

Ramayana

Gopal Venuraja Rao



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PREFACE

Why I have started re-telling RAMAYANA in a novel format is a question which I shall answer to my own conscience and also for the benefit of the reader of this book.

RAMAYANA is a first epic poem which dates back to approximately 350 B.C.

This story of Rama was originally written by Sage Valmiki in Sanskrit language in the form of 24000 shlokas approximately.

The later famous addition which was like a sequel was “Uttar Khanda” written by poet Bhavabhuti in Sanskrit shlokas in the year 1 A.D during the reign of King Narasimha Verma II ruling a kingdom with capital at Kanauji (in the state of U.P., India). But this “Khanda” or part was generally added to Valmiki Ramayana by many publishers. And also common man on the street think that “Uttar Khanda” which literally means “later part” is a part of RAMAYANA written by great Sage Valmiki. It was because great poet Bhavabhuti imitated the style of Sage Valmiki. Poet Bhavabhuti mentioned the fact that he was writing a complete fiction, like a sequel to RAMAYANA of Sage Valmiki on the request of the great king Narasimha Verma II and he was naming it as “Uttarakhanda”.

In the year 1 A.D. as per historians, King Narasimha Verma II had a court poet called “Bhavabhuti”, who standing in the court in front of the king declared that he possessed a copy of Valmiki Ramayana. But that was only a copy according to the shlokas written in the very beginning itself by the pundit who copied it from the original. If the copy itself was 2000 years old, what could be the approximate age of the original epic written by that great Sage Valmiki?

Sanskrit scholars found that a character called Ahalya already existed in Padma “*Purana*” and also “*Brahmanda Purana*” and likewise they also found other characters also existed in ancient literature of India, like Parashuram, Vishwamitra and *Karthaviryarjuna* etc., who were narrated in Ramayana as they were connected to the main protagonist of the story of Rama and his journey of truth by Sage Valmiki.

There were the evidences like Rama’s bridge across ocean from Rameshwaram in India to Sri Lanka in the present times and during the time of British rule of India, they called this bridge as “Adams Bridge” which was also scientifically researched by Archeologists and found that the stones which made the bridge float if unlocked.

These scholars through the research of literature and other sources claim that story of Ramayana was as old as 350 B.C.E at least.

And Valmiki collected many stories sung by villagers in Dandakaranya, the forest of southern India and other singings by bards, poets, Sadhus, Saints and even by house wives during various festivals.

Valmiki collected these stories of Rama and his wife Sita and put them in an order from the beginning to the end of the journey of Rama’s life. It is very much possible that Rama existed much before Valmiki composed his greatest epic poem in the form of two line Sanskrit shlokas which were basically intended to have an undertone of tragedy. Sage Valmiki without any doubt should have found so many gaps in the stories collected from various sources by him which were called “*janapadas*” particularly from village bards and Sadhus and his main work was to connect these stories from beginning to end in his own way and in Sanskrit shlokas, a literary form called “shlokas” which was invented by him. Vedas were not in the form of shlokas but in the form of verses and mantras.

According to these shlokas in Ramayana , in the very beginning , in his unmistakable style, in his own epic, Valmiki revealed that, he lived as a dacoit earlier and he became a Sage (after undergoing penance) and that he was writing this great epic poem of Rama's journey through life.

One day after becoming a Sage, according to his own revelation, he was taking bath in a river and he saw two birds, husband and wife were mating on the shore of the river. He was just emerging from the river and he saw an arrow shot at the male bird. The male bird was wreathing in pain by fluttering its wings, fallen upside down on the sands of the river but the female bird did not fly away. It was circling the dying husband and crying her heart out. Then as he came to the shore he saw a hunter with a bow and arrow.

Sage Valmiki says, without a deliberate attempt on his part, a Sanskrit shloka came on to his lips. This Sanskrit shloka was a narration of Queen Mandodari weeping on the dead body of her husband King Ravana when he was shot by an arrow from Rama's bow.

Later Valmiki continued his narration of the story in Sanskrit shlokas which essentially narrated the story of Ravana abducting Sita from the forest of Dandaka and then taking her to Lanka. Sita was sitting in a garden of Ravana was beautifully narrated by Sage Valmiki and named this "Khanda" as "Sundara Khanda" which literally meant "book of beauty". This part or Khanda of Ramayana is read even by those who do not believe in Rama because of its literary values and its most beautiful narration in the simplest Sanskrit shlokas.

One day as he was chanting shlokas of his own "Sundara Khanda" sitting on the bank of a river, Hanuman, the monkey god, appeared before him and told him that his own Ramayana was not as better as Valmiki Ramayana and hence Hanuman requested him to write the rest of Ramayana.

It is a myth and it is generally believed by devotees of Rama.

“Ayana” means journey and RAMAYANA means Rama’s journey through life which means journey of a man of truth, simplicity, kindness and values. Rama was praised as “Purushottam” which literally meant the best of human beings.

There are hundreds of versions of Ramayana already written by various authors through centuries of literary development and yet Sage Valmiki version of Ramayana is still available and appreciated. Scholars say that there are 194 versions of RAMAYANA all over the world.

In many versions written in local languages of India as well as in Sanskrit language, many parts of Sage Valmiki Ramayana were deliberately ignored because they were unpalatable truths which devotees of Rama could not accept whereas critics of Ramayana would usually pull out some of these incidents of ignored parts out of context and try to mutilate Ramayana. And they call these mutilations as versions. These mutilations put Rama’s devotees who never read full original Ramayana by Sage Valmiki in defensive situations and lead finally to a defenseless situation of their argument.

Many versions of Ramayana emerged as a result over the period of centuries and these versions out of which at least some of them cannot stand the sword of literary critics who may try to show for example Rama as a villain and Sita as a door mat who would simply obey her husband without a word in her mouth even if it meant jumping in to a fire. But in Valmiki Ramayana the main character Sita from literature point of view was not a dumb, doll like beauty who would simply obey her husband without a word. She was not such a person at all in the narrations of great Sage Valmiki.

That is why there is a saying in ancient wisdom that “a person who is not a Sage cannot write an epic” which is in Sanskrit said as “*non rushiH kuruthe Kavyam*”.

Sita was a very adamant lady and she never kept silent without expressing her anguish or anger and she was never afraid to

speaking. In my version of retelling of this great epic I have tried deliberately to highlight these incidents where Sita had shown her courage to speak and demand either her husband or brother-in-law Laxmana or the villainy character Ravana. She argued with Ravana. She argued with her husband for his suspicions. She had severely criticized her mother-in-law. Sita did not suffer from psychological masochism as many critics try to portray. Sita never obeyed her husband in a blind manner.

The second most mutilated story is that of Ahalya which found its mutilated versions in so many languages of Ramayana that finally readers begin to accept the mutilated versions as real, Valmiki version! People including literary pundits who were well read forgot that the story of Ahalya in Ramayana was only an allegory where the actual explanation through the story of Ahalya was the tantric method of rousing the energy of "Kundalini". I tried my best to elucidate the story of Ahalya as a literary form of an allegory and a little bit of explanation of how it was actually describing an arousal of "Kundalini" spiritual powers in Ahalya and it was also a fact that she was an ardent devotee of Indra Bhagvan worshipping him every day and night.

There was a project taken up by many Sanskrit scholars who read each and every shloka of Valmiki Ramayana with an intention to find interpolations and extrapolations as time passed through centuries of abuse of Hindu beliefs and these scholars found many, many interpolations as well extrapolations in Sage Valmiki's Ramayana itself, and at least some of them show the protagonist Rama himself in a poor light from the point of view of a non-believer of Hindu gods, or an outright atheist or an agnostic person though these same versions can be self-satisfying for an ardent devotee of Rama.

These Sanskrit scholars pointed out interpolations and extrapolations depending on Sanskrit used including its similes which were different from the original author Sage Valmiki and his style. These Sanskrit scholars removed these shlokas also because the meanings of these shlokas differ or even contrary to

the shlokas which come later on in the story of Ramayana. These sites and foot-notes were also quite intellectual in their explanations and general readers do not seem to bother to go through these explanations on the www internet by great Sanskrit intellectuals and their erudite debates.

One intellectual debate is that if at all Ravana suffered from Oedipus complex? This is mostly true that Ravana indeed suffered from Oedipus complex. But inculcation of such behaviour was not explicit in Valmiki Ramayana even though it was vaguely suggested by Sage Valmiki through the double meaning shlokas of praise of Sita by Ravana which in Sanskrit was known as “slesha” and also through Ravana’s confusing behaviour when he stood in front of Sita.

The society as it evolved through centuries, brought world of domination of men over women in all spheres of her life from her birth until her death and modern complexity of the world brought much more insecurity to women in general irrespective of whether women who are working women or housewives.

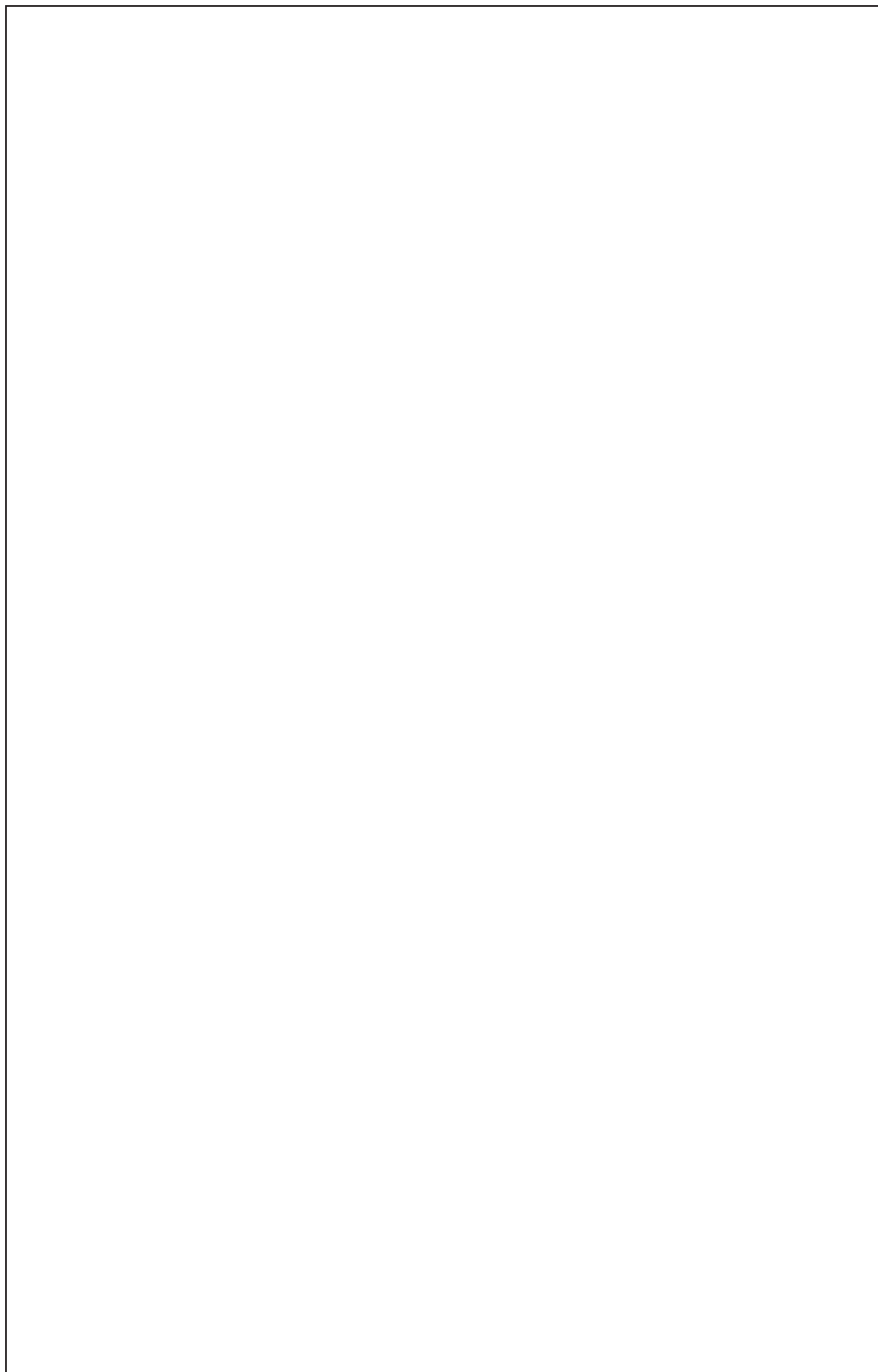
In Ramayana of Sage Valmiki there was no description of “Laxmana rekha” which was a line, in later versions of RAMAYANA drawn by Laxmana around Sita over which she should not step out according to Laxamana’s warnings to her but Sita stepped out of that line only to be abducted by a rakshasha Ravana!

In many parts of Ramayana, umpteen numbers of mutilations took place to the original story by various so called “versions” of RAMAYANA. In this “Ramayana” which is written like a social novel by me, I tried to correct many mutilated, distorted changes to the original story which cannot stand a critics point of view but still appealing and credible to fanatical devotees of Rama.

The “Ramayana” written by me is an audacious attempt to correct these mutilated impressions created by various versions.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

**MY LATE MOTHER
BOWENPALLE YADAMMA
WHOSE MAIDEN NAME WAS
PONUGOTI PULLAMMA**



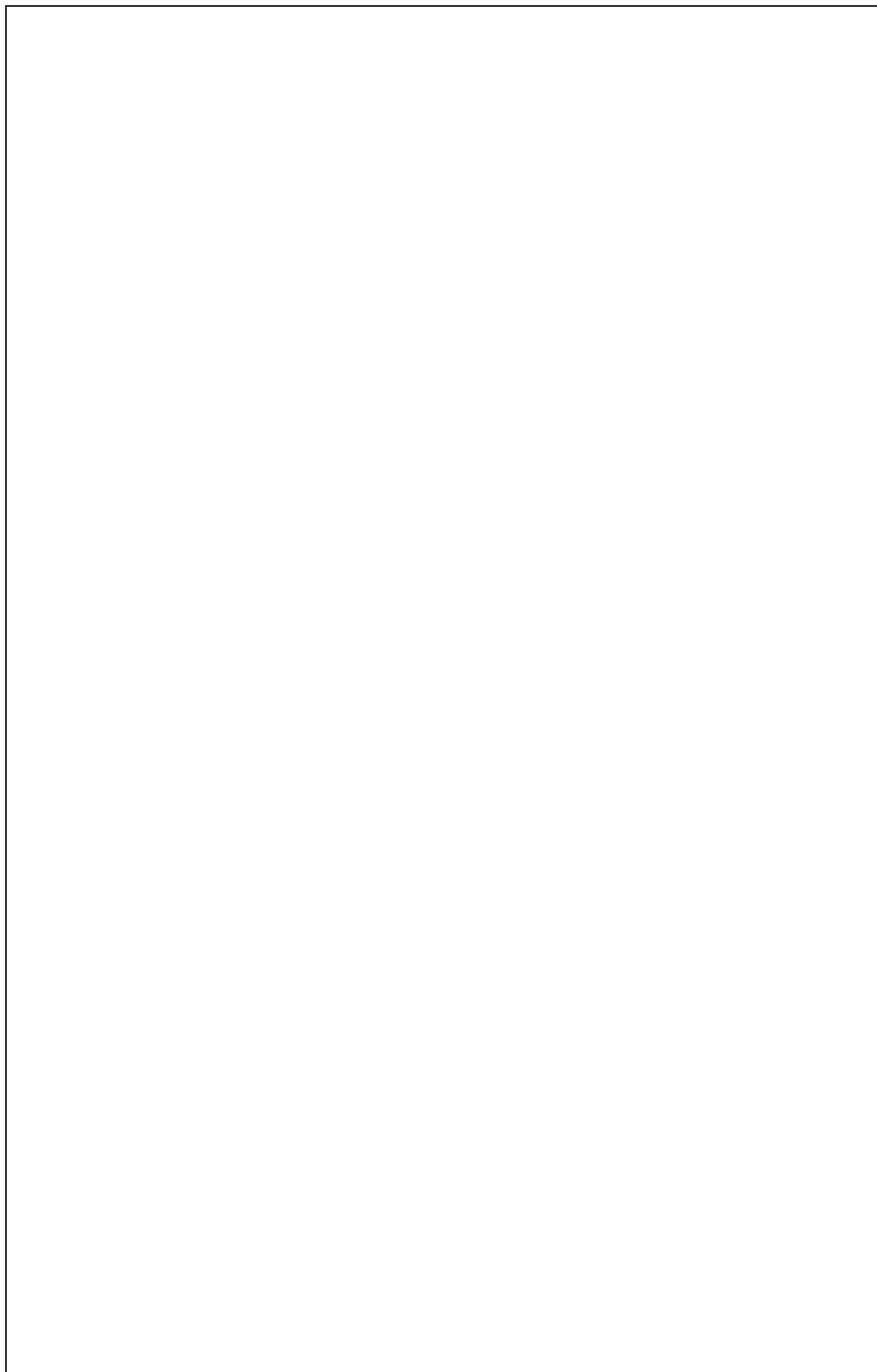
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gopal Venuraja Rao worked as sub-editor UDAYAM Telugu news daily for about 9 years in Hyderabad.

After wards he had learnt computer software programming in social colleges and worked as a software programmer in Hyderabad and also as Oracle DBA for about 12years, in Kuwait for Arab Information management Systems Company.

After returning, he toured all over India to Kashmir, Laddhak to Kanyakumari on his motorbike as his solo journeys.

His most passionate obsession since childhood was reading literature particularly classical literature.

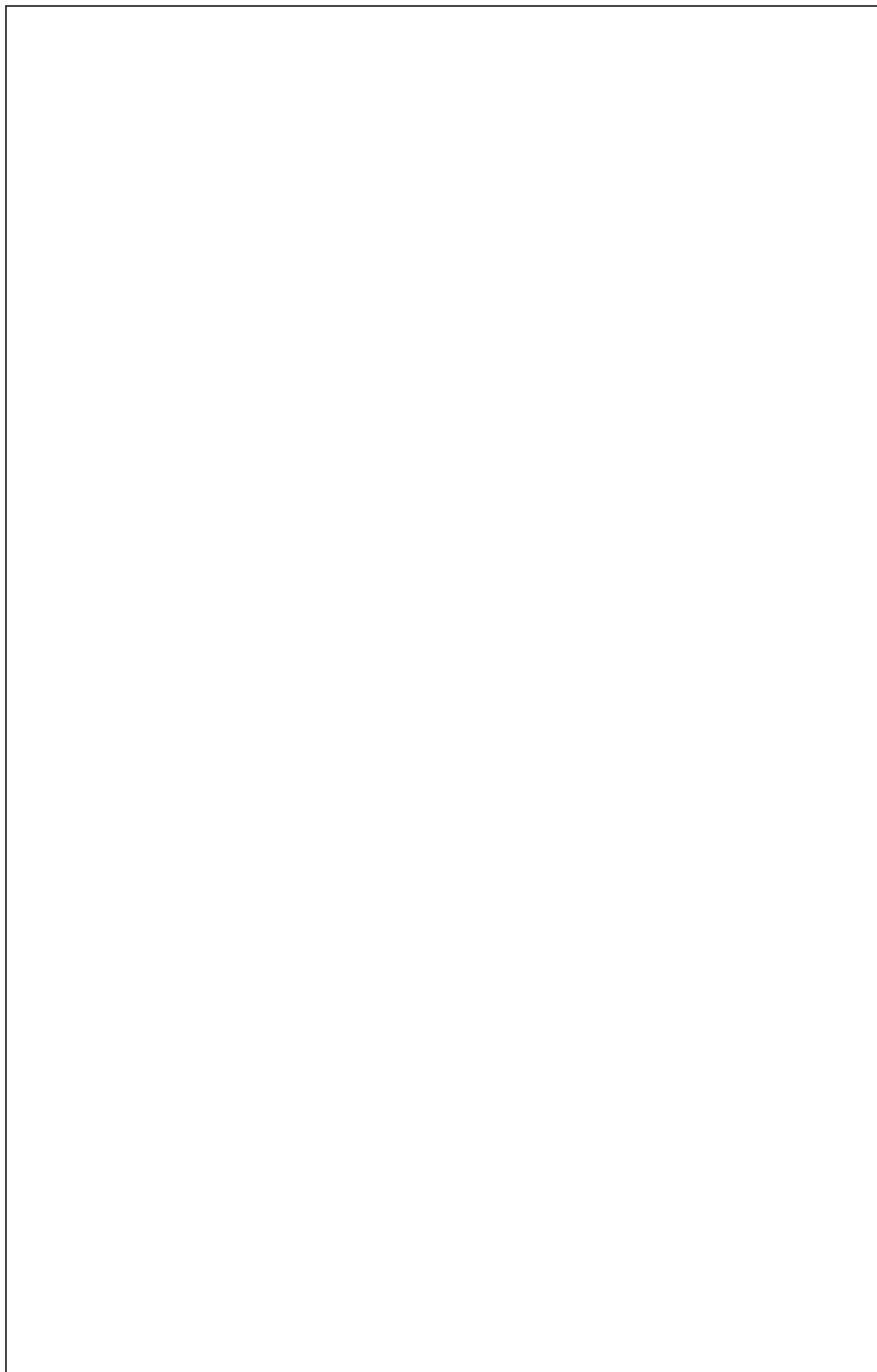


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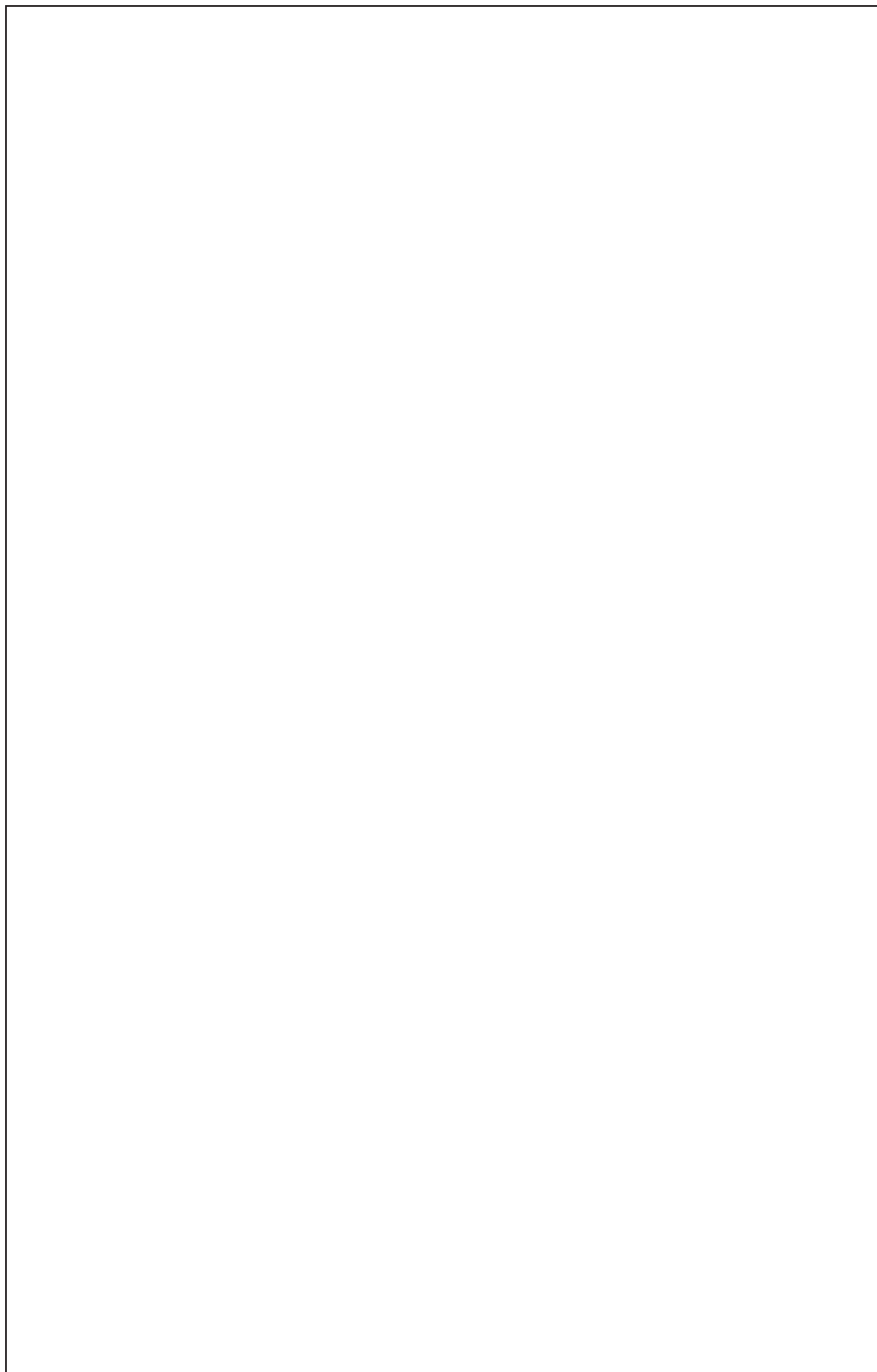
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RAMAYANA

GOPAL VENURAJA RAO



IT was 21st day of birth for that infant girl, in the arms of mighty Ravana, King of Lanka, and the island nation. It was her 21st day of birth and hence there was festive atmosphere in the palace with marigold flower garlands hung everywhere. The cradle ceremony was planned to be a grand affair for this little prince.

King Ravana held the infant on his extended right forearm. His palm folded in to a cusp holding the neck of infant baby giving it support. Her head was tiny little, covered by a cap made of white silk cloth with its edges stitched and folded in flowery fringes in red colour cloth. On his forearm the little infant baby was comfortably sleeping. She was milky white with her sleeping large eyes. When the King Ravana looked in to the face of his tiny little infant daughter that infant baby girl suddenly opened her eyes and looked in to the eyes of her father. The eyes were blank and they were very wide from end to end. Suddenly the baby had gone in to sleep again.

King Ravan was at his happiest moment in his life. He was feeling a very strong emotional attachment to that little daughter. He said to himself “What a beautiful daughter I held in my arms!” Ravana felt very possessive. He thought anyone would feel a pang of jealousy looking at his beautiful daughter. He walked in to the Puja room and stood in front of the big idol of Lord Shiva. He sat on his knees, kneeled to the front and prayed to the idol of Shiva, with his infant daughter on his forearm. “Oh! Lord! My lord! I have this daughter now. I do not want anything else in my life. I pray to you, Oh! Lord!! , if indeed, it were so much required, give my life breath to my daughter but Lord Shiva , always protect her”.

King Ravana’s wife and the queen of Lanka came in to Puja room. She stood there in silence looking at her husband. She was wearing a new sari. Her hair was loose, and flowing down to her knees. Her large eyes were watery; she seems to have taken a hot water bath a minute ago. She is smelling perfume. This most beautiful wife of Ravan had a glowing face. She was milky white in colour.

Mandodari, the most beautiful queen of Lanka and wife of King Ravana was a sorcerous who can challenge even the god of time! She came from an illustrious family of Maya, the architect of Gods. She was an extraordinarily intelligent woman who can control her husband Ravana with all his ten heads. The only weakness was her arrogance.

King Ravana, the mighty king of Lanka rose up from his prayers of Lord Shiva. King Ravana who was blessed by Lord Shiva and was bestowed so many boons that he challenged Gods. When he entered Brahmaloaka, the world of Brahma, the creator, Brahma simply ran away. Long ago, when Ravana entered Vaikunta, the world of Vishnu, the preserver and protector of this universe, the God Vishnu ran away out of sheer fear and started hiding in the Milky Way. Gods fear Ravana. The only God who timidly faced Ravana was the king of Gods Indra who was finally humiliated by Ravana. The white elephant of Indra wreathed in pain when Ravana pulled out its tusk. When neither gods nor demons could challenge Ravana a plan was hatched by God Vishnu who decided to take birth as human being to challenge Ravana. It was the only way out as Ravana was endowed with favours from Lord Shiva blessed by him with many powers and boons. But who knows how the fate ordained Ravana along with his loving daughter whose cradle ceremony was scheduled to happen in a little while and on whose main door the God of Gods Indra's white elephant's tusk was hanging as a memento.

Ravana was grandson of great Sage Pulastya. His father was a sage Vishrara who fell in love with a demon and married her. Vishrara got a son through her and he named him as Ravana. Ravana proved to be a prodigy who studied all the Vedas even as a young man and started composing the fourth Veda, the Sama Veda.

Ravana gave his infant daughter to her mother and his wife queen Mandodari and told her to get ready for the cradle ceremony of their daughter as he had invited the great Seven Sages from the Milky Way, to caste horoscopes for their infant. The sages also

would give a name and this naming ceremony shall be presided over by many other sages as well as Rishis who shall descend from the skies and other star constellations at the appointed time.

Hundreds of maid servants were scurrying everywhere making all necessary arrangements for this great ceremony particularly at the venue of that huge courtyard open to sky in between his palaces complex where celebrations were scheduled to take place. His great Haveli was adorned with lapis lazuli and various other precious blue stones embedded in the walls. Ravana's seven story high palaces built of stone, with interiors design of huge chandeliers and gold staircases with gold railings were opulent and beautiful.

Flowers of all kinds were wound all over the pillars and lotus flowers with thousand petals were brought from Manasa Sarovar of Himalayas. Everywhere Garlands were hung and wound around every pillar of his great palaces. King Ravana was himself a stinking rich hoarding lot of wealth. His city of gold was a gift from mother of Universe Parvati wife of Lord Shiva.

God was kind enough finally to bless him with a daughter which had been an unfulfilled desire for all these years for him. In a pure emotion, King Ravana prayed to Lord Shiva, that he did not want anything else in life anymore. He wanted to weep out of pure emotion when he held his infant daughter on his forearm and looked in to her eyes. Indeed he did not want anything else in life. He thought how fortunate he was! What else he wanted? Even without any effort from his lips came the words of prayer, "Oh! Shiva, My lord!"

As the time for naming ceremony was fast approaching great Sages began to appear as if from nowhere. They started drawing horoscopes with all complicated boxes right on the floor in the courtyard. They drew these with white flour. Some are round and some are rectangular with all numbers and symbols of planets and the location of stars in Sun signs. They all sat around these drawings and looked at the great King Ravana who was standing there. The great queen Mandodari, mother of infant girl child

arrived, wearing a red coloured Sari and her hair was loose and her eyes wide like two fish on her face.

Sages put the infant down on the earth, in a white transparent cloth, inside drawings. As the baby infant was put on these drawings, small drums were beaten with golden sticks and Shell conches were blown while musicians started singing along with very long flutes flowing with music of various notes. A huge gold plate was kept in the center of hall with red hot charcoal and sticks made of sandal wood paste were kept on charcoals. Many women were standing there with big bamboo fans fanning the air which was making the red coal much redder and a very light smoke was flowing with wind everywhere in the courtyard. The sages asked for the exact birth time, date and place of birth including the directions when child was delivered and started writing degrees of various planets and their placements. Ascendants of various methods of casting horoscopes were calculated. The great Sages each had one's own schools of thought and accordingly they were trying to predict the future of that infant girl. They were all very careful with calculations and also very precise because mighty Ravana was a Brahmin Pundit and an astrologer himself. He was a pundit of repute who was feared by all pundits.

Sages started feeling hopeless, as the time ticked by, many a time they were throwing up their arms in air in despair, looking hopelessly at the horoscopes of the infant. And all of them started whispering to each other. The infant was unusually quiet on the floor without even its mother's warmth. Sages started their calculations again. Again they felt hopeless and threw up their arms in air.

King Ravana was profusely sweating and looking very anxious. His face was in a state of confusion. He was not ready to accept anything except his own wishes and great expectations of his daughter who was only an infant at the moment.

A cold anger was raising in the bosom of queen Mandodari, the mother of infant baby. She was ready to accept anything said

about her infant daughter but at the same time, she was not ready to accept any evil predictions.

Sages one after other pronounced the same prediction with slight variations. Sage Shukra Acharya, who is a Guru or sacred teacher of all demons , and who controls planet Venus and who holds a bowl of “*Sanjeevini*” which can bring back any dead creature alive again, finally spoke to King Ravana who was standing and queen Mandodari who was sitting right on the floor near her baby.

Sages gave predictions for future of that infant girl, which horrified not just King and Queen but every one present there including maid servants and “Purohits” who were there to chant ceremonial mantras on her cradle ceremony and conduct ablutions for the infant on her 21st day of birth.

The great Sage Shukra Acharya, said, “Once this baby girl grows up and surely she will grow to be a most beautiful woman with very kind and delightful face which shall shine brilliantly, with a radiance which no human or demon had ever seen in all the three worlds, and that she would set fire to this great Lanka causing deaths of hundreds of thousands of people of Lanka, and most of this golden city would be burnt to ashes not just once but twice”.

King of Lanka, Ravana roared with his bellowing, resounding voice. And he said he would take care of the city, with all the water all around, none should worry. “I am Ravana. I am the King” he said with blocked throaty voice filled with shock and sadness.

But Sages did not stop there. Sages simply told Ravana “Oh! Mighty king! Your majesty with all respect to you we have to warn you of the future consequences. This daughter of yours once grow up, shall be the cause of your death and may be her mother alone might be spared of a disastrous death! Your daughter shall be cause of death for all of your sons, all of the family, except her mother”, they repeated.

Queen Mandodari broke down and started crying at a high pitch and then shouted “no!!” She however recovered in a short spurt of

time, with a determined face with her face becoming stiff and her jaws getting tightened. Her face turned full red with growing anger. The queen shouted at the height of her full voice “there shall be no naming ceremony!!For this devilish, little rakshashi, the demon, blood thirsty devil! Since she would be cause of death for my husband, I shall throw her in to the sea now and now itself”.

And then she cried and she suddenly stopped crying to lift the baby. There was determination in her face and she started gnashing her teeth while looking at that innocent infant who was, adding to Queen’s terrifying situation, looking straight in to eyes of her mother.

King Ravana jumped forward and grabbed his infant daughter from her. Infant started crying at a high pitch and with her tiny little hand she gripped the sacred thread which is around the shoulder and across chest of her father. She held the thread so tightly in her little fist that her mother could not take it off so easily.

Queen Mandodari turned around and shouted orders to her personal servants. At her orders the servants brought a huge box and the lid of the box was opened with high creaking sound of a big ship setting sail on the sea. The great Sages were horrified seeing queen Mandodari in that state of mind.

King Ravana refused to let go of the infant baby. He held his daughter with two hands and pressed her on to his chest. The infant was crying with the sacred thread still in her tight grip, in her tiny little hand, crying on her father’s chest. Queen Mandodari suddenly pounced forward, like an eagle, pulled the infant from her husband and threw that tiny little infant away in to that box from that far. This entire sudden incident happened in seconds. Everyone was horrified and was shouting as they jumped away. The infant fell with a thud sound in the box, stopped crying for a brief time, and then started crying at high pitch with her fists held tight. Infant child was crying so loudly that her cries were making resounding noises in the palace.

Sages and astrologers started running away. King Ravana shouted at full throat and fell forward over to the box but by the time queen Mandodari closed the box. Queen started chanting indelible, incomprehensible mantras, some mono syllables. No body understood what she was chanting. She looked as if possessed by devils. As she went on with her mantras, there was a huge swarm of black insects with tight black and thick wings hovering over the box while biting every one there, adding confusion to an already horrifying situation. When the insects sat on the box they were turning themselves in to steel, like hard nails and they were clutching deep in this big wooden box. Queen Mandodari did not stop chanting her mantras. King Ravana was horrified and shouted at her to stop! But the queen Mandodari did not listen. So mighty Ravana, greatly agitated ordered his body guards. Ravana shouted “body guards!” Guards appeared in steel jackets and steel helmets, all seven of them, with spears and axes. “Open the box; break it” ordered Ravana.

But Queen Mandodari did not stop chanting her mantras. Ravana shouted at her “what kind of mother you are!” “Stop chanting. Stop it”. But her hair now completely disheveled her eyes blood red, she in her red sari, moving circularly, around the box, went on chanting her mantras at a high pitch and in a loud voice. Mandodari was adamant about one consequence and that was her infant daughter must die!! She did not stop chanting her mantras.

“Drag her away” ordered her husband King Ravan. “Take your queen away” shouted Ravana again but none of the maid servants moved forward to obey his orders. After all she was their queen. King Ravan ordered again. Some woman guards moved forward seven on each side of the queen, holding her hands, to take her away. While these guards started pulling their queen away, to inside of palace, the Queen turned around towards the huge box, and started chanting her mantras much more loudly. And more and more of a swarm of insects started hovering around the box, all mysteriously descending down from the sky and clutching the box turning by themselves in to steel. It seemed the infant was

crying inside the box, a muffled cry of a little infant could still be heard.

Four demons appeared descending right from the sky. The King of Lanka, mighty Ravana was looking helplessly at the box. His bodyguards with steel helmets started striking that huge wooden box with full force, lifting their axes high up over their heads and bringing down on the box to break it but the box was not breaking, it was not giving in even a little, and not even a small piece came off it. Their axes, its staff, broke in to two and the blades flew in to the sky falling back right on their helmets with big, twang sound. All body guards fell down. They tried to open it with their hands. The box would not move even a little.

Then four more demons descended down from the sky. All eight demons that appeared mysteriously, out of nowhere lifted the box and flew up. King Ravana broke down, fell on his knees and wept. All the sages, all of servants and guards looked at mighty Ravana with astonished faces. They could not imagine a mighty Ravana weeping. They had only seen how he made Gods weep at his palace doors. They only knew that king of Gods Indra himself had run away along with his wife Sachidevi and out of fear he had left heavens in haste.

But King Ravan could also weep. He was the father of that infant baby girl in that box which had now disappeared. King Ravan sadly got up from that empty and silent courtyard and dragged himself along to inside of his palace to see his wife Mandodari.

King Ravana started begging his wife to bring back his daughter. He said he would not believe those stupid astrologers. He would make the Gods re-write her fate. He would go to Lord Shiva in Kailas to beg pardon and ask the supreme God Shiva to re-write his daughters fate. He would do everything he could possibly do to save Lanka and to save his daughter. "You as a mother should never be this much cruel. This is nothing but infanticide" Ravana told her in a begging, apologetic voice.

Queen Mandodari did not relent. “I shall not stop. I shall not allow that ill-fated little “Rakshashi”, a demon child to survive. I am the queen and am answerable to people of Lanka. All of people of Lanka are equal to my children. I am the queen. I am no ordinary person. That little wretched ill-fated daughter cannot make me a widow! Should I become a widow of all of my ill fate?”

Queen Mandodari let out a big wild cry. She got up, turned to her husband and went on “What kind of daughter she would be who would kill her own father when she grows up? That tiny creature who is my daughter must now be sacrificed to the ghosts and goblins to save you and every one of my sons! ” ranted Mandodari.

The unbreakable box with all its multitude of black insects which turned themselves in to steel railings and delved deep in to the box was gone. It was thrown in to the sea by those mysterious demons. And those demons came back to report to their queen.

Without any more hope and without any more energy left in his body, King Ravana slumped to the floor. He had just collapsed. All his hopes for recovering his daughter were gone, which all happened in just a few minutes. Ravana realized that few minutes of life brought a horrifying change in his life, turned everything in his life upside, down. Now he started hating his wife like never before.



KING JANAKA OF MITHILA

In this faraway place from Lanka and its king Ravana, there was a small kingdom of Mithila, located in the south of India on the edges of great forest called “Dandaka” grown thick on either sides of river Godavari. Its king Janaka was much erudite, an authority on ancient scriptures and was known in parts of the world as a great philosopher king. But his tantric practices were not much known outside in the world. King Janaka was considered a saint because he lived like a saint. King Janaka had a huge inheritance of mounds of gold and a precious bow from Lord Shiva, the ultimate god of destruction. King Janaka belonged to a clan where for many generations very few children were born and generations of accumulated fabulous wealth was kept hidden in the underground vaults of his famed unbreakable fort. Though his own kingdom was small, he owns and lives in a fort which many architects and engineers declared it as impossible to break and shall last long with its solid foundations and high turrets. They declared this fort as “fort forever” which shall survive as long as the Moon appears in the sky and clouds bring rains to the earth.

There were mounds of gold in the underground vaults of his palace inside the fort and there were several secret vaults hoarding dizzying quantities of gold, pearls and diamonds that if all were taken out and packed on the backs of three hundred elephants they might groan under the weight of gold alone not including bags of diamonds and other precious stones in huge wooden boxes.

King Janaka and his ancestors were ardent devotees of Lord Shiva and this was one reason why the great king Janaka was in the possession of an ancient and most precious bow of Lord Shiva made of alloy gold.

The population at large holds their King Janaka in reverence. Though it was a small kingdom there never was any dearth for food or water for even the poorest of the poor of this country. This tiny kingdom was surrounded by many large kingdoms but there never was an enemy who could take this fort or its fabled wealth in its secret vaults which was well known in those days.

Social security was high in his kingdom depending on the natural, god fearing people of the country.

It was one day on a monsoon season which later proved to be a life changing incident for King Janaka. From the direction of South-West, the most anticipated monsoons brought showers of rain. It was raining throughout that particular night. Few days before, there was a hurricane on the sea when even big ships were lifted up high in the air over the waves of the Sea.

Now early on in the morning, the great King Janaka's Prime Minister arrived at the court and announced that it was the day when the King should participate in a public function, by ceremoniously tilling the land, and his majesty should please the rain gods by worshipping's and shower his blessings for the fertility of lands at the start of season by ceremoniously plowing the land. The king shall announce the start of the season for cultivation.

King Janaka was wearing a ceremonial turban on his head and stood among the large number of people gathered on the fields. He was garlanded by farmers and trumpets blew while Vedic scholars and temple priests started chanting mantras for the great fertility and higher crop yields for the kingdom. They were chanting for the season for appeasing the God Varuna for more rains and to God Indra for the fertility of crops.

King Janaka started the ceremony of tilling the land while the temple priests and monks started walking along the plow following the age old traditions. But the plough got stuck unexpectedly underneath the earth. It was a very fertile loose soil

and there should be no reason for getting stuck there, in the middle of tilling the land.

As the plough was stuck, King Janaka gave a whip lash to the bulls tied to the plow. The bulls, both of them all of a sudden, moved ahead with a jerk, giving rise to a high creaking noise, coming from the under the ground very much audible to all present there, as if something had broken right underneath the earth. The plow made a deep furrow, and in that instant an infant baby pushed up from mother earth, like a pollen dust split up from flowers, up in the air. King Janaka jerked forward, to hold that infant baby so that it would not fall down. Surprisingly the infant baby was not crying at all.

King Janaka was astonished. It was a completely unexpected event. Trumpeters stopped and there was a big hush, hush muttering noises among farmers present there. King Janaka observed that infant baby girl in the cup of his both hands joined together. The infant was milky white. She was worn with a cap; a white silk cap around the infants tiny head bound with a border of fringes designed like flowers in red silk.

King Janaka took off his turban and wound the ceremonial cloth around the infant's waist. Looking at the stomach of the baby whose naval was still wound with black and white thread probably by a midwife during delivery, King Janaka told to all present there, that the infant shall be the child of mother earth, and was born just now right from the furrow.

The infant was still; its lips parched and even had cracks on the lower lip. The infant was completely pale and white looking very weak unable even to weep.

King Janaka hurried to his chariot, pulled by seven horses. He had immediately left to his palace.

On the following day, the infant was adorned in all new cloths of silk in pink colour and her head was in pink colour cap and her face was with vermillion marks on her forehead. A priest had completed all worships of gods particularly mother earth for

blessing the illustrious king Janaka with a baby girl who had no children of his own at the time.

The whole of Mithila came to know this great spectacular incident of an infant girl coming out right from the earth, from the plough's furrow while the great King was tilling the land at the arrival of monsoon.

King Janaka, climbed up to the terrace of his great unbreakable fort, and from the ramparts of the fort, he held his infant baby up in the air, keeping her feet on his shoulders, king Janaka declared, "Her name is SITA" and she is my daughter"

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered underneath the Fort, lining up miles together, raised their hands and said victory to Mithila, and victory to Sita!!



KING RAVANA

King Ravana in the city of Lanka in his palace suddenly woke up from a bad dream. He sat up on his bed feeling very stifled for breathing and was highly agitated. He was profusely sweating. He felt thirsty. He thought about this often recurring bad dream as if it were chasing him throughout his life. He also felt a pang of guilt whenever he remembered this dream. He was beside himself, lost in thoughts of past events, and his face contorted with black lines full of sorrow.

In the dream he had seen it all over again. What a bad dream! That beautiful woman, Vedavati, was walking, she was curvaceous. She was milky white with very wide eyes like two fishes on her face with a pretty mouth and a beautiful nose. She had very long flowing locks of black curly hairs, tightly tied in to a braid, reaching up to her hips. That beautiful woman was looking very gracious and even very spiritual.

But these beautiful curves of her body did not entice King Ravan and his amorous feelings for her did not arise because of her curvaceous body with heavy chest. Ravana was not spellbound because of her beauty. He had seen many beautiful women. He had many women as much beautiful as her right in his harem. A dozen of them he could have them for the night for fun.

But he had never seen such a serene face as the face of Vedavati, which was completely still, very spiritual and unbelievably still, like a calm, serene, untouched pond in the middle of a flower garden. And there was such a great devotion in her eyes. With an unmistakable devotion to Gods, and often times deep in meditation she had that serene and a complete “still” look in her beautiful wide eyes with a face shining with its own inner light. Like a winged insect goes around the lamp in the night, his mind and he, himself in body went around that small hut in the middle

of a forest in a place, where Vedavati lived. Vedavati was her name, an adopted daughter of a Sage who meditates on these hills in the middle of that thick forest.

But King Ravana was nothing but an insect in the eyes of that *Sadhvi* Vedavati. He had been stalking her for quite some time, and his stalking was highly irritating to Vedavati. He would be moving around that hut in the day and night, but afraid of her father who might curse even Gods. Ravana was terrified of curses as he was already cursed by many saints. “I have had all these curses” he thought “Enough of curses” and afraid to enter that hut.

