comes and are dispirited, down hearted when misery comes. Learned men like you should not be affected by either. They should be full of equanimity, whatever might happen. I have no credentials to advise you to face this situation courageously for you know the need for courage very much more. Oh Benefactor of the World! Heed my prayers. Give up this grief. I shall describe the details of my journey with them now. Please listen calmly.” At this, Kausalya struggled to raise herself up, with the help of the maids. She leaned on them and made herself ready to listen to what Sumantra had to say.

Sumantra describes the details of his Journey with Rama and others:

Sumantra began, “Oh Master! The first day we journeyed up to the bank of the Thamasa. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana bathed in the river and after drinking water, they rested under a spreading tree. The next day, we reached the Ganga River. Darkness was

invading from all sides. I stopped the chariot according to the command of Rama. All three bathed and rested on a stretch of sand. When dawn broke Rama asked Lakshmana to bring him the juice of the banyan tree, and when he did so, Rama applied it on his hair and matted it, so that he could wear it on the crown of his head. Meanwhile the ruler of the Nishada tribe, a friend of Rama, brought a boat. Sita was made to get into the boat first. After her Rama sat in it. Later honouring the order of Rama, Lakshmana entered the boat, carrying the bow and arrows. Ere he sat in the boat, Lakshmana came to me and asked me to convey prostrations and homage to the parents, and his prayer for blessings. He also directed me to request you to put up with things boldly and wisely.”

Sumantra continued his account of what Rama had asked him to announce at Ayodhya. “Master,” he told Dasaratha, “Rama said, ‘communicate my homage to the Preceptor. Advise my father not to grieve over what has happened.’ After this, Rama called me near him, and directed me thus, ‘Call together the Ministers and Citizens of Ayodhya, and the kinsmen of the Royal Family and tell them of this request, specially made by me: only those among them who help to make my father’s life happy are dear to me.’ Rama said, ‘On Bharatha’s arrival, convey my blessings to him, and direct him to accept the burden of ruling over the empire, and to conserve and to promote justice and integrity, fostering the welfare of the people through means that are pure in thought, word and deed. Tell him that I desire him to serve the parents so well that they will forget their agony at separation from me.’” While Rama was engaged in commissioning me thus, Sita too approached and told me to inform you she was happily

spending time with Rama with nothing wanting. She wanted me to offer her prostrations at the feet of her father-in-law and mothers-in-law. She wanted me to tell them not to be anxious about her and to be assured that she was happy with her lord, and eagerly expecting them to bless her always. She requested me to tell them that she enquired often of their health and welfare.

“Meanwhile, the boatman realised that it was Rama’s wish that he should not delay any longer. So he started to dip the oar in the river. Soon, Rama moved off. I was looking on at the receding boat, with my heart literally petrified. I must have spent a long time standing there on the riverbank. I had to return perforce to this place to carry out the orders of Rama; or else, I certainly would have drowned myself in the Ganga, I had become so desperate. I had to continue my life, just for this purpose—to convey to you the message from Rama. This Ayodhya which has no Rama in it appears to me forlorn and fearful as a forest.” Listening to the words of Sumantra and the soft sweet messages from Rama and Sita, Dasaratha could not restrain his anguish. He could not forget all that had happened. He fell in a faint. (*RKRV Part I p.381-390*)

THE BROTHERS MEET

Bharatha meets Sumantra and wants to know about the tragic events:

Sumantra too burst in to tears when his eyes fell on the brothers. He clasped Bharatha to his breast. The brothers too could not control their grief. Bharatha hoped that Sumantra at least would

throw light on the mystery hanging over the tragic events in the Capital. He tried various means to draw Sumantra to giving him an account of the happenings. But Sumantra did not like to speak on them. He thought Bharatha and Satrughna had already been told what had happened by those whom they had met before his arrival. (*RKRV Part I p. 404 405*)

Sumantra gives the message of Dasaratha death to Lakshmana

He drew Lakshmana near him and told him the fact. Feeling that it would be better that Lakshmana be informed more fully, he requested Sumantra, the loyal Minister of the Line, to relate to him the details and also the facts regarding administration of Ayodhya. At this, Sumantra fell down unable to bear the burden of grief. Struggling to rise he said amidst sobs, “Lakshmana! Where can we have Dasaratha hereafter? He was reduced to ashes by the flames of sorrow at being separated from Rama, Sita and you. Ayodhya has become a jungle. Wherever you look, you see only sorrow. Whatever you hear, you hear only wailing. Not merely men, even birds and animals cast off their lives when you left. Those who survive are keeping alive in the hope of your return.” Hearing this, Lakshmana shed streams of tears. He stood like a stump, unable to reply. (*RKRV Part I p.445*)

RAMA RETURNS FROM EXILE

Bharatha collected the sages, the scholars, the preceptors, the leading citizens and the four Sections of the Armed Forces, and with the three Queens and Ministers led by Sumantra, he walked

forward with Satrugna by his side to meet Rama ¹⁵⁶(*RKRV Part II p.274*)

Coronation of Rama

Vashishta called Sumantra into his presence and addressed him thus, “Assemble the armed forces—cavalry, elephantry, chariotry and infantry—at the City, for the Coronation of Rama is to be celebrated.” Those words filled Sumantra with extreme delight. He arranged for the presence of the Army with all its components. The elephants, horses and chariots were decorated grandly for the occasion. They were posted in serried ranks outside the City Gate. The horsemen and the foot soldiers wore colourful uniforms and they stood at attention, ready to march into the City for the festival. Messengers were sent in all directions to gather, in time, the various auspicious articles necessary for the rituals that formed part of the celebrations. The entire City was agog with joy. Citizens vied with each other in decorating their houses and streets. People felt their two eyes were not enough to imbibe the charm of the City. (*RKRV part II p279-280*)

Sumantra invited leading citizens and called the officials and asked them to decorate the royal roads¹⁵⁷ inside the City as well as the bazaars and shopping centres. He wanted them to erect Mantaps in many places. No sooner said than done. They executed the orders very quickly and the City was made ready

¹⁵⁶ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, ***Rama’s Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - BACK TO AYODHYA***

¹⁵⁷ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama’s Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - Jubilant Ayodhya*

for the big event. The City was excited and enthused into joyful activity. The elders of the City and officers reported to Rama that, as he had directed, information had been sent to the chiefs among sages and ascetics, and Vashishta had also been informed of what was being done. (*RKRV part II p315*)

To describe the infinite aspects in terms of limited words and limited experience is not possible.

The Maharishis who were well versed in the Vedhas and Manthras realised that it is not possible to explain and describe the aspects of Brahman in terms of words, and they were only indicating by their silence.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

16.3 MAID OF KAIKEYI, MANTHARA

MANTHARA

Manthara is a servant who convinced Kaikeyi that the throne of Ayodhya belonged to her son Bharatha and that Rama should be exiled from the kingdom. Manthara is described in the Ramayana as a hunchback, and extremely ugly. A family servant of Kaikeyi, she lived with her from the time of her birth.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

MANTHARA

Manthara¹⁵⁸: Hunchbacked maid of Queen Kaika¹⁵⁹. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Manthara's past Life

Even Manthara was one of good nature. She was only acting as a consequence of an incident that had happened in her previous birth. She was a deer then. One day she was playing with her husband in the forest. The king of Kekaya had come to the forest on hunting. He saw both the deer playing with each other. In an

¹⁵⁸ Also spelt as Mantharaa

¹⁵⁹ Known as Kaikeyi

attempt to capture them, he killed the male deer with an arrow. The female deer was grief stricken. She went to her mother and complained about the cruel act of the king. The mother consoled her saying, “My dear child, pain and pleasure, good and bad coexist in this world. We have to withstand the vicissitudes of life with equanimity. You may go to the king to seek justice,” Then the female deer went to the king and poured out her anguish thus, “Oh king! We were leading our lives peacefully and blissfully. You have inflicted untold grief on me by killing my husband. You have ruined my life.” The king ruefully said.

”Nobody can escape the sequence of his actions. You are grieving over death of your husband. I can also understand the agony of your mother having lost her son-in-law. As a result, one day I too will suffer from the loss of my son-in-law.” The female deer took birth as Manthara and caused the death of Dasaratha who was the son-in-law of the King of Kekaya.

This life is nothing but an ocean with the waves of union and separation. Everybody has to pass through the adversities of life.
(SSS Vol.36 Part I p.111-112)

Manthara heard the conditions for Kaikeyi’s Marriage

(Dasaratha) 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. *(SSS Vol.40 p.187)*

Manthara, who was the main associate of Kaikeyi, was hearing all their conversation. Accordingly the marriage was performed with great rejoicings. (*SSS Vol.41 p.55*)

Kama and Krodha (desire and anger) – Reason for sending Rama to forest – the original root cause is Rama’s own wish:

Rama broke... that bow with His left hand. Experiencing the joy of victory festivities..... held in Ayodhya with great joy and enthusiasm. The people celebrated that function... to propagate the power of Rama and the devotion of Sita to the world. Manthara became jealous to see all those festivities. You can find people like Manthara everywhere. Manthara became very angry when King Dasaratha decided to crown Rama instead of the son of Kaikeyi; she started poisoning the mind of Kaikeyi fabricating many false stories against Rama. (*SSS Vol.40 p.108-109*)

After we are born, we get all kinds of desires. The getting of these desires and harbouring them has been called ‘Kama’ and when these desires are not fulfilled to the extent you want them to be fulfilled, then you become angry. That is called ‘Krodha.’ These two qualities, ‘Kama’ and ‘Krodha’, the desire and anger are responsible for all our troubles and sorrows. In these respects, we should ask ourselves the questions what is the reason and who is responsible for sending Rama into forest? In replying to such a question, some people put the blame on Kaika, some people put the blame on the foolish father Dasaratha, some people put the blame on Manthara who was the attendant and so on. But when we read the appropriate sections of Ramayana and try to secure the basis for the particular act in Ramayana, we will

find that in some sections it has been said that Rama when he was a very young child was playing with a ball and that ball fell on the ugly looking attendant Manthara, who accompanied Kaika (*SSB 1972 p.82*)

It so happened that Manthara happened to be at a place where the four brothers were playing with a ball. When Rama kicked the ball, it went straight to Manthara and hit her on her back. Manthara jumped up as soon as the ball struck her. All brothers except Rama, laughed aloud at the action of Manthara. She felt deeply insulted, and from that day harboured ill-feelings toward Rama. (*SSB 1996 p 36*)

From that day Manthara had entertained some hatred and jealousy towards Rama. In addition to this, because Manthara was an attendant who came with Kaika from the Kingdom of Kaikeyi, from where Kaika came, it so happened that she was not very happy with or friendly to the sons of other queens. She was only attached to the son of Kaika. Because she could not do anything when the ball which was hit by Rama came and hit her on her back, which was an ugly hunch back, she was letting the hatred grow inside herself. She was waiting to take revenge at an appropriate time. (*SSB 1972 p.82-83*) When she heard about Rama's impending coronation, her anger increased by leaps and bounds, and she desperately sought an outlet. (*SSB 1996 p.36*)

This is the normal worldly explanation of things but for all these things to happen, the original root cause is Rama's own wish. When the time came for putting Rama on the throne, then she found the opportunity and she schemed and she did everything by which circumstances were so brought about and she had

achieved what she wanted to achieve by sending Rama to the forest. (*SSB 1972 p.83*)

Manthara's resolve - poisons Kaikeyi's mind

Manthara never forgot her past resolve and therefore decided to poison Kaikeyi's mind against her natural affection and her duties towards Dasaratha. Outside Kaikeyi's palace, there was fanfare, trumpeting 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. (*SSS Vol.34 p.79*)

She came to know about the imminent Coronation of Ramachandra, which was the cause of all the joy and exultation. She also saw the maids of the Palaces of Kausalya and Sumitra dressed in jasmine-white saris and bedecked in costly jewels, hurrying hither and thither. She could not bear the sight any longer. She had creeps all over her body like scorpion stings in plenty (*RKR V Part I p.227-228*). As Manthara was coming down, she encountered Kausalya's servant-maid. She was on her way to Kaikeyi to show off all the dress and fineries that Kausalya had given her. Manthara asked her wherefrom she got all this finery. She replied, "Kausalya's son Rama is going to be crowned as king and in the joy of that news Kausalya has given all of us, her servitors, fine clothes, jewellery, etc." Manthara was infuriated by this. She was even jealous of the fact at none of

it was coming her way also. Even that rankling was persisting in her mind. (*SSS Vol.34 p.79*)

She ran towards the palace of Kaikeyi, and finding that the queen had already retired into inner apartments, she neared the door and shrieked, “Mother! Mother! Open the door! A very urgent matter, now! Your life itself is in mortal danger! An earthquake is afoot.” Hearing her excited announcement in words that rolled one over other, the Queen hastily opened the door and enquired in fear, “Why? What has happened? What is the calamity? Has anything caved in? Why all this anxiety and pain?” “No, nothing of mine is destroyed. Your life is being destroyed, that is all. You have to live henceforward as a crazy careworn woman,” Manthara said. All in tears, she elaborated the pitiable state that waited the queen and with many a gesture and groan. She lamented loud and long.

Kaikeyi could not make out why. “The Maharaja is quite well, isn’t it? And Rama and Lakshmana? Kausalya? Sumitra? There is nothing the matter with them? If these are quite well, and no danger threatened them, I am not worried at all. What can happen to me? Has any danger come to them, tell me, Manthara! Tell me soon,” the Queen insisted. She turned the maid’s head towards her, held her chin in endearing appeal and pleaded for an answer.

Manthara replied, “Nothing evil has happened to those whom you mention! But they decided to wring the neck of your son!” and she broke into a pathetic wail. At this Kaikeyi retorted “You are committing a mistake, Manthara! The Maharaja is not such a person; nor is Rama, or Lakshmana or my sisters, Kausalya and

Sumitra! These sisters love my son even more than their own sons. Your statement reveals your warped mind that is all. It is not the truth! Well, you have not told me yet what the matter really is. Come on. Tell me the full story.”

Manthara answered, “Matter? At dawn tomorrow, Ramachandra is to be crowned Yuvaraja! Senior Queen, her mind full of unrestrained joy, is giving away costly silk saris and jewels to the maids. She is asking Rama to give away gold and cows in plenty. Engaged in all these activities of celebration, they are neglecting you! I cannot bear this in silence. I cannot tolerate. You are unable yet to understand the implications. You revel in the empty boast that there is none so fortunate. Your fortune is drying up fast. For your husband and co-wives, you have become a negligible person. Before long, you will be reduced to the despicable status of a maid. Be advised to be a little alert ere that humiliation overtakes you. Awake from sleep. Plan your course of action with full awareness of consequences. Decide upon means by which you can escape from the calamity that yawns before you. It is approaching you fast.

When Rama becomes Yuvaraja the entire empire will be held in the grasp of Kausalya, remember! Just as everyone else, you too will have to dance to her tune.” Manthara was acting her role and shedding false tears to reinforce her wily stratagem. (*RKRV Part I p.228-229*)

Kaikeyi reprimands Manthara and gives her rewards for bringing happy tidings

Kaikeyi was impressed by her loyalty, but was not convinced of the rightness of her arguments. “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.” I will not listen to such imputations against a pure and loving person¹⁶⁰, Kaikeyi reprimanded Manthara sharply. *(RKR Part I p.230)*

Kaikeyi gave a reward, gifting her a necklace for bringing the great good news first¹⁶¹. Manthara became furious when Queen Kaikeyi gifted her a pearl necklace, she immediately flung it away, for she could not brook the idea that Rama, who had once insulted her, was going to be crowned as the Emperor of Ayodhya. Inflamed with anger, she began poisoning the mind of Kaikeyi, though the queen had nurtured deep love for Rama. Indescribable is the damage done by anger

*When anger seizes a person,
He cannot perform any work successfully.
He gathers sin and is humbled.
Anger extinguishes one's reputation,
And separates him from people who are
near and dear. (SSB 1996 p.37)*

Manthara used many a specious and cunning argument to cloud and poison the pure and unselfish mind of Kaikeyi

Manthara said; “My reason is clear and fresh. It is yours that has suffered!” You are not concerned about the evil fate that awaits you. You hug blindly your old faith and fond attachment. I am

¹⁶⁰ See under Chapter *Kaikeyi* – **Kaikeyi says Rama becoming Yuvaraja is the happiest augury for the entire empire.**

¹⁶¹ *RKR Part I p.230*

anxious and worried for the sake of your happiness and self-respect. The others are all play-acting and pretending, just to deceive you. The Maharaja has no love towards his other Queens; he is enamoured only of 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. Consider this. These people did not inform you. They did not consult you about this proposal, for they have no respect for you. Have they spoken to you about it even once, on a single day? Consider how many months they usually deliberate and plan in order to come to such a decision. You cannot have Coronation so suddenly. It doesn't drop from sky one fine day on its own – can it? But they have decided silently and secretly.” The whole thing is the intrigue of Kausalya,”asserted Manthara. (*RKR V Part I p.231*)

Kaikeyi burst out: “Maharaja is much nobler, more righteous than my sisters – You cannot find him a trace of subterfuge or 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. (*R.K.R.V. Part I p.231*)

Manthara stooped to even worst tactics of persuasion:

Manthara feared that her stratagem will fail ignominiously. So, she stooped to even worse tactics of persuasion. “Dear Mother!

Ponder over the matter a little deeply. I have listened to many things while moving about outside the palace. In fact, this Coronation affair has been decided upon months ago. That is the reason why Bharatha and Satrughna were packed out of the capital. They were apprehending that their presence here will cause complications. And there must be good ground for such fears; or else who will arrange for the Coronation when they are away? Have you become incapable of asking this simple question? Formerly, when you were accepted in marriage, Dasaratha had promised and given his plighted word that the son born of you will be crowned king of the realm. You might forget it, but I refuse to. It is the fear that the presence of Bharatha here at the present juncture might rouse the memory of that promise and prove an obstacle to their plan, which made them keep Bharatha out of the way, by sending him to his grandfather's palace. Once the Coronation is accomplished, nothing can be done to reverse it. To promote this mean trick, they kept the idea secret and kept it from you so long. Think about this for a while, the inner design. You do not spend any thought on such matters. You believe 'all that is white is milk! Your foolishness and innocence are taken advantage of by others. You simply exult in your love for Rama and recite 'Rama. Rama,' in your infatuation. Well, leave everything else aside. Did that Rama, whom you love so greatly, did he at least inform you of this great good fortune happening to him?'

She said, "Mother who is there in this City of Ayodhya willing to pay some little regard to us? Who treats you here as worthy of count? They are all one, united against you. You are stranger here. They might even throw you out of Ayodhya shortly. They

will desist from even such meanness. The Emperor will not desist from even such meanness. The Emperor is a crafty trickster, a clever juggler. When he approaches you, he speaks soft endearment to satisfy his whims, and then he departs triumphant! You do not realise the fault in you which is preventing you from attaining the high status you deserve. Mother! You may remember, the kings are ever ruled by lust, and not by love. Your father knew this fact, and so he did not agree to give you in marriage to this aged suitor. After prolonged negotiations, and confabulations, through the intercession of the Sage Garga, when it was decided that you be given in marriage, the suitor was compelled to agree to many conditions.

This day those arrangements have been cast into flames and your son has been cheated. All the while, they are quietly playing their merry drama! Else, why should they take advantage of this chance of your son being away? Why Coronation from any State beyond the bounds of the empire? Consider how their low mentality reveals itself! How full of mischief and deceit are they!

When neighbouring Rulers are invited, your father will certainly not miss the opportunity to attend. Naturally he will then bring to the notice of all the promise made to him. So, the plan is to get through Coronation without informing anyone; and once that is over, they know, nothing can be done to undo it. This conspiracy is hatched by wily with this objective. So, be warned in time. Once this moment is missed, your fate will be contemptible as that of a dog. Therefore, do not delay. Ponder deeply; decide upon the method of preventing the Coronation from taking place.” Manthara fanned the flames of anger and hatred.

Kaikeyi succumbed to her machinations at last. She said. “Hearing your words I feel that each statement is more convincing than the previous one! Yes indeed! This is no matter that can wait. What has to be done next? If you can indicate the step I have to take, I shall put into action.”