But unable to overcome his heinous obsession one day Ravana finally entered the hut. He saw Vedavati sitting near the holy fire in the middle of that hut, right on those geographical drawings. She was chanting mantras. Seeing Ravana, the king, Vedavati was terrified as she was all alone in that hut at that time. She shouted at him to get out and repeated again that she had taken vows of celibacy as a *Sadhvi*, and she would remain as a spinster. That was what exactly she said.

Ravana went through this entire course of tragic incident again in his dream.

But Ravana’s interest at the time was not in marrying her but in possessing her and he was blind with desire. As he moved forward, Vedavati warned him not to touch her and stop approach her. She warned him repeatedly but Ravana did not care to listen.

King Ravana started to beat his forehead sitting on the bed now in the dim light of a lamp in his bed room. He felt guilty and thought he could have restrained himself and regretted the past event. He questioned himself as to why he could not control himself.

Why he was so much interested in this monk like woman Vedavati who had no interest in day to day to life? The detailed dream came back to memory again.

Ravana pounced at her on that fateful day, in that lonely hut, and caught the locks of her beautiful hair. Vedavati spat on the face of Ravana and said that her hair became polluted due to the touch of such a lusty womanizer. But Ravana was in no mood to listen to her. Vedavati moved away from him, took out a small knife and cut off braid of her hair, throwing it in to the holy fire called “homam” she started cursing him which he could never forget.

King Ravan insisted she must come on to his bed in his palace. She freed herself from the grip and jumped in to the fire; Vedavati was on fire, burning herself. As the fire was engulfing her, Ravana tried to save her but was helpless and started running around in circles around the fire crying for help.

Vedavati while burning herself cursed Ravana. “Oh! Ravana listen. Your pride will end. I shall take birth as your daughter to teach you a lesson. I shall burn your city of Lanka twice the way I am burning now, and I shall finish your entire family and shall be the cause of your own death”.

Vedavati now completely caught in fire began to sink in fire, engulfed by the fire, she was fast disappearing. Ravana cried, shouted, asked for help and still he tried to put out the fire even in those last moments. Finally he found water outside the hut and doused the fire.

He could still see her face burning bright amidst fire in his mind’s eye. His search in the fire pit that was put out and a search in the ashes only could get him her bones. One was her skull and her teeth and a long thigh bone and few other bone pieces. All of them he dutifully collected in to a long piece of cloth, tied the ends of cloth together and in complete sorrow, he put that cloth bundle of bones on his head, and on foot on that day he arrived at his own palace completely forgetting that he was the king. He was oblivious of everything around him. He could not even remember the route he had taken to arrive at his own palace on foot. He was looking bizarre.

His advisors who confidentially advised him to immerse her ashes and bones in the river Ganga also warned him of sinful consequences if Brahmans do not perform some obsequies at the river Ganga while immersing her bones. But Ravana decided against their advice and kept the cloth bag of her bones at home.

King Ravana put that cloth bundle of ashes and bones of Vedavati right over on his own attic, which he could see from his bed. Every day he would see it. And every day he would feel waves of immense sorrow for a mindless act he committed. Sometimes it was like drowning himself in a sea of sorrow for him. And sometimes when he was alone he struggles to break down weeping to lessen the burden in his heart but he found that bursting out weeping was difficult for him.

Now in this bad dream that night, he had seen every bit of that incident happened long ago, repeating itself, in detail as if it happened, again right in front of his eyes. The dream was almost real for him. He felt exhausted and vexed. King Ravana was full of sorrow.

All of a sudden he sat up on the bed. On his side on another bed, his wife Mandodari was sleeping. As he got down from the bed, and crossed the room, he crossed that empty cradle as well. He stopped at the cradle. It was not a day break as yet, and in that semi darkness and in that light of flickering lamp, the empty cradle gave him a jolt in to the tragedy of yesterday.

He swaggered a little and studied himself. He wanted to sit down on the floor or to slump himself on the floor but with great effort he could still stand himself. After sometime he moved and lazily scrambled up on to the attic on the left side of the room's lower roof.

King Ravan brought down that cloth bag with ashes and the bundle of bones of Vedavati. Without any more waiting, he walked outside, towards the hangar where he kept his Pushpak helicopter.

His helicopter, “Pushpak” with its own robot pilot, was activated. Its fans whirled. Its robot pilot switched on the buttons, and the helicopter bellowed a lot of steam through the pipes and in no time Pushpak was airborne flying towards “Rishikesh” in Himalayas, which was on the banks of holy river Ganga. In a sad mood, Ravana was sitting in that “Pushpak” as if he had no life.



KING JANAKA

It was the court of King Janaka, in the city of Mithila. Two years after Sita had her naming ceremony; King Janaka was blessed with a daughter whose naming ceremony just happened a day before. She was named Urmila, which literally meant an enchanting woman. King Janaka felt that Sita brought him good luck of more children to him.

Both his daughters Sita and Urmila were growing up and a few years passed. King Janaka was in search of a teacher who could teach Sita all Vedas. King Janaka observed that Sita was a very special girl with a very strong mind of her own. Sita was growing up as very beautiful and lovely girl with shining, bright large eyes, with eye lids like petals of a lotus flower.

There was one saint Ashtavakra in the court of King Janaka who had eight deformities in his body and yet he was highly educated, very wise and famous intellectual.

One day Janaka sent for Ashtavakra. He was chosen as teacher for Sita.

Sita had very high grasping power, highly disciplined girl. So for Ashtavakra it was easy to teach her Sanskrit grammar and Vedas. Sita was physically very strong and highly active child. The learning of Sita was going on without any problem and her father Janaka felt that he was very fortunate to have such a daughter who seemed to know everything under the Sun, though her over confidence was a cause of concern for him as a father.

Janaka instructed Ashtavakra to find a teacher to teach her use of weapons particularly because he had no sons and he felt that Sita was son and daughter both for him.

Sita also started learning to use tantric weapons right from her father Janaka himself. As they could not find any teacher who

could teach her use of weapons, her father Janaka himself started teaching her techniques of using various fire mantras and tantric mantras and also the methods to use weapons, including missiles. She became a very skillful rider on horses and adept at using the bow and arrow.

But all these were not important for King Janaka by the time Sita attained maturity as a grown up girl. Janaka's worry was a bigger one. Sita meditates and often slips in to lack of outer consciousness!! She liked to wear saffron coloured clothes like monks which had worried Janaka much more. She was much ahead for her age in maturity of mind. That was the cause of worry for her father and he decided to get her married as soon as possible.

When Sita had grown up to be young girl of sixteen years, she was very much interested in playing her favorite handball game in the inner court yards of the fort.

In the game, girls escape each other to carry the ball to the goal as the opposite team push up the ball in to air with their hands alone.

King Janaka was sipping a peg of alcohol, sitting in the balcony. He could see his daughters Sita and Urmila playing in the inner courtyard along with several other teams of girls. King Janaka was taking his drinks while looking down, observing the game.

As he was watching, the ball was shot in to big tin shed on the edge of compound wall by mistake. So all these girls with their girlish giggling and jokes, they entered that great shed with a very high ceiling. While the girls talked, the shed was giving big resound. It was huge covered by iron sheets as its roof. They finally found the ball stuck up underneath that huge steel box which was 12 feet long and very wide. The only way to get the ball was to move the box. Janaka was observing with a smile on his face.

Girls shouted for guards. And guards appeared. First only two guards came to move the box so that they could take the ball

underneath the box. But they could not move in spite of all their combined strength. These guards called for help for more guards and a dozen of them collected at that great shed, who tried to push the box. Half a dozen of these guards and muscle men on one side and other half a dozen on back side of the box, including some huge bodied wrestlers who joined in to move the box tried their best with all their combined strength. The box did not move even an inch. It was evening time and light was also fading fast. They were all trying with all their strength and their bodies completely drenched in sweat as they tried until exhausted but were unable to move the box.

After watching all this for some time, Sita told all these wrestlers and guards to move away from the box to give way to her. All the guards moved away from the box and stood aside with all the respect for their prince. Sita went inside, took a look at the box, put her left foot on the box, and to the horror of her father watching from far on the balcony, she just moved the box away by kicking it with her left foot and then picked up the ball.

King Janaka who was very much horrified ran down stairs. As he approached he could see Sita his daughter taken aback as Sages and Rishis from skies descended one after another. All these seven Sages who were famously known as Saptha Rishis from Milky Way appeared there looking straight at Sita with anger.

Sita dumbstruck was just simply looking at them. Saptha Rishis, in one voice cursed her. They said “What an ego! How dare you Sita! You put your foot on the box of Lord Shiva, in which a large bow of Lord Shiva, much revered by Gods, had been kept. !! How dare you insult such a mythical bow, and how can you kick it with your left foot! Oh! My God! Oh! Lord Shiva!! Destroyer of this world, what a sacrilegious act had been done! You shall suffer in your married life Oh! Sita! You shall pay for your karma. !!”

At which, after hearing their curses, Sita fell at their feet asking for pardon. King Janaka who came running there prostrated before them and begged those great Rishis to pardon his daughter and pleaded for mitigating their curse. Janaka pleaded

“Oh! Sages! She is only a very young girl. She can even be considered a child. And she did not know that there is Lord Shiva’s bow kept inside the box. You should not have cursed her to suffer for life for her childish act”

But Saptha Rishis neither relented nor gave any solution to their curse to mitigate the effects. They said to him that their curse also serves a purpose. “Oh! King!! It shall be beneficial to the whole world. Sita would set an example of greatness for womanhood”. And then they disappeared.

King Janaka, fell down unconscious for some time. Sita also lost her speech for some time. There was a tragic silence which enveloped the entire palace of king Janaka.



KING DASHARATHA

Not very far away, on the north of Mithila there was this king called Dasharatha ruling over a very large empire called Kosala and to prove his suzerainty, long ago King Dasharatha conducted a “Maha Yagna”, a big ritual with one thousand Brahmins. And all of those kings who could not challenge him or the ones, who readily accepted Kosala Kingdom’s suzerainty with its capital at Ayodhya, and its King Dasharatha, promptly came to attend the ritual.

King of Mithila, Raja Janaka also attended this “Maha Yagna” and its great ritual along with many other kings as well. Kosala’s capital city, Ayodhya’s domination was accepted without a question by many kings including Janaka. In that way, and also because of a great fame and name, Dasharatha was well known and he was personally known to Janaka the king of Mithila who had been paying annual tax to Ayodhya.

There was a hoary past to this legendary king Dasharatha. Though all most all kings accepted the suzerainty of Ayodhya and were ready to be declared as subservient to Ayodhya and its king Dasharatha, King Ravana of Lanka did not accept Ayodhya’s domination at all.

It was well known that Demi-gods, and nature spirits like Yakshas, and species of tribes like Kimpurushahas were waging a war with rakshasha king Ravana and Dasharatha who sided with demi-gods participated in that war, which finally led to direct confrontation with Ravana.

In this closely held limited war Ravana, humiliated King Dasharatha and left him alive only because King Dasaratha pleaded guilty and begged for pardon. King Dasharatha did not die in that battle with King of Lanka, Ravana, only because of his

wife Kaikeyi, the third and very young wife of King Dasharatha who valiantly fought alongside her husband. In her daring attempt in the middle of the battle, to save the chariot with its wheel disengaging, she had held the high speed wheel with her left hand and in her excruciatingly painful attempt to save the chariot and save the life of her husband Dasharatha, her little finger was cut off by the wheel of her chariot. She, Queen Kaikeyi was a warrior and fought earlier also with Ravana along with her father in the kingdom of Kekaya before her marriage with Dasharatha. The warrior queen Kaikeyi fought with Ravana for the second time, along with her husband King Dasharatha. Her husband King Dasharatha was very pleased with her valour and sacrifice and had given her two boons to ask for whatever she desired to possess. But Kaikeyi said she would redeem her two boons only when she needed them.

The demigods, Yakshas and other neighboring kings felt that it was actually due to King Ravana's perfidy and insidious nature; he could win a battle against King Dasharatha.

The prestige and fame of King Dasharatha as a great warrior did not fade away, with his defeat in the hands of Ravana, the king of Rakshashas. All those neighboring kings actually praised his queen Kaikeyi for her valour and his own daring attempt to defeat Rakshasha Ravana. They all said even the King of Gods, Indra Bhagvan was humiliated by King Ravana at about this same time.

But this was all very much past incident for the life of King Dasharatha. The biggest problem for Dasharatha was that he had no heir to the throne. He had no children. Since he had been desperate to have children, King Dasharatha had married thrice in all these years for children but none of his three queens could conceive. His youngest wife Kaikeyi was a warrior herself. Kaikeyi was a very young and a very pretty woman, but in spite of spending all the time with her, King Dasharatha was bereft of an heir to the throne.

On the advice of great Rishi and Guru of Dasharatha, Sage Vashista, Sage Rishyashringa and many astrologers, The King

Dasharatha decided to perform a great Yagna called “*Putra kamesti Yagna*” with oblations to fire-god, to beget sons and heirs to his throne. This great “*Putra Kamesti Yagna*” started with all the Rishis chanting mantras from Yajur Veda and pouring ghee in to the sacrificial fire. Udgara started singing hymns from Sama Veda and Rutviks, eight of them started chanting from Rig-Veda.

On the left side of King Dasharatha was Queen Kausalya the first wife who seemed to be much taller to her husband and she was a very big woman. And sitting still further left of Dasharatha was his second wife Sumitra and on the same line of queens of Dasharatha, the last one was his youngest wife Kaikeyi.

As the ritual went on, hymns were sung in praise of Gods while Rishis ordered a horse, a white one, which was brought and then beheaded. The head of the horse was offered as an oblation to the fire-god. And the chanting of mantras reached high pitch. Various ablutions were done and “Kratu” performed. While Sages chanted mantras, various “rituals” were performed, and several times King Dasharatha along with his three wives circumambulated the ritual fire and had thrown fresh flowers, Vedic sticks, and poured clarified butter in to the fire. The ritual Vessel, a bowl of silver was kept in the middle of flower garlands in the center of rituals.

The ceremonial ritual was going on with full devotional hymns, and chanting of mantras went on to exasperation stage. Then there was a sudden big thunder in the skies above, which was reverberated very loud in the skies with pleasant blue light flashing in the clouds and then there was a long, blue thread like lightning struck right in the middle of silver bowl pouring nectar from the skies, filling the vessel with that sweet liquid. Then Rishis advocated King Dasaratha that he should call his first wife by her name, who was only eligible as per principles of ritual to drink the sweet, nectar.

But Dasharatha insisted that all his three wives were eligible and the first born son should sit on the throne as per the ancient principle of Dharma Shastras.

So, the first wife, the queen of Ayodhya, Queen Kausalya, took the bowl and drank half of the bowl of sweet nectar which she gave it to her co-wife Sumitra who drank one-eighth of what was given. Kaikeyi the youngest wife of King Dasharatha drank only half of it and gave the vessel back Sumitra who drank the rest of it.

A year was gone by, and as a result of “Putra kamesti Yagna” all the three queens of King Dasharatha delivered children but Sumitra gave birth to twins; these twins were named as Laxmana and Shatrugna. The son born to Kaikeyi was named Bharatha. When birth times of these sons were calculated Shatrugna was the youngest one of all. The eldest one is Rama born to eldest Queen and Queen of Ayodhya Kausalya.

This is very important one because in ancient India, according to the “Dharma Shastras” or rules of righteousness, the eldest son is the only one eligible heir apparent to the throne of his father or grandfather and eldest son is the only one who should perform all the Obsequies for his parents during and after their cremation.

Otherwise, any deviation from this rule, which may result in usurping the throne by younger brother, meant lot of trouble with common people in the kingdom. Such a succession will not be acceptable to Sages and also to regency council consisting of relatives of royal family.

King Dasharatha with immense joy conducted naming ceremony for all his four sons born to his three wives. The naming ceremony was conducted with great festivities all over Ayodhya city, and with a lot of fanfare when the mighty King Dasharatha donated thousand cows to Brahmins and sweets were distributed to common people all over Ayodhya city for several days.



LORD RAMA

Lord Rama the eldest son of King Dasharatha and the only son of his mother Kausalya reached the age of eighteen and had a reasonable knowledge of all weapons with excellent fighting skills but his most favourite weapon was his bow and arrow. He named his bow as “Kodanda” and Rama could shoot an arrow accurate to the target blindfolded. His strength and shooting skills became a sort of legend all over the kingdom of Ayodhya.

But great Sage Vishwamitra who was a legendary sage was also known for his short temper, visited the great King one day in the capital city Ayodhya. King Dasharatha was surprised of this visit of Sage Vishwamitra.

Sage Vishwamitra who was known for his supernatural powers to challenge even Gods, requested King Dasharatha to send Lord Rama with him in to the forest to protect a great Yagna which he proposed to perform along with other Sages.

That great Sage said to King Dasharatha “It is dharma of a warrior, who inherited the heritage of great Raghu clans who are direct descendants of Sun God and who have been praised for their lineage of “Surya Vamsha”. Your majesty Oh! King! You should send your eldest son prince Rama to accompany me to forests to protect my Yagna from unholy rakshashas”.

This apparent request but in reality an order from a Sage who had super natural powers, and who was known for his ill-temper was somewhat akin to a shock to the King. King Dasharatha had no temerity to challenge the wisdom of Sage Vishwamitra in requesting the services of a mere boy. The old king, felt a pang of pain in his heart. In the eyes of his father Dasharatha, Prince Rama was only an amateur bow man who was at the beginning of learning his martial arts, and for his loving eyes, his son Rama

was a simply a little kid. King Dasharatha at last dared an objection to this proposal from Vishwamitra and expressing his reluctance, the King said “He was just a kid” Oh! Great Sage! How can you order me like this? This is very unusual. How can a kid protect your Yagna deep in Dandaka forest infested with hordes of dangerous dacoits and rakshashas who are known cannibals, who cook human beings and eat them! And this Dandaka forest runs along on either side of the river Godavari with extreme heat and has been infested with mosquitos, venomous snakes and full of demons”?

But Sage Vishwamitra was apparently insensitive and indifferent to the feelings of King Dasharatha and adamantly insisted that prince Rama who was merely a boy must be sent along with him. “And that was final” the great Sage said it as his last word.

The great Sage Vishwamitra who challenged gods of heaven several times was not new to Ayodhya or to its king Dasharatha. Lord Rama belonged to the clan of King Ikshavaku who was the first king of Ayodhya and then on Prince Rama belonged to this clan as its child of 40th generation and from “Ikshavaku” downwards Rama was the prince and heir to the throne as prince of 34th generation!! These Ikshavaku clan people were very famous for their bravery as well as spirituality. They considered themselves as belonging to solar dynasty.

Some of the very famous persons born in this Ikshavaku family or Raghu Vamsha (meaning Sun God) family were King Trishanku and his son Satya Harischandra and other famous kings. But King Trishanku was closely associated with Sage Vishwamitra and story of Trishanku was most important to understand the great Sage.



KING TRISHANKU'S HEAVEN

It was very important to understand Sage Vishwamitra to know why King Dasharatha could not dare oppose him. The King Dasharatha was actually mortally afraid of that great Sage. As king Dasharatha was in a helpless condition, he went in to inner chambers of his palace, there all alone he broke down and wept hopelessly. King Dasharatha all alone in his inner chambers thought “how this Sage with his terrible face and short temper could demand to take away one of his dear most sons to the jungles out there which were full of demons or rakshashas”? King Dasharatha started talking to himself “How much of archery my son knows? He was just a kid. Oh! God! Oh! God Vishnu! What is this irrational demand of this bloody Sage with his cruel visage!!?” King Dasharatha was seethed in anger but could do nothing and hence he was highly frustrated. King Dasharatha cried and cried to himself without any help. He wept again, unseen and alone in his chambers.

Finally he had resigned to his fate. He thought that fate was all powerful and decided to allow Rama to proceed along with Sage Vishwamitra to Dandaka forest.

But the pertinent question was to know how this Sage Vishwamitra was, closely associated with this “Raghu Vamsha?” and demanded Rama to accompany him. There was one great king of this Ikshavaku clan known as “Trishanku” who was father of Harischandra the legendary king who was famous for speaking the truth and truth only at the risk of losing his kingdom and the queen. That great King Trishanku was named after a constellation of stars.

King Trishanku was a righteous king of great stature who claimed he never told a lie and never harmed any creature. But Trishanku suffered from a terrible problem of narcissistic, highly

egoistic nature which led him to boasting that he deserved to live among Gods but by misfortune he was misplaced among these small creatures called “human beings”. He was boastful. His constant boasting that he never told a lie might be indeed true but this led to arousal of jealousy among others which finally led him to face challenging situations. And one day very unfortunately Trishanku picked up a quarrel with Sage Vashista, a powerful, legendary Sage, who could challenge God Brahma who decided fate of humans on the earth. This Sage Vashista one day ate cow meat which was offered as “sacred food” because that cow was sacrificed on the altar of Gods and it was part of the ritual where sacrificial mantras were chanted when that cow was sacrificed and only a select few Sages and rishis were offered that sacred meat of that cow. There was nothing unusual about Sage Vashista, a Brahmin Sage eating the cow meat at that point of time.

Sage Vashista did not know at the time that it was his own cow meat and the cow that was brought for sacrifice was actually brought from his own home. And the most tragic part was that it was a cow of supernatural powers and Sage Vashista loved his most favourite cow like other human partners of his own family members.

As this was a deliberate attempt and planned by Trishanku out of personal disgust for this Sage Vashista, it was not a secret any more. That great Sage heaved like an ocean in a hurricane with a terrific rage, and spoke in an abnormal voice and then cursing Trishanku he said “Oh! Trishanku! Oh! King! What do you think! I am Sage Vashista and my words shall come true! Should take immediate effect! Your act is unkind and insidious. The cow has been part of my family. I can never pardon you for your sacrilegious act. I curse you. Your regality shall be no more. You shall suffer from leprosy and shall always wear only dirty clothes for the rest of your life without access to your regal robes”.

In a minute, white marks large and small started appearing on the face of King Trishanku, even though he was indeed a

righteous king of great reputation, the curse of Vashista came in to effect. Indeed Trishanku was a legend on his own. But now shabby cloths came over his body as his royal attire disappeared.

King Trishanku of Ikshavaku clan all in haste approached Sage Vishwamitra as this great Sage was equal to Sage Vashista, who was himself a king long, long ago. He became a Sage Vishwamitra after severe penance for decades deep inside forests. Trishanku, the king, helped Vishwamitra when both were kings. This was their former friendship, and then reminding himself of this friendship King Trishanku approached Sage Vishwamitra who was performing a great Yagna at the point of time deep inside the forest.

Sage Vishwamitra was enraged listening to Trishanku version of the incident.

Sage Vishwamitra said to the legendary King Trishanku “Oh! Trishanku, My friend! and righteous king who never told a lie, I shall send you to heaven right in this body of a “chandala” or untouchable leprosy patient wearing rags of clothes with white marks on the face, which shall teach a lesson to these Gods of heaven for keeping silent at this injustice to you and also for their foolishness of giving boons to Sage Vashista”.

“I shall send you to heaven Oh! Trishanku and this shall show those Gods the limits of their power” declared Vishwamitra in a firm voice.

King Trishanku, who was turned in to “chandala” at the time with leprosy marks all over the body, then started ascending to heaven which was miracle of all miracles, while Sage Vishwamitra standing under the Sun, lifting his hands up, started chanting mantras after he poured some sacred water energized with his mantras from his sacred vessel on the head of Trishanku. There was heaven indeed!! To the utterly surprised Trishanku, heaven enveloped him. And he entered straight in to the big hall of Heavens where King of Gods Indra was sitting with all other gods. All these Gods closed their mouths, twitched their faces

seeing a “chandala” who just ascended to heaven in a human body whose skin was terribly infected with leprosy and who was dressed in rags.

All the Gods shouted “What nonsense is this? It is sacrilegious to insult the gods and heavens.”!

King Indra shouted “disgusting”, and said “that disgusting fellow Sage Vishwamitra had sent this “chandala” another disgusting fellow right in to my heaven to dance with the divine nymphs and other damsels like Rambha? And may be if not Urvashi?”

King of Gods Indra was beyond his wits and never was he this much angry in his entire life time, and he was also terrified of the ensuing consequences particularly with his dancer nymphs and other beautiful damsels of heaven.

The majestic King of Gods Indra got up and violently kicked Trishanku so hard that Trishanku started falling down from heaven, letting out a horrific cry. King Trishanku was neither on the earth nor in the heavens. Trishanku raised hue and cry all the way down from heavens. He sobbed, beating his chest, and the heavens resounded. The tragic fall from heavens was unexpected and was very humiliating experience for that great King Trishanku.

Sage Vishwamitra was much more adamant who was standing down below on the earth. He shouted from where he was standing “Oh! Trishanku, you must stop falling and that is my word”. There and then Trishanku stopped falling but he was upside down hanging in the midair at the point of time. Sage Vishwamitra, down on the earth started creating another heaven right below Trishanku. A great heaven was created right under Trishanku who was hanging midair upside down. Sage Vishwamitra did not stop there.

That great Sage Vishwamitra even created duplicate, beautiful damsels like sexy Rambha, the celestial dancer Urvashi as well as other divine nymphs, and all apparent luxuries of a heaven but all in duplicate and the heaven in its entirety was an actual copy of

the real heaven. But Trishanku was still hanging upside down in the midair in between the heaven created by Vishwamitra and the actual heaven where King of Gods Indra was in rule.

Sage Vishwamitra and his powers of penance which he accumulated for decades of rigorous spiritual practices were all exhausted as result of creating a heaven in duplicate and thereby his powers were all exhausted at that moment. At that stage Trishanku was hanging upside down and he was neither in real heaven nor in duplicate heaven which was later on infamously called as “Trishanku heavens”. Sage Vishwamitra devoid of all his spiritual powers as they were all depleted for trying to create a heaven out of nothing went on foot over the hills and entered a cave to do penance again.

Trishanku at last began living helplessly in his own heavens with all its luxuries but he was since then hopelessly suffering from leprosy and loneliness.

King Trishanku belonged to Ikshavaku clan as much as Prince Rama belonged to it as its 40th generation warrior.

King Dasharatha who had already resigned to his fate recovered from those initial shocks and allowed the events as they unfolded. But as Prince Rama was ready to leave for the forests, his half-brother, Queen Sumitra’s son Laxmana also joined with him.

At last King Dasharatha summed up the courage to speak to that illustrious Sage, and in a very sad tone he said “Great Sage! Whatever you are doing is not at all justified. You are taking away my minor sons in to a forest thus exposing them to dangers of Dandaka forest when they are themselves innocent and very amateur with the use of weapons.”

But Sage Vishwamitra insisted saying “Oh! King! These palace walls do not teach anything about life to these princes. The crown prince Rama shall become the King of Ayodhya one day. Let him learn the life in a hard way. Power of time can neither be challenged nor can be stopped. God decides his fate; I am here for his benefit to show the way”

Prince Rama and his half-brother Laxmana, both sons of King Dasharatha were leaving to dangerous highly infested Dandaka forest which extended hundreds of miles on both sides of river Godavari which always floods in every monsoon as the river itself changes its course. King Dasharatha collapsed at the outer gates of the city while his sons followed Sage Vishwamitra. He started weeping inconsolably. He wept and wept later on for his loving sons for days and months.



RAKSHASHI THATAKI

Thataki, a female demon or ‘rakshashi”, was a cannibal living in Dandaka forest, and her most favourite food was human flesh. She decided to challenge first and then planned to eat Prince Rama and Laxmana for a good breakfast for herself and for her son Maricha.

Much before that time, Sage Vishwamitra along with Rama and Laxmana crossed river Sarayu on the banks of which their city Ayodhya was situated. After crossing Sarayu they travelled towards South, entered a forest and then after several months of travelling on foot through that dangerous forest in the direction of South, they finally entered thick forests of Dandaka which was highly infested with thugs, dacoits and demons.

Slowly but surely that demon Thataki got the news of their arrival along with that Sage Vishwamitra who was guiding those warriors of Ikshavaku clan, Prince Rama and Prince Laxmana.

Deep in that Dandaka forest, without their knowledge, they were actually approaching the habitats of rakshashas particularly that notorious Thataki areas of dominance in those dirt paths of the forest. Sage Vishwamitra was walking in the front. Thataki got the news that Prince Rama and his brother Laxmana were there in Dandaka to protect other sages and saints as well. This was a foreboding of extreme bad times for demon Thataki and she at once decided to attack them at their first sight and put an end to the trouble in future even before that powerful Sage Vishwamitra could teach them to use all those tantric weapons.

Thataki was a single mother and her son Maricha was more interested in black magic and sorcery than attacking anyone with weapons, and thus he shunned violence! Maricha never wanted to kill even animals let alone humans. In any case that demon,

Thataki decided not to involve her dearest son in a face to face battle with Prince Rama and Prince Laxmana. He was a doting son who was still young in her eyes. And also according to her deeply rooted fear, and her motherly instinct, her son would not be capable of fighting with warriors of Ikshavaku clan who were famous for their ruthlessness.

On that day, from afar a distance, she sensed and smelled those three human beings who were coming on foot right in her direction and she knew they were Prince Rama, Prince Laxmana and Sage Vishwamitra. She turned back in to her home and looked at her son. Her son Maricha was eating food and was all alone talking to himself and laughing to himself. Without disturbing her son, Thataki came out silently with a self-confidence which brought her smile on her lips on her huge mouth, when she saw those two young brothers Rama and Laxmana who were coming nearer.

Thataki walked silently towards them, and at once surprised all these three people by blowing air through her mouth and then started heckling at them using foul mouthed words. She was floating high in the air as high as toddy trees. Prince Laxmana was almost blown away backwards by the force of gushing wind from the mouth of Thataki. Prince Laxmana rolled backwards in the dust for a few meters.

Prince Rama withstood the onslaught of Thataki who took them by surprise and with great effort Rama had shot an arrow from his bow Kodanda. This time again, Thataki blew out pebbles flying in thousands, created by her sorcery and by violently fanning them with her hand-fan she whirled herself around flying a few more feet higher in to the air by blowing winds with her huge hand held fans. Rama set two arrows in his long bow, Kodanda, pulled the string up to his ear all the while withstanding a storm of small pebbles severely injuring his face and body.

This time Rama's two arrows roared in the air while his bow string made a reverberating "twang" sound in this deep forest. It

was as if two iron birds were shooting across with full speed. Thataki the demon fell down as the arrows of Rama hit her, while she was high in the air, pierced her chest, but before that she blew out a whirlpool of air while she herself was flying in a circular motion, she rained pebbles again which caused so many injuries to Rama. Prince Laxmana fell down much before, and could not get up due to the rain of pebbles which were shooting like sharp needles across him. Laxmana was coiling like a serpent in the dust.

Thataki also fell down vomiting blood with the impact of those two arrows of Rama which penetrated in to her chest. Rama shot another arrow at which Thataki let out a death cry, of a dying demon and then fell silent. Her son Maricha could clearly hear this dying cry of his mom.



MARICHA

Maricha ran outside but in confusion and inability to understand as to what had happened, he saw much to his anxiety, his mother who had recovered, was rolling over in dust, and while he was still unable to react due to shock and fear, his mother Thataki, somehow managed to get back in to the hut crouching herself and in a fit of desperation she was almost creeping on the floor.

Thataki at last entered in to her huge hut and there she fell down face up. She was twisting, twirling and was wreathing in pain holding on to those shafts of broken arrows deep in her chest.

Just before dying she looked at her son and gasping for breath with excruciating pain, summing up enormous effort, while blood was oozing out of her mouth, she said “My darling, my dear son Maricha, run, run from here, this Rama is not a human being, he may not be a human being, at this age, he was a mere boy, he killed me. I am dying my son! I am dying! Do not weep. Do not weep. You do not worry. Just get out of here, run my son keep running. Get out of here from back side of our hut and run deep in to Dandaka. You practice your sorcery you are damn good at that, which you know. Keep away from this Rama. Keep away from him for the rest of your life, my darling son”

And speaking in that feeble voice, while gasping for breath, she tried to console her son Maricha who was weeping loudly and inconsolably, crying “mamma, mamma”. She pulled out those broken arrows from her chest while gritting and grinding her teeth in pain. Thataki closed her large eyes for a moment but never opened them. She died.

But Maricha did not run away. Suddenly he kept himself silent with a grave face. He conducted the final cremation rites for his mother Thataki only after carrying her body to lord Shiva’s idol

inside the jungle near the hills. He found a dry sandal wood tree which he had cut off to perform cremation of his mother. At the cremation a few other rakshashas were present who exhorted Maricha to attack Rama and Laxmana immediately.

Maricha tonsured his head and took a ceremonial bath in the river Godavari. He took a vow while bathing in Godavari after his mother's cremation, that he would chant the name "Rama" everyday so that he would never forget his revenge. He told himself that Rama had to pay for his karma.



SAGE VISHWAMITRA

Sage Vishwamitra moved his head right to left in disapproval of the entire fight with demon Thataki. They were all sitting in a Rishi's hut in a circle around a ceremonial fire in the night after dinner consisting only of fruits available in the forest.

Sage Vishwamitra said "Prince Rama, your fighting was not that great. You need to know many more techniques of archery and you need to learn many, many mantras with which you can send arrows transforming them to missiles. You need to learn to move with great speed to avoid direct impact of the attack from enemy. For God's sake Thataki was not that powerful like many other Rakshashas or demons in this forest. How would you fight powerful demons who can chant mantras to disappear and appear again? Just with kindness of God we escaped a great danger today somehow".

"Learn from me, Oh! Great prince Rama! I, myself before becoming a Sage by deep meditation and several years of penance in this forest, I was a mighty King of huge kingdom. Learn to use Astra's from me." Vishwamitra told both the brothers Rama and Laxmana, "Hereafter onwards I shall be your teacher and I shall teach you use of missiles, astral weapons, using of various other weapons, and dexterous movements using sword and javelin. You shall obey my orders verbatim and learn through rigorous hard work. You shall memorize all the powerful mantras I chant through the day and night. Learn as much as you can, otherwise you would realize in a hard way that you can hardly survive in this forest let alone protecting anyone else. You both brothers shall get up early in the morning tomorrow before the Sun rises. We shall take a deep dip in the cold waters of river Godavari while chanting mantras. We shall bath in Godavari as the Sun rises".

Sage Vishwamitra began to teach both the princes but he was teaching a few secret weapons only to Prince Rama. Laxmana was seething with anger. Laxmana dared question Sage Vishwamitra!

One day frustrated with pestering of Prince Laxmana the great Sage Vishwamitra said “Oh! Prince Laxmana, you are angry and you hiss like a thousand headed snake!! You are unsuitable to learn astral weapons. Look at your own brother! Prince Rama. He remains clam and serene. Knowledge is power, Oh! Prince, One who has knowledge is burdened with that knowledge and so, he should remain calm under pressure and should never use the knowledge of astral weapons unless there is a reason and a need to defend the life of someone”

“Oh! Laxmana!! I thought Brahmastra to Rama, which destroys everything once it is released. I shall never teach you how to turn a blade of grass in to a mighty Astra with mantras. And imparting secrets of Brahmastra, Oh! Laxmana! , to you is impossible to me. Who has no self-control and who cannot respect oneself cannot respect others. You better not learn destructive weapons!! Great knowledge for violent people is like a weapon of self-destruction. A man of anger will not have any control over himself and the least on his own weapons.”

Three long years were gone under the wheel of time. All these years forest life was the only life led by these princes and teachings of Sage Vishwamitra were very vigorous. Using of astral weapons, missiles, and the secrets of Brahmastra were taught by this great Sage to Prince Rama. Prince Rama developed immense gratitude and sincerely felt that he was most fortunate person on the earth for beneficence of a great Guru like Sage Vishwamitra.

At the end of three years walking on foot, in the forest of Dandaka they suddenly saw a very big house.



STORY OF AHALYA

Sage Vishwamitra was walking ahead. Now Prince Rama was twenty one years old. All three were walking in one line in this thick, deep forest nestling in the Hills, but which is not very far away from the banks of river Godavari.

And in front of their eyes a house had suddenly emerged from among the trees. It was like a house suddenly jumping on to them. They could have walked in to the house without knowing that they were walking in to a house. They were so much close to it. The house was a very huge one built of hardened earthen mud and wood logs. Without talking much, almost silently Sage Vishwamitra was walking right in to the house which did not seem to have any human life inside as the house itself had an eerie silence about it.

Strictly obeying the Sage, the two princes Rama and Laxmana followed the sage and they also entered the house. It had a very big courtyard in the center of the house and the house has four parts, in the center of which it was open to sky. Huge wooden pillars were supporting the structure. They moved towards the north-west of the house, simply following Sage Vishwamitra.

There they saw a stone statue of a woman. The woman's statue was enchantingly beautiful. It was statute of a middle aged woman, with an excellent body proportions and extremely beautiful face. Even looking at this bewitching beauty in stone Prince Rama was spell bound.

Sage Vishwamitra started telling the story of that woman in the statue.

Sage said "Her name was Ahalya. She was wife of a very famous Sage called Gautama muni. Everything was going very well for the couple and they were blessed with a loving child, a son.

Ahalya was a great devotee of God Indra Bhagvan who was the king of all Gods in heaven. She was an ardent devotee of Indra Bhagvan, worshipped him every day and Ahalya's cult of devotion to her God Indra was spread like stories shared from house to house in those tiny hamlets spread across in this forest."

Sage Vishwamitra started telling the story of Ahalya's unusual birth and her unusual fate. Ahalya was created by Lord Brahma, who writes the fate of all beings created by him. One day in a great surge of creativity, Lord Brahma wanted to create the most beautiful woman in his entire Universe. His creative zeal was such that there should be no such woman with such a beauty in the entire world and the woman's beauty should be beyond the imagination of any artist, painter or sculptor in this world. It was Lord Brahmas' deliberate attempt at creating the most beautiful woman on the earth. Finally when a grown up woman was made of five elements of the earth, fire, water, air and senses, Lord Brahma put life in to it, without any need for her birth as an infant. And once she came to life, all at once as a full grown woman, Lord Brahma had given her a name "Ahalya" which literally meant a virgin or a scared one.

But what in reality what was created by Lord Brahma was a very sexy and voluptuous woman and she was not exactly an unparalleled beauty which Lord Brahma wished to create, when he started his work with such a creative fervour. When that woman came to life, and got her life force, Lord Brahma told her "I created you. I am your father and your name is Ahalya!"

Ahalya started living with her father in Brahma Loka or Brahma's world but Lord Brahma started worrying. He called a great devotee of Lord Vishnu , muni Narada, and told him about his worry of keeping such a beautiful daughter Ahalya in the house, which was causing him tensions about her future, and explained that it was like keeping a plate of burning charcoal right on his chest. Narada told him that it was nothing unusual for fathers to feel in such a way who had beautiful daughters and he should immediately arrange a marriage for her with a suitable

boy who could give her a great future. Lord Brahma then told him about God Indra Bhagvan who was frequently going around his house ever since he had seen Ahalya and it had been the real cause of tension for him.

Lord Brahma arranged a test to all suitors who claim the hand of Ahalya in marriage. The test was to go around the world as fast they could and return to claim his daughter Ahalya's hand in marriage. Actually this was the idea given by muni Narada.

And finally Sage Gautama was selected after he circumambulated a holy cow called "Surabhi" with reverence and then claimed to have circumambulated the earth itself. God Indra Bhagvan who also competed went around the planet Earth astride a cosmic white horse took a long time to return. Meanwhile Sage Gautama in spite of his big age gap with Ahalya and much elder to her married her. And Lord Brahma was happy because Gautama was one of very powerful Sages who was an unquestionable authority in the spiritual world should be able to provide full protection to an enchanting Ahalya. Brahma as father of Ahalya was very much concerned with her highly guarded living conditions rather than anything else and thought that she would be safe as a wife of great Sage Gautama.

Sage Vishwamitra along with Prince Rama and Laxmana standing right in front of that stone statue of Ahalya, told Rama, "But something else happened. God Indra Bhagvan appeared one day right in front of Ahalya in this house here, while she was worshipping him like every day in her puja room, but after seeing his human devotee Ahalya, so near, this God Indra Bhagvan fell in love with her beautiful body. In spite of Ahalya's spiritually powerful husband as a big deterrent and in spite of his knowledge of her own father Lord Brahma, God Indra Bhagvan started stalking her, day in and day out stupidly going around this house".

Ahalya was a beautiful woman but only a human being like all of us. She was indeed a very voluptuous, bewitching beauty. This God Indra fell in love with her for a sexual union. In the night on

that fateful day, much before the day break and when darkness was much thicker than usual, God Indra, mimicked morning birds in the forest and mimicked their sounds as if it were four a.m. in the morning. Her husband Gautama, a Rishi, a great Sage with so many super natural powers thought that it was his usual time of waking up before the day break, and hence got up, and immediately left for bathing in the river Godavari and to perform rituals there.

God Indra hugged Ahalya who was still in her bed, and it may be her prodigious vision, or indeed real from her perspective, Indra Bhagvan had sex with her, which caused an immense energy creeping up within her, as if a flaming snake shooting upwards from the base of her spine. And when this burning flower pot started shooting the flame of energy upwards, through her spinal cord, the energy in the form of a lightening at extreme speed crossed her chest area and then crept upwards in to her brain, giving her a tremendous shock throughout her body. Then Ahalya had seen a bright blue star very small in the beginning and then this blue star, small, bright one, began to grow in size in millionth of a second which then exploded!! Ahalya thought that she was dying every time after these explosions inside her head, and every time she had seen a small bright blue star in her mind's eye, she was terrified of that imminent intense orgasmic feeling causing shock throughout her body when it exploded. Ahalya started crying "no, no"! When she had seen that blue star growing bigger but that star exploded again giving her waves of shock through her body. The shock wave started at her big toe on her left foot upwards and that shock became intense after it reached the base of her spine. Then it was shooting upwards like an energized coiled serpent. Like that several times after she had undergone her mistaken sexual orgasms and each one gave her somewhat death like feelings, she had clearly seen in her mind's eye, a brightly shining Sun, like a disc, rising from the middle of an Ocean. She felt relieved after this wonderful vision. Ahalya felt extremely happy and her whole body relaxed.

She was married and rarely she had had any orgasm in sex with her husband but she could not compare this experience with anything else.

Indra Bhagvan her God, who she worshipped all these years, now got up from Ahalya's bed.

Ahalya told Indra Bhagvan, the king of Gods "Oh! Indra Bhagvan! I have got orgasm after orgasm in sex with you. I am fully satisfied." And then she hastened Indra Bhagvan "Indra! Hey! Bhagvan! Please run from here. You please run from here from back door, otherwise if my husband comes, he can curse even the Gods!"

Indra Bhagvan instead of running away from back door of Ahalya's house, approached front door, through which Ahalya's husband Gautama, came exactly at the same time.

Sage Gautama had seen God Indra and his wife again and again and thought he clearly understood as to what had happened. Sage Gautama in a flight of temper and in a terrific rage he cursed Lord of heavens Indra Bhagvan that henceforth whenever Indra approaches a woman for sex, that woman would see only hundred woman's vagina all over his body.

Sage Gautama turned to look at his wife Ahalya. He cursed her to freeze to become a stone statue. At which Ahalya fell on the feet of her husband and begged for pardon and asked for a salvation from his curse.

Sage Gautama took pity on his weeping wife and remembered the promises he made to her father Lord Brahma and told her "if a best of men, *"Purushottam"* comes near you and touches you with his hands, you, Oh! Ahalya would come back to life!" Sage Gautama walked away and his wife had been frozen in the form of stone.

Sage Vishwamitra finished saying "Since many years this beautiful woman had been frozen as a stone. She stands here lifeless in the form of a statue as you can see. Now this huge

house is derelict and gaps appeared in the roof from which you can see the sky at many places”.

The house was full of dust and of dry leaves. The stone statue was in standing position, giving an ambiance of beauty, serenity to that derelict house. Otherwise that entire house had an eerie silence about it.

Prince Rama looking around the house after listening to her story came back again to the front side of the statute and touched her shoulder with his right hand while appreciating her divine beauty.

Immediately the stone statue came to life, transformed in to a beautiful woman and she was looking straight at Rama. Prince Laxmana jumped backwards and even Rama was astonished. The lady spoke in kind words and said “I am relieved of the curse. You are “Purushottam” the best of men and “narottam” the best of all human beings. And I am Ahalya, now released from this freeze”.

After hearing this, Lord Rama introduced himself to Ahalya and said to her “Ahalya you are the best one among woman. You are a great devotee of the God. You did nothing wrong. I do not think that there was anything wrong in whatever you did with Indra Bhagvan. You are really a great woman”.

Prince Rama knelt before her on his knees; Rama kept both his hands on the feet of Ahalya and sought her blessings. Ahalya also blessed Rama saying he would get most pious woman as his wife very soon.

Lord Rama wished her saying “Ahalya. You shall live in this same pious way as before”.

Sage Vishwamitra left that house and entered the forest. Both the brothers followed him silently.



LORD SHIVA'S BOW

Rama and Laxmana, both the princes realized they reached outskirts of a city. And they stopped at an inn in the outskirts of this city called Mithila.

Sage Vishwamitra told them that they reached the city of Mithila. The great Sage said “this city is the richest city in the world, though the kingdom itself is tiny. The King is Raja Janaka, a philosopher King. As far as I know he has spiritual powers. It is said that there are mounds of gold kept in undergrounds of king’s palace. He owns the great Lord Shiva’s bow bequeathed to him through generations. Oh! Prince Laxmana you eat well whatever you want and take rest. I shall introduce myself to King Janaka which is a formality and I shall take along Prince Rama with me”.

A messenger was sent and it was announced to the king Janaka that great Sage Vishwamitra was coming to visit.

King Janaka got dressed and received, the Sage in the central hall which was so huge that it can accommodate thousand people to sit and watch an event very easily and still there would be a lot of empty space. King Janaka himself looked like a saint to Prince Rama.