When Kaikeyi gave this sign of having been won over by her wiles, Manthara was overwhelmed with pride and joy; She spoke with greater assurance now. “Mother! There is no need to spend further thought. The arguments that can support your demand are ready and strong. Ask for the two boons.” You can now demand that he grant them now. Can’t you? (*RKR Part I p.231/234*)

Manthara tapped on the shoulder. By this mere contact, all the evil seething inside Manthara entered into Kaikeyi. It is very dangerous to cultivate with anyone with evil habits. Even a little contact with them can pollute you with their qualities. Kaikeyi was so fond of Rama till then turned against Him in a moment - Swami keeps telling you, *Tyaja 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.80-81*)

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*)

Manthara was born to fulfil a Vow – Poisoned Kaikeyi’s mind – Jealousy root cause of all Evils:

Manthara was the personification of jealousy. Her jealousy was so potent as to change the motherly love that Kaikeyi had for Rama. Any amount of persuasion from Dasaratha¹⁶² was fruitless. Just then Rama entered all dressed-up ready for coronation, to pay His respect to His parents. Looking at the situation there, He asked Kaikeyi, "Amma, what is the problem? Kaikeyi did not reply, but Manthara told Him Kaikeyi's boons. She told Him, "Your father promised that day, but is now going back on his promise". Rama after hearing everything in full told Kaikeyi, "Mother, I shall uphold the words of father. One should never go back on the promises given. Such an act will bring dishonour on the Ikshvaku clan. So, I shall depart for the forest immediately." At once, 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. Kaikeyi then told Him, "Rama, do you look on Your father and mother differently? As a mother, I am telling you to go forest straightaway." Rama complied without demur. (*SSS Vol.34 p.82*)

¹⁶² See also under chapter, *Dasaratha - THE TWO BOONS*

Manthara ultimately succeeded in changing the mind of Kaikeyi and caused the departure of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita from Ayodhya. (*SSB1996 p.37*)

Manthara's Qualities

The *Ramayana* gives examples of Ravana and Manthara as both had evil propensities in them. Ravana was slain in the battle, but Manthara is alive even today in the form of jealousy. There is none who can destroy 'Manthara'. We have to ignore this 'Manthara' and carry on with our duties. When Lakshmana wanted to kill her, Rama stopped him, saying, "One should not kill a woman." Jealousy is the worst of all evil qualities. Three-fourths of the world is ruined because of jealousy.

Jealousy has no limits whatsoever. People are jealous of others' prosperity, beauty and education, and try to cause their downfall. One should not speak bad words, listen to bad things and indulge in evil activities. This is the main teaching of *Ramayana*. Manthara indulged evil talk and Kaikeyi paid heed to her. What happened to them ultimately? They were put to disrepute. Today, do you find any woman bearing the name of Kaikeyi or Manthara? You come across women having the name Kausalya, but not Kaikeyi or Manthara. Keechaka cast evil looks on Draupadi, and consequently met his doom at the hands of Bhima. Do you find anybody having the name of Keechaka? None. All those who indulge in evil talk and evil actions should be banished from this world. 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.34 p.83*)

The Krodha (anger) of Manthara, and the Kama (desire) of Surpanakha¹⁶³, are responsible for the entire Ramayana. The anger of Manthara sent Rama to the forest and the desire of Surpanakha sent Sita to Lanka. (*SSB 1996 p.36-37*)

¹⁶³ See Chapter, *Surpanakha*

Bharatha and Satrughna are angry:

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 were at the entrance, when Manthara herself, elaborately bejewelled was 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. (*RKR V Part I p.414-415*)

Satrughna¹⁶⁴ was prepared to kill Manthara. Bharatha and Shatrughna were prepared to cause hurt and harm to their own mothers, but they were not prepared to displease Rama by their acts. (*SSB 1977 p.59-60*)

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter, *Satrughna* - **Satrughna was prepared to kill Manthara** -

Janmajanmake Jeevanabhandho'
Jeevanadatha Jagadodhara
Jagadabi ramaa Janaki ramaa
Janaki jeevana Jaya Jaya Rama
Jaya jaya Ramaa Jai sayiraama
Jeevan jyothi Jaya sayirama||

- ***Inspirational Composition by Tumuluru***

**16.4 OTHER
CHARACTERS IN THE
STORIES NARRATED BY
VISWAMITRA**

STORIES TOLD BY VISWAMITRA

They proceeded on their way listening to the thrilling stories that lighted every river and spot of land: (*RKRV Part I p.101*)

Ashram of Siva:

Soon they got ready for the journey and stood before the sage with arms folded. Viswamitra asked, “Dear ones! Now we can move towards our hermitage, can’t we?” And Rama replied, “We await your command!” So, they started walking, with the sage in front and the brothers behind. Soon, they reached the confluence of the Sarayu with the Ganga. The brothers prostrated before the holy river, and cast their eyes all around the holy spot. They saw a hermitage, with heavenly vibrations pervading the surroundings. It struck them as very ancient and full of hoary associations. Lakshmana questioned the sage, “Master! Who lives in that holy hermitage? What is the name of the great personage who dwells there?” The sage smiled at the inquiry. He said, “Dear ones! God Siva had come here long ago with His divine attendants, to engage in austerities prior to His wedding Parvathi. While He was fulfilling His Divine obligations from here, Manmatha (the God of Love) obstructed the spiritual practices and caused anger to sprout in the Divine Heart. He opened His Third Eye, which threw such searing flames that

Manmatha was burnt to ash. His body was destroyed and so, he is known now as ‘limbless,’ Ananga. The word for a limb is *anga*; since Manmatha lost his angas here, in this region, this part of the country is known ever after as Anga! This is a rich region. This hermitage was used by Siva and it is being used since, by generations of His devotees, each of whom has merged in Him as the fruit of arduous asceticism. This hermitage will accept as residents only strict followers of the Dharmic Path. If you so desire, we shall spend the night here and start out again, after a bath in the Ganga.” Rama and Lakshmana could not contain their delight when Viswamitra came forward with this proposal. They said, “We are very happy” and accepted the idea. They bathed in the holy Ganga. Meanwhile, the news that Viswamitra was available near their residences and that he had with him two heroic sons of the Emperor spread wide and many rushed to welcome them and receive them in their own hermitages. That night, the Sage and the Princes stayed at the Ashram of Siva. They fed on fruits and roots. They watched with interest the activities of the hermitage. The Princes listened to the stories narrated by Viswamitra. Time floated fast in that flood of Bliss. As soon as day dawned they had their bath and ablutions and lovingly took leave of the hermits. Then they walked on, the two disciples following the Guru. They had to cross the Ganga River and so, some people of that area rowed them across and set them on the other bank. Thereafter, they reverentially bade farewell and fell at the feet of Viswamitra, before they returned. Viswamitra was gratified at this act of hospitality; he appreciated the depth of their devotion and their sense of surrender; he allowed them to depart, loaded with blessings. (*RKRK Vol. 1 p.99-100*)

Churning of the Ocean Milk:

They came upon a vast city full of beautiful buildings. Rama turned to Viswamitra, and asked him, “Master! We are seeing from here in this exquisite forest a vast city. To what kingdom does it belong?” The sage replied, “Rama! It appears to be near, but in fact, it will take quite some time for us to reach it! Perhaps, we may arrive there in the evening hours. I shall tell you the story of that city’s origin and fortunes when we actually reach it. Meanwhile, let us proceed.” Rama heard these words which the sage spoke with a twinkle in the eye and a smile on the lips. He grasped the meaning of his directive and walked on without a word in reply.

When they descended into the valley there was no sign of any city or human habitation; but, on rising to the heights, the city could be seen very near! Moving forward like this, they found that though evening drew near they could not reach the City. As Viswamitra had already indicated the City was still far away! As evening fell they halted; and after bath, they performed the evening rituals as laid down in the Sastras. While resting, Rama returned to the question he had already asked. “Master! Will you kindly tell us about the city?” At this, Viswamitra said, “Rama! I too was just now thinking about that matter!¹⁶⁵ The very moment the thought flashes in my mind that you had forgotten to ask about the story of the City, you questioned me about it. No further proof is wanted to show that you are the All-knowing!

¹⁶⁵ See Endnote - No.5 - Maya

Rama! In ancient times, Kasyapa had two wives, Aditi and Diti. The sons of Diti were repositories of physical might and the sons of Aditi, of moral grandeur. They grew up mightier and mightier with each passing day. The parents derived great joy, watching them grow up so fair and fast.

One day, the sons of both Diti and Aditi gathered together and entered into a discussion on means of avoiding old age. Finally, they came to the conclusion that the *Amrith* or Nectar that can be secured by churning the Ocean of Milk will prevent the physical calamities of disease, senility, and death. Soon, they set about that task. The Mandara Peak was plucked and placed in the Ocean as the churning rod. The serpent Vasuki was chosen as the rope, to be wound round the rod so that the rope might rotate quick and fast. While the churning continued for a long time, the serpent Vasuki began vomiting its poison. It was enraged so much as a result of the pain that its fangs struck against the rocks of the mountain peak. The poisonous fume raged as a huge fire!

Seeing this, the sons of Diti and Aditi became mortally afraid. They felt they would be burnt into ashes in that holocaust! They prayed for succour of the Lord. When Lord Vishnu appeared before them, the sons of Diti pleaded pathetically, ‘Lord! Save us! Put an end to this dread disaster.’ and the Lord changed into

Source of Photo (from Wikipedia)

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

1. *Chandra* Moon 2. *Parijat* , a tree in the Paradise of Lord Indra 3. *Airavat* , a multi-tusked elephant for again Lord indra 4. *Kamadhenu* , a cow which provides desired objects 5. *Uchchaihsravas*, the white horse for Lord Indra 6. *Sankha*, the conch of Lord Vishnu used for victory 7. *Gada* 8. *Laxmi* , goddess of wealth 9. *Rambha* , the apsara (celestial beauty) for heaven 10. 'Ratnas', (gems and jewel) 11. 'Kalpavriksha , a tree fulfilling one's wishes 12. 'Dhanwantari', the physician for all Gods. 13. 'Mada , a goddess 14. 'Amrut' (the nectar drinking which one becomes immortal) in a golden chalice (Kumbha)

Siva and said, 'Dear Ones! I am the eldest of the Gods, and so, I am entitled to receive the first fruit of this churning process.' Declaring thus, He drank off, without delay, the Halahala poison that was causing the panic.

Thereafter, the sons of Diti and Aditi continued the churning of the Ocean. Another calamity threatened them now. The Mandara Peak started sinking! So, they prayed again to the Lord Vishnu. He appeared again and assured them, 'Darling children! Do not become frightened.' The Lord assumed the Form of a Tortoise, and getting underneath the mountain peak raised it on His back and kept it safe on the hard shell so long as the churning lasted. The sons of Kasyapa were immensely grateful and happy. They extolled the Lord in profusion.

From out of the Ocean of Milk, there emerged a God with a *Danda* (Stick) and *Kamandalu* (Water pot) in His Hands! His name was Dhanvantari. Even as the sons of Diti and Aditi were looking at Him, there emerged again from the Ocean thick sweet juice or Rasa, which got rolled into a ball, which, in turn, soon swelled and broke, disclosing a bevy of maidens. Since they were born of Rasa, they are named Apsaras. They tried in many ways to persuade the sons of Diti and Aditi to wed them. They prayed and petitioned; but all their efforts were of no avail. So, they lived without being wedded, free and fickle. Then, from out of the waves rose the daughter of the water-god, Varuna and she had a chalice full of intoxicating liquor! The sons of Diti refused to have anything to do with the liquor. The sons of Aditi quaffed it. Those who did not accept the Sura (liquor) were known as Asuras, and those who accepted it, as Suras.

At last, from that Ocean of Milk arose the Amrith (Nectar). Who were to drink the Amrith? There arose a huge conflict between the sons of Diti and Aditi. In the terrible fight that ensued, the sons of Aditi began destroying the sons of Diti. The battle threatened to become a battle of extinction. The earth shook under the thrust and counter thrust of weaponry in that battle. Fear and anxiety spread their dark clouds over the world. Suddenly, Vishnu appeared before the contending parties as an entrancingly charming damsel, who captivated the hearts of all and led their minds away from the combat into which they had plunged! She charmed everyone and during her appearance the precious Amrith disappeared! The sons of Diti had all died. The grief of the mother was beyond consolation. Kasyapa failed to bring her to the state of normalcy. His attempts to teach her the evanescence of things failed to convince her. She wailed aloud and lamented most excruciatingly as if the end of the world had come.

At last Diti brought herself round. She approached Kasyapa and submerging her agony deep into her mind, she said, ‘Lord! Is this just? We both had children by you. Now I have been made childless. Is this fair, must I grieve eternally thus? Not even one of my sons is alive. Rather than have many short-lived sons, one long living one is most desirable isn’t it?’ When she wept aloud in this manner, Kasyapa consoled her and told her to enter on Thapas (the discipline of austerities to propitiate the Gods) so that she might have a son who will live long. He advised her to give up her grief which could never fulfil her desire. Encouraged by him and seeking his blessings she left immediately and started Thapas, with the professed aim of securing the boon from the

Gods, of a son who will be able to defeat the Lord of Gods, Indra Himself!

Kasyapa told her, ‘Thapas is no easy discipline. One has to be pure until the very end. One has to observe the vows and fasts, without the least infringement. Then only will the Gods be pleased and grant the boon.’

Diti reached the region known as Kusaplava and entered upon rigorous asceticism. Knowing her resolve, Indra desired to test her and came to her in the guise of her attendant. Diti’s prayer was answered. She became pregnant with child through Divine Grace. Days passed, months rolled by, Indra was beside her, as attendant! One day, in the hot hours of noon, overcome by sleep, she lay on the bed with her hair loose and her head placed where the feet were usually placed. This was against the strict rules of ceremonial purity, which she had to observe with tenacity. So, Indra got his chance. He noted that her posture was heterodox and contrary to Sastric injunctions. So He punished her, by fragmenting the foetus in her womb. The fragments started weeping inside the womb for their limbs and segments which had broken away. The attendant, Indra spoke softly to them, ‘*Maaruda*’ ‘Don’t weep’! Diti had terrible bouts of bleeding; she lamented her fate and wept most pitifully.

Indra stood before her with folded palms and pleaded, ‘Mother; pardon me. You acted contrary to the rules of ceremonial purity and so, broke the vow. Your hair was unbound and loose, and your head was on the bed where the feet are normally kept. When you slept thus, your Thapas was defiled. When the enemy

who is waiting for a chance to foil your fortune gets such an opportunity, will he keep quiet? I am Indra come in this form. You prayed for a son who would kill me, didn't you? The foetus in the womb was to destroy me and so I took that chance to foil my foe. And I did not destroy him through condemnable tactics. You know that strict observance of the vow was essential for the success of your plan. You had to ensure that you did not violate the code. The foetus has been cut into seven fragments and I have spoken '*Maaruda*' to them. So they will be born as the seven Godly *Maruthas*, (Wind Gods); I am conferring on you this boon,' Indra said thus and returned to Heaven.

Rama! This is the place where Indra and Diti had this dialogue and this compromise. (*RKRV Part I p.144-150*)

Gautama's Hermitage:

During the journey, Viswamitra narrated to them the past history of the Ashrams that they came across on the way. At last, they reached the hermitage of Gautama where Gautama's wife, Ahalya¹⁶⁶, lay in one place like a stone, having been earlier cursed by her husband. Rama, the incarnation of Lord Narayana, knew everything, but pretended as though He did not know anything. As He moved toward Ahalya, the vibrations that emanated from His feet brought a new surge of life into her petrified form. She immediately clung to the feet of Rama, and prayed to Him to forgive her and shower grace on her. At that very instant, Sage Gautama arrived on the scene and accepted the

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter, *Ahalya*

purified Ahalya. Gautama knew that Lord Rama would come and sanctify his ashram. After redeeming Ahalya, Rama and Lakshmana, accompanied by Viswamitra, Gautama, and a host of other sages, proceeded towards Mithila. The arrival of Rama and Lakshmana, who moved like lion cubs in the streets of Mithila, created a sensation. People admired them and began talking about these two handsome princes. Emperor Janaka received them with due courtesy and extended to them warm hospitality. (*SSB 1996 p.26*)

Fear of sin has declined; wicked deeds have become the order of the day; devotion to God has diminished. We find acts of violence all around. Oh man! Understand that you will attain peace and happiness only when you take refuge in the Lotus Feet of the Lord and chant His Divine Name (Telugu Poem)

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

ENDNOTES

ENDNOTES

1. Puthrakameshti Yagna/ Yaga:

Putra-kameshti (puthra-kaameshthi). Sacrifice prescribed for those wanting to beget a son. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Every man takes birth in this world to discharge three kinds of debt. The first is the debt to God. The second is the debt to the *Rishis* (sages). The third is the debt to one's parents. One's body is derived from the flesh and blood of the mother. How much sacrifice is involved in giving birth to a child and rearing him with continuous care and love is beyond description. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the life you lead are all the gift of your parents. It is one's primary duty to please one's parents. Only this debt to the parents is discharged. Nor is that all. The debt to the parents has to be repaid by acting properly and rendering service to society.

It is for these reasons that Emperor Dasaratha paid his debt to the Divine and through *his Yagas and yajnas*; he discharged his obligations to the *Rishis*. But he was unable to discharge the *Pithr-rna* (debt to his parents). He did show due reverence to them. But owing to the lack of a worthy son capable of sustaining *Dharma*, he could not fully discharge the obligations he owed to his parents. (*SSS Vol.23 p. p.37-39*)

Adore the parents, make them happy, give them contentment and joy by paying loving attention and bestowing affectionate care. Another duty is to propagate the line through children of pure character, high virtue and noble endeavour. Dasaratha, the emperor of Ayodhya, desirous of paying back his debt to his ancestors, had to perform the *Puthrakameshti Yaga*, the *Vedic* sacrifice that can bless the aspirant with sons. This is the *Vasanta Kaala* (spring time). This season comprises two months---*Madhu-Madhava* and *Mesha-Rishabha*. *Mesha* is the most glory-filled month in the entire year. It was in the *Vasanta* season that Dasaratha released the sacrificial horse so that it may wander freely over the continent along an unhinderable course, and it was in the same month that it returned unopposed to Ayodhya. The *Puthrakameshti Yaga* also

commenced in *Vasanta*, and the four sons---Rama, Bharatha, Lakshmana and Shatrughna---were born in *Vasanta*. This is the reason why the Yugaadi is acclaimed as the Inaugural day of the *Vasanta Navaratri* (the first nine nights of the spring season) culminating with the *Ramanavami* (the day on which Rama was born). (*SSS Vol. 13 p.207*)

Dasaratha was one who realised the supremacy of *Dharma*. Hence, to overcome the lack of a son, he decided to perform the *Puthrakameshti Yaga* (the special sacrifice for getting blessed with a son). (*SSS Vol.23 p. p.39*)

Why Dasaratha performed *Puthrakameshti yaga*

The desire to have a son should not be for the protection of one's possessions and properties. Nor should it be for ensuring the performance of one's funeral obsequies. Nor for rendering any type of service to oneself. The main purpose should be to have sons who will practise righteousness in the service of society. It was with this aim that Dasaratha decided to perform the *Puthrakameshti yaga*. (*SSS Vol.23 p.39*)

When a child is born, no one can know how it will turn out, whether into a good and noble person or a wicked and evil person. The father too should set a good example to the son and try to keep him on the straight path. It is by following the example of the parents that a child grows in life.

It was to discharge his three-fold debt that Emperor Dasaratha performed *yagas* and *yajnas* (ceremonial sacrifices) and ensured the presence of his sons on those occasions. He sent them to great *gurus* so that they may learn the sacred heritage of the past, before they confronted the challenges of the world. He did not calculate that his sons should serve him in his old age. He had no selfish interest in rearing them. He desired sons for the sake of his spiritual well-being. The son owes a deep debt to the parents for the trouble and expense they underwent to bring him up on right lines. This is the primary duty of a son.

The son is entitled not merely to a share in the father's worldly property. He is entitled also to a share in the godly life lived by the father. He must follow the high ideals of the father. If the father is given to evil ways, the son can acquire merit himself and reduce to some extent the effects of the sins of the father by cultivating good company, entertaining good

thoughts and doing good deeds. The sage Vashishta assured Dasaratha that many of the sins committed by him had been wiped out by the numerous *Dharmic* deeds of Sri Rama, such as destruction of the *Rakshasas* and protection guaranteed to the *Rishis*. (*SSS Vol. Vol.16 p135-136*)

Two kinds of *yajnas* to redeem the three debts

It is to discharge the debt to one's parents that rites like *Sraddha* and *Tharpanam* (ritual offerings to the manes) are done. Only a few perform these ceremonies now. The ancients felt that it was sinful for children to be ungrateful to parents to whom they owed their bodies and their achievements.