Sage Vishwamitra introduced Prince Rama saying “This young man of twenty one years is the eldest son of King Dasharatha and his Queen Kausalya. This young Prince has been so much interested and very curious to have a look at that Great Shiva’s bow which you have in your possession.”

There was no body in the central hall. The hall itself was giving resound while all three were talking. They realized they were talking a bit louder. Prince Rama thought, that one hall was much bigger than their entire palace in Ayodhya! And Rama was surprised at the words of Sage Vishwamitra because he did not

come there exactly with a purpose of looking at Lord Shiva's bow. Prince Rama chose to keep silent. But further events did not stop there.

King Janaka issued orders to fetch the bow. One hundred men appeared with 100 strong bulls. The central hall's huge doors of 15 feet tall were opened by dozens of palace guards. When the huge doors were opened Prince Rama could see a large courtyard which had shining tiles and at the end of the courtyard, bordering on the compound wall, he observed there were store rooms with large sized doors. The courtyard was so much smooth that it was reflecting light like a huge mirror in the blazing sun light. The store room doors made of steel were pushed back by dozens of people with great effort. And those hundred bulls were tied to ropes, fifty bulls on each side, stood on one line right and left, with long and thick wooden poles and then tied to very big hooks of a huge wooden box. Then it was pulled along to the central hall when hundred men with all their strength tugged along the rope with a sing and cry to sync with their efforts to pull the box and they also pushed the box. One hundred bulls heaved high and started moving. Prince Rama was looking at all this with great wonder with his large eyes widened much larger. He was nearly seven feet tall, with long hands and wide chest. He was a well-built young man with an intelligent face and with a very kind expression in his eyes.

Finally the great box was pulled in to the center of the hall. Raja Janaka was standing on one side and that great Sage Vishwamitra on other side of the box. Prince Rama was standing on the right side of the Sage. Prince Rama moved forward and with little effort with his left hand opened the top lid of the box. King Janaka twisted his eye brows and looked with wonder as if he had seen a great miracle. But at the same time Raja Janaka with a puzzled face also looked perplexed at Prince Rama

Prince Rama lifted the great bow of enormous weight which was 11 feet long, from the box, as if it were very light weight bow made of straw. He took the great Shiva's bow out of the box, and

thumped it against the floor, the sound of which resounded in the hall. The bow was made of highly malleable, flexible, unknown alloy metal. Prince Rama put up the bow right in his front, held it with his left hand and put his left foot on the bow, while bending it with his right hand in an attempt to string the bow. The bow was bent to a half-moon shape as Rama attempted to string it, but the bow gave in with a thunderous noise and split up. It was such a huge thundering sound, crackling noise with such intensity that the windows of the central hall banged against the frames and there was a highly intense booming resound almost tearing off the roof of central hall. Everything inside the central hall shook with vibration due to high intensity sound. The doubling effect of resound was an ear splitting noise and the great bow was broken into two pieces.

Prince Rama's full grown muscles of his shoulders protruding from beneath his full shirt now soaked in sweat got stuck up to his skin. Prince Rama's white Dhovati cloth wound around his waist and extending up to his ankles had long, wide fringes, now slightly pulled up shows powerful calf muscles of 7 foot tall young man with long hair up to his shoulders. His dark brown complexioned face was in a state of confusion as if he did not know what to do about this unexpected break of great Shiva's bow.

He looked with remorseful face at King Janaka who was dumbstruck at the moment. The great King, his majesty, with his long shining beard and flowing hair looked pale as if a bolt from the blue sky above struck right on his head. He was not moving at all.

At last it was King Janaka himself who broke the silence. He finally said "I was in search of a suitable boy for marriage of my daughter Sita. Indeed bending of Shiva's bow was a test put up for selecting a suitable prince who could marry Sita, my daughter, but all the princes in this country so far, failed to lift the bow and position the bow, in proper manner let alone bending it to string the bow. In fact many princes who attended the "swayamwara"

ceremony failed to lift the lid of the box to take out the bow. A “swayamwara” ceremony, when the bride Sita would have the first choice to select her husband could not proceed anymore. Everyone attended criticized me for such an unachievable test and walked away in frustration and anger. And some even took a vow to take a revenge on our kingdom”.

King Janaka continued to narrate the incident and said “My daughter Sita pushed away this huge box with her left foot, several meters away”.

Then Janaka told Rama the prince of Ayodhya “I shall talk to this honoured Sage Vishwamitra in detail later tomorrow but for now, Oh! Prince Rama you need not feel apologetic for breaking the bow as it was not intentional but a sudden event happened like an accident. It is the bow of Lord Shiva and it is the will of the God. Your breaking of this bow is ordained by fate. Everything happens for a purpose”.

Prince Rama and Sage Vishwamitra took leave of King Janaka after profusely thanking for his benevolence and reached the outskirts of the city, to their place of stay.

King Janaka came to Sage Vishwamitra’s hut right on the outskirts of the city of Mithila next day afternoon. The great Sage was pleasantly surprised to see king himself appearing there in front of such a little hut and that too located in the outskirts of the city.

It was obviously an unofficial visit of King Janaka. He was all alone. Both the princes Rama and Laxmana were sleeping inside the hut in that late afternoon. Sage Vishwamitra brought a cot for the King to take a seat and brought another one for his own use.

King Janaka started telling the incident of an attack on Mithila which had happened some time ago and narrated all the events that led to it.

One day Sita was sitting in meditation on a boulder among the trees which was very far from her palace inside the fort. This was her usual routine of the day and she went there with only one

maid servant accompanying her riding beside her on a horse. While she came out of her meditation and about to start back home, a king of the neighbouring country came across on a horse and looking at beautiful Sita, he did not move and he was staring at her. Sita appeared to him like a lantern in the falling light of evening on this boulder among the trees. She was like one of those flowers heavily bloomed on that bush which was bent with the weight of flowers spreading fragrance. There was a huge carpet of flowers at the foot of the boulder under her pink coloured feet. He looked at the beautiful Sita who was serene, sitting there on that huge boulder without fear or emotions. The king was astride a horse, a black coloured one, and with his raucous, booming voice , bending forward himself on his horse and giving a piercing look at Sita , he said “ Come with me , I shall marry you” . Such was his arrogance and in reply Sita retorted saying “If you are a king? Why should not you behave like a king? If a king of a country behaves like this, what are your people in your kingdom? In any case this is very imprudent way of behaving yourself. So I advise you go to my father and ask him”. At this answer the King on black horse straightened himself and spoke in his raucous voice ““all right I shall go to your father King Janaka”.

This king and his entourage approached Janaka next day with his proposals for marriage. Janaka told that ruffian like King of a neighbouring country “Yes. But the problem is that my daughter Sita could easily push away Lord Shiva’s box of bow. A suitable husband for her should be able to take the bow out of the box and put the string on it. And I feel this is a reasonable test.”

Listening to this answer the King said he would come again some other day well prepared for it.

King Janaka thought it was prudent to officially announce a “swayamwara” where his daughter Sita will select her future husband herself. The condition of “Swayamwara” was that “Shiva’s bow” shall be bent and a string shall be put on to it by a suitable prince to marry Sita. And an auspicious day was selected

for the occasion of that great “Swayamwara” which literally meant “selecting a suitable bridegroom for a marriage by the bride herself”.

On that significant day, for many reasons, more than a few dozens of princes appeared who were respectfully seated in the central hall. One hundred powerful bulls pulled the box of Shiva’s bow to the Central Hall. All most all of Princes tried their hand but failed and some were seriously injured even while lifting the bow. All have said in the end that Sita would never get married if this were the test of “Swayamwara” in future as well. But some of the kings who were already married and also those who were unmarried gave a warning to King Janaka ordering him to change the conditions for the competition or else face the consequences of a war. They all said that Mithila was a small kingdom and it might be run over for sure. “You remember that yours is a small kingdom Janaka” they warned. It was very clear by those warnings that they heard many stories about Sita’s beauty and they all felt that “Swayamwara” competition of “stringing the Shiva’s bow” was very unfair.

“There was a war” Janaka started telling Vishwamitra, after a long pause. All of nine kings of neighbouring kingdoms were united in their attack and their armies in a confederation attacked Mithila with combined strength never witnessed before in any war we faced.

The doors to the impregnable fort and the doors of great palaces inside were all closed and arms were kept in ready by that time.

King Janaka paused for some time with heavy heart and went on describing the incident of war. Sage Vishwamitra was silently listening without any questions.

King Janaka told Vishwamitra “We were all well aware that ours is an impregnable fort which no humans or demons can break it. It is the strongest fort in the world. Hence we were confident that those enemies would wear out as time elapses. I really do not know, how but most surprising problem cropped up. The enemies

outside the fort, a confederation of several kingdoms, found out the source of water to our fort which had been a secret for centuries and they could effectively block it. Water source was cut off to our fort. We were running out of our reservoir of stored water. And before we go thirsty, I had to take a decision and I knew I could not procrastinate any more if my people inside the fort were to survive. So I wanted to use my spiritual powers as I am blessed by angels and various fire gods.”

“I started a sacrificial fire “homam” in the court yard and started chanting mantras to appease fire god, the God Agni. As I chanted mantras my daughter Sita also joined and we started our mantras for Agni. From the fire Oh! Sage! Warriors wearing steel jackets and long swords of shining steel emerged one after another, thousands of them, with steel helmets and steel boots these warriors started climbing fort walls the moment they came out of fire “Homam” one after another and these warriors walked in a file and started creeping the fort walls like a well-trained infantry. Very much of a large swarm of soldiers emerged out of fire, “homam” as we intensified chanting of our mantras and as they emerged out of “homam” these soldiers, climbed over the walls on ladders and climbed down the ladders from the fort walls, to fight the enemy. The enemies’ army let out a huge cry of fear and started running away helter, shelter while unable to fight with these mythical warriors. The enemy army and their kings ran away for their dear life, accepting a humiliating defeat. Soon after this war we could restore our water supply to the fort and those mythical warriors disappeared.”

King Janaka paused for some time. He wiped out sweat on his face with his turban cloth. He drank a glass of water and then said “Oh! Sage! I request you to propose my daughter Sita’s marriage with prince Rama. I told you about the “swayamwara”. Prince Rama shall be a suitable boy for my daughter. I humbly pray to you to proceed in this matter by conveying my request to Prince Rama and his father King Dasharatha”.

Sage Vishwamitra said “The marriage of Sita and Ram shall take place. This is ordained by God. This is destined to happen by nature’s law. Prince Rama need not see the bride Sita before the marriage. I do not think Sita wants to see the bridegroom. Prince Rama shall obey me. Princess Sita and Rama’s marriage shall happen for the benefit of mankind. The match shall indeed be like God Vishnu and his wife Laxmi in heavens. The marriage will happen. Let astrologers select an auspicious date during this hot summer season. I shall send a message to Prince Rama’s father King Dasharatha who shall accept Rama’s marriage to Sita without a question”



SITA-RAMA KALYANAM

Later when Sage Vishwamitra called on King Janaka in his palace, the great King proposed that he had another daughter, Urmila, and she shall be married with Prince Laxmana brother of Prince Rama. King Janaka told the Sage Vishwamitra that Sita was not his biological daughter but an adopted daughter and that Sita brought him great luck.

Janaka spoke about the birth of Sita, “One day while I was plowing the land in ceremonious way with a lot of pomp and fanfare on a day of monsoons arrival, from the furrow of my plough, from the earth beneath, raised this infant child, up like pollen from a flower bud split up, when touched. She flew up in the dust and I held her in the air so that she would not fall down. It was like the infant was pushed up by mother goddess the earth with her own hands. That is why I had aptly named her “Sita,” meaning birth from a furrow”.

King Janaka went on. “I have a brother *Kushadwaja* whom you know, has two daughters *Mandhavi* and *Shrutakirthi*, and I propose that these two daughters of my brother shall be married to Bharata and Shatrugna, respectively, two other sons of the great king Dasharatha. Those two princes Bharatha and Shatrugna shall be very suitable bridegrooms for beautiful daughters of my brother *Kushadwaja*.

Sage Vishwamitra said “We shall perform all the four marriages on four different days”. Let this Navami day of next fortnight, of this hot summer shall be the day of marriage for Sita and Rama”.

The whole city of Mithila was drowned in festivities. Whole of the city of Mithila was erected with flower “*Pandal*” almost in every street. The festivities started with a lot of pomp and show a few days before the marriage. Mithila kingdom’s Raja Janaka had

no dearth of money; gold and pearls were literally flowing out in plates and bowls to meet expenses of a grand marriage of Sita and Rama.

King Dasharatha arrived at Mithila with 100 horse-drawn carts along with his two other sons, Bharatha and Shatrugna. Grand arrangements were made for the entire bridegroom party to stay in luxury in the city of Mithila. The fabulous wealth of Mithila was only a legend until then for the King Dasharatha but now he was experiencing it.

In the glowing interiors of great palace sandal sticks were lit everywhere for perfuming walls of the palace.

Sita was in her bridal dress. She was wearing a white silk sari with red borders made of gold thread. White jasmines, doubly woven in the form of long and thin garland was stuck in her dark hair and twined along her long single braid of hair, which was almost reaching up to her hips. Sage Vishwamitra went inside the palace and saw her in her bridal dress and said “There shall be no need of a lamp in the house if Sita sits there”. Sita had an unusual glow in her face with her wide eyes.

Prince Rama arrived at the marriage hall with a lot of pomp and show while crackers were being fired. He was wearing a long flowing Khurta, reaching up to his knees, which was a type of thick coat, woven and embroidered in silver thread, in white and blue patterns, with gold buttons and in a *Dhovati*, which was a very long white silk cloth around his waist and then around his left leg with lot of fringes and then back to the waist and then again descends down around right leg in fringes and then rest of the cloth was neatly folded in to long pleats and then tucked to the front side of his waist. A ceremonial sword was hanging at the side of his waist in a highly ornate gold and leather holster. Rama as bridegroom arrived at Janaka’s palace astride a highly decorated white horse.

Prince Rama standing in the marriage hall, near the flower-decked stage, in the central hall of King Janaka, on that hot

summer afternoon, was waiting to see his bride Sita. He heard that she was the world's most beautiful woman.

And then Sita, the bride was coming. A white semi-transparent cloth was held against Sita, by two married, middle aged woman on two sides while Sita was walking in the center of them behind that white curtain smeared with turmeric powder. She was walking very slowly. Prince Rama the bridegroom could clearly see her pink-coloured feet with thin golden anklets because the curtain was above her ankles and Sita was walking towards marriage Pandal very slowly.

Finally, the curtain was taken off near the Flower *Pandal*. And King Raja Janaka, her father came forward holding her hand. Sita looked straight at Prince Rama, from up to down. And Rama was spellbound. He was slightly darker in complexion and was a stripling youth compared to unparalleled beautiful bride Sita.

Prince Rama earlier had insisted that Ahalya's only son Shatananda the Brahmin pundit should conduct all the ceremonies of his marriage as the chief priest.

With Shatananda, son of Ahalya, as the chief priest chanting mantras from Rig Veda and Atharvana Veda the marriage rituals of Sita and Rama were started. Some mantras were from Sama Veda mostly composed by Rakshasha Ravan. The great sacrificial fire was lit and the bride Sita took the lead. She tied up a fringe of her Sari to the cloth upper garment of Rama and the bride and bridegroom went around the sacred fire seven times.

After hours of Vedic rituals were completed and vows were taken by bride as well as bridegroom to remain united as husband and wife through the vicissitudes of life for next seven births, the marriage ceremony was completed when Prince Rama tied "*mangala* sutra" the sacred thread with two small ornate discs made of gold, representing the Sun and the Moon around the neck of Sita as a necklace which shall remain for the rest of her married life.

Once the marriage ceremonies were completed as per customs and traditions, bridegroom shall take away his bride to his own home within a few hours after the marriage.

Rama and Sita, now husband and wife were getting ready to leave for Ayodhya. All necessary religious formalities were also completed. Horse-drawn carriages were getting ready. There was a very hectic activity with servants and guards running everywhere.

All the elders, King Janaka and Sage Vishwamitra and others were well aware that it would be a dangerous journey of crossing the forest of Dandaka towards north to reach Ayodhya and hence 1000 body guards of Mithila astride well bred horses were ready to travel along the newlywed couple. And as many horse-drawn carriages were kept ready as possible. An auspicious moment was selected by Brahmin pundits for the start of the journey, crackers were fired for an hour and then carriages one after another started moving,. About a hundred carriages were in line and they were all moving like lines of bison in a deep forest.

The horse carriage of Rama and Sita, the newlywed couple was in the forefront. Sita's cheeks were still wet from her tears and the lines of dried tear drops were still visible. The black eyeliner she kept melted with her tears; all along the cheeks, there were black marks. She was anxiously looking back at the fort of Mithila. "When will I see my father again? When will I see Mithila again"? Sita remembered her mom and her friends and her toys and her palace. She wiped her eyes with a hand towel as the tears welled up again in her eyes.

She was also anxiously looking for good omens, as she felt very nervous instinctively. Her newly wed husband Prince Rama was leaning on a new pillow with embroidered pillow covers in the carriage and was looking outside. But to the surprise of Sita, not a single person came in the opposite, and their carriage was the first, in the fore front of one hundred carriages. Many carriages were loaded with gifts for the newlywed couple along with personal maid servants of Sita. The newly wed Sita who was

anxiously looking for a good omen indicating a happy married life for her, could not find anyone coming in the opposite and for her surprise and anxiety, even birds or animals did not come in the opposite as an omen good or bad according to her knowledge. Sita believed in Omens. Sita believed in the signs and symbols on her palm. And Sita always believed in soothsayers. Prince Rama had been completely oblivious to all this inquisitive and anxious search of Sita for a good Omen. And when Sita expressed her anxiety, Rama answered to his newly wedded wife terming all omens as “nonsense”, and as they were born out of one’s own fears they did not hold any “value” according to him. He was looking at his newly wed wife now and then and took a little pity on her as her tear drops were rolling over her cheeks and also for her anxious looks seeking a good omen for a happy married life.



ENCOUNTER OF SAGE PARASHURAM

They just reached outskirts of the city of Mithila and about to enter the thick forest area and they reached exactly a place where there was an elevated plain grass lands leading to a thick forest ahead with tall trees skirting that area.

As they reached the entrance to forest, with tall trees on either side, all of a sudden, horses made a whining noise, stepped backward, pushing the cart backwards, and the chariot driver thought he was losing control. In front of the carriage, at a distance on the way, in the middle of dirt path for horse carriages with deep grooves, Sage Parashuram was standing with a battle axe looking like a killer, with a ferocious face blocking the way. He had an ugly black beard flowing down and his long hair was thickly matted on the sides, with a crown like hair knot in the center of his head. He was looking wiry, thin but very strong. He was wearing a dirty Dhovati, one single white cloth, down from his waist up to his ankles and his hairy chest was completely bare. His hands and chest were full of hair.

That lanky and very tall, wiry Parashuram shouted with a raucous voice and asked for Rama with vicious, hissing anger. He swirled his axe staff on his right hand fingers, and huge, tall trees on either side blew backwards making a creaky noise while violently swinging like they were in a hurricane. He thumped his feet and the earth split up all the way up to the horse carriage of Sita and Ram. Since the leading horse carriage of Sita and Ram stopped in this single line on the forest dirt path, all the following carriages were stopped behind and there were incoherent noises, due to commotion and there arose a terrible confusion among all those servants and bodyguards.

Sage Parashuram, as a young man killed his own mother and beheaded her with his axe right in the front court yard of their own home early in the morning. His father suspected her fidelity and they were all standing in the front courtyard of their house in the morning sun light. The father of Parashuram was a Rishi Jamadagni who had used his spiritual powers to know that his wife entertained sexual thoughts of romancing a King when she went to river to bring water for the Yagna.

That Rishi Jamadagni found with his “spiritual” eye that his wife Renuka was not pure and hence charging her as unfaithful wife, just because she dreamt of romance with a Kshatriya king, who she had seen naked and bathing, forgetting herself, and also because she “forgot” what for she had come to river. This was the reason “Jamadagni” that Rishi ordered his sons to kill their own mother Renuka, a devotee of Goddess Kali, and not stopping at that he declared openly in front of her own sons that she was not a faithful wife at all. All four of her elder sons refused to obey their father’s orders, but her youngest son, Parashuram obeyed his father and beheaded his own mother with an axe.

If you were to understand the cruelty of Parashuram, this incident was the beginning one and it would not be enough. This was only a test by fire, like the first “initiation” of Parashuram in to the world of violence and for his ruthless life later on. Parashuram was also highly intelligent but suffered from a bad temper and his hatred for all Kshatriyas was well known.

But a great twist of life for Parashuram was that this Parashuram, the killer of one’s own mother became a Sage as the years passed. He became a fanatic devotee of Lord Shiva and did an arduous penance in the forest for decades, sitting in the hot sun and in the river in cold winters. He lived in caves eating only fruits and drinking river waters for decades. And the world was astonished when Lord Shiva granted boons bestowing on him spiritual powers as well as super natural powers. Parashuram as a Sage emerged out of caves in deep forest with matted hair, roamed around length and breadth of India, dipping his battle axe in

pious rivers in the south and in the north trying to get rid of the sin of killing his own mother and to cleanse that battle axe, off the smell of blood of his mother.

Sage Parashuram challenged Prince Rama for a fight as he had challenged and killed until then, twenty five kings of various kingdoms on the excuse that their rule was not justified or corrupt or else simply because he felt that they were not religious! He hates all warrior caste Kshatriyas from the bottom of his heart, just because of their caste of birth and called them out for a combat, in which he beheaded twenty five kings earlier with his battle axe which he carried on his shoulders. His battle axe was later blessed by Lord Shiva. So he carried it emboldened by its supernatural powers.

And one good aspect of Sage Parashuram was that he was an excellent teacher and teaches only the students of Brahmin community. He teaches spiritual mantras and even astral weapons but only to Brahmin caste students.

Kings feared him, and in fact Kings ran away, leaving their kingdoms just by hearing about his arrival. Other Sages feared him because of his unbelievable spiritual powers, as well as boons granted by Lord Shiva, the God of destruction and annihilation. Sage Parashuram could even use a straw of dry grass and chanting mantras he could make it into an Astra called "*Pashupatha Astra*" to annihilate everything in its path. Sage Parashuram of all human beings, and animals, for the good or bad of this world, was a great Sage with spiritual powers and all other Sages, and Rishis acknowledged him as a sage for his spiritual powers and for his devotion to Lord Shiva. The battle axe on his shoulder which was blessed by Lord Shiva appeared and disappeared to his enemies.

Prince Rama, with his wedding attire still on him, with wedding ceremonial drawings of a plant juice in orange colour still wet on his feet and on his palms, got out of the horse carriage with his great bow Kodanda and an arrow. Suddenly everything fell silent, the whole forest drowned in eerie silence.

Prince Rama walked past the carriage, towards Sage Parashuram who was standing in the middle of the dirt path of the forest. Prince Rama strung his bow and was setting the arrow. Sita came running from behind him and hugged her husband begging him to stop. Sage Parashuram tried to rotate his mythical battle axe of great powers, around his stretched palm, like he would always do before a mortal strike at his opponent. The right hand of Parashuram which held that infamous axe of dire consequences to his enemies was paralyzed and frozen to the dismay of Parashuram. His hand turned numb. He was utterly shocked and his eyes were wide open. Sage Parashuram immediately bent and plucked out a blade of grass and tried to utter some syllables of mantras for astral weapons but he could not remember a single syllable. His mouth was parched, his saliva dried up and he could not utter a single word. He felt a terrible weakness that was creeping up his legs. He tried his best and found to his utter shock that he could not lift both his hands. He tried to shout as a last attempt and not a word came out of his mouth.

That beautiful Sita, in her bridal dress, the newly wedded wife of Prince Rama hugged her husband again and said “My darling, Oh! Raghu! Listen to me. There had been no omen since we started. I wish I had seen a beautiful girl coming in the opposite or a group of girls or at least some woman carrying basket of fruits and flowers which were considered very good omens for a prosperous and happy married life, but none came in the opposite, good or bad so far until we reached the beginning of this forest”

Sita continued “Listen to me Oh! My dear husband! Listen! A single, Brahmin all alone, should never come in the opposite direction as anyone starts on a journey as that was considered a very bad omen indicating future problems. And now we see, Raghu, a lonely Brahmin coming in the opposite, standing in our path is also holding a battle axe!! And want to kill us. For God’s sake this is not at all a good omen for our happy married life as husband and wife. And if you also kill this Brahmin even if it was a Parashuram who looks like a vulture that feeds on dead bodies, who is deadly to look at with an ugly face, known all over the

world as killer Parashuram with an axe and who dipped his axe in all the sacred rivers to get rid of his sin, and smell of blood of his own mother, you can imagine the sin of killing a Brahmin just a few hours after our marriage!. Oh! Raghu! My dear, I repeat, just imagine killing a Brahmin immediately after our marriage”

But Sita’s newly wed husband Raghu Rama did not listen and he did not stop setting his arrow with a widest blade fixed to it. He pushed away his wife just with one push of his left hand and said, “Sita, keep away. I do not care about those so called omens. And I don’t believe in all those sentiments of yours. What nonsense of omens, and blind beliefs you are talking? Why this Parashuram first of all wants to kill me? You must think about it. I am married just a few hours ago and he wants to kill me for what? It may be just because I was born in to warrior caste as “Kshatriya”? Can anyone take birth choosing his own parents and his caste? What shall come later on shall be “Ramarajya”, my rule over this earth where everyone shall be equal before the law, irrespective of caste, colour of skin or creed of his belief! What nonsense are you talking Sita?!” Rama, the newly wed husband shouted at his wife Sita.

Prince Rama, again pushing away his newly wed wife continued, “I shall shoot an arrow and kill this Parashuram, here itself thus putting an end to his violent and unjust life! He who killed his own mother has no right to live. He who killed twenty five kings of various kingdoms without any proper trial, hearing of the case or complaint has no right to live. Parashuram must die! Now itself” Rama shouted with intense voice.

When all this argument was going on between newlywed husband and wife, while ghost like Parashuram was standing right in the middle of the path, an unknown, incomprehensible fear gripped those one thousand body guards who accompanied the newly married Sita and Rama after they had seen that Sage Parashuram with an axe. All this time Sage Vishwamitra, who was watching on the side lines, approached Rama. Sage

Vishwamitra demanded Sage Parashuram to explain the cause of his anger?

Sage Parashuram suddenly started speaking. He said “This Prince Rama had done a sacrilegious act. He had set his left foot on Lord Shiva’s bow and bent it only to break it. What an outrageous act? He had insulted Lord Shiva’s great bow by placing his foot on it. I wanted to kill him and so I came”.

Sage Vishwamitra answered Parashuram saying, “No sacrilegious act was committed. When the bow was so long and so strong, it had to be bent with left foot on it and it was done as a necessity. The breaking of bow was verily accidental and I shall tell you while the bow was broken I myself was there and witnessed it”.

Prince Rama moved forward with his bow and arrow now largely drawn to kill Parashuram who was helplessly standing, probably first time in his life and with a lot of embarrassment and shame writ large on his face.

Sita moved forward again to stop her husband. Sita said to Rama “First learn to forgive people. You are going to be anointed as a king and learn to act like a King; behave like a king, and learn to pardon people”.

Sage Vishwamitra finally said “Parashuram, you should agree to live only in caves and in deep forests and you shall promise never to come to outside civilized world. If you agree to this condition, Rama shall pardon you”

Sage Parashuram agreed. Prince Rama took off his arrow from his bow “Kodanda”. Sage Parashuram started running towards caves in the hills. His pride was gone and his spiritual powers were totally evaporated.



PALACE POLITICS

After so many days, and nearly after a fortnight of arduous journey, after crossing so many rivulets, rivers and ravines and passing through the thick forests routes, newlywed couple Sita and Rama's horse cart finally reached the gates of Ayodhya. So a finely decorated chariot decked with flowers and quality pearls was kept ready for them, to take them in a procession to the palace.

People lined up on either side of road to see their beloved Prince Rama who was very popular warrior hero among masses. They were very curious to see the wife of their beloved prince who would soon become their queen.

The procession went through the streets of Ayodhya and everyone started talking about beautiful Sita. They talked about her mesmerizing and charming face.

Now at the entrance to Palace of seven stories built of stone, all of three mothers-in-law Queen Kausalya, Queen Sumitra and the youngest Queen Kaikeyi welcomed their eldest daughter-in-law with golden plates, lit up with lamps and perfumed sticks. Sita was their eldest daughter-in-law who should have special place in the family as per traditions. Prince Rama's mother Queen Kausalya took Sita in to her arms and hugged her and kissed on her forehead with all the love. Sita specially noticed that another mother-in-law Kaikeyi was surprisingly very young and also a very pretty looking woman.

One year had passed without any incident. Sita was happy herself. She would spend most of her time in meditation and worship of Lord Shiva. Her mother-in-law would often see her either in puja room or in deep meditation in her own quarters. Sita was generally very quiet keeping herself very clam and serene.

Prime Minister and other ministers and even priests advised King Dasharatha to relinquish responsibilities of ruling the big kingdom and anoint Prince Rama as the king as he was married. As per traditions unmarried person cannot be anointed as king.

Then very auspicious dates were fixed after consulting almanacs for the coronation ceremony of prince Rama as the king of Ayodhya and his wife Sita as Queen.

The auspicious date was fast approaching for the coronation ceremony of Rama leading to hectic activity inside the palace. The king's baton had to be passed on to Rama who was already very popular among masses as he had already taken up many responsibilities of ruling the kingdom while working under his father King Dasharatha.

Prince Rama was very truthful, kind and very able administrator. Rama's fame not as prince of Ayodhya but as a great hero of valour, and man of an exemplary courage spread across the world far beyond the limits of Ayodhya city. It spread even to the small villages in deep forests and even to remote hamlets nestling in hills.

In rural areas in their oral legends Prince Rama was gloriously eulogised among villagers and hamlets of various tribes. And in many rural folk lore's sung by bards, and wandering gypsies Rama was a great legendary hero. This was much more widely spread after the killing of demon Thataka and humiliation of legendary Sage Parashuram who ran away to caves, made Rama an Avatar of god. Tribal poets in remote villages wrote ballads in which Rama was a hero, a living legend. And these balladeers sang eulogizing heroic deeds of Rama at village functions, gatherings and festivals. Natural of the typical legends, they were highly exaggerated versions of Rama narrating him as an Avatar. Rama was a warrior hero even in the songs sung by house wives. House wives sang the songs of Rama marrying Sita and the event of breaking of Shiva's bow. Bards started singing verses and gypsies started telling stories of Rama from village to village and from house to house. Seers and masses were singing ballads

narrating the story of Rama during traditional festivals. Sri Rama was a living legend even before he was anointed as the King of Ayodhya. In many of these stories woven around the valour and heroic exploits of Rama as a great warrior, those poets, bards, gypsies, wondering monks and even house wives used their own imagination to invent highly exaggerated versions which fired fantastic romanticism of people. And as it happens in all legends he was considered more than a human being.

King Dasharatha thought that his eldest son Rama highly deserved the throne of Ayodhya. The auspicious date for coronation ceremony was fast approaching and priests had made regular visits to the king's palace requesting a list of requirements for ablutions and for other necessities for overseeing the ceremonial arrangements for anointing Rama as the king of Ayodhya.

The coronation ceremony was only one day ahead.

In the chambers of Queen Kaikeyi, in the inner quarter of the great palace of the legendary King Dasharatha, the third and youngest wife of king Dasharatha was sitting on a mat on the wooden floor brooding very seriously and was deeply lost in thoughts about her son Bharatha and his prospective new role as advisor prince to his half-brother Rama. And then her physically deformed sister cousin "Manthara" with her stiff neck and bent back bone entered the Queen's chambers. Manthara came along with Kaikeyi, accompanied her from their kingdom of "Kekaya" when she was married to King Dasharatha. Against the belief of many in the palaces of King Dasharatha at the time, Manthara was highly educated woman who called herself as scholar or "Pundit" of Political Science and Master of the art of "political propaganda". Manthara due to her physical deformity chose to remain as spinster and followed Kaikeyi to the capital city of Ayodhya. Manthara with her forwardly bent stance was very familiar face in the palace and known as personal servant of Queen Kaikeyi.

Manthara said to Queen Kaikeyi “I see you are seriously thinking. I think it is about your son Bharatha. I can also observe that you are quite happy about his role in the new rule by his half-brother. I dare say as your cousin and advisor for all these years, until I get this much old now, that you Kaikeyi had forgotten your own aims and ambitions in life. You had grown foolish and now acting in a stupid way because you were also like the whole of the world outside came under the influence of that mythical hero called Rama, son of your co-wife”

At which quite annoyed by Manthara, Queen Kaikeyi replied “Didi, (elder sister) what nonsense are you talking? While this auspicious moment shall come just tomorrow itself, why should you think I am foolish?”

“Yes, you are! Let me tell you, do not think like stupid. Your son Bharatha work like a servant under his domineering and highly popular legendary brother Rama who subdued Parashuram and broke to pieces that great Shiva’s bow. And do you feel happy about it? You should not because Prince Rama son of your co-wife, now a days, you can see was feeling very proud of himself ever since he married that beautiful woman Sita.”

Queen Kaikeyi said “Yes, It does seem like that sometimes. But as eldest son born to Queen Kausalya, Prince Rama was born to become king, he was destined to rule the kingdom as first-born, destined to sit on the throne and that was his destiny ordained by God. My son was not born as eldest. So was the case with Laxmana and Shatrugna. What is wrong? It is dharma and we should all follow Dharma!?”

Manthara in a lower voice as if palace walls were listening, carefully said “Look, my darling! Sister, do not under estimate your own strength. Find ways to make your son the king of Kosala kingdom sitting on the throne at Ayodhya!! Think ways for it my foolish child. There should be indeed a way. Actually you had long forgotten your own ambitions and in fact you had quietly forgotten your own life, for God’s sake. Let me tell you my darling Kaikeyi, you remember the war? You had been

warrior yourself and had accompanied your husband the great king Dasharatha, on his chariot, when you had yourself deftly shooting arrows with exemplary courage while fighting with that mightily powerful Ravana? On that fateful day, in that fierce battle with Ravana, you told me, the chariot wheel would have come off the axle, and king Dasaratha would have died there and then in that battle with Ravana! You had not only fought valiantly but you had put your finger in the hole of that axle stopping the chariot's wheel which was slipping out! The wheel could stay in its place because of your sacrifice and your finger was cut off!! And your courage, your valour saved the king and thus saved the kingdom even though that great King Dasharatha was no match to the King of Lanka Ravana with his mystical powers. The great King Dasharatha, his majesty, told you to ask for three boons whenever you wanted them. Now is the time Oh! Darling! Ask for the boons the king had promised. A king is a king and can never go back on his own promises and boons granted to you and the oaths he had taken in the name of Gods!"

At which at least in the beginning Queen Kaikeyi the pretty, sexy and voluptuous wife of King Dasharatha was shocked as her heart began to thump against her ribs, and the sound of her own heartbeat, she could hear it herself. She immediately knew what boon she should demand and was well aware of all those consequences thereby might arise in the palace and outside among the people of Ayodhya.

But you see "Manthara Didi", Queen Kaikeyi began to speak "even if I were to ask the king to anoint my son Bharatha as the king and even if crowning ceremony takes place , God willing, Prince Rama is highly popular with the masses outside and prince Laxmana supports Rama outright whether good or bad. So these ideas do not work and I say Didi please keep shut up"

But Manthara was not the one who shut up so easily without sharpening her "advise" and ground her axe against Prince Rama. That old woman Manthara, with burning emotions inside knew well how to cut them to size, these so called successful people.

Any successful person aroused jealousy in Manthara and she would immediately ground her teeth and felt challenged. She started to tell her brainwashing and dangerous ideas to Queen Kaikeyi.

Manthara told Queen Kaikeyi, "Oh! My darling Queen, that is actually very easy. As part of redeeming your boons which the king promised himself, you would demand that Prince Rama should go to Dandaka forest for 14 years. That shall be redeeming your second boon. Meanwhile we take care of our Bharatha, popularize him with political propaganda. This is well known, public memory is very short and 14 years' time shall be very long. You know general masses forget whatever the kings and queens do, good or bad very soon."

In the night Queen Kaikeyi was waiting for the King Dasaratha to come as she was a young wife among his wives, almost twenty years younger to her husband and she knew that she was the sexiest one. And Queen Kaikeyi was aware that the king Dasharatha was much enamoured of her. So she thought she must take a hard decision. In fact she had taken a dangerous decision to emotional black mail her henpecked husband.

Next morning it was coronation day for Prince Rama, a celebrated day of investiture ceremony. And hence prince Rama was bathed while priests chanted mantras. The previous day he was fasting and had performed various rituals ordained by religious belief systems. He was suitably dressed in costly royal robes and pearl garlands around his neck. His wife Sita shall become the Queen of Ayodhya. She was also getting ready in her private quarters of the palace.

The time was fast approaching; Rama's accession to power as the king of Ayodhya, that auspicious moment of coronation should not be run over by late arrivals. That was why priests and other ministers were already in waiting. Prince Rama went to the central hall of the palace, fully dressed in royal robes and jewels and pearl garlands. Prince Rama had seen several guests who were already sitting there and waiting for the coronation

ceremony to start. Sacred water from the river Ganga was already brought in the sacred vessels and kept ready. And great sages, Rishis, Purohits, Brahmans and priests were all ready and waiting. Prince Laxmana, half-brother of Prince Rama was fuming with anger because their father, King Dasharatha was absent.

Everyone was asking the same question to each other “Where is his majesty the King?”

Prince Rama had been walking to his mother’s quarters in the palace and back to the central hall since the appointed time for the arrival of the great king Dasharatha, at least a dozen times. Prince Rama was fully attired in a king’s full dress wearing a highly embroidered coat with gold buttons, and was adorned with a highly regarded turban studded with diamonds. Laxmana came nearer to his brother Rama and said “brother, you check at quarters of our small mother Kaikeyi at once”.

Prince Rama then went to palace quarters of Queen Kaikeyi which was very suitably located with a good view of the city of Ayodhya. Then straight he walked in to bedroom of his small mother, as its doors were fully open. There Rama saw to his surprise and shock, what he could not believe at first. Their father king Dasharatha, was not at all ready and he was sitting cross legged, on a large and wide wooden bench and he covered himself only with a thin bed sheet. He was probably naked beneath that covering bed sheet. He was looking sad and weary, with an exhausted face. And on the other side, right on the floor on a simple mat made of forest grass his small mother Kaikeyi was sleeping, her face turned on the side of wall, herself in full black sari and blouse, covered her head with a black transparent cloth, expressing the fact as per traditions, that she was very angry with her own demands. When a queen wears a black sari and blouse and sleeps on the floor, it actually meant the queen did not like what was going on at the time.

Prince Rama stood in front of his father and asked “What is the matter? What is all this? What are the demands between you and

mother? So many guests have been already waiting and auspicious time is fast approaching. At this point of time what exactly is going on here? Father! I demand to know it myself.”

At which King Dasharatha said “What can I do? Kaikeyi redeemed her boons. I promised and granted those boons decades ago immediately after the battle with that rakshashas Ravana of Lanka, when, in that battle she saved my life. I am the King of Ikshavaku clan. I should stand by my word, given to her. Then all of a sudden Dasharatha stopped with a choked voice and with his weary, exhausted face he looked at Rama who was attired in a kingly dress with a face beaming with enthusiasm and lot of expectations, and in that moment the old king could not speak any more. He looked again straight for a few seconds at Rama and with tears started rolling down his cheeks, that old King Dasharatha fell silent.

The queen Kaikeyi, who was listening, got up hissing like a snake from the floor and stood up, looked at Rama and said “What he will tell? He is not able to tell!”

Then she looked at her husband King Dasharatha who looked back at her helplessly with shadows of fear in his eyes! Kaikeyi the queen said to Rama, “I redeemed my boons! And your father granted them. Accordingly Bharatha shall be anointed as King and you, Rama are exiled to Dandaka Forest and you should immediately proceed to forests of Dandaka, for fourteen and half years and never to return until the end of that time. That is what your father should have ordered you to do, and I expect you as a dutiful son of Dasharatha you must obey him. But unfortunately I have to speak his orders!”

At which Dasharatha the king fell silent and was looking at his young wife with his large eyes widely opened, and at the same time with an expression, which he brought on to his face, of his own helplessness.

And Kaikeyi, the young Queen did not stop at that. She continued “Oh! Rama! I neither hate you nor jealous of you. What for did I marry your father even though he was of my father’s age at the time

of our marriage. Your father threatened my parents, coerced my parents, to marry me. But even with all the pressure on me, to accept to marry him with big age gap, I had married him with a hope that in future my son should become a king. But everyone knows this. Why did I marry him?"

At which Prince Rama turned to his father King Dasharatha and said, "Why father, you should have come here as a first choice instead of presenting yourself at the central hall. What made you, my dear father, to come here, early in the morning?"

King Dasharatha looked at his sexy wife, who appeared much more voluptuous in her black sari and transparent blouse and then did not say anything. King Dasharatha was only murmuring to himself.

Prince Rama said, "Father. I understand that you had been here since yesterday night. You are the king and you should stand by your word, that is righteousness for a king and indeed you want to stand by your word without any exceptions for me whatever way. So be it! Father! I shall renounce my right as first born, to be anointed the king of Ayodhya. I shall let you do what you want to do. You may declare, your dear son Bharatha as the king, and anoint him as the king. I shall be in exile exactly as you promised her, for fourteen and half years into Dandaka Forest and I shall promise I do not return before the end of fourteen and half years. It is my promise. I give you my word for that"

Prince Rama left that premises and straight walked towards the quarters of his own mother Queen Kausalya, the first wife of King Dasharatha, in the palace complex. As he entered through the door, Sita was coming in the opposite direction in full makeup. Sita was wearing a new white silk sari with gold embroidery and with diamonds embedded blouse. She was shining like an angel from the skies. And she was looking very happy. Prince Rama in a very simple way and in a very casual voice told her "Sita, we need not go to central hall for coronation and you need not do anything there or you have anything to do with this palace. It is not your place, I think. Instead, I am sending you forthwith to

Mithila to your father king Janaka to take care of you while I am leaving for the forests for fourteen and half years”

Sita at first could not believe her own ears and what she was hearing. It took a moment for her to understand what her husband had said in such a cold manner, in a very cold voice. She felt her husband was curt and ruthless.

Sita asked for details and Rama told her all the details of what had happened in the rooms of Kaikeyi, her small mother-in-law.

Sita did not go away. She did not collapse either.



LAXMANA AND KAUSALAYA'S ADVISE

Time cannot be stopped. What shall happen shall happen. That was what was discussed by everyone in the coronation hall. Once the auspicious moment was passed by, and Sun went up in the sky straight above, everyone left the palace premises murmuring to themselves. Preparations for festivities even on the roads were abruptly stopped. It seemed whole life in Ayodhya came to a grinding halt.

In the palace in her own quarters, in a small hall, in front of her own bed room, Queen Kausalya, who was the Queen of Ayodhya stood there, leaning against a huge wooden pillar. She was silently weeping as her tears were rolling down her cheeks. Prince Rama was sitting on a wooden stool with his head bent down, unable to see his dear mother weeping with a sad face. Prince Laxmana was also sitting on a wooden bench near the wall in the same hall with his eyes full red with anger and he was heavily breathing.

It was Rama at first who broke the silence of sadness by narrating how their father and the King Dasharatha told him how he was bound by the boons he gave to his young wife Kaikeyi long ago and his morals of “Raja Dharma” in a helpless manner. Rama seemed to have resigned to his fate of living in forests and it was very apparent that he accepted foregoing his right to rule the kingdom of Kosala and to spend life in forests. Instead of sitting on the throne at Ayodhya he was getting ready to leave home for Dandaka Forests.

But when he began to explain the difficulties of living in a forest and how exactly would be the forest life and other problems, his mother Queen Kausalya broke down weeping loudly, she had

slumped on the floor. Rama's mother Queen Kausalya said in a very sad voice, stopping in between her sobbing "What will you eat, my darling son for fourteen years? Who will cook good quality meat for you? In forest do you eat tubers and tree leaves for fourteen years? Oh! No!!" She cried, got up and came running to her son Rama, and kissed on his forehead. It was like a big cow came running for its calf when she had lost it in a forest. Then Queen Kausalya wiped off her tears and with some determination and finality in her voice she said, "We must think about some alternatives to avoid all the troubles of living in forests for God's sake". When she said this, Laxmana got up all of a sudden from his bench and hissing like a hooded cobra, bending forward and in choked voice of suppressed anger, he said "My dear brother Rama, your innocence is hijacked. We can actually kill our father and usurp the throne. That is it. Every act is justified when dealing with treacherous ambitions for power, particularly of a woman"

"We can poison our father, or cut him with a sword or pierce him with a javelin but we shall not be going to forest for fourteen years until everyone forgets us and never expects us to return and unfortunately we may never return. You must realize this coronation of Bharatha is all dubious design of our younger mother Kaikeyi to drive you in to forests because you live as a legend among the populations. Our father and the King is infatuated with our younger mom and that is how he is helpless. He is obsessed with her, physically and mentally attached to her. He had been enamoured of her totally henpecked, he could not say a single word against her selfish wishes."

Rama in a very peaceful and very firm voice told Laxmana "Listen Laxmana, sitting on the throne with a crown on the head and with the authority of a king, should not be important. We should not commit a bigger crime than our own father had done to me or to you. The method and the means we adopt should always be noble and better than what we want to achieve in the end. Our own morals and values we uphold in our lives paves a better way of life for us than what we get by usurping the throne by force.

After all that is said and done about morals and values what is more important is how we achieved what all that we achieved. There shall be no question of any type of rebellion or any plan of regicide and the ideas of imprisoning him should not enter your mind and I shall say, our father has the right to bequeath the empire to whoever he may have favoured. You should never think in terms of causing harm to him in any manner”.