Yajnas and *Yagas* (*Vedic* rituals of sacrifice) are symbolic rituals designed to redeem these three debts. *Yajnas* are of two kinds: *Antar-yajna* (internal) and *Bahir-yajna* (external). The internal *yajna* is the striving to realise the Divinity within. The Divine is in every one and it can be realised only through *Dhyana* (meditation). The mind is the sacrificial altar. One has to offer as sacrifice on this altar all one's bad qualities. It may be asked how any bad quality can pollute the body-mind-complex when the Divine is the in-dwelling Spirit. But, it must be realised that this is not one's first birth in a body; many lives have preceded this. Man in Samskith is called *Maanava* which means, *Maa* (not), *nava* (new) - "not new". (*SSS Vol.16 p135-137*)

Conforming to the procedure laid down for the *Puthrakameshtiyaga*, Dasaratha first embarked on an *Aswamedha* (Horse) sacrifice. For this sacrifice, a horse that has certain specific characteristics is required. It should bear all the prescribed insignia. (*SSS Vol.23 p.39-40*) The sacrificial horse is a very sacred element. That should be pure white horse without any dark patches on it. The ears should protrude out in a beautiful manner. The hair on the neck of this horse should also be very attractive and straight. The tail of that horse should be so long that it touches the bottom of the feet. In the attempt to look for and locate such a sacred horse which satisfies the requirements, some effort is required. (*SSB 1977 p.124*)

In the season of *Vasanta* (spring) the search for a suitable horse was started. It was only by the return of the next spring season that it could be found. Another year went by before the horse could be appropriately prepared for the *yaga*. Then, the horse was released to go round the

realm. It returned from this sacred mission in the next spring season. This means that the preparations for the *yajna* were spread over three years.

Brahma then appeared. Who is this Brahma? He is described as a deity with four faces. The four faced Brahma told Dasaratha: "Oh king! Your desires will be fulfilled. Complete the *yajna* with expedition." Heartened by the deity's assurance, Dasaratha distributed largesse to one and all generously and completed the *yajna*. The scriptures declare, "*Yajna* is the very form of Vishnu. "Who is Vishnu in this context? It is not the form bearing *Sankha* (Conch) and *Chakra* (Wheel). Vishnu refers to the Supreme One who permeates everything in the cosmos. (*SSS Vol.23 p. p.40*)

2. Yoga-Vashishta

Yoga-Vashishta: Sacred work in the form of dialogue between Vashishta and his pupil Rama, teaching the way to eternal bliss. (*Dharma Vahini p.139 - Glossary*)

Once in the midst of conversation, Vashishta spoke thus to Rama; "Listen, O, Rama, the Valiant! The Jiva is a bull reclining in the shade (*Moha*) of a vastly spreading tree in the forest, Samsara. It is bound by the rope of Desire and so, it is infected by the fleas and insects of unrest and worry and disease. It rolls in the mire of wrong, while struggling in the dark night of ignorance to slake the thirst of the senses. Then, some good men who are wise untie it and take it out of the dark recesses of the forest. Through Viveka (discrimination) and Vichara (inquiry), one achieves Vijnana (higher wisdom) and through Vijnana, one is able to grasp the Truth, to realise the Atma, to know the Atma. That is the ultimate goal of all Life, the stage that is beyond the Past, Present and Future."

But one point has to be clearly noted and remembered always: mere giving up external activities connected with the satisfaction of sensory desires is not enough. The internal cravings have to be uprooted. The word *Thrishna* covers both these, the internal promptings and the external proceedings. When all promptings cease, it is called *Muktha-thrishna*. Knowledge of the Atma and faith in the Atma—these alone can destroy the irrelevant thirsts. (*Jnana Vahini p.21*)

The Yoga-Vashishta says that Sri Ramachandra asked the sage Vashishta the question, “Divine Master! Is there a way by which death can be avoided?” This same problem drove Gautama Buddha along the path of renunciation, and forced him to give up all traces of attachment. It showered on him eternal fame, as supreme among men. Prahlada, foremost among the devotees of the Lord, addressed his fellow pupils, even as a boy, “Friends! Have you not observed some boys of our own age fall dead and get burnt or buried?” Thus, he drew their attention to the event of death and invited them to draw lessons from that inevitable fact. He taught them the higher wisdom. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p.100*)

In order to persuade a child to stop weeping and regain joy, the *Ayah* (nurse) relates a fairy tale which pleases it. The *Ayah*’s sole purpose is to calm the child. The fairy tale is only a means modelled on its intellectual level. In the same manner, the *Jivi*, fascinated by the beginningless attraction of *maya* and bound by tendencies cultivated during many lives in the past, cannot avoid inquiring into the origins of the Universe which he encounters. The *Sruthi* answers such inquiry in words that give temporary relief. For, the question, how was the Universe created, is on a par with the question, how is a dream created? The dream originates from sleep or *Nidhra*; the Universe originates through illusion or *Maya*. Just as the dream has no order or law, the Universe also is too full of mystery and *Maya*. There is only ONE, not two as often happens in a dream. This is the doctrine of *Adwaitha*. Very much like the question of the origin of creation, another problem that generally worries man is, how did this ignorance happen? The solution has been provided by the sage-preceptor, Vashishta, to Sri Ramachandra. “Rama!” he said, “Rather than entangling yourselves in the inquiry regarding how Ignorance entered Man, I would exhort you to be engaged in efforts to get rid of it.” This lesson is directed not only to Rama but to all mankind. It helps all who do not possess the realisation of the Truth behind the objective world. *Ajnana* or ignorance is the name given to ignoring what is one’s own inner experience—that the universe is an ever-changing phenomenon. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p.159/160*)

All this will disappear and lose individuality with the emergence of *Jnana*, the Highest Wisdom,” said the Sage Vashishta to Rama. “Rama!” he advised, “You have to understand how this non-knowledge grew and by what means it can be destroyed.” There is one mystery hidden in this advice. Centuries of inquiry have failed to unravel the secret—wherefrom did the Cosmos originate? How did it emerge? If it had a Personal Cause, the inquiry could have succeeded. The Cosmos or *Jagath* is not such an

object. The questions “How did it emerge?” “Wherefrom did It originate?” are exactly on a par with the question, “How did the “serpent” appear on the “rope” and cause the “terror”? Only the rope exists there; the serpent was imposed thereon, during dusk, by the defective intellect of the onlooker. That is to say, on account of the illusion created by reasoning. In other words, ignorance is the basis of the misapprehension.

Brahmam is the “rope”; Jagath is the “serpent” superimposed on it by Reason afflicted by illusion. We cognise Brahmam as Jagath; we take one thing as another, so long as this affliction holds sway. Therefore, it is best to conclude that the Jagath is an object which originated in our own Buddhi (Intellect) and emerged out of the same faulty faculty. An object born of such a delusion and confirmed by only an infirm intellect can never be true. When the delusion goes, when the infirmity disappears, the Jagath so caused also disappears. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p.161-162*)

In the Yoga-Vashishta, Sage Vashishta says, “Oh Rama, the boundless ocean can be drunk dry by man with great ease. The enormous Sumera mountain can be plucked from the face of the earth, with great ease. The flames of a huge conflagration can be swallowed with great ease. But controlling the mind is far more difficult than all these.” Therefore, if one succeeds in overwhelming the mind, one achieves the awareness of the Atma. This success can result only when one undergoes many ordeals and denials. The bliss that one earns afterwards is the highest kind of happiness. As the fruition of all Sadhana one is established in the perfect equanimity of unruffled consciousness (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*) and the Ananda that fills him is indescribable. It is ambrosial, equal to the nectar of immortality. *Nirvikalpa* means the state of consciousness when it is devoid of thought. This state can be reached through appropriate Sadhana. It is of two natures: Non dual in full experience and the state of non-duality when dual thought ends. The first takes man beyond the triune of Knower, the Known and Knowledge; and he is aware only of the Cosmic Intelligence of Brahman (This is *Adwaita Bhavana*). The second stage is reached when all the attributes ascribed to God and man merge in the ONE which embraces the Cosmos and all its contents (This is *Adwaita Sthayi* or *Adwaita Avastha*). (*Vidya Vahini p.64*)

Women can, by spiritual practice (*sadhana*), attain that unwavering unequalled auspicious Brahman; this is made clear in the *Yoga-Vashishta* and in the *Puranas*. (*Dharma Vahini p.57*)

Q. Can women win Brahma Jnana, even while leading the householder's life?

A. Why not? Madaalasa and others were able to get Brahma Jnana while in the Grihastha stage of life, the householder status. You must have heard of these from the Yoga-Vashishta and the Puranas, how they attained the height of auspiciousness, Brahma Jnana itself. Then again, do not the Upanishads declare that Kathyayini, Sarangi, Sulabha, Viswaveda and others were adepts in Brahma Jnana? (*Prasnottara Vahini p.51*)

3. Atma:

Atma (Aathma). The real Self, one's divinity, God, the substance of everything, the unseen basis, the spark of God within. The Atma is unchanging and immortal; It does not die. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

The first step, or the negative step, is to say that *Atma* is not that, *Atma* is not this, and in that way, we remove all possible comparisons. In their childhood, the nature of *Atma* was discussed in this manner by arguments and expositions between them-selves and the *Guru*, and whatever they had given in that form to the world is now called the *Vashishta Gita*. It is in this context that Rama took truth as His very basis and in that way, He gave up the kingdom that was rightfully due to Him. He never had any aspirations for kingdoms. Ramachandra took truth as His foundation and based all His *karma* on the foundation of truth. It is in this context that it has been said that “*Sathyam nasti paro dharmah.*” Different from truth, there is no *dharmah*. There is no truth which is different from *dharmah*.