But Laxmana insisted that he himself would stab their father if required. Laxmana said “People will rebel for sure; nobody accepts all this treachery, of anointing Bharatha as the king. If only we were to go outside and explain people as to what has been happening inside the palace, and the king’s submissive nature, people themselves will rebel”.

Rama loudly objected and said “Laxmana! You should not entertain any thoughts of rebellion against the king by people outside or committing a regicide yourself. Dasharatha is the king of Ayodhya but first of all he is our father and we are his children. That first aspect of our own life is that we are his children and anything in our life comes next. He has every authority even as father as well as the king to declare and to bequeath his kingdom to anyone he likes and proclaims him as the king. But most important in life for anyone are the values one follows with kindness and one’s ability to sacrifice life itself for the values one espouses.

Take the example of Emperor *Shibi*, a legendary emperor who had cutoff a muscle of his thigh as food for that eagle because he had given his word to the pigeon that he would save its life when it was entangled in the talons of that eagle. But the eagle demanded his own thigh muscle as its food in exchange of the pigeon in its talons. The great Shibi the emperor stood by his word and cut off his thigh muscle to feed the eagle and to save the pigeon”.

At which his mother Queen Kausalya intervened and then insisting she said “think about alternatives my dear son Rama! Do not go to forest for so many years my dear son. Why do not you

think about what Laxmana is telling you?” But Rama was against rebellion and against any other options like imprisoning King Dasharatha as well as resorting to any other dubious methods to ascend to the throne.

It was late in to the night and yet all three were sitting in this same position in the same hall with several lanterns burning.



RAMA'S EXILE

It was the next day but a fateful day for Sita, Rama and Laxmana. Queen Kausalya was very much worried. For the whole of previous night she had been weeping. She was pondering over only one question, "What was going to happen to their lives, in that dangerous forest and whether she would be still alive after fourteen years to see her son?"

In the courtyard, inside the palace which is open to the sky, Rama took off his royal robes, a full length upper silk coat embroidered with gold and silver thread, a diamond studded belt and golden bangles on his wrist. He was wearing only a yellow cotton towel wound around his waist, with bare upper body, half-naked, Prince Rama was taking a ritual bath of his vows at an open well in the courtyard. Again and again he was repeating his vow while pouring turmeric mixed water over himself, that he would not return until the end of fourteen and half years from Dandaka Forest.

He had drawn the water himself in to a big vessel. At the Well, after mixing some turmeric in the buckets of water in the brass vessels in a ritual manner, he lifted the buckets of turmeric mixed water and poured over his head all by himself.

His young wife Sita was watching this, entire ritual bath after vows by her husband made to all the family members present there in a very loud voice. Sita was leaning against the outer walls of the palace facing that large well in front of which Rama was proceeding with his ritual bath.

Rama completed his ritual bath of vows. Rama was wearing only one single yellow coloured dry cloth which was an eight yards long one, smeared with turmeric powder, and he wound it around his waist and around his two legs, with fringes in the front, which

covered his lower portion of his body until his ankles. It was a dry raw cotton cloth in saffron colour. He was half-naked without any upper garment. Sita came straight to him and holding his both hands near the shoulders, she loudly broke down weeping. Sita spoke in a begging voice of pity and sadness “Raghu! How long you would be like this?” Rama told her, “Sita, look outside the palace. Stand at the compound wall and look down in to the street. Most of the people wear only this much. Let all the people wear full dresses in my country and then I shall wear a full dress”.

Sita turned around in agony, and then in fits of anger she approached her three mothers-in-law, who were also leaning against the walls of the palace, watching all this unexpected tragic event of a couple who were married just a year ago, but remained themselves totally silent.

Sita walked straight to Queen Kaikeyi and said “Now I think your burning eyes finally got a relief. Your large eyes are cold without warmth of any love in them and except jealousy those two eyes of yours are devoid of any kindness. What a pair of evil eyes? Oh! God! You are spitting fire with your bloody eyes, all through these days the moment you see me. Have your eyes finally become cool, my dear mother-in-law? I suppose, after seeing me and my husband in this condition, you are happy?”

Kausalya wanted to say something to Sita to keep quiet, but Sita shouted at her own mother-in-law Queen Kausalya in a very loud, frustrated voice “You three queens are all wretched creatures and do not have any conscience first of all!”

At which Rama got angry with his wife Sita and shouted at Sita “go back in to your room, out of here, I say”. Sita walked away very fast, throwing away a towel in her hands, back in to the open court yard.

An hour after that Rama came in to his quarters in his palace, with one cloth, a saffron coloured “Dhovati” which is up to his ankles. All of a sudden he was looking very odd in his half-naked appearance without any upper garment.

Sita was standing at the compound wall of the palace at the edge of their quarters, and she was throwing away her gold and silver jewelry in to the women public gathered outside who came there to see her for their everyday, regular “*darshan*” of Sita. Sita was standing on long wooden stool leaning on the compound wall and people outside were clamouring for more gold. There was a lot of noise, cries and shouts of public outside asking for more jewelry. They were also throwing garlands at her like every day. It was everyday routine for Sita to stand there and give “darshan” to the common people standing outside the compound wall with one difference on that day. Sita was throwing away her jewelry in to the waiting people outside.

Rama was waiting until Sita turned around. She turned back with her jewelry basket empty, got down from stool, but she hardly looked at her husband, and straight she walked to a swing in the center of the hall and sat there. Rama started to tell Sita in a beseeching, cajoling voice, “Sita, I am making arrangements for your departure to Mithila for your stay there until I return. I had already sent a messenger with a letter to your father”.

At which Sita got up, came near to him, and obviously she was very perturbed. She was very much hurt and she looked at her husband as if her husband had insulted her. Sita said “You should feel ashamed of such a suggestion to your own wife. Raghu! Listen I shall accompany you to the forest. Sita shall be there where Rama is there. I shall not go to Mithila. I shall not, I repeat”.

At which Rama started explaining the dangers of leading a forest life for fourteen years and about Dandaka forest which was nearly impenetrable with its demons, rakshashas and poisonous creatures. Rama told her “Sita you cannot go on foot for many miles a day until we reach water source or a tribal village for a morsel of food”. Sita replied saying that she would walk in the front if there were thorns so that those thorns should pierce her foot instead of her husband’s foot. But Rama insisted that she

should go to her father at Mithila and there should not be any exceptions for her safety.

At that moment Sita got very angry. She said “Look Raghu! People outside think and exclaim, “What a coward you are!” They think that you could not take along your own wife with you because you are mortally scared. But let me ask you, “Do you think you are a man enough to take me along, your own wife with you”?”

That was it. Rama could hardly say anything .He turned around to go away and straight in the front he faced Laxmana. Laxmana who came there a bit earlier over heard the heated argument between husband and wife, also joined in the same argument in some other way.

Laxmana insisted that he would also join with them and accompany them to forest. This was not at all acceptable to Rama who was already frustrated with Sita shouted at his brother Laxmana and told him strictly to remain at home in Ayodhya.

Rama gave his reasoning for that. Rama told Laxmana “Someone has to take care of mother Kausalya and once Bharatha sits on the throne, as crowned King, Queen Kaikeyi as “*Rajamatha*” (mother of the king) would be very indifferent to my mother Kausalya as well to your own mother Sumitra. And also Laxmana! You have your wife Urmila; newly married to her you must take care of her. But please think about our father Dasharatha also, I cannot hate him, ignore him, and despise him just because he had denied his crown of power to me. And hence, for all these reasons, your presence here is highly important to give succor to our mother first of all”

Still Laxmana insisted that he must accompany him along with sister-in-law Sita to that dangerous forest Dandaka. Laxmana replied “My primary duty is to keep watch, always on alert for your safety. While both of you roam on the tops of hills deep in the forest, enjoying good weather, I shall keep watch and be on alert at the base of the hill. My presence is most important for

you both than providing safety for those who are always safe inside the palaces here and reveling in its luxuries. Why should I be here when you are walking through the dangers of Dandaka forest? Does it really make sense to me as a loving brother?"

Finally Rama reluctantly accepted Laxmana to accompany them to forest.

Rama wanted to donate whatever belonged to him. He instructed Laxmana to load approximately eight horse carriages full of clothes, gold and precious stones and donate them all to Brahmans and even to their widows. Laxmana gave orders to servants and officials of the palace and accordingly he made clear arrangements for distributing all of those eight cart loads of precious articles and clothes belonging to Rama to all Brahmans and even to their widows.

A poor man who lived by manual labour in the forest villages in the outskirts of capital city Ayodhya by digging wells, a known labourer called Trijata arrived home to his poor thatched roofed hut, in the colony of untouchables over a small hillock. Trijata had a wife and a dozen children. Wife of Trijata insisted that her husband should visit royal palace and beg Rama for some money. After initial reluctance, Trijata arrived at royal palaces of Ayodhya capital city and could easily cross five gates while all the time keeping Rama in his mind. Trijata thought that he had some spiritual powers of mind, using which he finally stood in front of Rama himself inside the palace. He questioned Rama about his donations to Brahmans and even to their widows.

Trijata asked for some financial assistance and explained about his dire poverty and his dozen children at home to feed. Trijata was wearing only a loin cloth to cover his genitals.

Rama said "Trijata, take a javelin and throw it. I shall measure the land and donate my cows to you which shall fill that exact space". Trijata felt very much happy and proceeded to outer courtyard of the palaces of Rama. Trijata threw his javelin with as much power as he could muster. But he did not expect the result.

The javelin went on and on in the sky, and finally landed, striking at the banks of Sarayu River. And as promised, that prince Rama, who was called by name Raghu by his dear wife Sita donated the last and remaining one thousand cows to Trijata after gladly hugging Trijata for his enormous strength!. Trijata was still dazed with the result.

Rama summoned his brother Laxmana and told him, “Laxmana! King Janaka, of Mithila, our father-in-law had given us Astra’s and quivers of arrows which could never be exhausted. What is important for us shall be strength of our weapons in the forest, and nothing else protects us more than these Astra’s, and arrows with quivers of mythical powers.”

Laxmana immediately collected all those weapons donated by King Janaka, their father-in-law, after his brother Rama’s marriage with Sita and his own marriage with Urmila. These weapons included among others like mythical quivers, two long swords made of alloy metal with Gold handles and excellent, well ornate leather sheaths.

Laxmana had been busy making final preparations to leave his home with a cloth bag with his essential cloths. Laxamana’s wife Urmila started weeping. She was leaning on to a wall of their private room. Laxmana could not take along his wife because as per traditions his wife Urmila should not walk on the same path of her husband’s elder brother through a forest. As per old traditions, shadow of Rama should not fall on her. Urmila stayed back, but very soon just in few days after separation from Laxmana, she went in to a coma type of sleep.

On that particular day, after midday, Rama and Sita were ready to leave Ayodhya. Sita made a cloth bag of her jewelry which her father had gifted her just before leaving Mithila with her husband and a few essential cloths and nothing else. Laxmana also arrived there. Rama told Sita to give that cloth bag to Laxmana to carry. Laxmana put that cloth bag on his head and all three started walking towards river Sarayu. People lined up on the streets on either side to see this tragic departure of their beloved prince and

princes to forests. These people had a strong feeling that these three would never return. Many people including elders started weeping and children started crying loud when their mothers started weeping. Everyone was criticizing Queen Kaikeyi and her selfishness. Some even started abusing that Queen and broke down weeping. Rama was walking in the front and behind was Sita with her bare feet as she refused to wear foot wear because they were made of leather and the last one was Laxmana with a cloth bag on his head. For some of the people watching, it gave them rude shock and for some who were unable to bear it actually fainted. And most of the people thought that it was the last time they were seeing them.

But this situation of a complete sudden twist in their life was perceived by common people as their tragic destiny. But this stripling youth Rama and his young wife Sita with more maturity than her age accepted all this turn of fate stoically. At this point of time, if every event had happened as planned, Rama's coronation would have been completed and by this time, he might be receiving foreign dignitaries as the king of Ayodhya. Instead he was crossing river Sarayu, on a small boat with his wife Sita and brother Laxmana. Rama was silent on the boat and knew that troubles are not always alone as a rule.

But when troubles come, a person's journey is always lonely. Alone one has to face, one's troubles and dear most persons would be absent at the time of your troubles. But Rama thought that in his case at least, he was accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Laxmana. And Rama felt that he was actually a fortunate person! He thought he should feel happy in one way. It was because his wife Sita was walking along step in step with him.



ENTERING DANDAKA FOREST

On entering Dandaka forest, and going on foot for a whole day they had finally seen a hamlet of hermitages. Those hermits who had been in penance for many years in these forests were quite surprised to see illustrious Sita, Rama and Laxmana. They were not in the knowledge of what had happened recently in the palace faraway in Ayodhya. But all these hermits felt more than happy looking at these three people without even winking their eyelids.

Demons or rakshashas in Dandaka forest were their pertinent problem. Demons were not exactly demons but these were also called “Rakshashas” because these people had their own culture, a knowledge through generations that was passed on to them, with an education of dogma and practice of cults which they call as “religion”, which was actually a narrow minded belief system of blind cult following, these rakshashas had their specific ethnicity which was uniquely their own and indeed had built large cities with marvelous engineering and they were hoarding great riches. According to them their Lord Shiva was only god for the universe and worshipping in their method shall be the only method for a relief or to achieve “moksha” from the cycle of births.

These rakshashas were violently against any other cultures and ethnicity and also any other worshipping of any Gods other than worshipping Lord Shiva was strictly prohibitive. These were called highly fanatical rakshashas who were indeed known for cannibalism, for cooking and eating human beings who were antagonistic to their ethnicity, and their belief system or their methods of worshipping. They were indeed turned to cannibalism with all their hatred for other types of communities with different cultures.

Rama was against all these people who were called “rakshashas” particularly for their cannibalism and hatred for other cultures. Rama wanted to destroy these narrow minded people if they confront him, but indeed Rama was overly concerned about their cult worshipping or for their belief system. Rama wanted to destroy kingdoms built by these “rakshasha” people and bring all these smaller or bigger fragments of kingdoms in to one umbrella of a great empire of equal justice without prejudice to race, caste, colour, creed or belief system, which was what Rama himself declared as “Rama Rajya” which he promised to usher in once he came to power.

Rama taking vow with his great bow “Kodanda” assured these hermits, of his dedication to their cause, belief and system and promised to protect them at any cost.

Rama told those hermits and Rishis, “Destiny brought me to Dandaka for the second time. This time I came with my wife Sita. I knew about these rakshashas and their influence in Dandaka even as a boy. I was the one who killed that “Thataki” and protected various Yagna performed by Sages, earlier under the guidance of Sage Vishwamitra.”

Hermits flocked around these brothers Rama and Laxmana as if kids would surround their mother after a whole day gap of time. Rama promised and took a vow to protect them, in the name of his “Kodanda” assured them again that he would protect their rituals even risking his life. He took oath and said it shall be primary aim of his life. He took a vow to kill all rakshashas wherever and whenever he would encounter them without any mercy.

“I give my word. I take this vow in the name of my Kodanda” Rama told all those in that congregation of hermits, sages and Rishis.

In a small hut of mud walls and roof with tree leaves, on the earthen floor, Rama and Sita slept for the night. Laxmana and other hermits of that hut slept outside under the trees.

In the morning, Sita washed her face with extreme cold water stored in a big earthen vessel of the hermit's ashram.

Then the forest life in Dandaka started for these brothers and Rama's wife Sita.

Hermits, Rishis and Sadhus advised Rama to proceed southwards to "Janasthana" where the trouble from rakshashas was persistent through the days and nights, literally persecuting everyone who was performing any "Yagna" propitiating the gods.

Rama in the front followed by Sita, and Laxmana started walking in a single line through the dirt path of that thick forest in complete silence to avoid attack from animals. And before the fall of night they wanted to reach some or the other tribal hamlet or a little village deep inside the forest.



ATTACK OF VIRAADA AND HIS BURIAL

On the way they stopped at a small water fall, flowing down over a small hillock. Sita started washing her face and hands and Rama and Laxmana were sitting on a boulder nearby. A huge Rakshasha with a huge belly , with tiger skin around his waist ,dripped in blood and with a javelin in his hand also dabbled in blood, appeared all of a sudden as if from nowhere.

Sita with her face dripping with water turned around to look at him and was terrified letting out a shriek, and started shaking with fear like a banana leaf in a wind. That Rakshasha, who was almost looking like a huge bear with so much hair on his large hands, gave a long look at Sita and even he smiled appreciating her beauty! He lunged forward, lifted Sita on to his shoulders and started running. Sita was crying and shaking like a small bird caught in the teeth of a tiger. Rama stopped the rakshasha from the front, and Laxmana was standing on another side from behind. Rama took a sharp arrow with long blade and cut off the left hand of this huge Rakshasha who was still holding Sita right on his shoulder. That Rakshasha without agitation or fear and with full confidence in himself had brought down Sita from his shoulder. Sita ran away to hid behind her husband Rama. That Rakshasha bent down, picked up his cut off hand with his right hand and then patched it back where it was cut. Rama and Laxmana were astonished to see it happen. The cut off hand simply patched up without any trace of injury! That rakshasha was chanting some mantras of Lord Shiva.

That Rakshasha smeared his forehead with ash like any other devotee of Lord Shiva. He gave a challenging look at Rama who was seriously looking at him and said “You could do nothing to

me. I am Viraada; I am brother cousin of great and mighty Ravana of Lanka. I do abduct Sita, and with all your strength and might, Oh! Warrior! With a bow and arrow! I challenge, you will never be able to stop me. Let anything happen and whatever may happen. And I recognize, I do recognize with all my devotion that this fine lady is actually Goddess Laxmi, Goddess of wealth and hence forth, she must sit in my house as I am an ardent devotee of Goddess Laxmi. Oh! Warrior brothers, you must know who I am and keep away from me for your own good.” While Rama was still listening with a surprised face, Rakshasha Viraada pushed away Rama to reach Sita.

Rama fought with that rakshasha Viraada. Though Viraada was easily defeated by Rama in hand to hand combat and each time Rama had cut off the hands and legs of Viraada, those cut off pieces were attached again by Viraada. Rama and Laxmana were astonished to witness how these body parts were patched up by Viraada. That mysterious rakshasha had been apparently unaffected by the ferocity of Rama with his sharp blades of arrows. Viraada then started laughing and Laxmana who was watching the fight was highly frustrated.

Finally Rama caught the throat of Viraada in a vicious grip and started strangulating him, when Viraada struggling to breathe collapsed down to his knees. Rakshasha Viraada struggled with desperate attempts to free himself from the grip of Rama but he was over powered by mighty Rama to his knees. Then Rama shouted at Laxmana, “Laxmana! You shall dig a large pit enough to bury even an elephant. And dig that damn pit very fast”. Laxmana within no time using a sharpened wood pole dug out a very big pit indeed. Rama lifted up the entire body of this huge mountain like Rakshasha up in the air and then with all the force and with all his strength Rama threw Viraada in to this deep and large pit to bury him alive. Immediately both brothers Rama and Laxmana started rolling huge boulders and started pushing stones, mud and earth in to the pit. Now this huge pit was filled with stones and boulders and this mound of stones looked like a small hillock over the body of that mysterious rakshasha Viraada.

But that rakshasha could roll himself in the boulders over him and even he managed to sit up inside the mound of huge stones and started crying and shouting for help while unable to wriggle out of those huge boulders over him. Then Viraada all of sudden very surprisingly resigned to his fate and spoke in a very loud voice from inside huge mound of stones. “Oh! Warrior! Actually you did a good thing! This peaceful world finally got rid of rakshasha Viraada, who tormented them. I had been a curse given by the God to these human beings but I have had been remained a great devotee of Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth. And Lord Shiva, the ultimate God shall forgive me for all my mistakes”

Viraada in an incoherent speech about his past started narrating his life story in a loud, booming voice from behind the mound of stones. He revealed that he was indeed released from a curse given by Kubera, who was his own brother and also the world's richest man with great spiritual powers comparable only to the mighty Ravana of Lanka. His brother with uncontrolled anger cursed him only because he came very late to his house warming ceremony, a huge bungalow built by him. His brother was much angrier because even the distant relatives and even Gods came all the way from heavens and arrived much earlier to attend his house warming ceremony.

Viraada shouted from behind the stones “I am brother of Kubera and a cousin of Ravana the great”. Rakshasha Viraada went on crying, as tragedy of being imprisoned forever behind the mound of stones over took him. Viraada was again trying desperately to come out from the mound of boulders but could not move much as the mound of stones rolled over each other and were resettling in to the same mound.

While all this trauma of Viraada was going on, and both the brothers were feeling happy to have imprisoned rakshasha Viraada, they suddenly remembered Sita and turned around to look for her.

Sita, her tears rolling from her large lotus eyes sat down on the earth in the middle of forest dirt path a little distance away and herself bending forward, keeping her hands in the dust, weeping loudly, she refused to move.

Rama requested Sita several times to get up herself and start walking because it was getting late as it was already an evening and before the night fall they had to reach a hermitage of a Sage or any other small hamlet in this dangerous forest. Rama bent down to look in to the face of his wife while he was himself on the edge of his patience.

Rama asked Sita “What is the problem? My dear wife! We have got rid of a big problem of Viraada, who is none other than a brother cousin of Ravana himself. Why do not you get up Sita?” Rama realized that he was actually shouting at her in frustration and then with deliberate effort he could control himself.

But Sita refused to get up. Sita said to Rama very slowly and in a determined voice, “how can you bury a person, with full throbbing life, alive? Yes, I understand, he tried to steal me, abduct me and tried to run away carrying me on his shoulder. He probably, mistakenly thought that I am Goddess Laxmi when he is himself in a state of deleterious mind and may also be in a pitiful intoxication after eating some food. You know I am not a Goddess. I am daughter of Janaka. And you, my dear husband, you have no right to bury a person alive even if someone tried to kidnap me. Even if I was really kidnapped you should not kill anyone. But what is this cruelty in you? I am scared with a strong feeling that I never understood you. You have just now buried a person alive just because he tried to take me, your wife, away! An unbelievable cruelty! Just listen how he was still shouting buried in the mounds of boulders!”

Sita broke down again and started weeping like a lost child.

This argument between husband and wife went on to heated levels until they started shouting at each other. Both of them Sita and Rama were not listening to each other but only shouting at each other and unnecessarily blaming each other. And Rama

started plucking his hair in frustration when Sita demanded to know as to why rakshasha Viraada should not be released!!

Laxmana was sitting away on a big boulder keeping his head in both of his hands.

Sita put her hands down in the dust and adamantly declared that she would not get up from the earth and she did not care for whatever the consequences it meant.

Rama finally bent over her and asked her “What do you want. Whatever you may ask I shall give if possible and I give my word for that.”

Sita said “I ask you three boons. One; you should never kill any one, any tiny creature even an ant in front of my eyes, I cannot see violence. Two; if a person chants the name of “RAMA” and repeats “RAMA, RAMA” and begs for your pardon then you must forgive that person even if it means forgiving a person who might have abducted me. Third One: You throw away that Kodanda or your great bow, and we shall go in to some cave, located nearby river and we both live like ascetics performing strict austere, penance for fourteen years. I tell you, listen; your mother would be very happy seeing you when you returned as a great saint with all spiritual powers”

And while Rama was dumbfounded and taken aback by her demands for boons or promises, Sita very calmly started telling him a story.

According to her narration of the story “Once upon a time there was a Sadhu who was doing a very austere penance for benevolence of Lord Shiva in this forest. As this penance of Sadhu was progressing to a crucial stage of achievement, King of Gods Indra Bhagvan felt very jealous and also somewhat scared of this Sadhu and he wanted to distract or disturb Sadhu’s penance”.

Sita stopped for a moment and then continued with her story

“So one day Indra Bhagvan appeared before him as if he were on a casual visit and requested that Sadhu to accept his sword of

diamonds for safe keep. That Sadhu readily accepted a Gods' request and took that legendary sword. But the next day onwards the curiosity of Sadhu about the sword grew to such levels that he could not control it. And hence that Sadhu one day took the sword in to his hands and went out only for testing its sharpness. But that Sadhu finally ended up knifing and cutting down many deer and other forest animals because the miracle sword of Indra was doing the work as if it were a live one with its own mind. Finally a few days later, Sadhu started eating animal meat as well and killed more animals for pleasure and food. That Sadhu forgot about his penance altogether and was obsessed with that mythical sword of the king of Gods, Indra Bhagvan. He turned to violent means and with cruelty he started acquiring properties. He forgot his penance or devotion to Lord Shiva."

Sita told this story and tried to convince her husband Rama to throw away his bow "Kodanda" so that he would not get deep in to acts of violence from which Sita said "there shall be no return".

Rama told Sita in a very curt manner "I do accept and grant those first two boons. But I do not accept the third one; I do not relinquish my responsibility of protecting these hermits, these sadhus, these rishis and sages in this forest and common people living in these hamlets. I am a Kshatriya warrior and this is my duty to protect the weak and innocent. I gave my word to them; I took a vow to protect them. And without mincing words let me tell you Sita, I am ready to lose you, forego all this family life, but I am not ready to leave, put to rest or throw away my bow, "Kodanda" or my arrows and my fighting skills. I shall protect these righteous people and innocent people even at the risk of my own life."

Sita got up and started walking along with her husband and brother-in-law and by the time the evening light was fast fading in these thick jungles of Dandaka, all the three finally reached a hamlet of huts to stay for the night.



SITA'S JOURNEY

The journey through this Dandaka forest for Sita was a strenuous one. It was much more than to describe it simply an arduous journey. There in the forests she was to face more problems than her husband and brother-in-law had faced. She was a vegetarian. She did not wear normal shoes because they were made of leather. She would not eat any cooked food by others. She was on bare foot for many miles through this forest every day. So many thorns pierced her feet.

In the night, Laxmana lights up a lamp by wounding several layers of cloth around the tip of a long dry stick and dousing it in oil, he would light it up. During the night Laxmana wakes up and pours additional oil over the stick to prolong the fire giving light to them. That would be their lamp, many times under the trees or open clearings in the middle of a forest.

There were many instances when Sita could not get water to drink as the biggest problem inside a forest was lack of water and the source of water could be miles away. In addition to all these problems mosquitoes attacked throughout the night, giving her sleepless nights.

Sometimes they could reach a village by night fall and then there they all could have rice and some curry to eat. In the morning she would have a luxury of a bathroom. She never complained, never said it had been better if she had lived with her father Janaka who was world's richest person and a king.



SHOKA OF DASHARATHA

King Dasharatha was unendingly ruminating on what had happened to Sita, his young daughter-in-law and his eldest son Rama. A few days after Sita, Rama and Laxmana left for the forest the King Dasharatha started feeling terribly guilty. He started living in the past and the events which he could not change started haunting him. The burden of his guilt weighed so high that he felt walking was terribly strenuous exercise and sleeping was very scary for him, with panic attacks, and he thought life was extremely difficult to live. The health of Dasaratha soon collapsed. He was bedridden with his own non-stop murmuring and talking to himself. Doctors told him to relax and they told him that the pressure on his mind was causing all the health problems. The king's health condition was worsening by day. His eldest wife Queen Kausalya was the only one he could allow to sit beside his bed and she was the only one who could give some solace to him.

Queen Kausalya begged Queen Kaikeyi, her co-wife to take back her second condition and allow Rama and Sita at least to live in Ayodhya without any royal privileges. But Kaikeyi was very adamant even when the king's health condition was worsened much more than a few days ago.

Kaikeyi told Kausalya that she was an instrument in the hands of God and the fate was all powerful.

One day the old King Dasaratha asked for the last glass of water from Kausalya. And while drinking water from the hands of his wife Kausalya, that king Dasaratha died.



ARRIVAL OF BHARATHA

An army arrived in Dandaka and at the head of this small contingent of army was Prince Bharatha, half-brother of Rama who was trying to navigate through that impassable forest of Dandaka.

All along the route, Prince Bharatha, son of Queen Kaikeyi, made many enquiries about the whereabouts of Rama and Sita in the forest. Prince Bharatha visited the Ashram of Sage Bharadwaja on the recommendation and help of a forest tribal, who told them that Rama with his wife Sita and brother Laxmana had stayed only for a brief time at that Ashram of Sage and later they left towards Chitrakuta Mountain.

Prince Bharatha moved with small army of cavalry regiment and a group of messengers who were familiar with the forest, worked as guides who tried to locate his half-brother Rama. He learnt that these three people Rama, Laxmana, and Sita had crossed three small tributary rivers. Bharatha also crossed these three rivers and reached the vicinity of Chitrakuta Mountains. There Bharatha could find out the probable location of Rama, Laxmana, and Sita only after thorough search and enquiries for many days with the help and guidance of native tribal people living in those tiny hamlets where Rama and Sita were household legends and where Sita was often garlanded by tribal house wives. These tribes were singing songs of the legends of Sita and Rama.

One day Prince Bharatha came to know the name of a boat man called “Guha” whom Bharatha approached to find out the exact location of Sita and Rama in that thick forest. After the enquiries with Guha and after conveying him the urgency of the matter that boatman Guha, accompanied by another person who was a known atheist called Jabali indicated that Sita, Rama and Laxmana were living on the foot hills of Chitrakuta Mountains.

That Jabali earlier worked as an official in the King's court of Dasaratha.

That prince Bharatha, and his small army of cavalry men, with the help of Guha the boat man and Jabali and a few other Sadhus, mendicants, and bards finally reached foot hills area of Chitrakuta where they could locate a small hut in the jungles of nearby hills very near to a rivulet.

After a few hours of their waiting at the hut, Rama and Sita returned from the top of Chitrakuta hill to that hut, long after spending their time together viewing beautiful scenery.

Rama welcomed Bharatha who had been waiting there and asked about father and mother and the welfare of people of Ayodhya. He had even enquired about the good health of mother of Bharatha, Queen Kaikeyi.

Bharatha after the exchange of formalities very slowly informed the untimely death of their father King Dasharatha. Even as he was describing the poor health and the very critical time of Dasharatha, Rama fainted. Sita who had already broke down after listening to shocking news, brought very cool water and poured it over the face of her husband Rama. Laxmana also brought cold water in a tumbler and poured it on the face and head of Rama who was lying unconscious on the floor.

Finally Rama came back to consciousness but started weeping loudly. Prince Bharatha, boatman Guha, Jabali and other Sadhus, Rishis and many cavalry men were standing around Rama and started consoling him.

It took sometime before Rama could become normal with an ability to speak.

Prince Bharatha simply informed him that Rama should come back immediately as the promises he made to their father King Dasharatha who had passed away, were irrelevant at the time and the whole country wherever people assembled, the discussions centered on the villainy nature of his mother Queen Kaikeyi. Moreover he was himself felt that he could not rule the country.

And in the changed circumstances, presence of Rama was all the more important. Bharatha advised Rama to return immediately. Prince Bharatha argued that ever since Rama left home, his mother Queen Kausalya had been weeping and sitting on the bed side of their sick father Dasharatha who he said was bed ridden just in a few days after Rama left home for the forest. Bharatha argued that Rama should take care of his mother Queen Kausalya, who had become a widow.

Jabali argued that so called boons were all nonsense and at the time irrelevant. What was most important was a good administration under him, for the sake poor and downtrodden people and which means Rama should immediately return.

Sage Bharadwaja also sent a message through Bharatha that Rama should return immediately to Ayodhya for the good of Sita and his brother Laxmana.

Rama refused all their requests to return to Ayodhya. Rama argued that real respect is keeping the truth and abiding by what one has promised. His father promised to queen Kaikeyi and it should be fulfilled by him particularly because he had already obeyed his father and promised to his mother. He would not return to Ayodhya until the completion of fourteen and half years of his life in the forests.

Bharatha after many attempts at convincing Rama, and facing a very vehement rejection by him turned around to return but suddenly broke down weeping there itself.

Prince Bharatha finally reached capital city Ayodhya after crossing three rivers and travelling through forests for many days.

On the coronation day, Bharatha kept the shoes of Rama on his head and ascended to throne of Ayodhya as the king of Kosala.



SATI ANASUYA ASHRAM

After prince Bharatha left, Rama and Laxmana along with Sita decided that they should travel towards south through Dandaka forest.

Rama argued with Laxmana that there were many small kingdoms in the south persistently harassed by rakshashas claiming the forest land as their own. There were so many horrific crimes committed by these rakshashas which were reported by Sadhus and Rishis to Rama. And Rama thought that it was most important to protect not only tribal hamlets, but also the Sages, Rishis and their Yagna.

Rama said he wanted to unite these small “*janapadas*” and other small kingdoms in to a big powerful empire with rational rule of equality to all.

The rakshashas as cannibals were creating havoc in these areas of Dandaka forest with their wanton killings born of hatred for different cultures.

On a day of full bright morning, Rama, Laxmana and Sita left their highly protected surroundings and very comfortable hut in a very beautiful scenic Chitrakuta and started walking deep in to forest towards south.

Finally they reached one day, a hermitage of Sage Aatri who was very popular and stayed at his ashram. The sage advised Sita, Rama, and Laxmana to visit ashram of his wife Anasuya who had been in penance for many years and had attained “siddhis” and could easily get into states of super conscious states of mind.

After taking leave from that great Sage Atri, and following his advice Sita, Rama, and Laxmana finally reached the ashram of Anasuya deep inside the forest.

So in that very large “ashram” of legendary Anasuya, a sage herself who was popularly known as “Sati Anasuya” all over in Dandaka forest area, Sita, Ram and Laxmana stayed for some time.

On that day Anasuya, the aged lady saint told Sita “My dear Sita, you are such a beautiful woman, I had never seen or could even imagine a human being to be so much beautiful. But I see that your face is now full of red dot marks of ants and mosquito bites. You look like a beautiful doll bitten by ants. What a horrible situation is this one. It is most pitiful to me. I understand you had not eaten rice and curry, a full meal, since many days. I advise you that it is very prudent for you to go back to Mithila and live with your father until your husband returns to Ayodhya from these forests. Your presence along with him through this impassable forest is not required at all. It is also very dangerous to live in this forest with full of rakshashas who were controlled by that mighty Ravana, that great devotee of Lord Shiva with super natural powers. Rakshasha Ravana is feared by gods and you must know that. And in any case, exactly where the hell you people are going? For God’s sake! Why so much deeper in the jungle southward? Listen to me; you need not stay with your husband in this forest, it is highly risky for such a beautiful woman like you. You can always join with Rama in Ayodhya”.

Sita who was surprised, at the advice of such a legendary woman saint Anasuya replied saying, “You are like my elder sister Anasuya! You are a famous Saint known for your renunciation of worldly pleasures. You had been very dedicated wife to your husband for most of your life. You are also staying in this forest for your penance. And I do understand your dedicated saintly life. As for me, I shall always stay with Rama. I shall say that wherever truth alone prevails and triumphs, there shall be the presence of Rama, and wherever there is Rama there shall be Sita.”

Anasuya kept quiet but warned Sita to take care of herself in this dangerous forest of Dandaka.

Just before leaving the ashram, Anasuya hugged Sita and applied an Ayurveda cream to the face of Sita. Saint Anasuya with her divine powers had materialized many ornaments and also heavenly flowers for Sita. Anasuya herself bedecked Sita with all this jewelry and adorned her with heavenly flowers in her hair.

Rama her husband when he had seen Sita adorned with all that jewelry looked astonished at her bejeweled beautiful appearance and much appreciated the beauty of Sita.

That old saint Anasuya who was very famous in that area of Dandaka forest, advised Sita, Ram to proceed further south and stay permanently at Panchavati area and also to construct a Parnashala on the banks of river Godavari. That great saint Anasuya told Rama “Once you construct a spacious, protected Hut at Panchavati, on the banks of Godavari, stop moving further south”.



PARNASHALA ON THE BANKS OF RIVER GODAVARI

Many months and years passed away deep inside Dandaka in their southward journey on foot. Rama killed so many rakshashas to save sages and rishis and became a legend in all the villages of Dandaka forest all along the banks of river Godavari. At a point of time, rakshashas came on horseback in a line from left side and another line of rakshashas, from right side and all are on horses with bows and arrows. These rakshashas dangerously surrounded Rama, Laxmana, Sita while heckling and making hooting sounds. Rama shot down with single arrow many rakshashas in one line on horseback as their heads rolled on earth in a line and as he aimed with a long arrow of a wide blade, at another row of rakshashas circling around on horseback in a file, Sita came to the front of her husband Rama, hugged him and stopped him.

Sita said “You have no right to exterminate the entire race of rakshashas. Who gave you this right to kill whoever they may be, irrespective of how dangerous they might be, you do not have any right to kill them. What harm they have done to you?” “Oh! Raghu!” Sita started questioning in a very agitated voice. Sita was almost on the verge of weeping. The entire rows of rakshashas on horseback were wearing face masks with ash and red colour vermillion. They belonged to a specific ethnic race and have specific culture of their own. They were indeed cannibals but do not eat flesh of their own ethnic groups. After Sita stopped Rama, the row of rakshashas who survived with ashes smeared all over their faces rode away on their horses making hooting sounds all in one line like trained warriors and then disappeared in to the forest.

After many more years of journey on foot in this Dandaka forest, Sita, Rama and Laxmana reached an excellent place, where the hills were shining in the sun light because of metal ingrained in their stones and the place appeared serene with river Godavari very much wide miles together in that place , was silent and flowing very gently. This was the place selected by Rama to settle by building a large hut on the banks of that river. This area was also known as “Panchavati”.

They were all exhausted with many years of journey through the forest on foot. Rama told Laxmana “Start building a very huge hut for us Sita and me and build another hut for yourself very much adjacent to ours.”

Rama told Laxmana “Cut off huge trees. Bring along huge sized long wooden pillars and beams and construct a very large hut with a roof covered by strong wooden branches and long tiger grass to sustain heavy rain and heat. You shall build a good sized shed for yourself”

Laxmana started cutting off huge teakwood trees and branches for the construction of “Parnashala” which literally meant a hut with a roof of tree leaves.

After the construction was completed by Laxmana by working in the day and night for few days, he had dug out a big well for Sita and constructed excellent private bath rooms for her with a huge stone tablet for the floor. The floor of the hut was hardened with clay and sand mix brought from the river Godavari and it was made smooth like glass. Laxmana had hardly slept any day during his strenuous work of construction.

Rama and Sita started living in that “parnashala” on the banks of Godavari and that big flat ground on which “Parnashala” was located was surrounded by shining hills. All of these three people Sita, Rama and Laxmana would have lived until the completion of their fourteen years period in this place of the forest, which actually meant only the remaining period of about two years for

them, and returned to Ayodhya in another six months after that, but fate had some other plans for them.

It was because; Maricha was living not very far from this “parashala”. And no one was aware of his presence and quiet life there, because he was leading a life of a recluse after the untimely death of his mother Thataka in the hands of Rama. Maricha resettled himself in this area for his practice of black magic, other tantric practices and mantra vidyas. Many times Sita sat there in her “parashala” all alone when both the brothers went out to the villages nearby to beg for food or had gone for hunting a deer for them to eat.

And added to this unknown danger to both the brothers, there was another rakshashi woman, a very beautiful one who was also visiting this place in utter secrecy to meet with her lover or lovers who were living very near to river Godavari towards the east in that section where there was heavy growth of bamboo clusters, thickly spread over a wide area.

That rakshashi woman, with an extraordinary complexion of body with sexy curves, always did whatever she wanted to do and she was morally deficient and shamelessly lacking in the dignity of behaviour.

Later on as the time passed by, this woman was the center of all rumours all over Dandaka forest of that area of Panchavati and she was nicknamed “Shurpanaka” which literally meant a woman with sharp, long nails. Actually she always painted her long, fancy nails which she grows as a point of fashion. It was very derogatory name but she did not care about it. Her actual name was “Vishalakshi” the meaning of which was a woman with large eyes or beautiful eyes. That was indeed a befitting name for her. She was own sister of legendary king of Lanka the mighty Ravana, and she was the only sister of that ten headed rakshasha of great power and fame.



TRAGEDY OF VISHALAKSHI

This Vishalakshi was a regular visitor to Dandaka forest. She was of brown, cream colour, almost like that of a full moon light, and she was a tall woman with oversized breasts and large eyes befitting her name. She was born as last child in the family of Rakshasha Ravana of Lanka. She was his little sister who had grown up with a golden spoon and she never had tasted a defeat in her life so far with all the comforts of life she desired she got almost immediately except one. And that had been, a virile man, a lover to satisfy her lust in the bed. She had no morals and obviously she was least bothered about any dignity for herself. The problem was her strict brother and she had no moral courage to oppose her legendary brother and King of Lanka, Ravana. So she turned herself very secretive, mortally afraid of her illustrious brother Ravana and her legendary sister-in-law Mandodari.

She had found out long back a secret way to satisfy her desires. That was to make regular visits to Dandaka forest to meet her lover or any lover or any rakshasha who looked virile and desirable by a woman of her strength and as it were there was no shortage of such men in Dandaka forest. That was only secret place to avoid her brother who behaved like her father also because of a big age difference.

But the nature took care of itself. She became pregnant and she was scared of her brother Ravana and his wife Mandodari, her sister-in-law. That was the reason her visits to Dandaka increased to a state of her long periods of absence in Lanka. Until that time, before her pregnancy, for many months she was not in Lanka, and every time of her absence she would weave a story to explain herself to her brother and for that art of telling lies she was one of the best in the world.

The time had come for her to deliver the baby. She delivered the baby right inside those thick bamboo bushes on the banks of Godavari while herself taking an immense risk of losing her own life in delivering a child all alone without any help in that thick jungles of Dandaka. She was bleeding a lot, but survived and delivered the baby. But once she delivered and also recovered her strength, her hormones started their own work. Her initial plan of throwing the baby in to the river Godavari immediately after delivery and walkout after washing her hands did not really work out that way as she planned it, and her mind had changed. She felt proud of her infant baby even though she definitely did not know the identity of its father, and her guess work did not work out well, but even then she loved the infant like her own life, like her own heart and breath and her mother's instincts taught her to give nourishment to the infant baby. She would come on time to penetrate in to thick bushes of bamboo jungles in that lonely forest and breast feed her infant baby girl and then felt tranquil only during and after breast feeding the baby.

She would take bath in the river Godavari in the morning and her sexy body with her long torso shining in all its glory in the morning sun light was so much voluptuous to look at that it was to be seen to be believed. But all days were not alike for her. Her karma was catching up with her very fast. And tragedy was lurking behind her hedonistic view of life ever since she had been leading a secret life of her own to satisfy her lust.

One day like every other day, she went deep in to the bamboo bushes, all in haste, now and then rubbing her breasts, to feed her baby but she noticed many bamboos were cut with very sharp hunter's sickle. Her mother's instincts made her terrified and her heart was pounding as if it would break her ribs, and sweating all over, she literally ran inside only to find bits and pieces of her infant baby girl. The hunters sickle while cutting bamboo from the bottom of the plant cut the infant baby as well who was quietly sleeping in midst of these bushes. She took the baby's tiny head in her lap and wept with heart rending cries beating her

breasts. She was uncontrollably sobbing for the whole of night until the day break.

At the day break, she collected all bits and pieces of her baby in to a piece of cloth and after digging out a very big pit, Vishalakshi gave her infant a burial with tears.

She had pressed her breasts with both her hands to flush out some milk to feel some relief. Her face was weary. Her eyes were all red and swollen. In spite of her best attempts to hide her tragedy, she could hardly control her tears every minute. She took bath in the river Godavari and came out in to the forest. She walked towards west because she heard that two new huts had come up not so long ago and she wanted to enquire and look around them.

On the front of comparatively small hut she had seen a very huge bunch of bamboo sticks freshly put up against the wall to make them dry. It did not take any more time for Vishalakshi to know who had killed her infant daughter. She waited behind a tree to see Laxmana who came out of the mud house. And she had seen his brother Rama, who was looking like a great warrior with a long eight feet bow and very long, sharp arrows. Rama was starting out somewhere. Once they left, she came out from behind the tree and with her face fully red with anger Vishalakshi spat on the walls of Laxamana's hut with all the hatred. She had spit again and again until her mouth went dry. She took a vow of revenge while she kept her index finger on her nose. She told herself that both the brothers should be killed tomorrow. She had imagined in her mind's eye that they were all cut to pieces by sharp knife.

The biggest problem for her was that she could not tell what had happened here in Dandaka, to her brother Ravana under any circumstances. In fact her brother should never know. Even in Dandaka she thought or believed through her own self-deception, that no one knew about her secretly born baby.



KHARA AND HIS FIGHT WITH RAMA

She went straight to her friend and a powerful Rakshasha leader to make a confederation of rakshasha leaders to gather together a hotch-patch collection of huge army of at least five thousand strong rakshashas to attack that warrior Rama with great bow and arrow. According to Shurpanaka alias Vishalakshi that was the only way.

She thought about pros and cons of the idea and weighed up all other alternatives. Otherwise she thought it would be enormous risk for a few people to attack that warrior and to attempt to kill Laxmana.

Her distant brother cousin great Khara as he was called, who had always boasted himself saying he was equal to mighty Ravana in strength and always exaggerated his strength with his terrible ego, interested in listening to her version of the events only after she assured him that there could be a prize catch of beautiful wife of Rama in that huge hut out there though she herself had not yet seen her.

Vishalakshi told Khara that a handful of warriors should not take a huge risk by even approaching that mightily looking warrior. Vishalakshi calmly told Khara, not to entertain any idea of approaching that warrior with just a few handfuls of rakshashas. She insisted that even thinking like that would be the height of foolhardy adventure.

After a reconnaissance mission for a day, she met that legendary rakshasha Khara again and informed him that she had also learnt that the name of that warrior was Rama from Ayodhya belonging to Ikshwaku clan and he had long ago, even as a boy,

singlehandedly fought and killed Thataki. Khara listened to her with disbelief.

She later on learned through other Rakshashas that his wife Sita was daughter of Janaka of Mithila. And also she came to know that Rama was in exile and Laxmana was his brother, and all of them had been in Dandaka forest for quite a number of years. And they also told her that they had seen Laxmana cutting bamboo on that day, during early hours of morning when it was still dark.