He regarded *sathya* and *dharmah* as the two foundation walls. He also regarded them as the two wheels for the chariot of His life. He propagated that with *sathya* and *dharmah*, one can carry on one's life in this world. This is why Rama has been described by saying “*Ramo vigrahavan van dharmah.*” Rama is the embodiment of *dharmah*. Rama's form is *dharmah*, Rama's conduct is truth. Here Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna can be identified with the four *purusharthas*: *dharmah*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Ramachandra has been looking at these four *purusharthas* as distinct ones. He took *dharmah* as the base, *moksha* as the destination which we have to reach. When we have a ladder and when we want to climb to the top using the ladder, the ladder rests on the ground as the base. The ladder has also got a destination which we have to reach. This ladder rests on the ground of *dharmah* and attempts to reach the top mansion which is *moksha*. In between there are two steps, the steps of

artha and *kama*. Both these steps, *Artha* and *Kama*, are to be joined either on one hand with *dharma* or on the other hand with *moksha*. If one is to expound it in a simpler way, one can say that *dharma* and *artha* join up and constitute one part, and *Kama* and *moksha*, join up and constitute the second part. When *dharma* and *artha* are put together, we see that by a *dharmic* life, one may acquire wealth or *artha* or you have the aspiration to acquire wealth for the sake of *dharma*. Do not have *Kama* towards the world. Do not have a desire to enjoy the world but have *Kama* or the desire for *moksha*. All your earnings and acquisitions should be related to *dharma* and your desires to *moksha*. (SSB 1977 p.51/52)

4. Ravana ignored the counsel of many:

Ravana ignored the advice and counsel given by many: Sujnaana-
Vijnaana – Prajnaana -

- Maricha¹⁶⁷
- Jatayu¹⁶⁸
- Hanuman¹⁶⁹
- Vibhishana¹⁷⁰
- Suka the messenger¹⁷¹
- Prahastha¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu* - **Maricha advises Ravana to desist from such acts:**

¹⁶⁸ See Chapters, *Jatayu* - **Advices Ravana:**

¹⁶⁹ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman:**
See also Chapter, *Hanuman* - **Interesting Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman**

¹⁷⁰ See Chapter, *Vibhishana* - **Vibhishana's Advice to Ravana:**
See also Chapter, *Ravana* - **Vibhishana explains to Ravana the Code of conduct of a king – killing of an ambassador contrary to accepted conduct:**

¹⁷¹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **The might of the Vanara force described to Ravana by Suka:**
See also Chapter, *Ravana* - **Ravana sent a messenger**

- Angada¹⁷³
- Malyavantha¹⁷⁴
- Kalanemi¹⁷⁵
- Kumbhakarna¹⁷⁶
- Mandodari¹⁷⁷
- Sita¹⁷⁸
- Minister and respected elder, Sindhuranatha¹⁷⁹

5. Maya:

Maya (maayaa). Worldly illusion, mistaking the transient for the real; non-awareness of actuality, appearances masquerading as reality. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Maya-prapancha (maayaa-prapancha). This illusory world, composed of the five elements. (*Ibid*)

¹⁷² See Chapter, *Ravana - Ravana Prepares for the Battle; Counsel of his son Prahastha ignored*

See also chapter, Lesser Known Sons of Ravana - Prahastha

¹⁷³ See Chapter, *Angada - THE INTERACTION BETWEEN RAVANA AND ANGADA, THE SON OF VALI, SENT AS AN ENVOY TO LANKA:*

¹⁷⁴ See chapter, *Ravana - Ministers Advice Ravana*

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter, *Hanuman - The story of Kalanemi:*

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter, *Kumbhakarna – Kumbhakarna’s Advice to Ravana*

¹⁷⁷ See Chapter, *Mandodari - HER ADVICE TO RAVANA*
See also, Chapter, *Ravana - Ravana’s Curse and Mandodari’s advice:*
See also Chapter, *Mandodari - Mandodari pleads with Ravana to prostrate before Rama and seek pardon*

¹⁷⁸ See Chapter, *Sita - Sita warns Ravana:*

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter, *Ravana - Ravana laments the loss of his son and his kith and kin:*

Maya-sakthi (maayaa-shakthi). Power of illusion, the veiling and projecting power of God. (*Ibid*)

Maya is inescapable for anyone however great. It will turn them upside down in a moment. It will not loosen its grasp so long as the victim is engrossed in the belief that he is the ‘body’. It will not be frightened by the name or fame, the skill or intelligence of the person it seeks to possess. Only when the individual discards name and form, releases himself from body consciousness and establishes himself in the Atma, can he escape from the misconception that Maya inflicts. (*RKR Part I p.97*)

Maya, by means of its power of (1) hiding the real nature and (2) imposing the unreal over the real, makes the one-and-only Brahman appear as Jiva, Easwara and Jagath, three entities where there is only one! The Maya faculty is latent but when it becomes patent, it takes the form of the Mind. It is then that the seedling of the huge tree (which is the Jagath) starts sprouting, putting forth the leaves of mental impulses or vasanas, and mental conclusions or sankalpas. So, all this objective world is but the proliferation or *vilasa* of the mind.

Jiva and Easwara are caught up in this proliferation and they are inseparably intertwined in the Jagath and so, they too, are creations of mental processes like the things appearing in the dream-world. Imagine Jiva, Easwara and Jagath as having been painted. The pictorial Jagath has both Jiva and Easwara incorporated in it and all three appear as different entities though, created by the same paint. So also the same mental process creates the appearance of Jiva and Easwara as pervading and immanent, in the background of Jagath.

It is Maya that produces the illusion of Jiva and Easwara and Jagath: this is declared by the Sruthis. Has not the *Vasishtasmrithi* made clear that mental processes are responsible for the magic dance of He and I, This and That, and Mine and His? The expression “*Sohamidam*” found in that text indicates Jiva, Easwara and Jagath. “Sah” means He, the Unmanifested, the Super-soul, the Power beyond and Above, the Easwara.

“Aham” means “I,” the entity enveloped by the consciousness of doer, etc., “Idam” means this objective world, the perceivable sense-world. So,

it is clear that these three are the products of mental processes only and they do not have any absolute value. Their value is only relative.

In the waking stage and during dream, these three appear as real; but, during deep sleep or while unconscious (as during a fainting fit) the mind is not working and so, the three do not exist! This fact is within the experience of all. Therefore, it is easy now for you to realise that all these three will disappear for good when, through Jnana, the mental processes are destroyed. Then one gets release from bondage to all these three, and knows the One and Only Entity. In fact, he gets established in Adwaitha Jnana.

The Jnana won by the analysis of the mental processes can alone end Maya. Maya flourishes on ignorance and absence of discrimination. So, Vidya spells the doom of Maya. Fevers originate because of your actions. They flourish on wrong methods of life and diet. They grow with the growth of such wrong conduct. The idea of the snake which is Maya, flourishes on the ignorance of the real nature of the rope. It grows and becomes deeper, the more one forgets the rope which is the base. The ignorance which prevents and postpones the inquiry into the nature of the Atman makes Maya flourish. Maya fostered by this attitude becomes as thick as darkness.

When the flame of Jnana illumines, the darkness is as Truth. The wise will at best designate it as “Indescribable” or “Beyond explanation,” for it is difficult to explain how Maya originated. We know only that it is there, to delude. The wise refer to it as “hare’s horn.” Thus, it is spoken of in three different ways, according to the point of view of each. When simple-minded children are told, “Lo! There lurks a ghost there”, they believe it to be true and they get terribly frightened. So too, unthinking, ignorant persons get convinced of the reality of the objects around them through the influence of the Maya. Those endowed with Viveka, however, distinguish between the true Brahman and the false Jagath; others, unable to do so or to find out the real nature of Maya, simply dismiss it as “beyond description,” “*anirvachaneeya*.”

Jnanis who have clearly grasped the truth characterise it as the mother, whose corpse is cremated by the son! It is the experience of Maya that gives rise to Jnana, or “the revealing wisdom.” The child Vidya kills the mother as soon as it is born. The child was delivered for the very purpose of matricide, and its first task is naturally the cremation of the

dead mother. When tree rubs against tree in the forest, fire starts and the fire burns out both. So too, the Vidya or knowledge that arose from Maya destroys the very source of that knowledge. Avidya is reduced to ashes by Vidya.

Like the expression “hare’s horn” which is but a name for a non-existent thing, Maya too is non-existent and one has only to know it to dismiss it from the consciousness. So say the Jnanis. Nor is this all. You label anything non-existent, as Avidya or Maya. Whatever becomes meaningless, valueless, untrue, baseless, and existenceless when knowledge grows, that, you can take to be Maya’s manifestation.

The World is an illusion, which on account of the play of Maya seems to be subject to evolution of names and forms and involution of the same until the whole is melted in Pralaya (involution) or Universal Fires, an Illusion disappearing with the Illumination of Jnana, as Light dispels the delusion of the snake with which the rope was covered! Then, the knowledge that the Atma is All, fills and fulfils; one is Atma through and through! That is what the Sruthi too declares. (*Jnana Vahini p.52-59*)

Man is steeped in *maya* in this manner and he cannot free himself from *maya*. He forgets his origin and he does not understand *Brahman*. However, if this situation does not exist, there is no reason why *Paramatma* should come as an *Avathar* at all. What exists as a reality is only one, but what we see is mani-fold. This one thing appears to us as if it is many. What is real is the *Param Jyothi*. This *Param Jyothi* is the *Atma Jyothi*.

There is a small illustration for this. We have a candle light here. We cover this candle light with a pot which has ten holes in it. On this we also put a thick Turkish towel. In that situation, the light that is inside the pot is not seen at all from outside. But if, slowly, we take off the towel with which we have covered the pot, uncovering each hole one by one, then we can see one light, another light, as the holes come out one by one. But if we remove the towel completely and throw it away, we look at ten different holes, and ten different candle lights. In spite of the fact that we can see ten different lights, if at that time we break the pot and throw it away, then we realise that all these ten lights are only from one single candle. Earlier we did not see any light, but once when the cover on the pot has been removed, we have seen ten lights. If the pot is broken, then we again see one light. This is the basis of your life. There

is inside, as we all can see, the *Jivan Jyothi* or *Param Jyothi*. The *Jivan Jyothi* has been covered by the human body with ten holes in it. We have put the thick cover of worldly desires on it. If the desires of the human body should be broken, then we will have the vision of the one *Jyothi*, i.e., *Atma Jyothi*. That has also been called the *Adwaita Jyothi*. This *Adwaita Jyothi* is the *Jyothi* of the *Atma*. *Atma* is the embodiment of bliss. You can only experience the embodiment of bliss, and it is not possible to exhibit it in any other manner.

Many people have tried their best to find whether this *Atma* exists. If it exists, where could it be found? Since time immemorial, it has been the attempt to find out one's *Atma* and to know what *Atma* is and where it is? What is the evidence for us to accept the existence of the *Atma*?

To establish the existence of the *Atma*, we cannot take even the *Vedas* as the *pramana*. The *Vedas* have only dealt with people in certain aspects relating to the world, and have explained what they should do in this world through various *karmas*. This is the subject matter of the *Vedas*. It has not been possible for the *Vedas* to establish the nature of the *Atma*. (*SSB 1977p.63-65*)

Rama said¹⁸⁰: “Affection for the body, attachment towards possessions of any kind, egoism that breeds the conflict of ‘You’ and ‘I,’ the bonds that grow between the individual and his wife, children and property—all these are the consequences of the Primal Illusion, *Maya*. That Illusion is basic, mysterious, and wondrous. *Maya* establishes her domain over all beings and things, all species of living creatures. The ten *indriyas* (five senses of perception and five senses of action) have each its presiding deity and *Maya* perceives the objective world and derives pleasure therefrom, through their instrumentality. Every item and particle of such pleasure is *Maya*-produced and therefore illusory, evanescent and superficial.