Khara in that forest of Dandaka was an unchallenged leader of many groups of rakshashas and he was the one who always claimed that his family clan as belonging to that of great Ravana. He assembled a strong force of five thousand rakshashas with chariots and horses and an infantry force with javelins, swords and bow men with arrows. The aggressive attack plans of Khara had only one single aim and that was to put an end to the life of a warrior called Rama and his brother Laxmana and then forcefully abduct his beautiful wife Janaki who was Janaka's daughter. He also told them, that Janaki was an extraordinary beauty born from the earth. Khara was actually more interested in that Janaka's daughter about whose beauty, villagers were narrating and balladeers were singing ballads eulogizing her as daughter of the jungle. They all told him "Sita shines like a full moon and she looks like a goddess".

After completing an exhaustive reconnaissance missions, the rakshasha leader Khara, notorious for his unbridled cruelty in the jungles of Dandaka, called for a huge gathering of all his comrades. He exhorted them to be brave enough so that so called warrior Rama with his bow "Kodanda", who had become a legend among poor villagers and among all those little creatures of forest would put to a miserable death while his wife "Sita" would be stolen away right in front of Rama's eyes and that killer of Thataki shall meet an ignominious death with a shameful end to his adventurous life. He told all his companion rakshashas and charioteers, to kill both the brothers and abduct Rama's wife Janaki unharmed. "That would be a great gift to me" he told them all and assured them that he would distribute gold as gift equal to weight of Sita in return.

On that fateful day, in front of Parnashala, Rama was standing in the morning sunlight and looking towards forest because huge waves of dust was swirling up in the air and that was moving in his direction. Rama estimated it should be a mile away. Rama shouted at Laxmana to stop sharpening arrows and bring one hundred arrows in a basket to him.

Laxmana brought more than a hundred arrows in many bamboo baskets all in a hurry. Rama told in haste with urgency in his voice “Laxmana take Sita and climb over that hill faraway and push her into a cave and then close the mouth of the cave with the biggest boulder you can find. You must stand guard right in front of that cave there, well-armed and should not move from there under any circumstances. I shall say you must start running in haste. You shall hold Sita’s hand and run and I repeat run away from this danger”.

Laxmana looked at approaching army of rakshashas, though they were less than a mile away, they were clearly visible at the time. He went inside and came out with his sister-in-law; Sita, who came along with him, came only to see that approaching herd of rakshashas.

But she refused to run and refused to leave behind her husband all alone. Sita argued that Laxmana should be near his brother Rama to help him fight those rakshashas. Sita argued that two warriors to fight were always better than one. As there was not much time, strictly obeying his brother he held Sita’s hand and dragged her to run. She vehemently opposed it. Then Laxmana told Sita “You really do not know how a great warrior is my brother. He can vanquish them all and kill them all and the death of all those rakshashas is very much certain. Their attack has been only to die in his hands. So, you do not have to worry. Let us together run from here”.

Laxmana and Sita started running towards the hills, with Sita’s hand in Laxmana. Laxmana took her over to the top of the hill, pushed her in to a cave and closed the cave with a huge boulder.

Laxmana stood guard at the entrance of the cave with a long javelin in his hands.

In front of Parnashala, Rama strung his great bow, “Kodanda” and took six arrows, set them and pulled the string up to his ears. He was standing straight with his left leg forward. Standing completely still, unmoved for a little time, he released the arrows.

These arrows of Rama made an ear splitting, deafening noise which reverberated in the forest echoing in the faraway hills. These arrows reached targets, shooting across half-a-mile distance, and hit Khara’s chariot who was in the forefront of his army. His chariot wheels came off and flew high in to the air with the impact of those arrows. Rama shot a few more arrows which cut off right ear lobe of Khara who was struggling to get up from his broken chariot and then Rama’s arrows cut off the heads of many rakshashas like a sharp knife would cut off heads of chicken. And those heads of rakshashas started rolling among the trees in the forest. There was huge pandemonium and rakshashas in horror raised hue and cry and there were cries of death. There were crying noises of chaos and confusion which led to a stampede in this irregular army of Khara. Khara was himself seriously injured.

All of Rama’s one hundred arrows were exhausted and he went inside his parnashala to bring another basket of arrows.

Khara realized that their own arrows and javelins, clubs and knives aimed at the enemy could not reach Rama. They could not shoot arrows to such a long distance of half-a-mile so as to reach him. Against them, Khara observed to his dismay that Rama’s arrows were shooting across, all the distance, with deafening noise and with terrific speed. Rama’s arrows were penetrating their steel armor breaking them to pieces. Their chariots were pulverized by Rama’s arrows. Some javelins shot by great many rakshashas running too much to forward positions reached a little short of distance to Rama either fell or could strike the earth almost six feet in front of Rama, before reaching him. These weapons could only raise the dust in the front of Rama. The war between only one Rama the great warrior

against five thousand rakshashas went on and in just less than an hour, half of Khara's army fell dead. He exhorted his army to run forward, so that their arrows could reach the targeted enemy. In particular his cavalry regiment which was a hatch patch collection tried its best to move forward but receded only after suffering huge casualties to riders and their horses. Horses were dead and riders rolled in the dust.

Khara started fighting himself very valiantly from his freshly brought chariot, while Vishalakshi was on foot right on the side of Khara's chariot with a long sword in her hands with a face very repulsive, filled with hatred for the enemy. She was walking along Khara's chariot.

Rakshasha Khara was killed by Rama's arrow which penetrated his armor breast plate and came out from back of his chest. And the remaining army began to run away with all their strength they could muster in their legs in various directions in the forest. They were running in all directions like herd of hyenas when attacked by a King lion.

Khara died, and Vishalakshi, seeing his dead body roll over and fall from the chariot did not waste much time. She knew she could choose another day to vanquish the enemy. Vishalakshi flew in to air over the trees. She made terrible noises flying over the trees of the forest. In the midst of swirl of dust and smoke she disappeared chanting her mantras.

At least two thousand rakshashas were dead and many were injured and some of them seriously. But Rama was not exhausted. Some arrows still remained in his basket of arrows. He was still standing there, tall and his muscles were shining in the Sun. Laxmana moved the boulder and opened the cave. Sita came out and ran down the hill towards her husband.



VISHALAKSHI BECOMES SHURPANAKA

The only problem for Vishalakshi was that she liked her nails. She painted them one colour each for her finger nails and nails of toes and she painted her hair in bundles matching her nails. The nails were grown long to look fine and were sharpened in different ways. She was derogatorily called Shurpanaka which literally meant the woman with sharp nails. Vishalakshi look much sexier than many women in the world and her beauty was enhanced with her intelligence. Her problems arose out of her own insatiable desires and her short sighted belief in hedonism. She had a weakness for being lazy and never really believed in fair play for a happy life. She had an evil brain full busy scheming new plans. But at this point of time in her life her rising and ebbing of emotions were not for seeking her terrible addictions for revelry. She was burning inside for revenge.

Now after Khara's incident she was all alone in her hideout in the thick jungles of Dandaka and was seriously considering various options for revenge. She was scheming about a plan which should be more than a death for those warrior brothers. She ground her teeth and took a vow that those brothers Rama, and Laxmana should never recover from the blow which she should deliver them.

In the very beginning she thought, she should be careful so as not to alert her brother Ravana and those unwanted news should never reach him. She was mortally scared of her legendary brother Ravana, the king of Lanka.

In that darkness, and in that small hideout in Dandaka forest, on that floor made of stone, she wept incessantly and rolled on the floor unable to bear the pain. Her breasts started oozing milk

looking at which she started weeping silently lest someone might hear her sobbing for her lost child, in that room made of stone walls wherein she was all alone. This was the place where she had those amorous meetings with her lovers meeting them secretly in boundless, uncontrolled passion she enjoyed. But on that day and at the time in this same place on the same floor, she was weeping without anyone to console her. She realized after all that there was nothing free in this world. Everything including revelry demands its own price and the associated karma, good or bad definitely returns. She realized hedonists bound to suffer and the nature could not make any exception for her.

Thinking throughout the night in that darkness and all alone, she finally could come to a conclusion by the day break that she should pit her great brother Ravana with this warrior Rama and she thought such a plan for sure would finish both the brothers. She presumed that if that were not the result, then whole world should laugh at Ikshwaku clan. Rama should be at the butt of jokes all over the world. The man should hang his head in shame and should never return to claim his throne in Ayodhya.

There was one way for that for sure and that plan was germinating in the evil brain of Vishalakshi which was actually poisoning her brain. She became very emotional, obsessive and in a fit of rage she was gnashing her teeth until blood spurted out of her mouth. And while her reasoning was lost, Vishalakshi set upon implementing her vicious plan with dangerous consequences irreversible in their nature.

Vishalakshi got up from the floor, on which she was rolling all over the sleepless night, and had taken a perfumed bath after which she started dressing herself. She was wearing only single bra with flower embroidery on her huge breasts and the bra strings she tied up behind her open back. She took one long silk cloth, wound it around her waist, much below her navel and wound the same cloth around each leg in a tight way with ample fringes and several folds, for every inch of it and put a gold belt around her waist under her navel. She was very curvaceous with a

very narrow waist and well-formed hips. She put different colours to each of her nails and combed her hair in to various plaits and each plaits of hair painted either in orange colour or pale yellow colour like that of dried grass. She put red colour of a fruit and flower extract on her beautiful, lascivious thick lips. She put golden anklets on her ankles. Her wide and large soft, shapely stomach was kept bare open. She had a golden, brown complexion of a body and in that afternoon light her skin had a glow.

Vishalakshi then stood just a hundred yards away from Parnashala of Sita and Rama and she was watching them before she could move. A little later afternoon time, she walked up to the front court yard of that large Parnashala with lowly hung portico. The front part of it was very neat. Sita wife of Rama was sitting cross legged on a plank of wood in the open verandah and Rama was standing right beside Sita, his wife who was hand stitching a blouse. Laxmana was standing a little away from both of them in the courtyard near a flowering bush. Laxmana was sharpening arrows.

Vishalakshi reached very near to Rama. And Rama looked at her and was surprised because none of them observed her until she reached so much near them.

Vishalakshi asked Rama, “is she wife of yours that so called Sita?” Rama said “Yes”. Vishalakshi said “She looks like a monk in that saffron coloured sari and in that immaculate appearance with a well braided hair combed so much spic and span, and with that type of serene face anyone should feel that she was indeed a monk!” Vishalakshi remarked that Sita applied too much oil to her long, beautiful hair. And then Vishalakshi exclaimed “See her face! It is shining like that of a ghost in the night in a crematorium. And how should you waste your virility, and such manliness, with that monk like wife of yours? Does she know anything about how to enjoy the power of a man like you? Actually she looks ugly in a way. Does not she? In any case you need a wife like me.” Saying this she stretched her wide, sexy stomach, full length and put her long fingered hand on her stomach covering her navel.

Rama was unmoved with all that dramatic expressions of Vishalakshi, and in the beginning he thought that she was one of the villagers nearby who often come to visit Sita for their sentimental “*darshan*” of Sita. But now Rama became very suspicious.

He had seen her long nails and was suspiciously looking at her. She came much nearer and put her hand on Rama’s forearm. It was very cold and Rama felt as if he were touching a slimy frog. He looked at her long nails on her toes which were changing colours all by themselves and then Rama shouted “Laxmana, this woman is a rakshashi, no doubt”. At which Vishalakshi gave a dry smile which could have scared away and strike terror in the heart of any human on the earth. Her look was devilish and very fearsome.

Rama said “Laxmana she is a rakshashi and yet she is still a woman. We cannot kill her. Cut off her nose to half and cut off her ears and send her away, so that she would never come back and this rakshasha women should be treated like that”. At which Sita put away her cloth which she was stitching by hand and came running down the steps to the courtyard. Sita was highly disturbed and then she shouted at Laxmana to stop but Laxmana was already dragging away Shurpanaka from the front portico of parnashala.

But Laxmana caught her both hands in his one hand very firmly from which she could not wriggle free herself and while Sita was shouting “Stop Laxmana, please stop”, he had taken away Shurpanaka to a flowering shrub and pulled her down on her knees, and before Shurpanaka could realize or Sita could stop, what was going to happen to her, Laxmana cut off her nose with a sharp arrow’s blade and also her right ear at once in one second. Laxmana shouted “She is Shurpanaka, I heard, she was a roaming rakshashi in Dandaka” and he had cut off another ear when Vishalakshi alias Shurpanaka let out heart rending cries unable to bear the pain. Sita came running to Laxmana and warned him for

not listening to her. She commanded him to stop torturing that woman and then herself freed Shurpanaka from Laxmana's grip.

Laxmana left her. Shurpanaka was wailing, was cursing taking dust in her hands and throwing it towards Laxmana. While Laxmana looked on, Shurpanaka said, "You ikshwaku warriors, after all you are damn cheap trouble makers with dirty minds. I will make you and your brother run in this forest with a loss of face, with your dignity completely lost, I say, you both brothers should weep for years and for the rest of your life you should never recover your prestige. I in the name of God Shiva, curse you. I am Vishalakshi and my words shall never go wrong" A few moments later Vishalakshi walked away.



SITA AND JATAYU

Jatayu was a very big, very huge giant vulture but with human head with a vulture's beak. It had human mouth and it could speak. His name was Jatayu. He was very huge in size and when in a standing position on its legs it appeared like a mountain.

Sita sat under the banyan tree, which was very near her Parnashala in her usual routine of doing her meditation. That huge banyan tree had very long branches extending up to one hundred meters on each side. One day she was meditating under the tree, sitting on a large wooden plank based on short wooden legs, covered with blanket. Sita was sitting in deep meditation facing the east with an earthen tumbler of water near her.

It was a slightly disturbed weather on that day. Winds speed suddenly increased and the trees in the forest were making creaking sound and their small dry branches were floating in the wind. Sita was oblivious of this entire hurricane like gushing winds and disturbed weather around her. She was still absorbed in deep meditation. In that high speed winds a huge branch of that banyan tree, broke off the trunk and it started falling down. Jatayu, which was perched itself on a nearby tree, dashed across, held that falling tree branch in its huge talons, and then flew up high towards river Godavari where it dropped that huge branch in the river.

Rama who was far away near the river Godavari could see the danger, and started running towards that Banyan tree to save Sita but much before that Jatayu caught that huge, wide branch in midair.

Sita came out of her meditation very slowly and with a very peaceful, serene face she was sitting still on that wooden plank, completely oblivious of that danger from which she was saved by

Jatayu. She got up from under the tree and came out, and was surprised to see a huge vulture was hovering very low in the air making circles just above her head. Jatayu flew down, alighted at a distance and started walking towards Sita. It was walking almost like a human being. Sita was much more surprised when Jatayu greeted her in chaste Sanskrit.

Jatayu was more than ten feet in height from his stretched neck with his huge wings which could stretch and span eight meters on each side. Jatayu told Sita that he was friend of her farther-in-law King Dasharatha and he heard about her as his daughter-in-law. He had been watching her since the beginning of her life in Parnashala and he had been watching her everyday sitting under banyan tree doing her meditation.

Jatayu told Sita “My mother Shayani and mother of great Rakshasha, that legendary Ravana the king of Lanka were own sisters. Due to prayers to Lord Vishnu by my mother, seeking boons to beget a son to carry on his back was granted by Lord Vishnu, and I was born like this, as a great Vulture and I am known in the world as Jatayu. And I have a brother called Samapathi whose wings were burnt because he tried to reach the Sun God. Though both of us tried to reach the Sun by flying towards it, I was cautious and returned but my brother did not care and burnt his wings. Since that time of his accident I have been taking care of my only brother who has been confined to the cave up above in the hills”.

That great vulture, Jatayu also told her that he would be ready to render any service she might require. Sita did not say anything but conveyed her best wishes to Jatayu and thanked him profusely for saving her life. Sita also told him she would be more than happy in his company and he could always stay nearby her Parnashala.

Rama reached there and Jatayu introduced himself to Rama. Since then many a time Jatayu walked along Sita, Rama and Laxmana to Godavari River for a bath at the day break. Jatayu very often told some or other story to Sita particularly narrating his

adventures high above the clouds in the sky, and his daring attempts at attacking the chariot of Indra Bhagvan in the clouds. At the time of telling stories while they were walking towards river Godavari, Sita observed that Jatayu was an ageing bird, very old one. Sita learnt that Jatayu was very popular among all the vultures and other huge birds in Dandaka Forest.



SHURPANAKA IN LANKA

Shurpanaka arrived in Lanka, the island city nation after a journey of flying many miles in the air over the sea, using her tantric powers. It was not difficult for her to fly over the sea, since she had been doing this to meet her lovers secretly in Dandaka forest. As for Vishalakshi alias Shurpanaka, her hideout in Dandaka forest was like a second home for her.

After entering the palace which had been her child hood home, she reminded herself that after a long absence without permission, she was meeting her own brother. She was mentally recovering a lost story and rehearsing a drama she would play in front her mighty brother. She took courage and sent a messenger to her brother for an audience. That king of Lanka Ravana had called off the meeting with his cabinet ministers and after making sure that there was none left behind in the hall, he called for his Prime minister. That Prime Minister duly informed him that the matter was very much concerning a family affair and it would be very prudent for his majesty to move to his secret chambers in the palace.

Vishalakshi was walking through the palace rooms towards secret chambers. She had half-cut nose, and the sides of her head were still oozing blood from the cuts of ear lobes. She had an expression of shock and pain.

She presented herself before her great brother Ravana and said “My darling brother! See my face; how it has become now! In the forests of Dandaka, a person by name Laxmana, brother of Rama from Ayodhya, had been in love with me and since then rejected by me, this is what he had done to me”. She had pointed to her half-cut nose and then she broke down weeping.

Ravana in fit of rage caught the hair of his sister Vishalakshi and lifted her up like an elder boy would lift a doll after smashing her

face. And brought her down with force and gave blows on her back. At which Vishalakshi let out a big cry, weeping and looking at her brother's face for his pity.

King Ravana, her brother said "You, Vishali, what have you demanded of that man, you shameless girl? Without your fault why did he cut your nose? Do you mean to say that he was a mad person?"

Ravana warned her not to tell him lies and also he warned her about her wayward undisciplined life day by day in spite of warnings by her sister-in-law, and his wife Mandodari. Ravana shouted at her saying that as his little sister she had been more of an embarrassment for him.

Vishalakshi looked at his brother for his pity and she immediately remembered her brother's weakness. She thought to herself, "I know my dear brother more than anyone else" and then her evil brain flashed an idea.

Vishalakshi told her brother "Listen to me Oh! My great brother! You please listen to me. During this tragic incident of my face being disfigured, I have seen an unbelievable woman who came trying to stop Laxmana. And Immediately I remembered you. You deserve her, my darling brother, I repeat you deserve her. She was Sita wife of that warrior Rama. She is a beauty; she is so much beautiful, I am sure you had never seen such a woman on the earth or even in the heavens. I had never seen such a glowing face and curvaceous body in my life, soft with a complexion like foaming hot Milk. She appears simplest with a natural charm and shines with her natural unparalleled beauty. She must be your wife. A diamond among stones must belong to the King, Oh! My brother, you know that what I mean!"

At which King Ravana diverted himself and lost in his own imagination, and also oblivious of a fact that his own little sister was sitting on her knees right in front of him, fell himself to dreaming. He asked his little sister, many more details of this woman called Sita.

But his sister all of sudden warned him "Oh! Brother! I shall warn you! This Rama proved to be very dangerous person. I do not

want any harm that may befall you. This Rama single handedly killed a thousand of our own men including our own cousin that great Khara in just half-an hour in that big, haphazard sort of a war. We could not even approach him, as he stopped us with his arrows a mile away and all of us were dead. This Rama could stop our entire army of nearly five thousand people a mile away with his powerful arrows which resounded in the clouds high above in the sky and in the faraway hills. The entire army of chariots, horses, and infantry fully armed was totally vanquished. What followed was a massacre unleashed by this dangerous warrior called Rama, who could shoot arrows like comets which made sounds of thunders in the sky. There was no time for us even to runaway let alone fight with him. In an instant Vishalakshi lowered her voice and said “I do advise you my darling brother you must invent an idea to avoid bloodshed.”

Vishalakshi continued, “instead of picking up a fight with an army, which may also give a bad propaganda of stealing someone’s wife by the king himself, I advise you to find some other way so that Rama would weep for his stolen Sita while the whole world should think that Sita had run away with someone more handsome than himself.”

Ravana, her dear brother told Vishalakshi “You shall take care of your health little sister and acquire that bloody nose and ears of yourself from someone else by tantric methods! I shall take revenge for the insult that he had meted out to you and they shall pay a dear price for it. I shall bring upon them an insult the weight of which entire Ikshavaku clan cannot bear. That unbearable insult inflicted on us shall burn their family. The loss of face for them shall make them hide forever in those jungles. I want to see who shall save this so called Rama or his so called legendary status. This Rama seems to have tired of his own life. He should feel dying shall be a great relief and that he shall feel death as a great boon”.



RAVANA IN DANDAKA FOREST

Ravana landed on a big clearing nearby Maricha's house in that Dandaka forest. He came by a helicopter which was well known among Gods of heavens as *Pushpak* when it was actually the personal helicopter of the king of Gods Indra Bhagvan himself. When Ravana ascended to heavens in his mortal body and took up a fight with God Indra himself, all the Gods were terrified and tried to appease Ravana by giving him this robot driven helicopter called "Pushpak". Ravana was much pleased with these materialistic gains and returned back to the earth forgetting to enhance his spiritual powers by ascending himself to heaven. This "Pushpak" has four diamond studded doors and seats made of pure gold. It has metal horses in the front, inhaling air and fuming out hot gasses these metal horses were giving out hissing sounds. There were these seven alloy metal horses to fly the helicopter. It had a huge fan fixed to the center mast of helicopter. It had a robot pilot who listens to commands of Ravana by a remote device which looked like a walking stick with a beautiful handle in the hands of Ravana. That king of Lanka was so clever that he ordered his own engineers to make a duplicate "Pushpak" by reverse engineering the existing one and which they successfully accomplished by manufacturing a second "copy" helicopter which had been available to him. Ravana, the king now owns two Pushpak helicopters rousing jealousy in demi-gods and even in the mind of Kubera the world's richest man.

King Ravana, king of Lanka, got down from his helicopter. He had worn very expensive silk dresses and golden braids around his waist and around his wrists he wore diamond studded bracelets. King Ravana was well built, tall, with very wide chest, excellent complexion and looked very handsome with very brilliant eyes.

Maricha could not believe his own eyes. So he rubbed his eyes to confirm it was real and that mighty, legendary King Ravana himself was walking towards his mud walled hut with thatched roof and his majesty, the king was coming all alone without even a messenger in the front. Maricha was sitting in the center of his mud house practicing his magic and chanting of some mantras which he thought he would forget if not repeated. Maricha looked to check again to see that tall king of Lanka in his royal robes was indeed real and he was entering his hut.

“So now it is true” thought Maricha. Maricha was now twenty seven years old and settled on the banks of Godavari in Dandaka forest. He dedicated his life to worshipping Lord Shiva.

Maricha, the great magician who was adept at sorcery got up, saluted the king by bending low before him joining his hands and greeting him with “Namaste”, and immediately all in haste brought a brass tumbler with water to wash the feet of Ravana in the inner courtyard of his mud house which was open to sky.

King Ravana sat down on the grass mat cross legged. Then Ravana very slowly told Maricha very sincerely that he was not really interested in all these formalities. And that king Ravana said “Maricha you are most important person in this whole world. There is no great magician who can perform magic like you. The world should recognize you and your name shall be permanently etched in history and in the memory of people for several thousand generations”.

Maricha instantly knew that Ravana was praising him to do some dangerous work. Maricha offered some dry fruits to Ravana in a plate stitched with betel nut leaves.

Ravana asked Maricha while eating dry nuts “I heard that there is someone called Rama, a warrior living nearby in this Dandaka forest with his wife, Sita. You know I am the King and this Dandaka forest belongs to me. It is part of my empire as you know very well. I am here on an important mission and to be very frank, actually on a secret mission. And hence it is very important

to keep it confidential. And then Ravana bent forward in his sitting position, said in a low voice “I, think his wife Sita is very beautiful woman? Am I right”?

Maricha immediately sensed danger “Yes, Your majesty. But I give my sincere advice and a king needs good counsel. Your majesty you better not think about this person called Rama. It is much more better you do not think about his wife. This person Rama is real danger. He killed Khara and all of an entire force of five thousand people at a time with his long arrows shot across one mile away. He killed my own mother of immense strength, though it happened long ago when this Rama was a mere boy”.

Ravana told Maricha “You are expressing fear in front of Ravana! I am Ravana, God’s fear me. Lord Shiva is the only god, the most benevolent blessed me. I am afraid of none. Those who worship demi gods, ghosts and goblins, they shall be indeed blessed by them. Who do you think I am? When I went to celestial world *Vaikunta* that God called Vishnu ran away along with his beautiful wife! What do you think? God Shiva shall be kind to you! Oh! Maricha! What a fear!! What is this nonsense?”

Maricha asked Ravana “What exactly you want?”

Ravana said “Maricha, there is a need of your skills of magic and sorcery. You shall become a golden deer and here and there on the skin even diamonds should sparkle. You become such a deer exactly as I described, and divert the attention of that Rama and I shall abduct Sita on my sky chariot Pushpak. In other words Sita shall be stolen in the end”

Maricha listening to this plan shivered so much that the bowl of nuts he held fell down. He said, “That only means death to me. I told you to keep away from that Rama. And even I heard that his wife is extremely beautiful. But keep away from all this kidnapping of someone’s wife. I must tell you it is very immoral to look at someone’s wife. We are all Lord Shiva’s devotees. This is actually your majesty should never do, we will never know the consequences of any immoral action”

King Ravana got very angry, he told Maricha “You are a coward Maricha. I am avoiding a lot of bloodshed. This is the most peaceful method to take revenge! You should avenge the death your mother Thataki, who was killed in a very cruel manner by this Rama. How was it behoving him, belonging to that so called great Ikshavaku clan, to kill a woman? These stupid villagers of Dandaka treat him as a God and his wife Sita as Goddess! They are simply humans and that Rama and Laxmana behave worse than humans. Laxmana had disfigured the face my sister and Rama had ordered it. And probably you knew details about this incident. In any case what type of a son you are of that great, illustrious Thataki! Have some morals and some gratitude and respect for your dead mother!”

Maricha replied still shivering “Ravana, the king, your majesty! I bow to you and with all the respect I am giving a good advice. You do not seem to listen to good advice. It is like playing with death and that Rama is a very dangerous killer. It is also totally unwanted trouble. Nobody can fight with that Rama. It means, obeying to your orders only means death to me. I do not do it”.

Ravana said to Maricha “Maricha listen carefully. It is an order from your King. First of all learn some manners and learn obedience. Don’t you know how to talk and behave with your own king? Do you call me by my name? And I warn you, to be aware of what will happen if you disobey your King’s orders. I am the king of this entire Dandaka. I can always get another magician but you cannot get another life. You did not get one more mother. This Rama was not harbinger of anything good for you. If it means risking life to take revenge, then take revenge, which is better than living as a recluse, hiding deep in this forest”

Finally Ravana had forced Maricha to obey his orders threatening him with dire consequences of death!



GOLDEN DEER

That day was a very auspicious day according to the old almanac. It was also a day of festival for housewives.

Sita dressed herself in sari and blouse in saffron colour and sat before the mirror wearing one item of jewelry after another item adorning them for that festival day.

Most of this jewelry was given by that old saint Sati Anasuya wife of Sage Atri. Sita was feeling very happy herself wearing all that jewelry. Sita was wearing gold threaded embroidered blouse with embedded precious stones. And she had worn a long garland made of gold with a design of golden flowers and leaves which was flowing over her highly decorated blouse.

Maricha in that pleasant morning time, on that day which changed Sita's life forever, turned himself in to a golden deer.

The golden deer was shining in the morning sun light with diamonds studded in its skin and it was a very beautiful scene to look at as it was eating grass very nearby Sita's Parnashala.

Sita was drying her hand towel on a rope and Rama was standing nearby talking to Laxmana. Sita was first one to see this unbelievable scene of a golden deer eating grass nearby her effervescent "*Parijatham*" flowering twine. The flowering twine was full of double coloured flowers spreading perfume of its flowers all over that area.

Sita stopped drying her clothes, turned around as if she could not believe her eyes. She looked again and again and then called her husband Rama. She told him to look at that golden deer over there eating grass. Rama looked at the golden deer. The different iridescent hues emanated by diamonds on the skin of that deer and its golden skin were reflected and spread on the grass like a

wheel with so many colours, creating something like a rainbow on the green grass. The deer was shining bright and it was jumping around with all the happiness in the world and it was very unusual for a deer to be completely oblivious of humans standing very nearby her.

Sita pointing to the deer with her beautiful index finger told Rama “please bring that deer to me. I would like to have such an excellent deer to adopt as pet in our parnashala.”

Sita moved nearer to Rama and requested again. Laxmana on the other side of Rama almost standing opposite said “Sister-in-law, do not believe what you see as true. I feel that golden deer is an illusion created by magic or sorcery. We must be aware of all these cunning rakshashas and their ability to create these illusions in Dandaka forest.”

But Sita brushed aside these fears of Laxmana and looking at her husband Rama, Sita said “You must bring it alive Raghu, please catch it without any harm to it and without hurting it”

Laxmana very much agitated with a sense of danger said to his brother “Look, brother, do not do it. Please do not go from here. I have heard that Rakshasha Ravana had come in to this side of forest. Sometime ago villagers told me they had seen Ravana’s great flying bird Pushpak. We really do not know, but this golden deer cannot be real! How can it be real? Do not move, danger may be just around us in this forest infested with demons, after all it is Dandaka forest”

King Ravana who was hiding behind flowering bushes very nearby, almost in a hearing distance, of these brothers, just on the right side of Parnashala, sitting in a crouching position was losing his patience. Ravana thought that Rama and Laxmana might not fall in the trap and started cursing that reluctant, half-hearted attempt of Maricha, which according to Ravana was going waste only because the heart of Maricha was not in it.

But Rama took the bait. Rama told Laxmana “We should take risk in life and without risk what do we achieve? In any case since

the time of our marriage Sita had been reluctant to ask me anything. I am surprised for she had finally asked me something. I cannot refuse this small wish of hers which is simply to catch a deer alive. You do not worry Laxmana, I would catch this deer alive or I shall kill the deer if it were a rakshasha creating an illusion with magic”

Laxmana said “No! It could be a devil, ghost or demon which we cannot understand”.

Rama replied, “You stand guard at the Parnashala protecting Sita. If this deer is diverting our attention, Sita would be in great danger. Under any circumstances you should not move away from Parnashala and Sita shall be within your eyesight always until I return. And I do repeat, dear Laxmana, to be very precise, I shall demand, you should not close even your eye lids even for a moment while you stand guard here watching Sita”

Rama took his bow, bend it, and put its sting on it. Rama kept his basket of arrows over his shoulders. Surprisingly the golden deer was jumping around in circles and did not go away all this time. The deer did not seem to have sensed any danger at all.

Rama ran towards the deer but it jumped high in the air darted forwards, towards the forest. Laxmana ordered Sita to get inside Parnashala which she obeyed immediately. Laxmana stood guard at the entrance, but kept the door open, while his sister-in-law, Sita sat in the middle of the house right on the floor with her innocent face. Laxmana did not like this adventure of his brother chasing the deer and he did not hide his anger and frustration at his brother’s adamant attitude. Laxmana was hissing between his teeth and restlessly moving around inside the parnashala while Sita was looking at him with a clear surprise on her face and with deeply lurking fear in her heart. The fear in her was strange and confusing for herself.

Rama ran behind that golden deer in to the forest and traced the deer among the trees. And to his terrible surprise it was eating grass again as if nothing had happened and as if no one was

chasing her. Rama leapt forward in the air to catch the deer alive but it simply disappeared in the last second. Rama did not notice this at first and thought that he had missed it, but he finally tired of running behind it while the deer had been constantly disappearing at the last moment. Rama clearly noticed that it was disappearing itself in thin air and sometimes right from between his hands. Rama realized that it must be a rakshasha and without any delay, he sat on his knees and set the arrow, with sharp, long blade to his bow Kodanda. Now in an amazing way, the golden deer appeared very near and then disappeared while moving in circles like a flash of lightening as if it were sure that it was under the sight of a hunter and it was apparent that the deer was desperately trying to survive, with lightning fast movements.

Rama shot the arrow in a split second time, which had hit the deer, deeply penetrating in to its body. But when the deer fell down, it transformed itself in to a slightly fatty but short and black complexioned rakshasha with curly hair, with a pug nose with large nostrils and the one who smeared ashes on his forehead like a devotee of lord Shiva and while transforming from the shape of a deer, that young rakshasha, strangely shouted in an extremely tragic voice, very loudly and it was clearly a dying person's death cry. That short rakshasha, Maricha, shouted in agony "Laxmana, Laxmana, I am dying save me" mimicking the exact voice of Rama. It was an impersonation of voice which nobody can differentiate with Rama's voice. And it was so loud that one could hear miles away. Rama was shocked and surprised but to realize the grave consequences of such a mimicked voice, he took a minute of time.

Rama was mortally afraid. He thought it was the dangerous cheating he had ever witnessed. He never imagined such a difficult situation. But relying on Laxamana's intelligence and capabilities, he was pacified by his own imagination and wishful thinking. Again while Rama bent before that fatty, little rakshasha who was still breathing and profusely sweating, that rakshasha opened his weary, fading out eyes, recognized Rama seconds before his death while chanting "Rama, Rama" in a very

low mumbling voice , he fell silent. His head drooped to one side, he died. A flash of blue light came out of that body of dying rakshasha Maricha and penetrated in to the heart of Rama.

Rama shot another deer normally grazing there with his arrow and tying its legs with toddy leaves and holding it in one hand, Rama started returning back towards Parnashala with long strides and tension writ large on his face.



RAVANA ENTERS PARNASHALA

Ravana was waiting right there crouching behind yellow flowered bushes. Laxmana was still there standing in front of Parnashala and Ravana who was seeing him clearly, sensed trouble from him.

Sita with an agitated mind, and with a heightened anxiety sitting inside the parnashala on a wide stool, and Laxmana who was inside parnashala but standing near the entrance facing right opposite Sita, and Ravana hiding behind flowering bushes adjacent to Parnashala, all of them clearly heard a death cry of Rama asking for help. They clearly heard Rama's voice "Laxmana, Laxmana I am dying, save me" from far away forest! It was like a last cry of someone who was dying. The voice was very desperate, helpless and a last cry for some help. Rakshasha Ravana clearly heard the voice and moved by the tragic tone of the voice. At that instant Ravana who had been crouching behind the bush and highly strung was ready to get up.

It was cry of a dying man calling "Laxmana, Laxmana", for help and for Sita it was a helpless cry of Rama in dangerous situation of an imminent death. Sita rose up from stool, like a deer terrified of seeing a tiger all of a sudden. Sita tried to run out of Parnashala but Laxmana was standing there blocking the entrance.

Sita who was still very startled with wide eyes and in a fright exhorted Laxmana "Now run Laxmana, run in to forest to save your brother. He is crying for help from you. Cannot you hear? You stood like a wooden pole! It is just unbelievable! What is the hell with you? Why do not you seem to feel anything at all? For God's sake run Laxmana! Run".

But Laxmana did not move and he was so calm, so much collected that smiling was only missing from his face and he steadily looked at beautiful Sita without batting even an eyelid. His looks were like someone making fun of frightened little girl when she heard a rumbling of a thunder in the sky.

But Sita shouted at Laxmana in very unsavory words “Why are you looking at me? Oh! Laxmana, have you gone mad? I am in the position of a mother to you, I am your sister-in-law!” But Laxmana did not run out to help his brother! He stood there unmoved. In fact he was steadily looking at Sita without batting an eyelid! He was looking at her without moving even an inch. Sita in a flight of temper shouted “You bloody rogue!”

Sita continued with her tirade of disparaging cries and curses, in the language which was unacceptable to Laxmana. Sita rose up like a little deer bitten by a rattle snake, tears welling up in her eyes with helplessness, and her frustrated voice mixed with anxiety shouted at the height of her voice. She was cursing Laxmana and calling him names. She was shouting at Laxmana in her high pitched voice. She said “Have you gone mad? Instead of running out in to the forest to help your brother, why are you looking at me? With your bloody eyes! What are your intentions? Why do not you move Laxmana?” Sita shouted at the height of her voice.

But Laxmana did not move from his place of watch. He did not move even an inch. He was still kept looking at Sita without batting an eyelid as if he were someone enjoying the whole drama for fun. Laxmana simply repeated his words in an extremely careless manner and he was slightly irritated as if he were fed up with the request to run in to the forest. Laxmana replied back to Sita in a voice clearly showing he was hurt by her words “listen to me. Sister-in-law, Do not move” Laxmana dared point a finger at her and warned her! Then a few moments later Laxmana told Sita in a challenging voice “I do not go anywhere and that is final. You do not know how rakshashas play many tricks so that you would be left alone. I cannot leave you alone in this parnashala

that which is impossible. As I had already warned both of you, my brother and you in the beginning, that appearance of a golden deer should only be a magic trick of illusions to divert the attention of my warrior brother! I do not run in to forest, and that is out of question because you cannot be left alone here in the middle of this forest and in this Parnashala and also I am sure, my brother Rama shall take care of himself, there is no power on this earth which can hurt him”

Laxmana keeping up an adamant face did not move. Laxmana steadily kept looking at Sita without batting his eye lids and was thinking to close those heavy teak doors of Parnashala for safety. But Sita was very anxious, desperate and her frustration turned itself in to anger. And her eyes were burning red with anger. Sita was in desperate mood of concern for her husband and her perception of Laxmana's indifferent attitude, and strange behaviour of looking at her was all the more indecent and improper for Sita to rouse in a fit of rage.

But Laxmana was looking at Sita, almost staring at her with twisted mouth, as if someone mischievous would enjoy a game of fun with a scared girl.

Sita shouted at Laxmana “What do you think? You bloody vulture! Your eyes were on me. I understand it clearly and how come all these years, why did not I understand you and your bloody intentions. You think you will have me if your brother dies? Do not you! You bloody Jackal! Your eyes should burn, hell with you, you are such an unreliable character, a shame for whole humanity! Oh! God! Oh! Lord Shiva!” Sita started hurling abuses and while unleashing a barrage of invective words insulting Laxmana, her eyes turned red with anger and she was literally shaking with fits of rage.

Sita started beating her soft belly on both side of her navel by her clenched fists. She said “This is this body on which your eyes rested and you had been devouring me with your lusty eyes all these days which I was not aware. I had been a fool to have kept trust in you as my brother-in-law. And so saying Sita started

punching her soft belly again with both her hands. She said she would jump in to fire in case her husband had died. She repeated her warning, and said she would not be available to Laxmana under any circumstances and sure she would immolate herself if anything had happened to her husband. She went on cursing Laxmana.

Laxmana broke down all of a sudden and started weeping. He jumped out of main door of Parnashala, holding a big javelin in his hand. He looked back at Parnashala only once more and started running towards the forest. Laxmana was out of sight very soon.

Rakshasha Ravana, who had been waiting, simply came out of bushes and entered in to Parnashala free of any fear. In fact Ravana entered Parnashala calmly with dignity.

The moment Ravana entered Parnashala, he had seen Sita standing, and actually leaning on to a central, huge wooden pillar, a pillar of teak wood, supporting the main beam of Parnashala and she was twisting her red coloured silk sari ends with her fingers. The fringes end of her sari was wound around her white stomach and her narrow waist. Her one hand was on her stomach while another hand, left hand, was kept behind her, between her back and the wooden pillar. She was shining like a lamp without a glass around it. She was wearing a saffron coloured sari and a blouse matching it covering her fine, big, round breasts and her beautiful shoulders and up to her forearms. She was wearing a full blouse. Ravana intently looked at her which was affectionately interesting for him because this was how his own wife Mandodari wore her blouse.

Even Ravana, even after listening to so many versions of Sita's beauty, did not expect Sita to be so much beautiful. Ravana looking at Sita lost the world for a moment and forgot for a few moments where he was standing.

When Ravana looked at Sita, he found Sita surprisingly quiet and calm.

Ravana told Sita “I am Brahmin, mendicant, passing through this forest. I beg you Oh Mother! Some food to eat”

After asking like that he wondered as to why he addressed her as “mother” and why he said like that.

Ravana chanted a few Sanskrit verses describing her beauty, as unparalleled and described her thin waist and her well-developed breasts and he appreciated her heavily embroidered blouse with precious stones, and even described how they were stitched and how beautifully they were covering her round breasts. He appreciated her finely pleated nice silk sari with fringes.

Since it was normal and not very unusual for Brahmin mendicants to narrate a girl’s body or praise unmarried girls in those olden days, particularly in rural and tribal areas, Sita smiled and said “Oh! Learned Brahmin! I am married. My husband should be very near in the forest. He must be coming anytime now.” Sita said this to Ravana who she thought was a Brahmin and added “Your Sanskrit is really excellent in grammar! Oh! Brahmin but somehow I feel you may not be a Brahmin first of all”.

And again Sita moved towards main door and looked through the door outside and said again, “my husband is coming, he must be arriving here any time”.

Sita said this but invited the Brahmin little inside to inner court yard which was open to sky where she brought a tumbler of water to clean that Brahmin’s feet. At which surprisingly Ravana took away the tumbler from her hands and washed his feet by himself, saying there was no need for her to touch his feet as she was herself none other than Goddess Laxmi, Goddess of wealth for his eyes. Sita smiled and said she would bring a leaf plate with something to eat.

Indeed she put some dry fruits and nuts, in the leaf plate and kept a wooden plank with very short legs for him to sit. Ravana walked with his wet feet and sat on the wooden plank exactly the

way, a Brahmin would sit cross legged closed tight and looked in to the leaf plate.

Sita again walked to the main door and looked outside and leaning right on the door frame, she said “my husband went on a work, nearby and very soon he must be arriving”. Saying this Sita came inside and stood opposite Ravana who was sitting on the wooden plank, facing the main door.

Ravana suddenly stood up and Sita instinctively moved backwards. That tall Brahmin with well-developed body with a high chest and muscles on his shoulders with long nose and long hands declared “I am Ravana! Oh! Sita! Come with me! I am here to take you away. You are my golden queen. You shall be my primary queen of all my queens. I shall worship you in the center hall of my great palace with all the flowers in the world twined in to garlands and shower your pink coloured feet with scented flowers. Oh! Sita! You are my Goddess of all Goddesses! Pivotal to my life I shall worship you and you only shall be my wife!”

Sita was terribly afraid and she was literally shivering, and then all of a sudden she shouted at the height of her shaking voice with full of fear “Laxmana! Laxmana! Where are you?”

Now Ravana felt that his words of describing her as his Goddess were nonsense. He felt confused and could not like his own words. Ravana thought that she was a human being after all! A passing thought came to him and talked to himself mumbling “What for I came here?”. Then Ravana thought “Certainly not for praising her, for God’s sake”. He again lost himself thinking and murmuring, he talked to himself “why I am I praising her?”

Now Ravana’s voice was changed all by itself while Sita was trembling with fear with her wide eyes open staring at that rakshasha Ravana. Ravana told her in a cajoling voice “You understand Sita! That fellow Rama listened to a woman’s words and brought you to forests. And that shall end. You shall be my wife and as the primary Queen of Lanka, every one of my other wives shall pay obeisance to you in the morning and evening. You

shall be my goddess where I shall worship you and I shall chant all the verses of Vedas for you” and Ravana went on ranting all the praises again but with all those double meaning words of praise which also meant that Sita was his mother and Goddess as well. For the first time Ravana cursed himself for his great erudition and command of the language of Sanskrit. Ravana suddenly stopped speaking, as if he were misspelling some words. He felt his thoughts were indeed going out of the line and he was saying something else, very different from what he intended to speak. And he could only speak Sanskrit full of double meaning words and revealed his own secret desires for Sita hidden deep inside his consciousness.

Ravana with such a powerful mind and with absolute consciousness felt very vague and confused at the moment he was looking at the face of Sita. And the next minute apparently Ravana became very resolute. Ravana thought whatever he was saying to her was all nonsensical blabbering and he must possess her, lift her and take her away.

Now Ravana in a deliberate effort changed his voice. And with great effort, he demanded Sita that she must come with him. She was already in utter fear and she was literally shivering and in her quivering voice while trembling like a plantain leaf in a storm, she shouted at Ravana “Get out of here! Ravana! You bloody rakshasha; I am only a human being” And then Sita with all her strength as if she suddenly felt her life, cried out very loud “Laxmana! Laxmana! Where are you”! While tears welled up in her large eyes and started rolling down her cheeks.

King Ravana bent forward and downwards holding her thigh with his left hand under her hips and his right on her shoulders he lifted Sita up and stood up. Sita let out huge cry with terrible shock at the touch of Ravana and she fell unconscious; her head fell straight on the right shoulder of Ravana.

Ravana walked out of Parnashala towards his “Pushpak” helicopter which was waiting outside Parnashala. Ravana kept Sita in the back seat of his Pushpak. He jumped onto the front

seat, pushed buttons on his walking stick like remote control, and with the same stick he pushed buttons on the metal horses. These metal horses fumed gases from their nostrils and Ravana's Robot pilot moved its Joystick like control. The Pushpak made a huge noise as the fuming gases jetted out; it lifted up in the air with huge, wide fans making terrible whirring noise while rotating.

When that Pushpak was airborne, Sita suddenly regained her consciousness and started weeping, wailing and crying. She was hopelessly sobbing and looking downwards towards her Parnashala and then started crying "Laxmana, Laxmana!"



JATAYU ATTACKS RAVANA

Jatayu, the great vulture was sleeping on an old tree which was almost dry without leaves and branches. Now his old age was catching up with the spirit and courage of Jatayu. It was long ago, when his brother Samapathi and he were flying towards the Sun in a race to reach “burning globe” as they perceived it. The great Samapathi, his brother was much ahead and very high into the sky where his wings caught fire.

That was an incident of their extreme stamina long ago but at the point of time age was catching up with Jatayu and he had been getting tired even for short distances of flying and feeling himself very exhausted. Jatayu was perched on the top of the tree and taking a short nap when he woke up with a jerk hearing the wailings and sobbing's of Sita. Jatayu was shocked at first to see this unbelievable tragic scene in the middle of the sky but quickly recovered his senses and could comprehend the trouble only after seeing Ravana on the Pushpak. Jatayu flew towards Pushpak helicopter of Ravana and stretching his wings to maximum extent of eight meters on each side, he winnowed the air by flapping his wings causing that huge Pushpak to wave hither thither in the air. He stretched his head and looking seriously with roving round eyes, the great vulture, started flying parallel to the Pushpak.

Ravana looked at him and warned Jatayu, “You must not interfere in my affairs Jatayu! My brother! I warn you! Mind your own business Jatayu!” Ravana shouted, full of anger.

At which Jatayu shouted, “Land immediately and set her free. You do not seem to know why Sita is here in this forest. You must know her. You shall land now and there shall be no quarrel between us”

Ravana warned Jatayu again saying, “Jatayu, mind your own business and do not interfere. I never interfered with your affairs. This Pushpak is unsettling and waving up and down because of the flapping’s of your bloody huge wings. “Why do not you move away? Get out of my reach; I warn you” shouted Ravana. Saying this Ravana took out a long sword from the sides of his Pushpak and stood up holding a railing of Pushpak with his left hand. Sita was helplessly crying in the back seat of Pushpak.

Jatayu started flying a bit higher and tried to convince “Ravana my brother, you are foolish. This Raghuvamshi Rama had set a trap for you. Sita is only bait for this plan. You believe me when I say this, these brothers Rama and Laxmana wanted to kill you. Understand this Ravana; you are foolish in this attempt of abducting Sita because you had taken the bait as they had expected. I am warning you only because your mother and my mother were own sisters and you know that, and you know why I developed wings.”

Ravana again warned Jatayu to keep away from Pushpak because it started weaving right and left just too much like a big cradle in the air and situation of its own balance was getting precarious. And Ravana was afraid that Sita might fall from the sky. Ravana shouted at him “Jatayu, you are a stupid. Sita might fall from the sky; Pushpak is weaving a lot, losing control in the midair, it is getting unsettled”. Ravana warned Jatayu and started brandishing his long sword standing himself erect pointing his long sword straight upwards threatening Jatayu that he should cut off his wings.

Ravana’s Pushpak Vimana speed was increased as an automatic response by its Robotic pilot.

Jatayu also increased his speed and tried his best to convince Ravana again “A farmer sitting in his rice fields do not realise until very late that a snake was hiding in his own cloths. Oh! Ravana realise that in this manner Sita is sitting in your Pushpak. You took the bait, my dear! Sita is part of that plan. Rama and Laxmana were ready to kill you. It is their plan to kill you. And I

tell you again, Sita is the bait. I am telling you, because you are my brother cousin” Jatayu repeated emphatically, and ordered Ravana to land his Pushpak down in the forest immediately.

Jatayu took a flight high up in the sky with its head up penetrating the clouds and then pointing his head downward closing his wings, dashed downwards with terrific speed. Jatayu took a dive towards the helicopter and then taking sudden turn in the midair and attacking from behind he had kicked Ravana on his head with his very long talons which were very sharp. Ravana swirled his sword but Jatayu could manage to escape even highly skillful Ravana’s mighty sword. Ravana was injured and he was bleeding blood through his hairs from the back of his head and his blood was flowing on to the back of his shoulders. And Jatayu flew high again and started diving down with a high peel which could be heard miles away. This time, the vulture aimed at metal horses of the Pushpak. The heads of horses were plucked out, and were held in its claws of long talons like tennis balls. There were huge fumes jetting out of torso of those metal horses which had dangerously unsettled the helicopter Pushpak. The helicopter’s back side was sinking in the midair as huge ship sinks in the middle of an Ocean and increasingly slanting downwards towards the earth; the entire Pushpak was slipping through the air.

Sita caught hold of railing on the sides of Pushpak, in the last minute, avoiding her falling from the sky. Jatayu started circling with a high frequency peal around the Pushpak closing and opening his wings. Ravana with his left hand holding on to a plank of the helicopter, and with his right hand gripping the handle of his great sword was ready to face the attack from Jatayu. The great vulture as if he were determined to commit suicide, came back again, and with his razor sharp, curved, long beak Jatayu attacked the Robot pilot and plucked out the Robot pilot’s head in its mouth. This turned the Pushpak upside down in seconds! And it started gyrating in the sky before dashing towards the earth below.

Sita started falling down from high above in the sky. She let out a huge cry terrified of falling down towards the earth with increasing speed. Sita cried out of terrible fear of death filled the skies. Rakshasha Ravana dived down as much fast as he could and caught Sita in the midair by holding her with his left hand around her waist while with his right hand, he was still holding that long sword, and was ready to attack Jatayu who was diving towards him with great speed.

Sita moved her head towards left, on the other side away from tall and very huge Ravana, while covering her face in cups of her hands feeling ashamed of herself to be gripped in the left arm of Ravana around her waist. Both of them were coming down towards the earth. Then Ravana used his powers and started ascending upwards again which was seemingly easy for him. Jatayu the great vulture, now took a long circle around Ravana who was ascending upwards in the sky with his left hand curved around the waist of Sita, holding her and a long sword in his right hand ready to strike. Jatayu knew that he was going to die. He took a dive at Ravana, from behind, and diving in the air with all his strength, age old Jatayu, tore the back of Ravana all along his backbone with his long and sharp talons. Flaps of muscles separated on either side of Ravana's backbone and he was profusely bleeding all over his back, blood reaching the feet of his legs. Ravana's white bones of his spinal column were exposed in the air. Jatayu, who flew far up above in the sky, towards the clouds started diving again for a final do or die battle with Ravana. This time Ravana managed to turn around in a very surprisingly agile move and then cut off a wing of Jatayu with one long slash of his sharp sword. Jatayu could somehow fly away with only one wing to support his huge but very old body, fluttering around in the sky spilling blood all over on the face of Ravana. And Jatayu flapping his only wing furiously outward, away from Ravana, managed to keep afloat while its feathers from his cut off wing were floating everywhere in the sky. Jatayu seemed to be determined to save Sita from the captivity of Ravana. Jatayu considered captivity of Sita in the hands of

Ravana was a terrible humiliation worse than death, and he mustered all his strength. Jatayu came for a last suicidal attempt to attack Ravana. Now this mighty rakshasha Ravana started ascending again in the sky with full speed with a long sword tightly gripped in his right hand and in the same manner he was holding Sita in his left arm around her waist.

Ravana was dexterously swirling his sword and waiting for the Jatayu, to come for him. Jatayu could not balance himself with only one wing and also with profuse bleeding of his blood his strength was gone. His attempt on Ravana was very feeble while the rakshasha Ravana was ascending on to the clouds with great speed. Jatayu feeble attempt was countered by Ravana with immense strength. With another wing also cut off, Jatayu fell to the ground below after circularly rotating in the air. Jatayu fell on the ground, with his two wings cut off, was still alive and conscious.

Ravana, who was already terribly injured, and with the last attack of Jatayu, on his left eye brow which was cut was profusely bleeding causing a blurred vision for Ravana, So, Ravana descended downwards once Jatayu fell to his sword. Ravana landed almost nearby Jatayu whose two wings he could cut off, looked around him, and Ravana himself was disheveled and with his bizarre look, he was in total disbelief of the powerful motivation and suicidal attacks of Jatayu. Ravana was slightly feeling dizzy for a little moment. Meanwhile, taking this opportunity, Sita started running towards the trees and as Ravana ran behind her, and reached her, she had hugged a tree, praying to Gods for protection from Ravana.

Rakshasha Ravana reached her, and holding her long braid of hair, pulled her backwards. So many gods came out each of those trees and started cursing Ravana, saying the sin of pulling Sita by her hair shall haunt him through many birth cycles. “You will never get rid of this sin, Oh! Ravana! You pulled a pious woman Sita by her hair”, they started cursing Ravana one after another

arising out of many trees around. Ravana looked around all in dismay.

Ravana hearing those curses, looking bewildered, was terribly afraid and while started shaking with fear, he took off his hands instantly from her hair. He loosened her grip of the tree by unclutching her fingers with his powerful hands and putting his left hand around her waist that Rakshasha Ravana again flew in to the air, with his long sword in his right hand pointing upwards in the sky. Ravana started ascending high above the clouds. He was moving in the midair over the hills and forest of Dandaka, moving towards south. Ravana was going towards his city state of Lanka.

But Jatayu was still alive. And this old bird was still watching with its head upwards in to the sky while blood was running through his eyes, he was struggling to breath with great effort.



JATAYU CREMATION

Rama started returning back home from deep forest and as he had crossed a small rivulet, which was only ankle deep, Laxmana was coming in the opposite direction which had stupefied Rama. For a moment Rama was frozen with fear.

“What the hell is with you? Why are you coming here”? Rama was aghast, in a desperate moment, he asked Laxmana in a very agitated voice.

Laxmana said “Sister-in-law was abusing me with unspeakable words until I jumped out and ran in to the forest in search of you because she thought you were in danger and crying for help”.

Rama said “What I told you Laxmana!” Rama shouted in anger. “I told you never to move from Parnashala and Sita should always be with in your eye sight!”

Laxmana suddenly realized his mistake and standing opposite his brother he was stunned in silence. Laxmana stood there as if he were frozen like a stone statue. Laxmana realized the great mistake he did and he felt his whole body was becoming numb.

But Rama could recover himself from the fits of his anger which quickly turned in to fear and desperation. Rama anxiously said “now there is no time to waste. Something terrible indeed happened. I am sure about that, let us run Laxmana, run”

Rama first threw away the carcass of the deer in his hands, started running towards Parnashala and Laxmana followed him weeping. When Rama reached “Parnashala” the first thing he noticed was that the front door was fully open and the entire Parnashala was in an eerie silence. He ran inside and found a wooden plank and in front of it a leaf plate with nuts and fruits, clearly indicating that there was an unwanted guest inside the house and probably Sita was abducted. Rama ran around the

Parnashala calling out at the height of his voice “Sita! Sita” without any response and Rama started searching for her.

Rama’s cries echoed in the nearby hills. He felt that entire forest was totally silent as if great conspiracies were hatching deep inside the forest and he had been ignorant about it. Rama ran around Parnashala again this time crying and weeping “Sita, Sita”. There was no body to answer and he could not accept the reality. Rama went inside Parnashala again and there he collapsed on the floor with his throat completely parched dry, and then the reality had struck him like a lightning. It became clear to him that Sita was indeed abducted. She was stolen!!

Rama started running in to the forest towards right, towards south and Laxmana followed him. They searched for her, for only about three miles of distance and they found so many feathers of a vulture spread all over the ground and some were even still flying due to wind blast.

There was trail of blood and Rama followed it, with his eyes to the ground and all the while he was weeping. They searched not very far before they could see huge Jatayu, at a distance on the ground. Rama and Laxmana ran towards Jatayu holding their breath.

Jatayu was still alive and he was wreathing in pain, kicking his legs and his ten feet long and huge body fell on one side, bleeding heavily from the cuts of his wings.

Rama sat behind Jatayu and took his head in his lap.

Jatayu could muster all his strength and spoke in a very feeble voice while dying. “Your Sita was abducted by Ravana; Janaki was weeping and wailing for help. She was crying, sitting on the back side of that Pushpak. I chased Ravana in the sky and there was a fight between us. Ravana’s Pushpak Vimana was completely destroyed by me. He was flying in the air with Sita, though severely injured by me. I saw him going in southward direction, in the air probably to Lanka. All my efforts to convince Ravana to leave alone Janaki failed. I regret that I could not help

the delicate woman. I am dying Oh! Rama! You should proceed to Lanka to save her. Jatayu started weeping in muted silence with all the energy that was remaining in him. And he looked at Rama for help, put his head with his long beak in Rama's hands and breathed his last.

Rama got up and told Laxmana who was ready to run southward in to forest. "We must do cremation for Jatayu, Laxmana! And immediately we should search for his two cut off wings". Rama and Laxmana could easily find those two wings because so many feathers and so much blood was spilled circularly everywhere on trees and grass.

Jatayu was carried by Rama and Laxmana after they put his dead body, on a bier made of two poles of long wooden sticks. Both the brothers Rama, Laxmana carried Jatayu mortal body as pallbearers on their shoulders to the banks of Godavari river sands. Laxmana collected dry wood from the forest on which Jatayu was placed. Laxmana created fire by fast churning a thick wooden stick kept in a hole of the plank of dry wood with his palms. Thus sacred fire was generated with which funeral pyre was lit up by Rama.

The body of Jatayu was turned to ashes as both brothers stood watching mortal remains of Jatayu in the funeral pyre. Rama shot a huge bird with his arrow and cutting it Rama made meat balls. These meat balls were kept on a leaf plate and Rama started chanting mantras from Vedas. These mantras and verses were some parts of the rituals of death.

These meat balls were offered to Gods for the soul of Jatayu to rest in peace. After offering these meat balls to Gods, both the brothers immersed ashes of Jatayu in river Godavari while chanting mantras from Atharvana Veda. Afterwards Rama and Laxmana took bath in the river.

Rama and Laxmana started walking towards South deep inside the forest, all in silence. They both were well aware that their search in this unending forest was almost hopeless unless they

had hoped for a landing of rakshasha Ravana because he was seriously wounded by Jatayu. Both the brothers kept their options open and rapidly moved southward while searching for Sita in those Jungles of Dandaka. Now and then, quite often Rama broke down weeping for Sita. But Rakshasha Ravana did not seem to have landed anywhere in spite of serious injury to his left eye and a terrible muscle tear over all along his back bone.



SHABARI AND HER DEVOTION

In that Dandaka, deep inside that forest, “*Maha Sadhvi*” Shabari was sitting on a long slab of stone in front of her small hut in the middle of thick forest. She had been in deep meditation until that time. Shabari though belonged to an untouchable caste and lived by manual labor of cleaning the precincts of the big houses of land lords and also as a slave to the kings, warriors and other higher caste people, she never told a lie and always lived righteously.

Finally she left the villages and entered forests in search of a guru who could impart her spiritual knowledge but no one accepted Shabari as his disciple because she belonged to an untouchable caste.

But Sage Matangi could understand her sincerity and accepted her as his disciple. She lived her whole life as a disciple of Sage Matangi on the Rushyamooka Hill and attained “Siddhis” or spiritual powers. After the “Maha Samadhi” of Sage Matangi, Shabari left that Rushyamooka hill and lived deep inside the forest in her own small hut which was not very far from Rushyamooka hills and ever since she had been spending her life in penance. Thus very soon she became a *Maha Sadhvi* meaning a pious woman of spiritual powers who goes deep into meditation, days at a time, seeking salvation, by merging in to the ultimate power of Universe called “God or paramatma ” without seeking cycles of birth anymore. She had been for very long time, living a very austere life and for decades inside this forest she had been taken up a hard life of rigorous penance.

On that day early in the morning, while the Sun light was spreading its light through the gaps in this thick forest of Dandaka, that old woman Shabari saw to her utter disbelief, the gold and diamonds chariot of Indra Bhagvan descending near to

her own hut. Her hut was a thatched roof hut which was very small and insignificant in this forest.

While God Indra Bhagvan was still leaning against his own chariot, after alighting, there were some Sages who were coming in the opposite direction. They met Indra Bhagvan who came from heavens, and pointed to him those brothers Rama and Laxmana who were approaching the hut of Shabari but were still a bit distance away. Those Sages cautioned Lord Indra Bhagvan never to reveal the past birth of Rama to himself. Sages cautioned him that if Rama were to know his past birth, he would leave this earth as it had been his own human birth, a great burden to himself. King of Gods, from heaven, Indra Bhagvan commented that he was feeling himself guilty. While he was sitting in heaven as the king of Gods and thus living in luxuries while Rama and Laxmana were suffering had been giving him a bad feeling. And that he was very concerned about Rama's sadness and illusions about life itself. At which Sages cautioned him never to reveal to Sri Rama his own past birth. Otherwise, they cautioned him, that Rama would go away or end his life. Sages told Indra Bhagvan that Rama should be left to live the life of a human being for the benefit of the universe.

Shabari, who was standing in front of her hut, had first seen Indra Bhagvan; with her own eyes and for a time she could not believe it and thought that she was under hallucinations. She understood and slowly realized that King of all Gods from heavens was indeed coming straight towards her. Shabari stood up and paid her obeisance to the great king of Gods.

Indra Bhagvan told Shabari "Shabari, your life have had been a very pious one. All gods are in praise of you and granted you a boon to come to heaven in your physical body".

Shabari was immensely happy. She was about to move towards the chariot of Gods. But Shabari felt that someone was coming from far and looked in that direction on to her right side. Both Rama and Laxmana were coming on foot and Rama was with his

long bow and quiver of arrows on his shoulder which was very conspicuous for Shabari to recognize him and know him as Rama.

Shabari told Indra Bhagvan “I shall offer something to Rama to eat and at least some water I should offer and then only, I can come to heaven along with you. But for the request of Shabari, that God from heavens, Indra Bhagvan had serious objections and told Shabari “The time for ascending to heaven in my chariot is fixed by Gods. There is no question of changing this celestial event which can happen only at a particular point of time in the celestial world which is ascending to heaven and hence I cannot change the time of this event.” Indra Bhagvan continued “Oh! Shabari! Either you shall be sitting right now in my chariot and coming along with me or I shall leave you here and immediately fly back to heaven. There shall be absolutely no other choice for you”

Then Shabari told Indra Bhagvan “Oh! God! Indra Bhagvan! If those are your conditions, then my choice shall be to serve Rama and reject your offer of heaven with all the respects to you”

Indra Bhagvan simply walked away and soon his chariot disappeared in the air.

Rama and Laxmana were approaching Shabari’s small hut and Shabari was expectantly looking at them, standing right in front of her hut. Shabari was a very old woman, her many tooth were missing. She had a complete black complexion, her hair turned white and with her highly wrinkled face, she was slightly bent due to her old age. She was holding a walking stick and was peering in the direction of Rama and Laxmana.

When Rama and Laxmana arrived, they asked Shabari if she had water to drink. Shabari immediately brought water and requested both to sit on the mud elevation in front of her hut. When Rama sat there, Shabari sat beside him with a bowl of black berries. Shabari first took a bite of each to find its taste and then she offered that half eaten berry to Rama. Rama started eating these half-eaten berries first tasted by Shabari. At one point of time,

while Rama was eating these berries, Shabari asked Rama “I think you are God. People say that. Is it true? ” at which Rama told Shabari without mincing words “No, Shabari! I am Rama and I am son of Kausalya. I am only a human being. I am not god”.

Shabari said “Oh! Rama! You are not aware of your godly nature. I consider you as an Avatar of God Vishnu! You are Purushottam and you’re the best of human beings “narottam”. But Rama did not agree and told her he was in search of his wife Sita.

After she learnt that Rama was in search of his wife Sita, who was abducted by Rakshasha Ravana, Shabari advised Rama to visit Rushyamooka Hill, as it had been a sacred hill ever since Sage Matangi made it his home and lived there on that hill in a small hut for all his life. That great Sage Matangi left this earth in his “Maha Samadhi” on that hill not long ago and according to advise of Shabari Rama must visit the hill.

Rama took that old woman Shabari’s advise very seriously and took leave of Shabari. Both the brothers Rama and Laxmana left in the direction of Rushyamooka cluster of hills.

Shabari was standing with her walking stick and looked on at those Rama, Laxmana brothers until they went very far and disappeared from the site.

Shabari felt that it was time for her to leave her mortal body. She reminisced that with her hands she had fed the berries to the God. She questioned herself “what else I wanted?” and she also thought that she had nothing else to achieve. She felt that living more did not make any sense for her. Shabari reminded herself that with her hands the God Rama himself drank water and living any more after that spiritual ecstatic movement for her was meaningless. She wanted to leave her mortal body. Shabari thought that she was fortunate enough to have encountered God face to face and she had an unforgettable spiritual conquest in her life which she did not want to pollute by living more number of years.

Shabari lit up a big fire outside her hut with dried wood collected from the forest.

Shabari chanting the name of Shri Rama, Rama entered the fire and very soon she was engulfed by the fire.



KISHKINDA KANDA

Rama followed by Laxmana was in search of Sita, still with so many hopes that Ravana might have landed somewhere because of his injuries. They were on foot nonstop moving in south direction in this forest of Dandaka.

They finally reached an area near Pampa Lake. The Pampa Lake was blooming with numerous lotus flowers and in the morning Sun light many Lotus buds were still blooming spreading a fragrance all over the area. At this beautifully adorned Pampa lake with so many Lotus Flowers, Rama was standing looking into the lake, lost himself in thoughts of his wife Sita. These lotus flowers brought the memories of Sita whose eye lids were like petals of Lotus flowers.

He looked at Laxmana and said “Laxmana these lotus flowers are so similar to the eyes of my Sita and these flowers give a flash back of her memory to me” and so saying Rama broke down weeping. Rama sat down in the dust, overwhelmed by her tragic disappearance he started rolling in the dust until Laxmana got angry and shouted at his brother to stop and get up before any Vanara might see them.

Not far away from this beautiful Pampa Lake , but inside the jungles and at a little more distance, atop a hill called Rushyamuka there was a great monkey with a human body but with a monkey like face and tail. He was Sugreeva accompanied by his followers was living in exile and on these hills of Rushyamooka, they were all fugitives. These people were known as Vanaras, who roam around in these forests have enormous strength and also they were well organized in to a kingdom of their own called “Kishkinda”. These Vanaras had built this small city called Kishkinda including its own fort and well laid out

palaces inside this fort in the middle of this thick forest deep in south.

At that time, it was that legendary warrior and a great Shiva devotee called Vali, the Vanara, was the king of Kishkinda, who was brother of Sugreeva. And Sugreeva was fugitive, at the time, who had taken a shelter under the safety of the hills of Rushyamooka emboldened by its spiritual powers and still famous with an aura of an earlier Sage Matangi who had lived all his life and passed away on these cluster of Rushyamooka hills, sometime ago.

This great, very huge and towering Vanara called Sugreeva was indeed formerly a king of this kingdom of Kishkinda but at that time Sugreeva was dethroned and had been living in a fear of his own brother Vali on those hills.

Vanara Sugreeva, the former king was going through adversities, which was a really bad patch of time in his life and indeed he was suffering from self-dejection, self-pity, and despondency. Generally troubles do not come alone and Sugreeva was not an exception with his own mind tormenting him day and night. That former king of Vanaras, Sugreeva was living atop the hills of Rushyamooka, without a home of his own or his wife and was seeped in utter poverty and mired in all types of troubles.

Sugreeva lost his kingdom of Kishkinda to his famous and legendary brother Vali, who was considered to be world's strongest person. Ever since that time, for so many years this dethroned king Sugreeva had been living the life of a fugitive, atop the Rushyamuka Hills. Sugreeva had not been in the plan of waging a war with his illustrious brother but in fact living in terrific fear of his brother, who might attack him at any time.

This great and huge hill Rushyamuka was historically a pious place of Sage Matangi, with his own ashram atop these hills a few years ago. But a demon called "Dundhubi", who challenged and killed many rakshashas and even demi gods, one day challenged Vali his brother in front of his palace. At that point of time Vali

was the king of Kishkinda. Indeed at that time, no one could defeat rakshasha Dundhubi and he killed everyone who challenged him and was roaming all over the earth. Dundhubi could take various forms with an ability to change his body according to his will and he took the form a bison when he challenged that great Vali.

The fight between Vali and Dundhubi raged for a very short time in the wrestling grounds in front of the palace of Vali, the king of Kishkinda. Vali killed Dundhubi and swirled him round in the air holding its tail and then threw him away. The dead body of Dundhubi flew in the air for eight miles and fell in the ashram of Sage Matangi atop the Rushyamuka, spilling its blood all over the ashram. At which incident Sage got very angry and cursed Vali. The great Sage warned the king of Kishkinda, Vali, never to enter the precincts of Rushyamuka, and if he still dare climb the hills his head shall break into hundred pieces. That was the curse on Vali. Since then Vali had been very scared of the curse of the Sage and even though it all happened in the past some years ago, Vali never came near the Rushyamuka hills.

In these troubled times, Sugreeva his brother took refuge on these hills, to save himself. The only savior for Sugreeva was the curse that was hanging on the head of his illustrious brother Vali

So Vali, the great Vanara, the most powerful man on the earth, and the king of Kishkinda, who could repel a pointed arrow with his concentration on his stomach muscles and who could blow away any powerful arrow like that of a housefly by blowing air with his mouth, could never dare to step on the hills of Rushyamuka. And indeed he was mortally afraid of the hill itself even in his dreams.

Vanara Sugreeva at a distance from atop the hill had seen Rama and Laxmana who were armed with bows and arrows. Sugreeva was terrified to see a great warrior Rama with his long bow and sharp arrows and who was walking towards the hills. Since he had been listening to the stories of Rama and his ruthless killings of rakshashas, Sugreeva let out a huge cry and after climbing the

trees howled so loud that every Vanara started running and hiding atop the trees and in the ravines of the hills.

Hanuman, a Vanara, who sided with Sugreeva, on the Rushyamuka hills thought about it differently. He decided to have a talk with those two warriors Rama and Laxmana. So Hanuman dressed himself like a pundit, like a learned Brahmin, approached Rama and Laxmana and saluted them, bent down to touch the feet of Rama. Hanuman, though a Vanara with a long tail, was speaking in chaste, excellent Sanskrit which attracted the attention of Rama.

He learnt from Hanuman a little about the pathetic living of the former king Sugreeva on the hills and sympathised with him. Hanuman invited Rama and Laxmana, to stay on the hills of Rushyamuka with all the respect. This was a life changing event for Sugreeva as well as for Hanuman.

Sugreeva finally climbed down the hill to meet this great warrior Rama with an intention to seek help to regain his kingdom. Rama as a warrior was already well known all over Dandaka forest. Vanara Sugreeva introduced himself to Rama and Laxmana and he introduced other Vanara army warriors who had taken refuge on the Rushyamuka Hills along with him, accompanying him, and supporting him.

That former king of Vanaras Sugreeva recanted the glory of his brother Vali and in his own agony Sugreeva started telling about the injustice meted out to him and about his lost wife and kingdom usurped by his own brother Vali. Other Vanaras, who were listening to the hardships of Sugreeva, also supported the version of Sugreeva and even elucidated certain events to mighty warrior Rama.

But Rama was in a mood of his own sorrow at the time. He, who had rolled in the dust for his wife Sita an hour ago, could not come out from the memories of his own tragic separation from his wife. Rama's face was giving fresh smell of Lotus filled Pampa

waters as he had washed his face in Pampa lake after so much sobbing for his wife.

Rama explained to Sugreeva in detail about how his wife Sita was abducted by Ravana, controlling his bursting tears while mentioning of the name of his wife and his own narration of her abduction which closely followed the last words of Jatayu, the great Vulture. Rama explained his own search for his wife and need for the help of Vanaras in search of Sita.

At which Sugreeva remembered an incident with which he was himself perplexed at the time of its happening. Sugreeva explained that after listening to Rama about the tragedy of Sita, he began to understand that event which happened some time ago.

Sugreeva the great Vanara narrated the event to Rama in the following manner.

“One day , in a desperate condition, when I was standing on the top of the Rushyamuka Hill and was praying to Goddess Laxmi to shower me with gold to get me out of my own helpless condition, Oh! Rama! If I tell you what happened, you may not believe it and no one indeed believed this but actually gold was showered on me! And when I looked up above in to the sky, among the darkened clouds, I saw that Goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth! She again dropped a few bits of fine jewelry tied in a piece of sari cloth bundle. And I was astonished and with utter disbelief as well as puzzled, I saw in to the clouds again, and believe me, Oh! Rama! Oh! my God, I saw that rakshasha Ravana, who I know, as the king of Lanka, was holding Janaki on his side, by his left hand holding the waist of Janaki and that Ravana, that great Rakshasha was very weary, very injured and was absent minded looking elsewhere with a terrified face as if he were ready to defend the attack of someone unknown. I learnt it only later from other Vanaras that the lady was not Goddess Laxmi but might be king Janaka’s daughter Janaki who was also called as Sita”

At which Rama, all in haste, requested Sugreeva to show that jewelry. Sugreeva guided Rama, Laxmana to the top of Rushyamuka hill and while sitting under a tree he had untied a piece of sari cloth tied together. When Rama had seen, those pieces of jewelry, he broke down weeping helplessly. Laxmana confirmed that those toe rings were worn regularly by his sister-in-law and he said he was sure about it as he used to touch her feet every morning in obeisance.

Rama started crying uncontrolled. Rama cried “Sita! Sita!” And Rama started rolling in the dust crying and sobbing.

Sugreeva said, his hopes of regaining his own kingdom and his deep sorrow for his own lost wife Ruma were all evaporated and he was feeling hopeless. Sugreeva said he had great hopes of Rama’s help but seeing Rama himself rolling in the dust and weeping, he had lost all his hopes. Sugreeva questioned aloud and talked to his own self “who will help me Oh! God! ”

Sugreeva was walking forwards and backwards on the Rushyamooka hill and many times he was holding his own tail and murmuring and mumbling, he started beating his forehead. Sugreeva talked to himself saying it was all his unfortunate karma and all hopes were dashed to the ground as the one whom he thought he could depend on was rolling on the ground. Oh! God! Help me! Sugreeva talked to himself aloud.

Laxmana felt it was quite an embarrassment. He finally shouted at his brother to keep quiet and his weeping was quite an embarrassment for him and others. At last with great effort Rama could stop weeping and brought himself together.

Rama at last listened to Sugreeva and his version of the problems.

Sugreeva started telling the root cause of all his problems.

“A few years ago, it all happened which sealed his fate. He lost his kingdom and also he lost his wife. Sugreeva’s elder brother, the legendary warrior, Vali chased a demon called “*Mayavi*” which ran in to a cave to escape him. While his brother Vali entered that cave, he told Sugreeva, his younger brother, to keep vigil and

guard outside, so that if that demon Mayavi exits, he could kill it or chase it. But after three days of waiting, Sugreeva said, he had seen blood started dropping out, and he had clearly heard the angry cries of that demon “Mayavi”. Hence he hastily concluded that his brother had died and he had immediately closed the cave with a big boulder so that the demon would not come out. And then he went home, ascended the throne, which rightfully belonged to his elder brother Vali. But after few more days, his brother Vali came out of the cave, victorious after slaying that demon and then felt he was cheated by his brother Sugreeva.

It did not struck Sugreeva at the point of time, that his brother Vali was more powerful than anyone on the earth and it could very well be the blood of demon and could not be that of his own brother. His hasty conclusion about his brother’s death brought all the problems for him.

According to Sugreeva, his own brother Vali’s stomach was so hard that even arrows shot at his stomach with world’s best archers cannot pierce. And many were bent by his stomach alone like hair pins. Vali could catch any shooting arrow with lightning speed between his palms joined together even before it could hit him. His eyesight was so much accurate and his hands were so much dexterous that God of God Indra’s lightening sword from the sky thrown at him was caught by him with bare hands! Vali was no ordinary person! He had always worn a golden locket around his neck gifted to him by Indra Bhagvan which gave him supernatural strength always replenished his energy when he was completely exhausted of his strength in a fight. So there was no question of Vali getting exhausted in a fight with that locket around his neck. He was Lord Shiva’s great devotee with super natural powers.

Sugreeva told Rama “Vali would be ever ready for a hand to hand combat, to win or lose the entire Kingdom. But he always extended his empire with this same challenge to his enemies. He thinks he holds this Kishkinda in his grip but the fact is that I am its rightful King. I did a mistake I do admit. On that day when my

brother chased the demon in to that dark cave, I closed the cave with a huge, heavy boulder so that demon would not come out.

Once he came back, he kicked me out after a hand to hand fight and he had dragged my wife my beautiful queen Ruma to his bedroom right in front of all the royal members of our own and our own extended family members watching helplessly while my wife was crying for help”

Sugreeva continued and repeated the most tragic part of the story of his wife Ruma “My brother Vali had taken my wife and pulled her by her hair right in front of everyone of us and dragged her to his bedroom while she was wailing and weeping for help, none of the kings present could help her, including myself. I was kicked hard in my stomach and I was groaning with pain at that time”

Rama listened to Sugreeva with rapt attention and told Sugreeva “I shall kill your brother like a king would hunt down an animal. Show him to me”

Sugreeva said to Rama “It is not that easy. Do not come to the front side of Vali face to face. He is so much strong that I do not think, there is any arrow which can pierce his stomach. Even he can repel an arrow with an energy he concentrates on his stomach. The arrow will bend and fall away like feather of a peacock. And after all, he is my own brother and I know him like no other knows him. If you want you can still attack him, and bring me justice, but prove it first that you are capable of killing Vali”

At which Rama took out an arrow, set the arrow and pulling the string of his bow up to his ears released the arrow. This arrow made such a huge noise that all the birds on Rushyamuka flew in the air as if thunderbolts were struck on the hill and Rushyamuka caught the fire. Rama’s arrow in full strength cut through the huge trunks of a series of seven trees in one line and emerged out of the trunk of the seventh tree. All the Vanaras looked at this event in awe and could not believe their eyes. They looked at

Rama and in one voice they all praised Rama saying “He must be God”.

After this incident Rama and Sugreeva were discussing the plan to attack Vali but could not immediately finalize any plan.

Sugreeva told Hanuman to look after and serve warriors Rama and Laxmana as long as these two brothers were living with Vanaras. Sugreeva thought that the plan to attack Vali could be discussed later after a few days of rest for Rama and Laxmana since they had been through an arduous journey of the forest, and that Rama was struck by his own tragedy. And also attacking Vali was a dangerous attempt involving immense risk.

Rama after a time of interaction for a day found to his surprise that Hanuman was very obedient and highly knowledgeable person. He was golden yellow in complexion and was wearing a sacred thread around his shoulders. Hanuman looked physically very powerful with full of muscles. Hanuman had taken a vow of celibacy, which meant he would remain as a bachelor for his life.

The preparation for an attack on Vali was almost complete after Sugreeva and Rama sat alone in a secluded spot on the Rushyamuka hill and secretly deliberated on various plans to kill that King of Kishkinda Vali.

According to the finalized plan, on that day Sugreeva would call out Vali, the king, for a hand to hand combat to the grounds of wrestling and boxing. And while they were fighting in the wrestling grounds of Kishkinda, which were open grounds, outside the palace of the King, Rama would come there all of a sudden and then shoot down Vali with an arrow. It was a very simple plan with which both were agreed.

On that fateful day, Sugreeva decided he would go to the palace of Vali, the king's palace only at eleven O'clock late in the morning because since early in the morning Vali would immerse himself in worshipping of Lord Shiva with water brought from various rivers like Ganga and Yamuna and so on, using his movement with speed of wind combined with his spiritual powers.

Rama was wearing a saffron coloured Dhovati, a single cloth, eight meters in length wound around his waist in the beginning, and then wound around one leg with folds and then pulled up to waist and then wound around another leg and the remaining cloth was folded in to pleats of fringes of same size, folded and neatly tucked in the front side under waist band.

Rama was seven feet tall with his eight feet bow and very long arrows with sharp blades fixed to them.

Sugreeva told Rama “Listen Rama, I am fully dependent on you. You must shoot my brother otherwise I shall die in his hands. I hope you understand”

At which Rama said “Sugreeva! You should not worry at all. And I shall do what I am supposed to do and you can surely depend on me.”

Sugreeva stood in front of the king’s palace and called out Vali, the king, using a very invective language challenging him and abusing him to come for wrestling and boxing. Vali could not keep silent listening to that foul language. He came out for a hand to hand fight for a kind of boxing and wrestling combined in a free for all fight. Both Vali and Sugreeva reached the fighting grounds.

Nearby the fighting grounds, Rama was crouching on his knees, hiding behind a small bush of around five feet with yellow coloured flowers bloomed all over its branches in that season.

Rama was hiding behind the bush which was not even fifty yards from borders of the fighting ground and the place for the fight was carefully chosen by Sugreeva. Great Vali who was unsuspecting came to the place chosen by his enemy brother.

Rama with his bow and with an arrow set in it was ready on his knees crouching behind the bush. But there was an unexpected problem for Rama. He was in utter confusion after a very little time of their fight. Though in the beginning he could distinguish, in a very short time frame, he was bewildered because he could

not identify Sugreeva himself! It was because his brother Vali and Sugreeva were exactly like each other.

Sugreeva started getting exhausted and as his stamina to defend himself was weakening, he was receiving more and more of the blows from Vali. Sugreeva realized that his death was imminent if he were to stay on in the fighting ring. So, he jumped out of the ring all of a sudden and started running away with his tail between his legs, and by the time he got bruises everywhere.

Rama could catch up with Sugreeva while he was crossing that small rivulet in the forest and shouted at him from behind to stop and listen to him. At last Sugreeva stopped in the middle of rivulet with great difficulty while he was gasping for breath. The face of Sugreeva was heavily bruised, and he started weeping! Sugreeva said to Rama “I depended on you without understanding your nature first of all. I depended on you and I got these blows. I cannot trust you anymore. You just sat there behind the bush yourself totally frozen and scared of my brother, I think you were terrified after seeing him”

At which Rama replied saying “You both brothers were looking exactly alike to me and I could not be sure. What to do. I thought I better not take the risk of shooting my arrow”

Rama convinced Sugreeva to go again but this time he would be wearing a hard forest twine of flowers, a very thick one woven with flowers around his neck as a garland. Laxmana brought a flowering forest twine and twisted it and joined it, to make a garland which he put it around the neck of Sugreeva. Rama told Sugreeva that it would not look odd because boxers do wear garlands while going for a fight.

After a lot of persuasion Sugreeva went again and challenged Vali in front of Kings Quarters in the palace.

Vali wanted to come out immediately to silence his brother forever but his wife Tara stopped him saying “there must be some cheating in all this. And this time, there must be someone who might be behind him for support. He got your blows an hour ago

and was bruised all over his body but surprisingly came back within this short period of time for a fight again! What a surprise Oh! My God! Do not go!"

Vali did not carefully listen to the words of his wife Tara and replied with anger that he would finish his brother Sugreeva once for all. That king Vali, all in haste, came out scolding his brother for coming again for a fight and then warned him that he would silence his life forever.

And both brothers went to the fighting ring in the grounds, again to the same place, where there was a flowering shrub behind which Rama was hiding with bow and arrow ready to shoot. The only difference was that this time Sugreeva was wearing a twine of garland with forest flowers. The garland was long up to his stomach. And Vali made a huge cry before his strike with his fist.

Rama who was hiding behind the same bush at the same place with yellow flowers which almost matched with his cloth, saffron coloured Dhovati, took out a very small, tiny bottle of poison from inside his waist band and took out a thread which he dipped in the bottle of liquid poison.

Rama put down the Quiver of arrows on the ground and spread the arrows. He selected an arrow with a very sharp, but long, narrow blade.

And Rama wound this poisoned thread, a small, thin, white thread at the base, of that sharp and narrow neck of the arrow where it was attached to the staff. Then he put the arrow staff between his two palms and churned it for some time so that the poison was absorbed a little in to the bamboo shaft of the arrow.

He looked at fighting brothers Vali and Sugreeva from behind the bush. And by that time, Sugreeva's garland made of forest twine came off, and fell down already. But now Rama could easily recognize Sugreeva.

Rama pulled the arrow up to his ear until he could hear the creaking noise of the bow itself, and released the arrow while Vali was violently going against Sugreeva to punch on his face, one

more time. The released arrow shot through like a lightening in the air. The arrow pierced through ribs of great Vali and went deep inside his chest bursting his left lung. Vali was thrown backwards with the impact of the arrow but such a huge and towering Vanara warrior Vali, with all his strength tried to balance himself and caught the penetrating arrow with both of his hands. The arrow stopped there.

Vali himself while looking in the direction of the arrow swaggered backwards and fell on the ground on his back. Immediately his hands and legs started to freeze and the blue colour of the poison was spreading all over the chest area like the roots of a twine. Rama came from behind the bush with his bow in his left hand and a fresh arrow in his right hand, stood there looking over fallen Vali.

Vali said “So you are Rama!! I understand now! You are a legend in the villages of Dandaka as a man of truth, your name and your saffron coloured clothes has become a synonym with truth, and as a man of great values. What values! Oh! Rama! You had bent upon committing a cold blooded murder! You have shot me hiding from behind a tree! And that too, when I am fighting with someone and fully engaged. You shot me with your arrow doused in poison! Oh! God! Even while, when I am engaged in fighting with another person, how can you shoot me? What values? Rama! What values?! You speak about? You do not yourself have any values! If there is any tiger with a cow’s face, that is you Oh! Rama! And these innocent villagers think that you are an avatar of God! But you are in realty that deceitful tiger in cows attire! You were wearing a saffron coloured Dhovati of Sages! And Rishis! What kind of parody is it? You are a married person and wear saffron coloured clothes! What a parody you make out of monks and Sages! You are! As I understand now, is a cheat”!

Vali had gone unconscious for a while. He came back to consciousness and he was profusely sweating and due to effect of poison, his mouth was frothing with foam of white phlegm.

Sugreeva broke down and started loudly weeping looking at his dying brother in a horrible condition. Then Vali summed up all his strength and said “I think you did all this murder hiding behind a tree for the sake of your wife! Janaki! You love your wife so much as to stoop so low to murder me, to get support from my brother! All this murder is just to rescue your own wife from that rakshasha Ravan?! Vali started gasping for breath and he was writhing in pain because of the arrow which cut through left side of his lungs. Vali with great effort and trying hard resisting himself going unconscious again, continued, his speech stopping now and then “You could have asked my help Oh! Rama, I can kick that Ravana as I did before and bring your wife back to you right here to Kishkinda, in just one day! Who do you think I am?!! Even though we are Vanara species with tails and monkey like faces, live on the trees, like animals, we are better people than deceitful, characterless people like you”

Rama held his head high, with a grave face he answered that great Vali “You are an animal as you rightly said just now. I am the emperor of this whole country. My brother Bharatha has been ruling the country in my name. Kishkinda comes under my suzerainty”.

“What do you think Vali? How a brother’s wife shall be treated by his own elder brother in a family? She should be looked upon like any other family member, because she is an inseparable family member and hence should be treated as younger sister. You did not have any family values when you dragged Ruma, the most beautiful woman in the universe and wife of your younger brother to your bedroom, in front of everybody. While everyone of your family was watching it and that lady Ruma was crying for help. What do you think? You and I are equals and hence I shall ask you to come for a fight? You are just an animal in my eyes. And you may be worse than an animal. I am Rama. I uphold family values and I respect myself, and I stand by my word. I promised your brother that I shall kill you like the way a king kills an animal and I had to shoot my arrow at you. This is what

you deserve. Oh! Vali, I do not feel guilty and I shall say and repeat again that you deserve this type of death”

Rama continued “It is like that. I shall not take any help from a person like you; I shall not even imagine it. The method I choose, the ways I follow to rescue Sita is all the more important to me than Sita herself. It is not the final result alone which is important to me but the method I adopt to achieve it is important to me”

At which time the queen Tara, wife of Vali, heard the clamour inside her palace and learnt that her husband was shot by an arrow by Rama. She ran out of her palace all in haste, while fear and anxiety gripped her. She came out of palace without being well dressed and started running towards that battle field which she knew was the fighting place between her husband and his brother. And many Vanaras were running away in every other direction literally jumping over everything in utter fear. And one Vanara with a fear stricken face gasping for breath, stopped at her and somehow explained to her the situation and advised Tara the queen, to take control of the army and palace guards immediately so that without a minute delay she could anoint her son Angadha as the king. Otherwise Sugreeva shall usurp the throne and he had planned the murder of his own brother by treachery. That Rama was there standing ready to kill everyone with his bow and arrow. And hence that Vanara told her “Queen Tara you must run for your life and run inside the palace and take care of your son Angadha”.

But the Queen Tara shouted at them incoherently while weeping for her husband. She expressed serious concern for her injured husband and told them that she should not care for herself as she was not afraid of Rama with bow and a sharp arrow ready to shoot.

Queen Tara literally meant a shining star came running and tried to fall on her dying husband. The arrow came in between her and her dying husband who she tried to hug. Vali lost his consciousness due to the effect of poison. Tara, that beautiful queen collapsed on the ground in the dust beside her husband

Vali's body and started weeping loudly. Her son Angadha, a young man, was on his knees, looking in to his father's face, he broke down and started weeping uncontrollably. Vali then slowly regained consciousness again, his face was wet with the tears of his wife Tara and son Angadha and while heavily breathing with great difficulty, wreathing in pain, his body sweating all over, and his hands turned blue with poison, he made feeble attempt to console his wife Tara. Vali said to her "this poison is working on me, my hands are numbing, and I am losing sensation, my dear Tara! Take good care of our son Angadha and listen to elder's advice"

Tara with blood of her husband smeared on her chest and garments, wearing only bra and an under wear, lower tight under garment covering her thighs, with light brown colour body, that curvaceous Tara was shining like a golden doll in the morning sun light with the reflection of light on her silky smooth body. She got up and approaching Rama, she joined her palms in Namaste and bending forward, while weeping, tears rolling down her cheeks, and shivering with shock, Tara pleaded with Rama "Kill me! Oh! Rama! Kill me also! Why do you spare my life?! Why should I live? Kill me also now itself; with your pointed arrows kill me at once, cut my throat". Weeping like that she knelt down before the feet of Rama.