“*Maya* has two forms: One type is called *Vidyamaya* and the other *Avidyamaya*. The *Maya* named *Avidya* is very vicious. She causes

¹⁸⁰ Under Section, Rama, See chapter, Pathithapaavana – Teachings and Advice - **Rama tells Lakshmana the purpose of his avatar and gives discourses on spiritual matters:**

boundless misery. Those drawn by it will sink into the depths of flux, the eternal tangle of joy and grief. The Maya known as *Vidya* has created the Cosmos, under the prompting of the Lord. For, she has no innate force of her own. Only while in the Presence of the Lord can she create the three-stranded Cosmos (*Prapancha*). (The three strands are *Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*, each of which separately or in some kind of combination is characteristic of beings: *Sathwa* meaning the equal balanced temper. *Rajas* the sanguinary or the emotional, active temper, and *Thamas*, the dull, inert temper).

“The truly wise, the *Jnani*, who has realised the Reality, is the person who has given up the rights and obligations of caste and society, of age and status and lives in the constant awareness that all is Brahman. He has understood that there is no manifoldness or diversity here. It is all One. (*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma; Na iha naanaa asthi kinchana*). He knows that the entire Cosmos is constituted of the same Brahman, that there can be no second entity apart from Brahman.

“Oh Lakshmana! You must know that the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra) are but the reflections of the one Brahman in each of the three strands or attributes— *Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*. The *Rajas* attribute is personified as Brahma, the *Sathwa* aspect as Vishnu and the *Thamas* aspect is known as Rudra or Siva or Iswara. The entire Cosmos, including the world is the manifestation of the One Brahman through one or other, or some combination or other of these three attributes. So, the wise man will go beyond and beneath these three strands and seek the Origin in the One. He alone deserves the name, monk or *Vairagi*—for he has no *raga* or likes and dislikes.”

Sometimes, Rama had Sita and Lakshmana near Him and explained to them that so long as the Individual *Jivi* does not understand aright the affinities it has to Maya and to the Supreme Brahman, it can never liberate itself and merge in the Supreme. It has to remain a particularised Individual only, bound by the coils of illusion to the limits of the name and form. But Rama said, the instant the Individual discovers and knows that It is but the image of the Supreme, and that the distinction between the Supreme and Itself has no basis in Truth, Maya will disappear, like fog before the risen sun. This is the genuine *Atmajnana*, for the Supreme is *Paramatma* and the Individual is the same *Paramatma* seen as an Image in the Body-with-name-and-form, the *Upadhi*. (*RKR V Part II p.25-29*)

Viswamitra said, “Rama! Though I know that you are aware of the working of every mind, still, the veil of Maya (taking the appearance as real) hides the fact and precipitates men into misleading tracks. All cannot be masters of the mind. When persons like me find it impossible to keep it under control, there is no need to dilate on the fate of ordinary men! (*RKRV Part I p.144*)

An interesting episode in Ramayana is worth recollecting in this context. When Sri Rama, Sita and lakshmana were moving in the forest, they used to walk one behind the other in that order. Sri Rama represented Paramatma in the context; Sita, the Maya and Lakshmana the Jiva. Whenever Lakshmana wanted to have darshan of Rama, he found Sita standing between him and Rama. How can he have the darshan of Sri Rama? What are the options available to him? Can he push her to a side and have darshan of Rama? No, that is not possible. Not only he will not have His darshan but also will earn the wrath of Sri Rama in such a situation. Same is the case with the jiva (being) also. When Jiva wishes to have darshan of Deva (God), Maya stands in between. The Jiva has to pray Maya to move aside. He cannot threaten her but only pray! If Maya is threatened not only she will not move aside, but God will also become angry since Maya is the upadhi (vesture) of Paramatma. God Himself has taken upon the vesture of Maya and hence He will not tolerate any disrespect to her or bypassing her. Hence, one has to pray to her and earn her grace and through her grace only can have the darshan of Paramatma. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.109-110*)

To all of you I say, “Let mountains fall; let the sea overwhelm the land; but, do not give up your sadhana. And, remember, sadhana is a waste, unless you grow at the same time in virtue and uprightness.” If you give up all and surrender to the Lord, He will guard you and guide you. When you complain, “Oh! He has not guarded me,” I reply, “You have not surrendered.” The Lord has come just for this very task. He is declaring that He will do so, that is the very task that has brought Him!

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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LYRICS

Andalaraasi Aaanandajyothi
Abhayapradayaka Ananadaroopaa
Arunaruna Kanthikantha
Arunojvla jyothi prakasha
Amruthodbhava bhayanasaka
Anduko NaaAraadhananu

- *Inspirational Composition by Tumuluru*

Lyrics

We have included a few Lyrics sung by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and other devotees. We have tried to incorporate the audio of the Lyrics wherever possible, which can be heard in the CD Format of this book. We are grateful to Bhagawan and other devotees.

1. NamasmaraNam Dhanyopayam nahi pasyamO BhavataraNe RamaharE KrishnaharE Tava Naama vadami sada nu HarE |

For crossing the ocean of worldly existence, I do not see any shortcut other than chanting the divine name. I always chant Your name, Hey Rama! Hey Krishna!

2. Sri Raghavam

Sri Raghavam Dasarathathmajamaprameyam
Sitapathim Raghukulaanvaya Rathnadeepam
Aajaanubaahum Aravindadalaayadaaksham
Ramam Nishaachara Vinaashakaram
Namaami... Namaami... Namaami||
Sri Raghunandana Dasaratha Nandana
Bhadradeeshwara Rama
Vaidehipriya Vaikunthavaasa
Sada Smarami Raamethi Rama ||

3. Brochevaarevururaa

Brochevaarevaruraa
Ninu Vina Raghuvaraa
Nanu Brochevaarevaruraa
Nee Charanaambujamulune
Vidajaala Karunaala Vaala
Brochevaarevaruraa.....

O Chathuraa Nanaadi Vandita Neeku Paraakelanayya
Nee Charitamu Pogadalenī Naa Chinta Theerchi
Varamulicchi Vegame
||saa sanidapada nisa ninidadapama
paadama gaa maa paadaani saaneedapama needaapama
gamapada magariśa samaa gamapada maapadani
sasarini ninisadaa dadanipaada mapadani
saanidapa magamanidani padamaapadani
samaa garisa risaanidapa saaneedapama gaamapadani||

Brochevaarevaruraa.....
Seetaapate Naapai Neekabhimaanamu Ledaa
Vaathaathmajaarchita Paada Naa Moralanu Vinaraadaa
Bhaasuramuga Kariraajunu Brochina Vaasudevudavu Neevu
Kadaa
Naa Paathakamella Pogotti Gattiga Naa Cheyi Patti Viduvaka
||Saa sanidapada nisa ninidadapama
paadama gaa maa paadaani saaneedapama needaapama
gamapada magariśa samaa gamapada maapadani
sasarini ninisadaa dadanipaada mapadani
saanidapa magamanidani padamaapadani
samaa garisa risaanidapa saaneedapama gaamapadani||

Brochevaarevaruraa.....

4. Raa Raa Maa Intidaaka

Rara Maa Inti Daaka

Raghuveera Sukumaara Mrokkera (Rara Maa Inti Daaka)

Rara Dasaratha Kumara

Nannelu Kora Ne Thaalalera (Rara Maa Inti Daaka)

Korina Korkelu Konasaagaka Ye

Neeraja Nayana Nee Darigani Ve

Saarithi Gaana Saadhu Janavana

Saari Vedali Swamedaina (Rara Maa Inti Daaka)

Prodduna Lechi Punyamuthoti

Buddhulu Cheppi Brothuvu Gaani

Mudduganu Nee Momunu Joochuchu

Vadda Nilachi Varamu Poojinchenu (Rara Maa Inti Daaka)

Dikku Nevanuchu Thelisi Nannu Brova

Grakkuna Raavu Karunanu Neeche

Chikkiyunnadella Marathuva Ika

Sree Thyaagaraajuni Bhagyama (Rara Maa Inti Daaka)

5. Rama Nannu Brovara

Rama Nannu Brovara

Prematho Lokabhi Rama Nannu Brovara...

Cheemalo Brahmalo Shiva Keshavaadulalo

Prema Mira Melugu Chunde Birudu Vahinchina Sita (Rama Nannu Brovara)

Meppulakai Kannathaavu Nappu Badaka Virraveegi
Tappu Panulu Leka Unte Thyagaraja Vinuta Sita (Rama Nannu Brovara)

6. Rama Rama Rama Sita

Rama Rama Rama Sita, Rama Rama Rama Sita
Srimad Ravikulamandu Janinchi
Seetha Devini Preethi Varinchi
Premanahalya Shaapamu Deerchi
Priya Bhakthula Rakshinchina Sri Raghu (Rama Rama)

Guruvaagnanu Vanamandonarinchi
Guhuni Bhakthikaanandamu Chendi
Paramaadaramuna Bharathuni Gaanchi
Paadukalosagina Paavana Charithudu (Rama Rama)

Kharadooshanaadi Danujula Drunchi
Karuna Jataayuvu Gathi Savarinchi
Sarabhangaadi Muneendrula Brochi
Sabari Phalamulu Prema Bhujinchina (Rama Rama)

Munduga Hanumanthuni Deevinchi
Mudamalaraga Ravisuthu Paalinchi
Chengina Kinukatho Vaalini Drunchi
Cherina Vaanara Veerula Brochina (Rama Rama)

Paavani Saahasa Moralaalinci
Aaa Vanaraasani Neeta Bandhinci
Modamu Meeraga Lankanu Jeri
Aadaramuga Vibheeshanu Brochina (Rma Rama)

Raavanaadi Suravairula Drunchi
Ramanithoda Saadhula Paalinci
Devathalella Nuthimpaga Jesi
Devigoodi Purijerina Sri Raghu (Rama Rama)

Nija Sahodarulu Ninu Sevimpaga
Ninnugoodi Prajalella Sukhimpaga
Ajaharaadi Surulella Nuthimpaga
Aanandamutho Ayodhyanelina (Rama Rama)