Rama while standing straight with a grave face and in a determined voice said "Oh! Tara! Do not weep and talk like any other ordinary woman? When the milk of Ocean was churned by both, Gods and Rakshashas, you were born out of churning, along with Goddess Laxmi and the divine nectar "Amrita" from that Ocean of Milk. You are one of the rarest and a divine nymph born from the Ocean of milk. Is there any fort with kings and queens without a tragedy? Do our lives go on normal as it were for the commoners outside? Is this tragedy of life new for us Kshatriya Kings and Queens? Even after your husband was gone, you would have your royal palace, and your royal life should continue as before and I assure you the possession of fort and palace for

you. Kishkinda royals should follow the customs and traditions of society and I ensure you all of them and that is my word”

Vali who had gone again unconsciousness for some time regained his consciousness.

Rama, the warrior standing beside Laxmana and Hanuman told Vali “Oh! Vali! Do not worry. Your son Angadha will be anointed as the king of Kishkinda”

Vali, who was dying, in a pool of blood oozed out of the Rama’s arrow, with his face turned blue, could speak in a very feeble voice and said “Rama! The throne of my kingdom rightfully belongs to my brother Sugreeva”

Saying this Vali called his son Angadha nearer and said “Angadha do not weep, my darling child! I am paying for my karma. All my bad karmas have now come to rendezvous in this manner. Always listen to Rama! My dear son you should follow this rule throughout your life. Rama is a man of virtue, Rama is a man of truth, he would never cause harm to you and so you must always listen to him, obey his orders and do whatever Rama says”.

Vali while dying turned his head towards his brother. Vali could speak very feebly.

Sugreeva said to his dying brother “Brother I never thought that Rama would put a poison to the arrow and shoot you like this. I did not think that Rama could give you such a fatal blow like this which could kill you and I never thought that you would die! Oh! Great brother”!

Sugreeva broke down and started weeping, falling down in the dust, beating his chest.

Vali said “Sugreeva do not weep. You shall take great care of my son, in the manner I took care of him. He is very young and sometimes he may not listen. Sometimes he may waste your time and sometimes with his childish behavior he may fight with someone and bring upon himself and to you unnecessary problems. Always look upon him and talk to him with love the

way I look up on him and talk to him. Do not get very angry with him and do not try to punish him very hard”

Vali, in spite of his feeble condition and numbing hands by every minute, took off the golden pendant around his neck which was gifted to him by the King of Gods, Indra Bhagvan and gave it to his brother Sugreeva to wear. Vali told his brother “This pendant has spiritual powers. It will replenish your energy exactly when you were exhausted in a fight” and told his brother Sugreeva to pluck out that Rama’s arrow from his chest, and following instructions, Sugreeva pulled out that arrow. Vali passed away.

Sugreeva and other Vanaras arranged a palanquin decked with all flowers in which Vali’s dead body was kept and lifted. Vanara army generals with his son Angadha and Sugreeva were carrying the palanquin in the front. Vanaras as per custom started beating a single drum and playing a sad tune on a single flute they took Vali’s body to the crematorium. Many Vanaras started a tragic dance in the front of the palanquin and also in the back of the palanquin while the palanquin itself was swinging right and left with the mortal body of Vali.



SITA IN LANKA

Ravana landed straight in the middle of his palace in a courtyard which was open to sky. Sita walked across the hall and sat under the stair case. Ravana went in to his Puja room and started chanting some mantras and he did some mudras to cure his back where it was cut open full length by Jatayu. Amazingly the flaps of muscles on his backbone began to patch up and his back was normal without any visible injury. He cured his left eye lash and eye brow which had half-moon shaped cut caused by the sharp talons of Jatayu, and he also cured the back of his head, where, sensing its location by touch, Ravana plucked out a broken piece of nail of Jatayu stuck deep inside the back of his head.

Ravana was deep in meditation for some time, of Lord Shiva. The great idol of Shiva in meditation pose made of gold was kept on huge wooden plank in his puja room shining bright with lamps around it. Then afterwards Ravana relaxed, for some time, took a bath and changed his clothes. He smeared the sacred ash on his fore head chanting mantras from Yajur Veda.

He walked up to Sita in that hall, where she had been sitting under that staircase. He looked at her and said that he had such a great palace, which she probably had never seen. Ravana wanted to show her around his palace and its architectural wonder. Sita did not resist and to the surprise of Ravana she got up, kept herself silent, had covered her face with the ends of her sari and followed Ravana.

Ravana was walking in the front holding the hand of Sita. Sita did not say anything and silently followed Ravana. He told Sita while walking along the corridors of his majestic palace, "You see these patterns of precious stones of blue sapphire on the walls? So much precious but I just embedded them on the walls designing

the walls for the purpose of interior decoration. I suppose, you like them don't you?"

Sita did not say anything. She pulled the free end of her sari much more over her face covering the face completely. The sari's end was semi-transparent and as she followed Ravana, she was seeing the marvelous architecture of the building and those precious stones embedded on its walls and their decorative patterns.

Ravana took her around that great palace along with its hugely decorated halls and with its huge diamond studded chandeliers holding more than hundred candles. And finally both of them reached a large, spacious central hall supported by huge stone pillars in a circular way, where it was connected to four bedrooms on all four directions. Ravana was still holding hand of Sita. From there they finally reached back to the same smaller hall with a stair case under which Sita chose to sit again. There was a huge courtyard between the palaces with a shining floor. There were many maid servants moving around to serve the queen Mandodari.

Ravana stood in front of her, and Sita was sitting under that same staircase. Ravana abruptly told, "Sita, I shall kill Rama, your foolish husband! He left an empire by listening to the words of a woman. He does not know anything about politics and political science. Think about it. He could not provide you with two meals a day and a good house to live in all these twelve years! What is a man when he could not provide two meals a day for his own wife?"

Ravana clapped his hands and four rakshashas appeared with javelins fixed with very sharp blades. He ordered them "Find out that man called Rama and Laxmana with a bow and arrows somewhere in Dandaka forest and I am sure those two brothers might be travelling towards south. Find that Rama who always carry a bow and quiver of arrows and kill him. Don't forget to bring his dead body, I have to show that dead body of Rama to his wife Sita here" Ravana pointed to her.

Those four rakshashas armed with javelins immediately left on their mission by flying in to the air like ghosts.

Sita in a very sad voice told Ravana “You have killed those four people! What do you think of Rama? Do you really believe that these four people would find Rama and kill Rama? What a tragedy? You do not know him! Rama will kill those four people as well”.

Ravana said “Sita! Why are you worried? I do not understand. You were not born here in Lanka. You did not drink our water nor tasted our salt. Why should you worry about our warriors, our people? If they die in the pursuit of Rama, let them die”

Sita repeated “You have killed those four people. Now they are going to die! What a waste of life! Rama would kill them the moment he sees them”

Ravana did not care to listen to Sita’s words. Instead Ravana started speaking about his palaces, his wealth, his knowledge and his power. He boasted that even the Gods in heaven are jealous of him. In riches he told Sita he was equal to Kubera.

Sita told Ravana “I lived in luxuries and I was born in to luxury. I am daughter of Janaka, one of the richest kings in the world. When I was married, my father-in-law gave me an entire building made of stone as a gift. I am a married woman, Ravana! You made a mistake and this can bring you death!”

Sita stopped for a moment as Ravana’s face became red with anger. But he could somehow control himself.

Sita continued “You do one good thing at least. Take me back to that place where from you brought me. I shall plead with Rama or whatever will be required I shall do, so that he would spare your life pardoning you. Do this immediately to avoid a big trouble. Sooner or later Rama would come to know that you were the one who abducted me and brought me here to Lanka and he shall come here only to kill you. Rama’s arrows burn your Lanka! You please take me back exactly to the same place from where

you brought me and that is all that you have to do to save yourself and Lanka.”

At which Ravana laughed uproariously “this Rama is a simple human being, he can do nothing. Even the king of Gods Indra is scared of me, and that God Vishnu ran away along with his wife Laxmi and was hiding somewhere inside the Milky Way! What a coward he was! Now you say I should be afraid of that Rama! What nonsense! You will be my wife! Oh! Sita! And you shall be my Queen; every one of my wives shall garland you in the morning and shall sing your praises every day. I shall hold you in my heart, you are my Goddess and my soul, you are precious and in my eyes you are on high pedestal, I want to worship you Oh! Sita! And you are higher than everything in my life!”

Ravana went on praising Sita but then a maid servant entered and informed Ravana that Queen Mandodari was calling him and his majesty should immediately be present there.

King Ravana called a few maid servants and told them “take this Sita to Ashoka gardens and provide everything she may ask. You shall take very good care of Sita. Any discrepancy in attending to her needs simply means death to you people or I shall order a very harsh punishment worse than death. I shall order you, to guard her in the day and guard her in the night protecting her from any harm from devils and ghosts”.

About twenty maid servants gathered to execute Ravana’s order. Sita was taken to Ashoka gardens adjacent the compound wall of Ravana’s palace.



SRI RAMA SETHU

After the death of Vali, Rama declared a few days of rest and then the celebrations of coronation ceremony for Sugreeva as the king began in Kishkinda the forest kingdom of Vanaras.

Sugreeva's coronation as king of Vanaras was completed in the presence of Rama and Laxmana. Rama declared a rest of one month for all Vanaras to celebrate Sugreeva's ascension to the throne and also for regrouping of Vanaras to march to Lanka.

Rama declared it would be an arduous task, fraught with dangers of going on foot all the way to seashore, through the impassable jungles.

After the rest of one month, those highly motivated Vanaras under the command of Sugreeva started that fateful journey towards Lanka to rescue that daughter of the jungle Sita who they knew long before as Janaki daughter of Janaka, the king of Mithila. She attained a status of legend among the Vanaras of Kishkinda after Sugreeva had seen her in the clouds showering gold on him after his prayers on the mount of Rushyamooka hills. There were many stories spread from house to house about Janaki in the clouds and her abduction by that Rakshasha Ravana on that day.

Hanuman who was highly educated among Vanaras and Angadha, son of Tara selected an auspicious day, after consulting the almanac and on that appointed day, Sugreeva, the King of Kishkinda organized an army of one million strong Vanaras, divided in to hundreds of thousands of groups and each group consisting of about one hundred Vanaras with their commander, to march on foot on the left side and on the right side of Rama and Laxmana.

According to the plan Hanuman and Angadha son of Vali and Tara would be walking along very close to warrior brothers Rama and Laxmana. The king of Vanaras Sugreeva himself took the position in the forefront, ahead of all his one million strong army of Vanaras consisting mostly of very young Vanaras started its adventurous, fateful march towards the sea at Rameshwaram. It was a historic march and no one including Sri Rama knew what was in store for them in future. They did not even have a vague idea of crossing the mighty sea to Lanka. And that too to fight with Ravana!!

Sugreeva addressed his army of Vanaras before the start of the epic journey. He declared, “We shall decide what shall be done, at the sea shore. We can devise a plan to cross the sea only when we reach the sea. When we are set upon the work of Rama, everything shall lead us to success. We shall all reach Lanka and rescue Sita. You are all very capable army of Vanaras. We shall fight Ravana and destroy Lanka.” The army of Vanaras started marching in the thick jungles to reach the sea shore.

After several months of arduous journey, the entire Vanara army reached the sea shore. Vanaras were very young and very exuberant. Vanara army camped on the sea shores on the southernmost tip of India. They were also very restive and they were all coming up with plenty of so called “brilliant ideas” to cross the sea to Lanka, which was an Ocean of about fifty Yojanas in distance. One Yojanas meant distance of eight miles. Sugreeva estimated that logistics of moving Vanara army across the ocean and also to maintain their food supply chain even by hundred boats a day was an impossible task. And so they should devise some other strategy to move his One million Vanara army across the ocean. The bigger question was not moving the men but the logistical challenge of moving the material, weapons and food across the Ocean on a daily basis and to ensure their supply to shores of Lanka.

Sugreeva thought that he had run out of ideas.

Sri Rama who was called “Lord Rama” by all Vanaras, proposed the idea that they should build a bridge across the Ocean. Lord Rama explained to Sugreeva that he should listen with some attention and he should get rid of the fear of failure. Sri Rama told them that nothing was impossible.

Lord Rama said “Sugreeva! We will build a bridge across this mighty ocean all the way to the shores of Lankan islands which were surrounding and in a way enveloping the main land of Lanka and its mighty fort of Ravana which shall be easily accessible from those islands. We can build this bridge touching their shores, which is about fifty Yojanas in distance from the point of our camps at this time. We will build it. It is quite possible to build a bridge across this mighty Ocean. It is like building a very wide wall, great in width, right in the middle of this Ocean from shore to shore, from here to Lanka. We need stones but we cannot carry heavy stones, and in reality it means transporting huge boulders on the waves of this mighty ocean which is very deep. But comparatively this part of the ocean between Lanka and us, where we stand, does not have unfathomable depth. Sugreeva! Nothing is impossible. You shall look farther to the west from where we are standing and farther to the east also from where we are standing”.

Lord Rama continued after a brief pause, “We can see minutely small, tiny but multitudinous islands shining in the blazing sun light, located on both sides in the sea from where we stand. These are archipelagoes created by the bones of the dead and very tiny sea creatures which had been accumulated at one place over centuries of time. These tiny creatures of the sea were millions in numbers and die at one place and their bones sink to the bottom piling up there for hundreds of years creating islands in the sea. These stony looking, shiny islands can be cut. And if we could cut off parts of these islands in to the shape of huge boulders, these will float on the sea waters, once pieced off from their Islands. Our Vanaras should push them on the sea waves, to build the bridge. Even then we shall need engineers and architects. We shall take help of architects for planning and strategies.”

Vanara King Sugreeva instructed group leaders of his Vanara army to cut huge trees at the base, with a length of nearly a hundred feet and join two of such huge trunks with cross bars of wood to make gigantic ladders to carry the weight of the boulders on the sea.

Sugreeva told his Vanara army “We will cut off those pieces of huge stones or boulders from shining tiny islands all over the place on the left and on the right side with axes or long swords and place these huge boulders on the ladders. And believe me, Oh! My comrades! They will float!! And push these ladders on the sea following the instructions of architects and engineers. Now start the work!”

Vanaras immediately set to work on this seemingly an impossible, gigantic task at first. Hundreds of huge trees were cut and as they fell on the ground in such huge numbers, the ground began to shake. Thousands of ladders were made ready within days by this one million strong Vanara army! And these Vanaras with all their enormous muscle power, using all their strength started pushing these ladders afloat on the sea waters while swimming with their legs. Hundreds of Vanaras were clutching to the ladders on either side with their mouths and hands.

They pushed these gigantic ladders nearer to the tiny coral islands called archipelagoes. These Vanaras started axing on the edges of coral islands, with an inexhaustible strength for the whole day. Vanaras were cutting out huge boulders of exact measurements. They wrote the name “Sri Rama” on it with red colour made of mixing red-earth and plant juice and after mounting these boulders on to ladders they pushed them on the sea water while swimming along the ladders, holding on to them. All these Vanaras raised slogans “Jai Shri Rama” with a great devotion and with high jubilation. When millions of Vanaras chanted the name even the sea was echoing and reverberating. Their chants could be heard miles away.

Lord Rama requested Vishwakarma, the architect to construct the bridge with these boulders. But Vishwakarma had sent his

two sons Nala and Neela, both brothers who were architects and engineers entrusting them with the designing and building the “Rama Sethu”, the great bridge.

Nala and Neela, both the brothers set to work post haste. Nala had dropped metal balls with measuring ropes to the bottom of the sea, and Neela was using specially made binoculars and telescopes through which he was observing and setting the path of bridge to Lanka. Neela concluded that the bridge might have many bends depending on the depths of the Ocean and also depending on the sea bed. The Lanka, the target destination, was an island city and it was clustered by a string of tiny islands on the north.

Nala gave instructions, to Sugreeva to fix ropes to ladders loaded with boulders. Thousands of Vanaras began pulling the ropes in to its place marked by Nala by floating wooden balls as marking points. Nala was himself standing on huge launch pad made of a very wide and large planks of wood joined together, on the sea along with many of his instruments like metal balls to measure the depth, big wooden balls for marking purposes. Nala was using measuring ropes as he was guiding the Vanaras who were pushing the ladders with boulders mounted on them.

Neela, his brother guided them to rotate the ladders with boulders placed on them. When the ladders were brought to exact place more boulders were piled over them so as to sink the ladders with the increased weight on a marked place to the bottom of the sea. When the ladders were going down to the bottom of the sea, ends of ropes tied to ladders were held by Vanaras to position it properly as per the guidelines of Architect Nala and Neela standing on their launch pads. The next group of hundreds of Vanaras, who were swimming with legs and clutching the ladder with their hands, was pushing the ladders on the water to the place where the first one was sunk with added weight on the restricted space of a ladder forcing it to sink.

Neela guided, how to rotate the ladders, and guided another ladder of boulders to sink at the first one. In spite of efforts by

engineers, accidents did happen seriously injuring many Vanaras. But the construction was set in motion by one million Vanaras and the construction was going on with utmost faith in Lord Rama to build a bridge across the Ocean which was thought to be an impossible task even by those two engineers Nala and Neela who started it hesitantly, at least in the beginning.

But this impossible task could be carried on day after day only with faith alone as its strength. Lord Rama was their faith and Lord Rama told them not to think too much and work with faith in him. As there were many coral islands in an archipelago and each coral island had a depth to the bottom of the sea, there was no dearth of boulders to dig out and cut off from coral islands which were like a chain of an archipelago and also all the Vanaras who were laboring through the day and night had an unquestionable faith in completing Rama-Sethu, or Rama's bridge.



HANUMAN'S JUMP TO LANKA

The construction of this bridge across ocean went on non-stop, day after day, unabated.

Jambavan who was the king of bears was the advisor of Sugreeva. Jambavan was created by Lord Brahma who creates all beings and dictates their fate as well, created Jambavan out of sheer laziness. The result was that Jambavan was created with the head of a bear and body of a human being. He was born with enormous strength and very high intelligence. Jambavan was also a person endowed with spiritual knowledge and he was the greatest spiritual personality in Kishkinda. Jambavan was the only one who first recognized Rama as an avatar of Lord Vishnu, the preserver and protector of this Universe and Jambavan considered it is his spiritual duty to help this Avatar of Lord Vishnu in the human form of Rama. Jambavan told Hanuman “Hanuman if you still think of this Rama only as a human being, the spiritual realization is yet to come for you. This Rama is Avatar of Vishnu, the God”

Hanuman said “I am his devotee and Rama is the only God I know. I really do not bother if he were a Vishnu or not in his past birth or Avatar.”

But Rama himself, who was called as Lord Rama by all these Vanaras, sat alone with a woebegone face at that time and it was highly disconcerting for Rama thinking about the uncertainty of wellbeing of Sita.

Lord Rama called Jambavan aside and said “This Bridge will be completed, and I do not doubt it as it is only a matter of time before it is completed in all its glory. And I know that Sugreeva’s army of one million Vanaras will march in full strength on this bridge and shall lay seize to Ravana’s fort. There shall be no

doubt about valour and courage of Vanaras. Vanaras shall celebrate and their hearts shall be full of joy when they walk on the bridge and reach Lanka. They shall feel they achieved victory once they lay siege to the fort of Ravana on all sides.

“But I am, Oh! Jambavan! Very much worried, and all the more concerned about the present condition of my Sita. I want to be sure if at all she was still alive or else the entire super human efforts of one million Vanaras toiling every day, risking their lives in building this bridge shall achieve nothing in the end. I want to be sure that Sita was safe and still alive.”

Jambavan said “This bridge construction had been going on, even though a million Vanaras are toiling every day, it might take longer time than we expect this to complete. Meanwhile I wish it had been better if Hanuman had jumped across the Ocean to find Sita. We shall encourage Hanuman to become aware of his Yogic powers at least at this time”.

Hanuman the Vanara was the son of Anjani and his biological father was Vayudev who was the God of Wind. He had even as a child tried chasing and stopping the chariot of the King of Gods Indra Bhagvan high up in the sky. Such was his super human strength that there were many legends weaved around his blessed mother Anjani who had given birth to Anjaneya. One legend which was very much believed was that his mother Anjani desired a son who shall have super human strength and for this purpose she sat in penance of Lord Shiva, the most powerful god of destruction and annihilation of this Universe.

Lord Shiva who was famous for his “Tandava” dance to annihilate the universe also was that one god who granted boons to his devotees much sooner than expected.

When Lord Shiva appeared before his devotee Anjani, she asked for a boon. She prayed to Lord Shiva to take birth again in her womb in an Avatar of Vanara. Lord Shiva agreed and took birth as Anjaneya, her son. Though this legend was very much heard in Kishkinda, it was never told by Anjaneya himself who could not

remember his past birth and his mother Anjani never confirmed it.

But later on Gods and Sages were perturbed by childish pranks of Anjaneya with his super human strength. Anjaneya was too young to know where and when to use his power and his childish pranks had become a nuisance to even Gods passing through their celestial world and for the sages in their outer cosmic consciousness deep in their meditation.

Sages finally cursed Anjaneya to forget his own strength because they thought his super human strength had become a problem for all of them. Due to the curses of Sages, Hanuman would never know his own strength and it was difficult for him even to believe that had had latent spiritual powers to fly in the air.

Due to Hanuman's unwavering devotion, or "Bhakti", to Lord Sri Rama, Hanuman always felt he was released from his curse. When Hanuman chanted the name "Rama, Rama" Hanuman became aware of his own strength. Hanuman or Anjaneya became very famous as a great devotee of Lord Rama and for his super human strength.

Hanuman's birth name was Anjaneya who took a flight high in to the sky, with the power of wind, even as a child and had stopped the celestial chariot of Indra Bhagvan by hanging on to its wheel, which was flying through the clouds. But Indra Bhagvan was very angry with the annoying boy Anjaneya who was hampering the progress of his celestial chariot, and vexed with this boy's constant pranks one day, he had thrown his sword of diamonds at him which had inflicted an injury on one side of the mouth of Anjaneya. Then onwards everyone started calling him with the name "Hanuman" which literally meant "the one who has a scar on mouth".

Due to the curses of Sages Hanuman will not be aware of his own Yogic powers with which he can do anything that is humanly impossible. Hanuman as expected by Jambavan innocently expressed his inability to jump over the Ocean to Lanka.

Jambavan realized that someone must make him aware of his powers.

Jambavan told Hanuman “You do not know what yogic powers you have, oh! Hanuman! Now you shall do the work of our Lord Rama who is an incarnation of Vishnu. Only you Hanuman could do this, and you only can jump across the mighty Ocean. You must chant the name of “Rama”, “Rama” and it shall be done!”

Hanuman agreed. He started chanting the name “Rama”, “Rama” and forgot himself for quite some time, lost himself deeply meditating on his Lord Rama. After his meditation, Hanuman went to Lord Rama and bent before his lord, to touch his feet. Rama gave his blessings saying Hanuman would succeed in this adventure of jumping over the ocean. Rama said to Hanuman while blessing him “Hanuman you shall now become aware of your super natural yogic powers with which you can change your body to any size and you shall become aware of your powers to attain the speed of wind while jumping”

Lord Rama continued “Hanuman! You do not know how Sita looks like and so how do you recognize her? And it becomes all the more difficult to identify her in that vast city of Lanka, particularly when Ravana and other rakshashas might play as many tricks to distract anyone in search of Sita and might have placed her in a location which you may not find it easily”.

After a brief pause Sri Rama continued, “I shall give you my ring which Sita will identify. And you shall bring back any small jewelry item from Sita. You shall convey my best wishes to her once you find her. Your presence itself shall give courage to her. It is all the more important for Sita to know that we are building a bridge across the Ocean to reach Lanka and a bridge which shall facilitate one million Vanaras to march across the Ocean to Lanka. Hanuman, you tell her that the bridge shall be completed very soon”.

Rama took out his ring and gave to Hanuman which Hanuman had put it in his mouth.

Hanuman climbed up the mount Mahendra to jump to Lanka.

This Mahendra Giri was a habitat of great rishis and Sages who had been in penance for many years on the hill. This great mountain had many caves in which Sages; Rishis had been living for a very long time. This mountain was full of twines with myriad of flowers spreading sweet scent all over the area on the mountain. The trees on the mountain were straight, tall and went up straight to touch the clouds in the sky.

Hanuman stood atop the hill Mahendra Giri. Hanuman chanted the name “Rama, Rama.” Hanuman, with chanting mantra of the name of “Rama” and repeatedly chanting “Rama, Rama” he started expanding his body several feet high and he grew so tall that it appeared as if he were expanding in to the clouds. Hanuman was using his Yogic powers.

Great Hanuman now with super human strength with an unbelievable size touching the clouds in the sky, took a deep breath with his tail bent over his back bone in preparation of a great jump. He inhaled and his chest expanded, and then Hanuman started chanting the name “Rama, Rama”. Hanuman expanded his body further and took a deep breath again. The great Hanuman crouched and took a Jump upwards in to the sky straight up and landed back again on one foot atop the hill. The great Mahendra Giri shook, shuddered, felt unsettled and swung to left and right. Rishis and Sages ran out of caves. Those innumerable bears and monkeys on the hill made huge noises out of terrific fear. All the birds on tall trees and all over the jungle on the hill took a flight in to the sky and while fluttering circularly in the Sky, all the birds made very disturbing noises. Hanuman crouched again, took a deep breath again, and jumped up with full force chanting the name “Rama, Rama”. The wind blast along with his body uprooted many trees and they flew high in the air along with him upwards. Many twines with flowers flew high up in the sky and fell back like a garland around his neck and flowers showered on his large chest. And Hanuman’s loud chanting of “Jai Shree Ram” reached the sky.

The flight of Hanuman over the Ocean resounded in the clouds. The sky reverberated on all four directions, with his flight. Sea gods, Sea Devils who cropped up from the Sea took various forms and then tried to stop him midway. One great sea devil called “Simhika” could increase her own body size and opened her huge mouth so wide in the sky to eat, to gulp down Hanuman at once but Hanuman became a tiny figure so small that he entered her mouth and could come out of her eardrums, breaking her ears drums while coming out.

Hanuman flew for several hours, and after many fights with Sea Devils Hanuman finally landed on the sands of Lanka’s sea shore.

He took a run on the sands of beach of Lanka towards north and flew up. Then flying high over the city of Lanka in the form of a small monkey without arousing any doubts in the minds of security guards, Hanuman observed the city of Lanka from as low to the ground as possible. The city of Lanka was like a heaven on the earth. It had gigantic structures built with marvelous engineering skills. Hanuman was taken by surprise and he was awe struck by the beauty of the city.

Hanuman could identify the great palaces of Ravana with their golden domes and huge pillars. The palaces of Ravana were shining yellow with their reflection in to the clouds emanating from their huge golden domes. The city itself was rich with many bungalows, with many golden arches, in a very well planned city where all the rakshashas were reveling in joy with song and dance and excellent music. The celebration of rakshashas he could see and hear everywhere. There were many land marks of high towers touching the sky, as an example of marvelous engineering skills of these rakshashas.

Hanuman in a tiny, monkey form decided to land in the palaces complex of Ravana somewhere in between the Royal palaces with huge golden domes. Hanuman could not stop appreciating Ravana and thought that only rakshasha king Ravana alone could construct such gigantic structures which could not be emulated by anyone on the earth anywhere. Hanuman lowered himself and

sat on one of those golden domes of a palace and then he had all of a sudden seen a woman sitting on the corridors of one of the palaces leaning on to a pillar. Hanuman thought that she could be Sita.

Once landed in the palace complex itself, Hanuman effortlessly and silently, walked in a tiny form up to that specific pillar of that big palace where an extraordinarily beautiful woman was sitting. Hanuman was on alert and started assuring himself that she could be Sita only. She was wearing a saffron coloured Sari and a well embroidered blouse with precious stones embedded in it. She had very wide eyes with eye lids like petals of a lotus flower and her well combed hair woven in to one long braid. Hanuman felt more and more certain that the woman was Sita since the description of Sita by Lord Rama was a very close match with this beautiful woman.

The great lady, that beautiful woman suddenly got up and started walking inside the palace and Hanuman followed her while all the way hiding behind pillars. Hanuman was surprised to see her going in to the bedroom of the palace and then she was sitting on the bed.

Hanuman hiding behind a pillar was watching the lady giving orders to maid servants who were very much bent before her taking the orders. Hanuman very soon realized that she was the queen and wife of Ravana, famously known as Mandodari. Hanuman thought “Oh! God! What a beauty with so much radiance on her face!”

Hanuman came out of the palace complex and took a flight up in to the sky and swiftly moved towards the sea. He ate some coconuts on the sea shore, took a bath in the nearby river which was merging into the sea and had taken some rest. He realized it would not be that easy to find Sita! He ran along the sands and took a flight again to the sky in search of Sita. It was slightly getting dark already.

Hanuman flew over the city in a tiny form with his Yogic powers, chanting the name “Ram, Ram.” He searched all over the city and flew all over the population, huge buildings and palaces of Ravana. Hanuman returned back to the sea shore completely exhausted because he was disappointed.

Much before the sun rise, even while it was still darkest before the dawn, Hanuman completed his puja and ablutions near the river merging in to the sea.

And Hanuman flew again. He decided to see everywhere in search of Sita, all the city of Lanka inch by inch, including the interiors of the entire palaces of Ravana. This time to his surprise he saw a beautiful garden adjacent to the palace compound walls of Ravana.

It was not a full, broad day light as yet. It was still semi darkness pervading everywhere before the full day break. This garden which was full of flowering twines also had a massive temple in the center dedicated to Lord Shiva, with turret rising high in to the sky almost touching the clouds. In front of this beautiful and massive temple there was a very wide and round pond of clear water with red lotus flowers in it.

While looking from above, in that semi darkness, Hanuman saw a woman who looked like a lamp, like an earthen open lamp without a glass over it. Her sari’s end part was moving with wind. She looked like a flickering flame in the midst of that wide Garden. Hanuman lowered himself and came so low that he was almost sitting on the compound wall of the garden as a tiny monkey.

He looked at the woman who was sitting not very far on the green grass near the Ashoka trees. There were many rakshasha women mostly middle aged and all of them were looking very ugly in various ways. The woman with saffron coloured sari sitting in the middle of these rakshasha women , had her hair, very fresh as if her hair were drenched in the morning dew in that cold winter. Her hair well combed and weaved in to a braid was

very neat and was flowing on the green grass behind her like a long black serpent. Hanuman could not look at her face very clearly as it was still slightly dark in that Ashoka gardens because of so many trees.

Hanuman jumped in to garden and started walking towards that woman who was sitting in the center of many rakshasha women. The rakshasha women sitting circularly around her in that garden appeared like black shades of a wheel around a shining lamp. Hanuman started walking towards the nearest tree of that woman in that garden when he suddenly heard announcements of arrival of the King Ravana and accompanying sounds of trumpets and beating of drums.

The King Ravana was coming on foot. Realizing this Hanuman quickly got up and jumped on to the branches of a nearby tree and was sitting at a height to see the procession of the king of Lanka. Hanuman jumped down back to the ground again, and hid himself behind a shrub right beside the walking path in the garden.

The king Ravana was walking along the stone path of the garden and on the either side of him there were beautiful women who were very comely, shapely and very scantily dressed. Indeed very good perfumes were spreading in the garden emanating from their bodies. Some of the women were very neatly dressed. A few lamps burning bright light with glass panels well fitted in to golden bases were carried on their heads by maid servants who were walking in the front and on the sides of the King Ravana.

Then the king Ravana was coming near and Hanuman hid himself behind a shrub close to the stone path in the garden.

Hanuman could clearly see Ravana's face and he was mesmerized. Hanuman was completely stupefied, and was staring at that extremely handsome, almost romantically beautiful Ravana. Hanuman impetuously said to himself looking at Ravana's face "what a handsome man! The radiance of his face was much brighter than gas lamps carried on either side of him".

Ravana walked past right in front of Hanuman who assumed a monkey form hiding behind that shrub. Ravana approached Sita who was sitting on the grass. Hanuman followed Ravana walking and hiding behind trees. But Hanuman was so much near them that he could clearly hear what they were talking.

King Ravana said “Sita! Listen! What use is this thinking about that Rama!? What is the use of a man who could not provide two meals a day to his wife for last twelve years? Was he not a useless fellow who left a kingdom listening to the words of a woman! That fellow called Rama does not know politics at all. Do you understand?”

Ravana continued “Oh! Sita! You should marry me! Otherwise I shall kill you. You do not know my anger! I shall eat you for my breakfast! Cut your beautiful hands to pieces and eat them. You are foolish to believe such a useless fellow called Rama! In fact, you should live like a queen in my palace, and indeed as my primary queen, Oh! Sita, I shall worship your beauty with garlands twined from thousand different flowers everyday”

Sita did not move. She took a blade of dry grass and she had spit on it. Sita had put that blade of grass with her spit on it between her and Ravana.

Sita spoke. She said “Ravana listen. You are a rakshasha and I am a human being. And you know I am a married woman. I would say, and please listen to me, do not waste your life. Do not look at other married woman, because one day their husbands would kill you. You had better save your energy for the sake of your wife and to enjoy with her”

Ravana retorted in anger and said, “Sita, I shall kill you. I shall kill that Rama and bring his dead body here so that you shall weep over it. In any case how many weeks after weeks do you go on weep in the days and in the nights like this in this garden? I could clearly hear you sobbing in the nights, even after I close my doors, inside my palace, I hear your cry! What tantric mantra is this? How can your sobbing’s chase me in to my dreams?”

Sita without any anger or sadness or shyness but very confidently, calmly told Ravana “Ravana the king of Lanka! Listen! I have powers of penance! I can use my spiritual powers and instantly burn you to a fistful of ashes but I restrain myself from doing this, because, first of all there is no urgent need for such a burning of your body and also there is no permission to do it from my husband Rama!”

King Ravana immediately stepped back in fear. And keeping still, after a few seconds, he moved further back. He turned around to go back towards his palace for a little distance and then again turned around towards her to heckle at her with his mouth widely opened jetting out his tongue.

King Ravana walked away! Along with him, all those ladies were also leaving murmuring about foolishness of Sita by her refusal and Hanuman who was hiding behind a bush, over heard these ladies murmurings to themselves.

Rakshasha women who were sitting around Sita were already moved away in haste, before their king came there, and were standing circularly a bit away from Sita around trees in the garden all the time when their king Ravana was talking to her. They all had now gone away, and only one rakshasha woman called Trijata who should keep watch for Sita, was away tending to a fire underneath a huge pot of water near the pond.

Hanuman came around the bush from where he was hiding. Sita got up and walked to sit under an Ashoka tree and then sat on a small boulder with her feet on the grass. It was a broad day light now at the time and full bright morning sunlight was in the garden.

Hanuman neared her, himself sat on the grass with his knees bent over on the grass and looked at her with his palms joined together in Namaste.

Sita was milky white in complexion with large wide eyes and eye lids like lotus petals, and a straight beautiful nose. She had chest well developed and she was wearing a full blouse, well

embroidered. Her stomach was firm. She had very soft smooth skin like that of foam of milk. She raised her head all of a sudden and with her beautiful hands kept in one another, looked straight at this monkey who was like a man brown in colour with a tail and golden bracelets on his hands.

Hanuman lost a few beats of his heart when Sita looked straight at him. This austere bachelor, Hanuman, who was always in meditation for days at a time, lost a few beats of his heart when he looked at her eyes. Sita's eyes were so clear and so much radiant that Hanuman felt this earth was not rotating around the Sun but around Sita. Hanuman thought that this was the reason why Lord Rama was weeping so much for his Sita. Oh! God! He thought to himself that he had never seen a woman, a human being as much breathtakingly beautiful as Sita.

Hanuman paid his obeisance saying "Namaste" to her. And told Sita his name and why he came. He told her that he came as messenger from Rama.

Sita said to Hanuman "I know, many rakshashas play magic tricks. I was tricked and I am in this trouble. Please go away"

Hanuman replied saying "I came as sent by Rama himself. Here is his ring" And Hanuman took it from his mouth and cleaned it on the grass, crept himself on the floor of the grass on his knees and put it in her pink coloured palms.

Sita looked at the ring intently, while breathing heavily and her tears were rolling down her cheeks. She told Hanuman 'Yes! Now I believe'. And Sita asked him if he was all right and in good health. Sita asked Hanuman to describe Rama at which Hanuman started describing his Lord Rama. Hanuman said "Lord Rama is very tall person exactly six feet 11 inches tall to be very precise, with long hands and wide chest. He holds a bow named "Kodanda" which is longer than his own height. He has earthen colour complexion like a brown brick. He is very soft in speech"

Hanuman said “I think that was enough”. Sita said “I think that is good enough to understand that you are not in disguise and this is not a clever ploy by rakshashas!”

Hanuman said “Sita! You are like my mother! Just sit on my back and I shall jump back to Mahendra Giri and you shall be out of this Lanka and out of all this danger without any trouble”.

Sita said “I shall never even attempt to run away in fear from this Lanka. I shall never even think of coming with you myself terrified of these rakshashas of this Lanka!”

Sita angrily said “I curse this Lanka and curse these people, Lanka shall burn!”

Hanuman turned, got up and bent forward saluting her and said to Sita “I shall come again. Now I want to talk to Ravana the King, as messenger from Lord Rama”

And then Hanuman added saying, “Now I shall say, even I do not want to run away from Lanka”

He came out of the Ashoka gardens growing himself to full adult in size. Immediately security guards noticed him and started hooting and shouting at what they perceived as a huge monkey which suddenly appeared as if from nowhere. Rakshasha Guards on duty at the gates of this Ashoka garden arrested him and taken him to their imprisoning rooms for an interrogation.



BURNING OF LANKA

Hanuman was standing in front of Ravana the King of Lanka. The king was sitting on his throne, seven feet high, with stairs in the front. King Ravana was wearing a beautiful golden crown studded with hundreds of diamonds. The Rajyasabha of King Ravana was in full swing. Every one of members was present and witnessing a Vanara with a long tail, standing straight with his two hands on both sides of waist wearing only underwear. There were golden bracelets on the hands of this Vanara which was interesting for all those rakshashas who were sitting in that great hall of legislative assembly. This Vanara Hanuman who was standing straight with a very bright face, with full of dignity was wearing a sacred thread across his shoulders on his chest. That Vanara to their surprise seemed to be well educated. Vanara introduced himself as a messenger from his “Lord Rama” who was described as a legendary person by that Vanara who explained himself and also spoke out the message of his Lord Rama in chaste Sanskrit. And that Vanara Hanuman was pronouncing the words of Sanskrit like a great scholar and that was immediately noticed by the King Ravana. The so called message of that tall Vanara, according to Rakshashas was actually a request to immediately release Sita from captivity.

King Ravana could not understand the super confidence of this unknown Vanara standing right in front of him. This Vanara who called himself Hanuman and declared himself as messenger of “Lord Rama” entered the city state of Lanka surreptitiously without any permission or any information about his arrival and without anyone noticing him; This Vanara also had entered the highly protected Ashoka gardens as well. This Vanara Hanuman ignored to salute the King Ravana and was praising and adoring his so called Lord Rama. According to them this Vanara with a tail was nothing but a large monkey from the species of Kishkinda

and interestingly he was wearing golden bracelets on his wrists! The only Vanara King Ravana was well aware of and also had personal enmity was the King Vali of Kishkinda, the Vanara kingdom, in the jungles of Dandaka. Ravana the king got a message some time back that Vanara king Sugreeva who had only recently anointed himself as a king after the murder of his own brother Vali. King Ravana also heard that Vali was shot to death by an arrow by Rama, that husband of Sita.

King Ravana did not listen to Hanuman at all while all the time Hanuman was eulogizing his “Lord Rama”. Ravana the king could not understand why this monkey should be praising that Rama so much. King Ravana did not like all this and he considered Hanuman’s advice as a big drama which should not deserve his attention at all.

Ravana as the King did not even offer Hanuman a seat out of his complete disgust for the monkey whose attitude was careless, negligent, and Ravana felt that he was challenged. And thus his disgust for that “unholy” creature with only underwear and a tail who called himself as Hanuman multiplied when that Hanuman started singing paeans for his so called Lord Rama. King Ravana did not want to bestow on him the protocol benefits deserving a diplomat or emissary. And to cap it all, like rubbing salt on wounded ego of Ravana, that tall and muscular Vanara Hanuman started addressing the king of Lanka with a singular name.

Hanuman started addressing the King in his full assembly “Ravana, Oh! King! I give you a good advice as your well-wisher. And this is only because you are such a great devotee of Lord Shiva and also because you are also a great scholar, knew all Vedas and you recited “Sama Veda” as its founding author. Oh! King! You must listen to the advice of learned people and well-wishers which is the honorable tradition for the king of a State. I advise you to avoid war at all costs. You must think about this more seriously than anything else because a war ends in bloodshed and tragedy and except fools, fanatics and war lunatics, no one who is mentally healthy chooses war as first choice”.

“Oh! King! The consequences of a war as you know very well eats one’s own self and his family and the consequences of a war are always unpredictable. So I advise you Oh! King! Ravana! You must think again and bring back mother Sita wife of our Lord Rama from where you have abducted her, instead of choosing a war of destruction for Lanka. And let me repeatedly make it clear Lord Rama is the God and this is my “realization” not a mere praising”.

King Ravana listened but was fast losing his patience and his own megalomaniac feelings of himself were hurt by a simple monkey who was venturing in to giving advice to him! And this so called emissary was also claiming that a human being like Rama was a God! King Ravana thought “This monkey thinks too much of himself. First of all what is his courage to give me an advice! A simple monkey has the temerity for this but who asked for a monkey’s advice?”

Ravana thought “And in this Rajyasabha, this monkey Hanuman gives no importance to him, belittled him and praised that Rama as God! And even that too in front of all the members of this Rajya Sabha.” King Ravana thought that a mere monkey had gone too far and crossed all the limits.

He gave orders to his soldiers “Guards! Bind this monkey with strong iron chains! Set fire to his tail only on the beach sands of the sea shore. And then “advise” him to jump from Lanka over the Sea to Kishkinda, and this shall be the “message” for that so called “Lord Rama” the god of monkeys! And all these monkeys who call him God shall begin to laugh at their own God sitting on the branches of those trees and heckle at him in Kishkinda”.

King Ravana directed his guards “That is an order! And I declare hereby that a mere monkey shall never be considered as an emissary and thus it is neither an inappropriate action nor this Hanuman is any ambassador of peace!”

Special Guards of Lanka brought heavy iron chains and told hanuman to keep his hands tightly held to himself. They wound

the heavy chain around Hanuman, until they thought he was suffocating and started dragging him along the streets of Lanka. Lankan people, all rakshashas lined up on either side of the streets to see this spectacle, and children started running behind this huge monkey wound with chains throwing pebbles at him.

These soldiers brought hundreds of meters of cloth and wrapped Hanuman's tail with this cloth, several rounds over lapping each fold of cloth. And then they made him stand on the beach facing the Sea. Hanuman obeyed every command of the rakshasha guards of Ravana. After that, these guards doused Hanuman's tail with oil until the cloth wound around was well soaked in it. Someone put a stick with flame to his tail. Hanuman's tail caught fire. But Hanuman did not jump and in fact he was smiling at their foolishness.

Those rakshashas moved away as Hanuman's tail was on fire. Hanuman shook off the iron chains by blowing air with his mouth. The heavy iron chains came off loose and its pieces flew in the air like those feathers withered and shook off by a crow. Rakshashas were terrified to see this super human strength of Hanuman and started running while shouting to each other at the height of their voices. They ran hither thither gripped in fear which caused confusion in the streets choked with people running in all directions. They thought they had seen ominous signals of an impending danger to the city of Lanka.

But Hanuman turned towards city and jumped up in to the sky, flying over the city. He landed on the roofs of the houses with his burning long tail on the houses of tiles and wood which caught fire. Hanuman jumped from house tops to corridors and jumped through large windows with his burning tail and ran inside huge government bungalows setting fire to them. In an hour time half of the city of Lanka, particularly affluent sections of the city was on fire and the huge swirl of smoke bellowed up enveloping the area which could be seen from miles away. While Hanuman was jumping over the roof tops, the whole city of Lanka was enveloped by dark smoke spread by gusty winds. All rakshashas of Lanka who ran out in to

streets were beating their chests and crying, tragedy stricken, they collapsed in the streets unable to see their houses burning with their furniture inside. Rakshasha house wives who carried babies in their arms ran out in to the streets, and were looking at this huge monkey with utter trepidation and disbelief. As the monkey Hanuman was growing in his size up to the height of central towers in the center of the city, those rakshashas looking at huge Hanuman stopped breathing. Rakshashas ran backwards, bent their heads backwards or leaned on huge wooden poles of the city only to see that gigantic Hanuman grew himself much taller than many buildings of the city and he was overlooking them. Hanuman lifted his tail and extended it to touch the clouds in the sky! House wives watched in horror and people started running through the streets in fear were utterly shocked when Hanuman set fire to the top of the central tower itself by poking it with his burning tail.

King Ravana was watching from the top of his palace and was bewildered to understand the nature of this simple monkey. While Ravana was watching, Hanuman plucked huge steel dome of the central tower as if he were opening a cap of a bottle. Ravana felt the danger and immediately issued the orders to a thousand warriors to shoot down the monkey with javelins and long arrows.

Thousands of rakshashas were trying to douse the fire with all the water they could carry in vessels. There was a pandemonium due to that hazardous fire which was spreading with the wind.

Thousands of soldiers organized in to battalions walked in to the streets in a file like any professional army units, and climbed the buildings to shoot the monkey.

Hanuman blew the air with his mouth on those soldiers standing atop the buildings who were ready to shoot him with arrows. These soldiers were blown away like birds in a hurricane with the high speed winds blown out by Hanuman with his mouth. Soldiers fell to death from heights of the building roofs. Dark smoke enveloped the city and at midday after noon, it was all

darkness for the city of Lanka. Women and children started crying choked by the smoke and stricken with fear.

Army leader of Lanka reported the matter of an uncontrollable huge monkey to King Ravana. From the top of his palace, Ravana observed the city of Lanka while it was burning. Thousands of People and regular army were pouring water to bring the fires of the city under control. All that they could was to douse the fires with water and pull away whatever that was burning.

King Ravana met with his ministers and a decision was taken to use a missile “Brahmastra” on this monkey called Hanuman to burn him in to ashes.