7. Chanda Kirana

Chanda Kirana Kula Mandana Ram
Srimad Dasaratha Nandana Ram
Kausalya Sukha Vardhana Ram
Viswamithra Priya Dhana Ram

8. Nee Padamulu Vidajaalamayya

Shiridi Nivasa Sai; Puttaparthi Nivaasa Sai
Maa Hrudaya Nivaasi Sai
Aadhaaramu Nee Naamasmaraname
Akhila Jeevulaku Baba

Saranaagathudanu Karunaasaradhe
Sai Sadguru Deva; Nee Paadakamalamula Niduma
Nee Paada Daasa Daasaanudaasudanu
Naa Mora Vinaleda; Nee Manasu Karugadelo

Japa Thapa Vidhulanu Teliyani Sishuvunu
Shiva Thaayee Sathya Sai
Naamasmaranamanu Maalanu Galamuna
Dhariyinchithinoyi; Karunaanidhe Sai Rama
Nee Paadakamalamula Sannidhi Cherchuma
Baba; Partheesha; O' Shiridinivaasa Sai;
Puttaparthi Nivaasa Sai

Nee Padamulu Vidajaalamayya
Deva Deva Karunaamayaa

Sakala Bhuvanamula Nethavu Neeve
Sarasa Hrudayasthitha Jyothivi Neeve
Jagamulaneledi Swamivi Neeve
Janma Mukthi Phala Daathavu Neeve (Nee Padamulu)

Vishaya Chinthanala Melakuvalona
Thanuvu Marachi Viharinchu Kalalalo
Sukhamulalo Madi Kalachi Vethalalo
Nee Naamamu Smariyinchadamayya

Sairam Sairam Sathya Sairam (Nee Padamulu)

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Every handiwork of yours gets transmuted into the highest form of *Shivapuuja*. Roam about in the region of your own mind and understand its moods and mysteries; do not dream of wandering in foreign lands before you become masters of your own kingdoms. Self first; help next. Know yourself; that lesson once learnt, you can know others, much sooner and much more truly.

Dedicate this life to the service of others, for the others are only visible representatives of the Lord who resides in you. I have come in order to repair the ancient highway leading man to God. Become sincere, skilful overseers, engineers and workmen and join Me. The *Vedas*, the *Upanishadhs* and the *Shastras* are the road I refer to. I have come to reveal them and revive them.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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Man must crave for the vision of God, then only is he entitled to the status of human-ness. *Maanava*(the human) must reach *Maadhava* (the Divine). He must conquer the mind. Man is the ruler of *Manas* (the mind), not its slave. Who takes the role of educator from the beginning of your life? The Mother, is it not? *Prakrithi* (Nature) is the Mother, the Feminine principle, the *Maayaa* (illusory energy). She is the great teacher. If you do not learn the lessons well, Nature punishes you, boxes you in the ear, and hits you on the head. She is a stern merciless instructress; but, if you learn well, she will lead you proudly to the Presence of *Purushoththama* (the Supreme Person). Obey *Prakrithi* and be well trained by her: then, you can inherit the Glory of *Purushoththama*. If you disregard Her teaching, the Mother gets disgusted with you and the Father too will disregard your entreaties. The commands of *Prakrithi* given for your good are called, *dharma*. Have that *dharma* as the witness of all your thoughts, words and deeds. Be guided every instant by the dictates of that *Dharma*, and success will be yours.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SAAYEESHWARA



CH_SAIGAYATRI.mp3



**|| OM. SAAYEESHWARAAYA VIDHMAHE
SATHYA-DHEVAAYA DHEEMAHI
THANNAH- SARVAH PRACHODHAYAATH ||**

Meditate

One should **meditate** on Sri Rama and *the entourage seated on a lotus according to the following Verse:--*

*Vame Bhumi Suta Purasthu Hanumaa Pashchaa Sumitraasuta
Satrughnoo Bharathashcha Parshvadalayor vaayvaadikoNeshvapi
sugrivashcha Vibhinashcha yuvaraT Taraasutoo Jambavaan
Madhye Neelasarojakomala ruchim Ramam Bhajee Shyamalam||*

"Sita (Daughter of Goddess Earth) is seated to the left (of Sri Rama), Hanuman in front, Lakshmana (son of Sumitra) at the back, Satrughna and Bharatha on the petals on the two sides (to the left and right), Sugriva, Vibhishana, Crown prince Angada (son of Tara) and Jambavan at the four intermediate points (Namely, north-west, north east, south- east and south - west) respectively; while in the centre (of the lotus) I worship Sri Rama of a cerulean hue, possessing the soft lustre of a blue lotus" - (*Kalyana - Kalpataru- The Valmiki - Ramayana - Number VIII October 1969 page 4-5*)

MANGALAM

Ramachandraya janaka rajaja manoharaya
Maamakaabhishta daaya mahitha mangalam
Kosalesaya manda hasa dasa poshanaya
Vasavaadi vinutha sadwaraaya mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Chaarumegha Roopaaya Chandanaadi Charchitaaya
Haarakataka Shobitaaya Bhoori Mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Lalitharathna kundalaya thulasi vana maalaya
Jalaja sadrusa dehaaya charu mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Devaki Suputhraaya Deva Devottamaaya
Bhaavaja Guruvaraaya Bhavya Mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Pundarikaakshaya Poornachandra Vadanaaya
Andaja Vaahanaaya Atula Mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Vimalaroopaaya vividha vedanta vedyaaya
Bhutachitta kaamithaaya subhada mangalam [ramachandraaya]

Ramadaasaya mrudula hridaya kamala vaasaaya
Swami bhadra giri varaya sarva mangalam [ramachandraaya]

MANGALAM



Kosalendraya , mahaneeya gunabdhaye,
Chakravarthi thanujaaya sarva bhoomaya Mangalam.
Vedavedantha vedhyaya , Megha Shyamala moorthaye,
Pumsaam mohana roopaya , punyaslokaya Mangalam.
Viswamithrantharangaya , mithila nagari pathe,
Bhagyaanaam paripakaya , bhavya roopaya Mangalam.
Pithru bhakthaya sathatham brathrubhi saha seethaya,
Nandithakhila lokaya , Ramabhadraya Mangalam.
Thyaktha saketha vasaya , chithra koota viharine,
Sevyaya sarva yaminaam , dheerodhayaya Mangalam.
Soumithrina cha janakya chapa banasi dharine,
Samsevyaya sada bhakthya , swamine mama Mangalam.

Danda karanya vasaya , khara dhooshana sathrave,
Grudhra rajaya Bhakthaya , mukthi dayasthu Mangalam.
Sadaram Sabari datha phala moola abhilashine,
Soulabhya paripoornaa, sathvodrikthaya Mangalam,
Hanumath sama vethaya , harresabheeshta dhayine,
Bali pramadhanayasthu , Maha dheeraya Mangalam.
Srimathe Raghu veeraya , sethullangitha sindhave,
Jitha rakshasa Rajaya , Rana dheeraya Mangalam.
Vibheeshana kruthe preethya , lankabheeshta pradhayine,
Sarva loka saranyaya , Sri Raghavaya Mangalam.
Asadhya nagarem divyamabhisikthaya Seethaya,
Rajadhi rajaya Rama Bhadraya Mangalam.
Brahmadhi deva sevyaya , brahmanyaya mahathmane,
Janaki prana nadhaya , Ragu nadhaya Mangalam.
Sri soumya jamathru mune krupaya smanu peyushe,
Mahathe mama nadhaya , Raghu nadhya Mangalam.
Mangala sasana paraiir madacharya purogamai,
Saescha poorvairacharyai , sathkruthayasthu Mangalam
Ramya jamathru muneena , mangala sasanam krutham,
Trilokyadhipathi Sriman , karothu Mangalam sada.
Ithi Sri vara vara muni swami krutha , sri rama mangala sasanam
sampoornam

English Translation

Let good happen to Rama,
Who is the king of Kosala,
And the ocean of good qualities
Let good happen to Rama,
Who is son of emperor Dasaratha,
And who is a very great king.

Let good happen to Rama,
Who is venerated by Vedas and Vedanta,
Who is of the black colour of the rich cloud,
Who is one of the prettiest among men,
And who has a fame which is pure.

Let good happen to Rama,
Who is a confidant of Viswamithra,
Who is the matured luck of ,
The king of Mithila and ,
Is the form of pure humility.

Let good happen to Ramabhadra,
Who is a devotee of his father,
Who shines with Sita and his brothers,
And who makes the entire world happy.

Let good happen to Lord Rama,
Who is courageous and kind,
Who left the city of Ayodhya,
And lived in the forest of Chithrakoota,
And who served all great sages.

Let good happen to my Lord Rama,
Who was with Lakshmana and Sita,
Who was armed with sword and bow,
And who is always served by devotees.

Let good happen to the giver of salvation,
Who lived in the forest of Danda karanya,

Who was the enemy of Asuras, Khara and Dhooshana,
And who was greatly devoted to Jatayu , the king of birds.

Let good happen to him who has lot of good qualities
Who liked the fruits and roots offered by Shabhari.
And can be fully realized, extremely easily.

Let good happen to the God who is very brave,
Who can be easily be attained by Hanuman,
Who used to fulfill desires of King Sugreeva,
And who wounded and killed the great Bali.

Let good happen to the God who is brave in battle,
Who is the valorous hero of the clan of Raghu,
Who built the bridge over the sea,
And who won over the king of Rakshasas.

Let good happen to Lord Raghava,
Who presented with happiness Lanka,
To Vibheeshana due to his love,
And who has the entire world as devotees.

Let good happen to Lord Raghava,
Who was crowned along with Sia,
When he returned back to the city of Ayodhya,
And who is the king of all kings.

Let good happen to the Lord of the Raghu clan,
Who is served by Lord Brahma and other devas,
Who protected Vedas and Brahmins,

And who was the king of the soul of Janaki.

Let good happen to the Lord of the Raghu clan,
Who was got to us by the grace of the saint Jamathru,
Who is my Lord who is on of the greatest.

Let good happen to the Lord who only did good,
The salutary song about him is greatest by my teacher,
Grater than all that is written by previous great teachers

This song praying for good to the lord,
Written by the handsome sage Jamatha,
Wishes for all good all times,
To Lord Rama who is the king of three worlds.

Thus ends the song of good for Lord Rama, written by the sage
Vara vara muni

By

Jamatha muni

Translated by

P.R,Ramachander

(taken from <http://festivals.iloveindia.com/ram-navami/poems.html>)

————— *Om Shanti Shanti Shantihi* —————