Ravana’s most able son, who was also son of his Queen Mandodari and the queen of Lanka, named Indrajit was summoned to the king’s chamber. Ravana, the king, gave instructions to his son Indrajit to be careful and not to fight with this monkey called Hanuman under any circumstances but use Brahmastra as the first weapon of choice without any warning and burn the monkey right in the streets for all the people to see it.

Indrajit, a great warrior and son of Ravana went there to the center of the city where this Hanuman was creating havoc with his body size increased to several feet high looking over the tallest buildings of the city. At least half of Lanka caught fire and was already burning.

Indrajit who proceeded to encounter Hanuman was riding a chariot of mythical horses; his chariot flew in to the air, and started gliding in the air. Indrajit, in spite of his father and the king’s instructions and warnings chose to give time to Hanuman and ordered him to surrender. Already there was a stampede of frightened rakshashas down below in the streets. Indrajit hesitated to use “Brahmastra” right there.

Indrajit even used his magical chariot, using his magical powers, began to go in circles around Hanuman. Indrajit warned him saying he would be forced to use the most feared missile Brahmastra on him!

Hanuman smiled and told Indrajit to use that Astra and watch the consequences for himself.

Indrajit launched his Brahmastra after chanting several mantras from atop his magical chariot. Indrajit was shocked to observe that Brahmastra could do nothing to that monkey! Indrajit was astonished and dumbstruck. Brahmastra after repeated attack on Hanuman due to force of the Indrajit's mantras could finally wound up as a binding force in a circle of fire and brought Hanuman down to human size. And that great Hanuman looked like a capsized boat in the middle of a hurricane was finally standing in the middle of a street while Indrajit observed him from the sky riding high on his mythical chariot.

Indrajit took Hanuman to his father the King Ravana only after Hanuman's burning tail was dipped in cold water and fire was extinguished. Due to the effects of Brahmastra the body size of Hanuman was normal.

In the full Royal court King Ravana assured Hanuman to the surprise of many, saying, "The effects of Brahmastra would be taken away if you would leave Lanka immediately and you make promises to that effect"

Hanuman agreed but before going he said he would meet Sita in Ashoka gardens again and even for the surprise of Hanuman, and every one of his ministers present and listening, Ravana agreed to Hanuman's entry in to Ashoka Gardens again without any conditions.

Hanuman met Sita again in Ashoka Gardens. Sita told Hanuman "Hanuman I am giving you my toe ring which you should give to my husband. That would be a full proof of your meeting with me here in Lanka and also you must repeat an old story to my husband exactly according to my narration word by word".

And then Sita began to narrate a story and Hanuman was listening to it with rapt attention. "One day God of all the gods, Indra's only son while on his way to heaven saw me sitting on the banks of Godavari in wet clothes after my swimming in the river

waters. He had also immediately seen my husband approaching me. This young man, the son of King of Gods, Indra Bhagvan had a crooked thinking and hence he assumed the form of crow and flew very near to my chest which caused a slight bruise mark, a thin line in between my breasts due to the grazing of talons of that crow, which still exists even now. Then in a fit of rage, my husband Rama took out a blade of grass, chanted mantras to make it a “Brahmastra” and released it to burn that mythical crow which was trying to fly over my face again. The crow flew to the clouds with lightning speed and then on towards heaven itself to hide but the Brahmastra began to chase that crow first to the Brahmaloaka and then followed it to Indra Loka or Indra’s world and then in spite of the efforts of the Gods Indra and Brahma, trying to nullify it, that Astra burned one eye of the crow”.

After narrating this very confidential story Sita told Hanuman “You shall narrate this story, word by word and Raghu Rama would not have any trace of doubt of your meeting with me here, because no one knows this incident” then Sita gave her toe ring to Hanuman which she was wearing on her second finger of her right foot as a proof of her presence in Lanka alive.

Then Sita told Hanuman, “I can only wait for one year from this day. If Rama could not reach here in one year I shall immolate myself and die”. Sita continued “this is final and you shall report this as my decision”.

Hanuman took the toe ring and flew to the sea shore at first and from there he went to the top of Mountain Arishta on the sea shore of the city of Lanka. That very tall mountain Arishta was full of snakes and thorny bushes and spread with caves which were dark and closed.

Hanuman jumped from Mountain Arishta to the Mahendra Giri Hill on the other side of sea where construction of a bridge on the ocean was in full swing by one million Vanaras.



HANUMAN'S REPORT

Hanuman's report of Lanka was very important to Rama, Laxmana and Jambavan. All other Vanaras were also eagerly waiting for Hanuman's return. Hanuman after landing at the construction site of the bridge across the Ocean did not waste time in meeting Lord Rama.

Hanuman reported to Rama that he met Sita who was sitting in Ashoka Gardens of Lanka. Hanuman reported that the brilliance of Ravana can only be believed after seeing him.

Hanuman reported that his tail was set on fire, after one hundred meters of cloth was wound around it doused in oil. So Hanuman said he had set the whole of Lanka on fire by jumping all over the city.

Hanuman said that Lord Rama had to be very fast to reach Lanka and wage war with Ravana to rescue Sita. Hanuman emphatically told Rama that Sita was in depression and that she threatened to commit suicide by jumping in to fire, if Rama fails to enter Lanka within six months. Hanuman handed over her toe ring to Rama and also narrated the story told by Sita to him, privately.

Rama told Hanuman to restrain his power and also admonished for burning the city of Lanka.

Rama said to Hanuman "I told you to jump to Lanka only in search of Sita and also to find out her living conditions and to enquire about her welfare. But you went there and burned down Lanka! For what exactly did you burn the city of Lanka? What did you expect ordinary Lankan citizens to do? Those civilians cannot be held responsible for the actions of their King Ravan".

Rama also told Hanuman and others like Jambavan "The bridge construction by Vanaras has been going on at break neck speed and many Vanaras are taking risk for their life, by lifting huge

boulders and sometimes they are coming under the boulder in the depths of Ocean waters. We cannot do any faster and better than this in constructing the bridge, to reach Lanka. It is possible or may not be possible to reach Lanka within six months. We shall exert maximum pressure and put in best of our efforts and the end result is in the hands of destiny. We should not concentrate on the failure or success of the end result but put in our best efforts only on our attempt”

Rama told Hanuman never to be hasty and never to take thoughtless decisions on the spur of the moment. They only end in our own guilt feeling which pushes you to failure; it is a type of self-destruction.

The efforts on construction of the bridge across the mighty ocean redoubled with reports of Hanuman meeting Sita who was safe and their enthusiasm increased when they listened to the burning of Lanka by Hanuman alone.



DREAM OF TRIJATA

There was one rakshasha woman called Trijata among twenty five rakshasha women, who always sat around Sita in Ashoka Gardens protecting her and also attending to her needs.

These rakshasha women in the beginning could not be very serious about Sita and her abduction by Ravana from Dandaka Forest. They all took it easy the whole episode of Sita. Their King Ravana told them to provide everything or anything Sita may require and ask for it but for those rakshasha women, the unsolved problem was Sita herself who wept for hours through the night.

Sita was surrounded by these ugly looking rakshasha women who were eulogizing their king Ravana all the time. Sita was like a beautiful swan in a pond among the long necked, long legged cranes which were very different and yet they may look alike from the sky. Like all the rakshasha women Sita, was also a woman. Sita was looking forlorn, felt herself alone and helpless among them. Sita was like a deer which had lost its herd, lost its way in the jungle and was surrounded by hounds.

Sita was like a fully bloomed lotus in a pond surrounded by weed, grass and grass hoppers. She had her soiled cloths on her. And her intermittent fasting resulted in an emaciation of her beautiful body. Her sobbing through the day and during the nights disturbed the sleep of rakshasha women who had been with her day and night in that garden. She always had her cheeks wet with her tears.

Sita with her palms on the grass sat in that garden with her long braid of hair on the grass feeling completely alone even though she was surrounded by many women.

Many rakshasha women were now looking at Sita with astonished faces and they all sat in silence gripped in fear. Ever since her curses were coming true, they had taken Sita seriously and since the time when Lanka was burnt, they had stopped harassing her, by praising their king Ravana in front of her, until she closed her ears with her two hands. They stopped harassing her with insinuating words in various ways, indirectly hinting at her to succumb to the demands of Ravana and enjoy the life in Lanka.

Sita cursed Lankan rakshashas several times, and she very often repeated her curse pronouncing that the city of Lanka should burn and those flames should engulf its entire city. And indeed it had happened; half of the city had been already burned to ashes. Sita was crying and crying throughout the night and in the day she cursed them all to see a pile of dead bodies strewn along the streets of Lanka. And some of these women sitting there in Ashoka Gardens surrounding Sita through the day and night were affected by this tragedy in their own homes losing their own family members who burned in the flames which engulfed the city of Lanka.

Some rakshasha women were very sad as well as very angry with Sita. They started harassing Sita again by insinuatingly suggesting a great life for her with Ravana as her husband. These types of words caused consternation for Sita and she sometimes shouted at them to shut up and then she herself would burst into weeping. One day when Sita warned them and about to curse them again one rakshasha woman, a fatty, middle aged woman ran to Sita and closed her mouth, touching her feet, begged Sita not to curse them. She even prostrated before Sita, pleading Sita not to speak of any destruction of Lanka because whenever she cursed them it was coming true. That rakshasha woman with a woebegone face lamented that they all should be terribly afraid of Sita's wailings and weeping in the day and in the night.

But other rakshasha women were not as good. One Ogress started harassing her and threatening Sita with death nothing but

death. That particular Ogress announced that the next day she would sure to eat Sita for her lunch and then she should keep quiet if at all King Ravana came to enquire. She said that it would be like avenging the destruction of her house in the city.

Then Trijata, a rakshasha women rose up and threatened that Ogress and abused her of poor intelligence and manners for harassing Sita and that at the first opportunity she would eat that Ogress herself if she were to threaten Sita again.

All rakshasha women were terrified when Trijata rose up like a flame in full anger. Trijata was powerful among all of them.

Trijata told all other rakshasha women that she would narrate her dream of the previous night to all of them and those Ogresses with terrified faces kept silent. Trijata told them all that she should try to deduce the meaning of her own dream.

Trijata, the Ogress, with her eyes opened wide in full excitement started narrating her dream.

“In that clear dream at the day break of previous night, I had seen King Ravana wearing red coloured clothes and sitting in a chariot pulled by donkeys, the King was heading in the direction of south. It was in the pitch darkness of the night, she had seen Ravana carrying a safety lantern, which he had lifted and drank oil from that dark vessel beneath it. Ravana waded through the knee deep muck and mire and pulled up his clothes to go over the ordeal of walking through the mud and after that, finally the king mounted on the back of a bison. King Ravana got down from the bison only after a short distance when he realized he was naked. And again king Ravana sat on a donkey with those red clothes but with a shaven head and he was heading south along with Kumbhakarna, his brother.

While at the same time she saw in her dream, Sita was sitting with her husband on a white elephant, going towards east and then Sita stood on the elephant and touched the Moon with her hands. But then Sita’s husband Rama came in a flying palanquin carried by many swans which were tied to the yoke on either side

of that palanquin. And all the swans at once rose up flying the palanquin in the clouds in which Rama was sitting”.

Trijata, the Ogress with her huge body, with a wide big belly and widely opened large eyes in surprise and shock narrated her dream to all the rakshasha women who herded together to listen to her.

Trijata interpreting her dream said “It should be considered a prophecy. My dream indicates the humiliating defeat of our king Ravana resulting in loss of face and prestige and with the consequences of his own tragic death. While at the same time, my dream had also symbolized a great victory for Rama with all those swans carrying his palanquin and his wife Sita touching the moon standing on a white elephant. This symbolizes a great fame and the powers of a queen to Sita. This is all shown to me by the grace of Lord Shiva in my dream. This is so much clear to me and I do not doubt it”

Once Trijata, told all of them about her dream, and so emphatically she had analyzed it that all rakshasha women were very scared about that prophetic dream portending imminent defeat of their king Ravana which was so much shocking to them that they refused to imagine it. They tried to deny it and tried to discard it from their memory. They were spread away from Trijata, all in haste murmuring to themselves.



THE REBELLION OF VIBHISHANA

King Ravana's own brother Vibhishana was against the war. He was terribly upset when half of the city of Lanka was burned. He was openly in favour of Rama and in his opinion everything which was going on was an unnecessary and immoral adventure by his brother and the king of Lanka Ravana. Vibhishana was also performing rituals of worshipping Lord Vishnu in his quarters of the palace complex when it was strictly a prohibited worship. All rakshashas hate lord Vishnu, the god of Vaikunta.

King Ravana and Vibhishana had another brother whose height was 40 feet and whose body weight nobody knew but he weighed probably more than the weight of 100 elephants, had been sleeping in his auditorium like large bedroom for the last six months. His name was Kumbhakarna and his enormous physique and super natural strength was well known even to the Gods in heaven who were defeated by him. And particularly the Lord Brahma who wrote his fate knew it fully well that nothing in this world could conquer this warrior called Kumbhakarna who always slept for six months at a time but once he woke up he would not sleep for another six months.

Kumbhakarna either ate or slept, six months at a time. But at the time when Lanka was in flames unfortunately for him Kumbhakarna was sleeping. He would not get up so easily before the end of this six months period. He ate food which was enough for many elephants before going to sleep. We need not even doubt the fact that Kumbhakarna was a cannibal like many other rakshashas, but ate only human beings who do not belong to Lanka but it was well known fact that there were hardly any

humans who ever lived in Lanka. All those who were born in Lanka were all rakshashas.

Vibhishana knew well he could not wake up his another brother for support in this family feud. And hence Vibhishana dared pick up arguments with elder brother, the king, Ravana himself in their own private family quarters in the presence of his sister-in-law Mandodari, and their own sister Vishalakshi alias Shurpanaka and other family members.

The arguments of Vibhishana were very simple. Vibhishana told them all, that they were all facing an unnecessary trouble because of the foolish act of the elder of the family the king Ravana. According to Vibhishana, that so called enemy Lord Rama was not an ordinary human being but an incarnation of God Vishnu! And hence abducting his wife was a sacrilegious act which could bring ruin upon himself and his brother's family and to the people of Lanka. Vibhishana argued that it would be in the best interest of the family, to take away Sita back to Dandaka forest from where she was brought.

He said, he was totally upset with the behaviour of his eldest brother Ravana and regretted the fact that according to the religious rules alone his brother Ravana as first born deserved the throne of Lanka. He told his elder brother Ravana "I, Vibhishana as a result of my unfortunate karma, am your younger brother." He expressed his dismay and how much he was upset with the immoral life style of their sister Vishalakshi alias Shurpanaka who was bringing a bad reputation to the whole family if rumours all over Dandaka forest and the city of Lanka were to be believed.

The family meeting was over with Vishalakshi and Vibhishana, brother and sister shouting at each other. And Ravana labeled Vibhishana as a traitor who had been worshipping the God Vishnu secretly and exhibited a mentality of opportunism as that of slave's by aligning himself with the enemy for a gain. Ravana labeled his brother Vibhishana as "renegade". And Ravana warned that hence forth none should ever again utter the name of Sita or else they shall face dire consequences.

On that next day, Rajyasabha of the kingdom of Lanka was in full swing. One of the royal members of Rajyasabha was Vibhishana himself and the King Ravana was presiding over the Rajyasabha to discuss the affairs of the state. Members argued about the burning of the city and about some areas which were completely burnt to ashes. They pointed out with their arguments that great monkey Hanuman with a burning tail mostly set fire to rich areas of the city.

At this point of time Vibhishana got up and with a grave face, started speaking. Vibhishana told the leader of the Rajyasabha that his majesty the King Ravana, abducted Sita without informing anyone, without permission from anyone and in this regard, the least respected, ignored and shown indifference were the people of Lanka, which finally culminated in the most unfortunate event of burning of the city of Lanka. Vibhishana commented that the king himself abducted a pious, married woman and he asserted that her husband was none other than an incarnation of the God Vishnu himself. And Vibhishana warned that, this means much more ruin which would be in the offing for us and the king's immoral act was only taking time for a full circle of return as our bad karma! And he requested all members to decide and overthrow this rule of great king Ravana!

King Ravana got up with terrific anger.

King Ravana addressed the Rajyasabha with his explanation. "I do bring to the kind notice of the members that we have forgotten the insult the royal lady, my sister Vishalakshi got as a result of good advice she gave to that Rama to leave Dandaka immediately as it rightfully belonged to us. She advised him to leave because this Rama wanted to exterminate our whole species of Rakshashas and he already killed many of our people belonging to our species in thousands without any of their fault except that they were born as rakshashas. And we all know that nobody in the world chooses his parents before birth. He had just killed our species in thousands the moment he had seen them. We rakshashas as a species are under threat by this so called Rama, from Ayodhya kingdom. And the only

fault of us, in the eyes of Rama was that we were all natives of Lanka and we have had been roaming all over our own Dandaka Forest. This Rama speaks about setting up his own empire “Ramarajya!” by uniting all these small kingdoms all over, particularly in Dandaka Forest area after exterminating our species of rakshashas. Which are all utopian ideas and a dream world which Rama promises to brainwash the populations in Dandaka forest? This is nothing but witchcraft. He was a very cruel man but poses himself as God to all those monkeys. He had buried Viraada my own cousin alive, I repeat he buried Viraada alive, deep in the earth and killed that great Vanara Vali of Kishkinda by hiding behind a tree and shooting with a poisoned arrow. He was the one who left a kingdom on the words of a woman! One should recollect their own memories of that legendary warrior woman Kaikeyi. You believe me when I declare that this Rama was unfit to be a king, and he was thrown out by a woman and he really had been largely ignorant of politics or political science and he was merely a man and not the avatar of God”.

Ravana continued his speech in chaste Sanskrit, generally spoken by great pundits. “I abducted Sita! Yes! It was true. We will kill that Rama without any need for war as such but if war becomes inevitable, we shall be waging a war only to protect our species. We are all united and ready to fight with the enemy who had been constructing a bridge across the mighty ocean and who may attack our Lanka. But only renegades like Vibhishana appreciate the enemy, seeing him as God, sing praises of the enemy. Vibhishana type of people actually do not deserve to live amongst us”

When Ravana completed his speech in Rajyasabha, all the members stood up obediently and started clapping their hands and continued clapping until Ravana signaled them to stop. And Ravana continued “Vibhishana worships Vishnu in his private puja room. Vishnu is the annihilator of our species of rakshashas! That so called God Vishnu had taken oath in heaven that he would annihilate the entire species of rakshashas. He is our arch enemy, out there to kill us. My stupid brother Vibhishana should

not have any choice at this time but shall turn out as renegade openly and shall voluntarily leave the city of Lanka or else he shall be forcefully expelled from Lanka. Vibhishana shall lead a loathsome life of a traitor. Actually he does not deserve any more than that. He is a shame to my family. It is so unfortunate that he was born in the same mother's womb as mine"

At which Vibhishana, loudly started chanting mantras with which he acquired wings on his back with his supernatural powers. Vibhishana started chanting mantras very loudly looking up at the ceiling of Rajyasabha. And the roof of that great hall of Rajyasabha, split open in two parts and these two parts, on either side were blown away in the air like an old, yellow leaves of a tree in the gusty wind.

Vibhishana by flapping of his acquired wings flew up through that huge gap, a crater on the roof of the building, while his huge wings lifted him up in to the sky; all the members of Rajyasabha looked up in awe of that great spectacle. And Vibhishana up in the air in to the sky, bent forward, started flying in the air by flapping his wings, he went in the direction of enemy camp of Vanaras and their leader Rama. He flew towards the sea shore where Sri Rama was camping on the shores of Lanka while the end part of the bridge for a few miles was still under construction. There were one hundred thousand Vanaras with Rama on the shores of Lanka. And many more thousands of Vanaras who could be seen until his eyes could see were still pouring in, coming on foot while chanting the slogans of "Jai Shriram" all along that great bridge on the Ocean. Their sloganeering coupled with their disorganized clamour we're reaching the sky.

Vibhishana who landed among Vanaras was immediately chased and caught by those highly disorganized hordes of Vanaras with horrible shouts. He was suspected as someone who could be a spy and also as some unknown enemy who came there to attack them. And hence all those Vanaras were very excited to have caught him alive. They decided to take him to Sugreeva.

Vibhishana told Vanaras that he was brother of Ravana and that he meant no harm. This led to a big clamour and almost a stampede among Vanaras to kill Vibhishana because the name Ravana terrified them and confused them. Someone elder and wise among Vanaras saved him and brought him to Sugreeva. Vibhishana while accompanying Sugreeva finally met Rama.

Rama instructed Laxmana, Sugreeva, Hanuman and Angadha and other important leaders like Jambavan to be present and listen to brother of Ravana, and told them all that the information which may be revealed by him should be very valuable.

Rama turned to Vibhishana and said, “Vibhishana you shall be completely safe here. I do not suspect you at all, and so you must feel safe here with us. I understand you were a very reasonable person. I do promise you that once we achieve the victory in this war I shall anoint you as the King of Lanka. A coronation ceremony shall follow. You deserve it. You shall live here without fear until then”.

Rama enquired Vibhishana many details about Ravana including his rituals, his food habits, passions and ambitions and so on including the plan of the city of Lanka and plan of the its Royal palaces. Rama asked for the map of the Ashoka Gardens where Sita was sitting.

Rama told all the Vanara leaders that it would be very important to learn from the enemy for the victory to be guaranteed. Rama said “It is very important to love the enemy so that we understand the enemy, if we understand the enemy, we can vanquish the enemy. So, first of all love the enemy”



VIBHISHANA REVEALS

Vibhishana the renegade brother of Ravana started revealing the great secrets of Ravana to the enemy forces of Lanka, the Vanaras under the command of Sugreeva. Vibhishana started speaking and the information he revealed was like a great revelation for all the Vanara leaders and even to Rama and his brother Laxmana.

Vibhishana said “Listen! Oh! Great Vanaras! And Oh! Great Rama! My brother Ravana is no ordinary person! Our father and our family lineage is a legendary lineage of great rishis and sages with spiritual powers almost equal to many demi gods. Our grandfather was the great Sage Pulastya and our father was a Rishi Vishrava Vasu”

“My brother Ravana was extraordinarily intelligent person, a prodigy and all Vedas he had learnt by heart by listening to them only once. That is why our father was very fond of him. My brother’s command over Vedas, his erudition and his authority over all of the ancient texts and scriptures is comparable to none. Ravana is one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars in the world. Even Lord Shiva was very much pleased with his knowledge and many boons were granted to him. Goddess Parvati wife of Shiva had admired his devotion and penance so much that she had gifted him the entire Island of Lanka”

“He can acquire ten heads and twenty hands, with his spiritual powers and just by his intention alone he acquires super natural powers. My brother Ravana is a great devotee of the ultimate God and dissolver of this Universe, Lord Shiva. Ravana can disappear at will. This highly talented brother Ravana is also a shrewd politician and people of Lanka admire him, venerate him, and he is the most popular king for them. Ravana is a living legend comparable to none in the universe”.

Vibhishana continued, “Among our family members he is the most handsome person who is almost romantically beautiful with a glowing face, and a powerful and yet with a shapely handsome body. The powers of his meditation had been praised by Gods and days at a time he goes deep in to meditation in front of the idol of Lord Shiva and very often he loses outer consciousness of his physical self. He has complete control over his bodily functions. He has three wives but the queen of Lanka is Queen Mandodari, my eldest sister-in-law who is the daughter of the great architect Maya. She was blessed by seven sages when she saved them from poisonous sweet nectar which they were all about to drink. Since she was blessed by Seven Sages of Milky Way of Stars, she had acquired spiritual powers; she indulges in sorcery and magic for play time. She is a great chess player and always defeats her husband and my brother Ravana whose intelligence is no match to her even after using all his ten heads.”

“Indrajit is Ravana’s son born to his queen Mandodari. His birth name was Meghanadha. Indrajit is a great archer, a warrior and has knowledge of Brahmastra. Indrajit learnt all his black magic and sorcery from his mother. In sorcery, Indrajit is capable of performing any type of illusions to mesmerize anyone with his extraordinary capabilities. Indrajit can create anything out of nothing and create anything in duplicate. Indrajit is a great devotee of Goddess Kali, as well as a tantric, and he is this world’s greatest magician ever born. But Indrajit at the same time a brave warrior, famous for his archery skills with which he conquered Indra Bhagvan and since then he has been called Indrajit which literally means the conqueror of Indra. Indrajit has a wife called Sulochana who is a daughter of the king of snake world, “*Nagaloka*” and this is one reason why snakes listen to Indrajit and obey his commands”.

“He has a very secretive place where he performs his worshipping of Goddess Kali during the periods of new moon. This is a place which nestles among the hills located far in to the sea, west of Lanka!”

Vibhishana continued revealing his family secrets to the enemy forces “My brother Ravana is a great warrior and one should never underestimate his enormous powers. He went to heaven and challenged the king of Gods Indra himself and you must know that all the Gods of heaven ran away including God Vishnu who went in to hiding in the Milky Way of stars!”

“One day we all went to attend house warming ceremony of our brother cousin Kubera who was the richest in the whole of universe. That celestial dancer Rambha, who was one of nymphs like Urvashi and Tilotthama, who performed dances to please the Gods, also was attending the ceremony as she was also an invitee by Kubera himself”.

Vibhishana continued with his revelations of the life of Ravana and his glorious life until now.

“This brother of mine, Ravana, did not like the dressing of Rambha who was revealing her body and also her status as a dancer. Ravana humiliated her, actually misbehaved with her to the extent of molesting her right in front of every other God and demi- gods present there as invitees to the house warming ceremony. Lord Brahma got furious with Ravana’s behaviour in a place where guests should be honored and rising up in anger the God Brahma cursed my brother Ravana. The unwanted result of the curse was that the head of Ravana should burst into pieces if ever he tried to molest a woman in future. I really do not know, if at all my brother Ravana was afraid of the curse! For God’s sake I doubt the power of such a curse against my brother who was blessed by Lord Shiva himself with so many boons to counter all those curses heaped on him by Rishis and Sages”.

Vibhishana told them everything about Ravana and finally he gave drawings of the palaces, and the map of Lankan city highlighting the location of Ashoka Gardens.



RAVANA VISITS SITA

Ravana entered Ashoka Gardens again to visit Sita, this time not many women accompanied him.

Sita was sitting in the garden, under the Ashoka tree. She had her both hands in dust, play like, thinking with a sad face and her cheeks were wet with tears and her bangles are smeared with mud.

In the Ashoka Gardens, King Ravana was standing in front of her, spoke to Sita in a cold manner, "Sita! You will only change when I killed that Rama, your husband and I have been warning you and threatening you that I shall kill that Rama, a mere human being who should die in my hands. Did not I warn you? You were the reason behind my cruel behaviour. Sita, I did not want you to face a tragic situation. But what can I do? My own helpless situation is only because I cannot see you weeping."

Ravana kept silent for some time with a grave face and then started again.

"Finally my men ambushed him, early in the morning, near that bridge they are building across the ocean, where he was killed. And I have to tell you, and really I feel very bad to tell you that Rama was killed".

Sita looked up at him in a sudden jerk of fear the way a deer feeding on grass startled and terrified when it had seen a tiger all of a sudden. Sita could hear what Ravana had just said to her and yet she was dazed in to deafness so much that she thought she did not hear it.

Ravana smiled enjoying the look of fear and bewilderment of Sita due to shock. Her fawn like eyes with expressions of fear was very pleasant for that rakshasha Ravana.

In the wide, very frightened eyes of Sita which were like a fawn frightened by a cheetah when her mother was absent, Ravana could only derive an immense pleasure. Ravana looking at Sita with her beautiful lotus like eye lashes staring at him, frozen by fear, said very slowly as if he were very sympathetic, with all his sympathies keeping very much on his lips, "Sita now I order my guards to bring the coffin".

At Ravana's orders, more than dozen of his guards carried an eight feet long wooden box, on their shoulders. When they kept the box down, Ravana moved forward and opened a door on the top of that coffin, which was actually a plank of wood which he had taken off completely and put it aside and then asked Sita to look inside of the coffin. Sita got up, came forward, kneeled beside the box, and looked down inside and there was dead body of Rama along with his bow!

Sita broke down weeping. She rolled on the floor of garden like a female horse would roll making heart breaking noises, stretching its neck, when her mate was killed. Sita said she would commit suicide as she felt lifeless like a withering twine when the pond dried up. She wept and cried as if her heart would stop. Sita was unable to bear the pain and started crying while telling all those rakshasha women present there that she had no more interest in life. She could not stand. She could not even sit. She rolled in the dust crying and crying. Sita repeated that she should die immediately but the life was still lingering in her body.

Then Sita fell on the box weeping and tried to shake her husband's body inside the coffin with both her hands and almost immediately, on that instant, the dead body of Rama simply disappeared.

Ravana roared with laughter in a joyous merriment of sadistic pleasure, and said to Sita "Sita, this is great magic? Is it not? How is this magician's talent? Do not you appreciate?" And Ravana roared with laughter again.

“My dear Sita listen”, Ravana started telling “There is no power in this world that can fight with me, not even Gods in heaven. I do not die in the hands of Gods, neither can they kill me nor can they vanquish me. I am Ravana! I am invincible! What a simple human being like Rama can do? Sooner or later I shall bring his real dead body, in this same manner and in this same coffin. Sita! You should better understand this! God gave you everything! Oh! Sita! My darling! This entire palace is yours! For this entire kingdom of Lanka you are the queen. All these palaces with all my wealth, which can vie with the heaven, are yours! It does not make sense for you to think of that foolish person Rama who had walked you through the forest , through the burning grounds, had not been worthy of your husband. I wish you had realized it but you had not. Rama was a person who left a kingdom on the words of a woman. He is unfit to be a king!”

Sita stopped her sobbing and suddenly became quiet with her lovely eyes, still heavily breathing. Sita was like a crane mother bird which found her little youngling back again, after it slipped and fell from the talons of an eagle. Sita looked at Ravana with an extreme exhaustion. But the realization that Rama was safe gave her relief.

Ravana left the garden all of a sudden as if he were avoiding an outburst of Sita’s anger.

Sita, who was still under the after effects of a shocking incident which finally turned out to be only a fake incident, started venting out her anger.

Sita started cursing the Lankans and rakshashas again.

Sita cursed saying people of Lanka were indirectly responsible for all her troubles and the bad karma had been accumulated on the heads of people of Lanka for their support to an ugly king like Ravan.

Sita cursed again saying “Lanka would burn again”, she stood up and at the high pitch of her voice she cursed again. She cursed again and again saying “Lankan people should run in the streets

weeping for their dead. Rama's arrows would burn the city. His arrows would parch the green, fertile crops and all the agricultural wells of Lanka should dry up instantly".

At which terrified rakshasha women herded around her all in haste and begged Sita by putting their hands under her mouth, pleading her not to curse Lankan people for the mistakes of their king. "We are already suffering" they said in one voice "Ravana had not stolen you Oh! Sita! And Ravana had not brought you here after informing us".



AMBASSADOR OF PEACE

ANGADHA

When Rama crossed the bridge across the Ocean, another million Vanaras swarmed on the bridge, coming from Kishkinda.

Rama was in the forefront of this great army of Vanaras with clubs, stones, whole of tree trunks and steel rods. When one million Vanaras were with Rama to siege the fort of Ravana on the northern side of Lanka, another one million Vanaras seized the great citadel of Ravana from south and western side. Rama with bow and arrows was in the front of this surging Vanara army.

When a million Vanaras laid siege to the fort of Ravana from south and western side, there was only a narrow space of sand dunes between the army and the sea. Those million strong Vanaras started banging on the entrance steel doors and walls of the fort and beating the earth with their tails. When these Vanaras raised the slogans of “Jai Shri Ram” and raised their voices, the whole city of Lanka was resounded with their war cries; the earth trembled when million Vanaras stomped with their feet.

On the northern side of Lanka, the entire Lanka was surrounded by smaller islands. Lord Rama stopped at the gates of the city and the city is encircled by high walls and it had highly ornate gates. The entrances through these gates were made of steel doors. These highly ornate gates had high peaks with observation posts and the high arches of the gates appeared insurmountable. The observation posts were all well manned by rakshasha guards.

The gates entry was built with ramps which were very high and well-constructed. The arches of these gates were well decorated with flower garlands. The walls of the fort were massively

constructed with huge boulders which were well cut, and well-engineered. That entire fort looked impregnable.

Sugreeva the king of Vanaras impetuously, jumped up a ramp and climbed up the wide and huge arches built of stone. Sugreeva was taken aback and shocked to see, Ravana standing there over one of the observation posts looking down. Ravana was watching this multitude of Vanara army which was indeed totally disorganized and moving like waves in a sea all over the place.

Sugreeva, who faced Ravana himself there, could not be more unprepared than this encounter in his entire life. Sugreeva did not think much and jumped on Ravana who was absent minded looking in some other direction. Sugreeva took away Ravana's crown and had thrown it away far inside Ravana's palace. Ravana, who was taken by surprise, despised this Vanara Sugreeva and with a loathsome face and angry words, Ravana tried to kick Sugreeva out and this ensued in a type of wrestling between two of them. But Sugreeva was the person who was now surprised at the inexhaustible strength of Ravana and after suffering terrible humiliation with a few thunderous kicks from Ravana, Sugreeva who was unable to bear the pain of anymore kicks with the speed of lightening, on his chest and stomach, jumped from the arches to save himself from an agonized death and then escaped back in to the multitudinous Vanara army who were furiously banging on the entry doors of that impregnable fort of Ravana on that side.

Sugreeva, the commander-in-chief of the Vanara army sat there with humiliation stamped on his face and with terrific pain in his stomach, and groins started slowly nursing his wounds. The strength and speed of Ravana was a complete surprise for him. Sugreeva thought that he could have died if not for some luck.

Rama, who came there, learnt what had happened and reprimanded Sugreeva for his thought less act and for underestimating a very powerful enemy. Rama said that if Sugreeva had died in that fight with Ravana, he might have killed Ravana by directly fighting with him, in a hand to hand combat after challenging Ravana for a one to one fight and after entering

the fort by force. Rama confessed that if Sugreeva had died, he could have lost all the interest in his own life itself. Rama declared that the war with Ravana could only be fought and he could only proceed with the war along with Sugreeva on his side, alive and actively participating in it, otherwise, Rama emphatically repeated that there should be no war! Rama declared that he would not go to war without Sugreeva.

Lord Rama sat there brooding over the whole incident with a very sad countenance in spite of Sugreeva's assurances that he was all right without any serious injuries and that nothing was worrisome for him. But Lord Rama thought like a king and he had given his wise advice to Sugreeva, never to underestimate the enemy in future.

Lord Rama told Sugreeva and all other Vanaras present there "that venturing in to war with prejudice to all other options of conciliations should be detrimental to both sides. And hence the enemy should be given a clear chance to correct himself by our own conciliation or by offering a valuable gift or by a mutual agreement by discussions. And a negotiated settlement should always be the most preferred one than a war. A war should always be the last resort either to correct the enemy or for punishing the enemy for perceived injustice to us and never a war should be waged for gain of land or power. We should not need his land, we should never be in need of power over him and neither have we ever derived pleasure in controlling others".

Rama emphasized the necessity of sending a messenger again giving Ravana the last chance to avoid the war.

Rama called Angadha, the great son of Vali to his side and told him to meet Ravana in his palace in front of his ministers as an emissary. Lord Rama told Angadha to meet Ravana as a messenger without fear or anger and shall repeat his message "It is Lord Rama's last word that you shall return Sita safely to avoid a war. King Ravana must ask for pardon and that should be the only condition for all his mindless act of abducting Sita. Angadha, you shall tell Ravana that Lord Rama is ready to pardon him".

“Angadha”, Said Rama “You should tell exactly like this to Ravana after cautioning Ravana that as a messenger you are just repeating the words of Rama”

Angadha should repeat in the following manner, as per strict instructions of Lord Rama.

“I, Rama, have besieged your fort on all sides with Vanara army. Your whole of Lankan army will die under the feet in a stampede of two million strong Vanara warriors without any need for real battle at all. You had already given trouble to many good people and people who deserved great respect like Sages, Rishis, and Sadhus doing penance in forest for decades and also to their wives even though they never interfered with your government. There shall be an end to all this anarchy perpetrated by you and in this Dandaka Forest a rule of law shall come to force. I, Rama therefore tell you to petition for clemency. You must return my wife Sita and avoid a war and avoid unnecessary bloodshed. In the event of a war, there will be lot of bloodshed and loss of life which shall result in my complete support to anoint your brother Vibhishana as the crown king of Lanka”.

Angadha flew in the air and landed right in the front portico of the palace of Ravana flying over the high walls of his fort. Ravana at the time was sitting with his ministers in a meeting and was very calmly discussing the affairs of government as if he were least worried about two million Vanara army who were clamouring outside the fort for a war.

Angadha stood there right in front of Ravana who was seemingly amused to see a Vanara alighting in front of him after a long jump, without any permission or any announcement. And then that Vanara who was looking very young introduced himself as son of Vanara warrior the great and legendary Vali, and as an ambassador of peace he came as an emissary of his Lord Rama. Angadha calmly announced that he had come to deliver his Lord Rama’s message of peace and the words he was speaking should be considered as spoken by Lord Rama.

Angadha started delivering the message of Rama exactly in this manner.

“I am Rama, I am warning you to surrender and you shall return my consort Sita and seek pardon from me without conditions. Otherwise my arrows shall kill you along with all of your sons, who may wage a war with me. In the event the war becomes inevitable, leading to death and destruction, I shall anoint your brother Vibhishana as the king of Lanka. Plead guilty Oh! Ravana! You must plead guilty, in front of me and plead for mercy or else, you shall be ready for war”

King Ravana was enraged and shouted orders to kill the useless monkey who was talking nonsense using very improper words dishonoring the king. Then four army commandos who were very large in size came from somewhere in a mysterious way and held Angadha on either side by holding his right and left hands. Angadha flew up to the level of the roof of Ravana’s palace along with all these eight heavy commandoes and as he flew up, in the midway high up in the air, those terrified commandos fell down as they tried to wriggle free from Angadha at the same time.

Angadha then, standing on the roof of the palace thumped his feet on the roof so forcefully that the edges of Ravana’s palace started falling down raising huge swirl of dust.

Angadha jumped from the palace roof to the walls of the fort and then jumped to the other side of city walls and sliding along the walls of city gates, landed, outside among multitudinous Vanaras with a feeling of great victory, exhibiting his youthful exuberance. Angadha then came back to Rama and reported the matter of rejection by Ravana and also in detail about Ravana’s attempt to imprison him. Angadha told Rama that Ravana wanted war and nothing else but war and did not evince any interest whatsoever to listen to the peace talks.



RAVANA SENDS SHUKA

Ravana had sent a rakshasha called “Shuka” as his envoy for the purpose of peace talks. Shuka, the rakshasha used his occult powers to acquire wings like a bird and flew over the great army of Vanaras.

While Shuka was flying over the heads of Vanaras, they looked up and started clamouring to kill him. He straight went over them flying to the place where Sugreeva had camped and flying just a few feet right above him, fear stricken Shuka, the messenger of Ravana started speaking. He complained to Sugreeva that he was only a messenger from Ravana but his Vanaras were trying to climb over each other’s shoulders to catch him alive and some others were throwing stones and sticks with an intention to kill him. In fact some Vanaras were trying to jump up in to the sky, to catch this flying rakshashas Shuka alive and some Vanaras were issuing threats by loudly shouting that they will pluck his feathers and clip his wings. All these Vanaras were crying hoarse that the man with the wings of a bird was actually a spy. Some young Vanaras even declared they knew him as a spy and some emphatically said that they had seen him earlier flying everywhere, assessing the situation. Shuka said addressing Sugreeva that he was not a spy at all and was coming there only as a messenger of the King Ravana for the first time.

That rakshasha messenger Shuka told them all that as a messenger of the King Ravana, he should be speaking only the language of the King Ravana, mouthing his message and hence no one should get angry with him. But angry Vanaras did not listen and thought that Shuka was a spy and they were all trying to jump upwards in to the sky to catch him.

Lord Rama saved Shuka who was flying with the wings of a bird and ordered Vanaras to honour the envoy, and requested Shuka,

the messenger of Ravana to alight on the ground. Rama assured him all the safety, and freedom to speak.

Shuka flying still in the air said “This is the message from Ravana”.

Shuka finally alighted on the ground, still with his wings slightly fluttering, stood on the ground, still shaking with fear, Shuka said that he would repeat the words of Ravana the king, as he had memorized it and hence everyone should consider as if King Ravana were standing and speaking right in front of them.

Shuka in his rasping voice continued, “What wrong I did? I did nothing wrong, Oh! Sugreeva! You must realize this truth, and immediately leave Rama’s side by abandoning him you must get back to Kishkinda. I knew your legendary warrior brother great Vali who was killed by Rama himself by shooting an arrow hiding behind a tree. And as a consequence of which you have been crowned king of Kishkinda”.

“This Rama, indeed, long time back, more than a decade ago, was a prince at Ayodhya, but since then all these years he had been living in Dandaka forest which rightfully belonged to me. Not only that Rama had been killing people of my race of rakshashas but also had maimed and disfigured my little sister only out of his own superiority complex. This was how he had behaved with a woman. He had killed my cousin Khara and hundreds of our people in one day. Since that time onwards he had been killing people of our race, our species with an intention to erase them out of existence. And in any case what wrong it would be to embezzle the wife of someone who was a prince some decades ago? But Rama is not even a prince anymore and is it not true? What I feel? And I had stolen Sita from a hut in the forest which rightfully belonged to me. I did nothing wrong in Dandaka forest because a poor man owes his life to me, nonetheless his life itself belongs to me. How this, taking away a woman from a hut deep in forest is essentially different from any other king’s behaviour in this regard? And you, Sugreeva, brought all your species of innocent Vanaras by feeding wrong information and brain

washing them with your own superstitious belief that Rama is an Avatar of God! You motivated them to wage a war the consequences of which your innocent Vanaras do not understand. You and your Vanaras are peaceful people living your life in the wilderness of forest and your Vanaras really do not know the horrors of war because you people never waged wars. I pray, you make them understand the horrors of war. Otherwise they die without really understanding what for they shall die in this war! You have indeed put their life on the war front for no reason. If you think, I did anything wrong by stealing wife of someone who was a prince some decades ago, you are very wrong. Oh! Sugreeva! It was because I did nothing wrong. And therefore, I request you to go back to Kishkinda abandoning this fellow called Rama and his brother Laxmana to me and to me alone, as this problem of wrong or right of stealing Sita, is indeed their family issue of Ikshwaku clan warriors and it is actually a personal problem for these warriors called Rama and Laxmana. It is not a war between kingdoms to prove whose might shall prevail and who has the right to rule over vast lands of a kingdom. It is certainly not a problem for Kishkinda kingdom or its land problems. Wars arise out of need for more space and for more power. Where is the scope for a full scale war for Vanaras to die for the family problems of Ikshavaku clan? Do not misguide yourself and misguide others and you shall immediately abandon those brothers Rama and Laxmana and take back your army to Kishkinda.”

After listening to this message of Ravana through his messenger Shuka, Sugreeva was very angry with Ravana for his immoral nature and his blatant denial of his treachery, kidnap of Sita, the daughter of the jungle, and at his extreme perfidy.

Sugreeva also had sent back the reply message with Ravana’s messenger Shuka. Sugreeva told Shuka to memorize his reply message and repeat this to Ravana his king verbatim.

Sugreeva said “I, Sugreeva, send this message with your own messenger Shuka. Oh! Ravana! Your mind is so much under the

weight of guilt and hence you justify yourself with your perverted mind so much that you do not even seem to realize what you had done was wrong! Oh! God, Oh! Lord Shiva who you worship shall not be very kind to you. You should have been filled with the guilt and should not have a devotion to worship, or to chant Vedas as you do every day five times. You should have died under the weight of the guilt of your actions born out of your own lust and megalomania. I wish all your sons had died of karma by association. Your Lanka shall burn again. As far as living in peace is concerned, I can only say that you must return Sita, daughter of the jungle, and seek mercy from compassionate Rama. Who do you think is Rama? He is very much the Avatar! And Lord of this Universe. If your Lanka should survive, you must return Sita, in a palanquin of flowers”.

Shuka went back and explained the situation of Sugreeva and Vanaras to Ravana and repeated the message of Sugreeva out of his memory.

Shuka explained to Ravana that all of the sea front was filled with monkeys who talk like and behave like humans. “They have enormous strength and their main weapons are pieces of stones which they accumulated in huge piles everywhere. Their number is so huge it is like counting drops of water in an Ocean”.

Ravana the king went up the terraces of his fort and looked all over the city. The wall around the city, the first level of protection, was surrounded by monkeys. Their camps were everywhere. Those whole of wheat fields were full of monkeys and Ravana could only see the backs, furs and skins of monkeys and could not see the wheat fields at all. The exit gates on the south were crowded by monkeys. They were running everywhere, climbing everything, sitting on every branch of every tree.

The mango garden on the west was full of monkeys, the tall coconut trees were bent with monkeys. On all sides of the city of Lanka, there was sea. And all sides between the city’s outer walls and the sea the mother earth could not be seen. All these Vanaras,

singing songs of Rama were carrying huge banners depicting a tall Rama with a bow and arrow. They were hooting, shouting, and they were singing.

First time in his life Ravana was slightly anxious and he said to himself, that unless there should be a plan, these monkeys might prove to be dangerous to him.

Ravana got down from the ramparts of his mighty fort and walked to his war room. There were many sons of Ravana born to his various queens but the son who was highly talented was Indrajit who was born to his most important queen and queen of Lanka, Queen Mandodari.

He addressed all the chiefs of various divisions of his army and also his warrior sons who were commanding separate contingents of the army commandos. These special commandoes, who wear steel jackets and helmets, carry javelins with very sharp blades and some units armed with bows and quivers full of arrows were well trained and well organised. These were the elite forces of Ravana under the direct command of his sons.

Ravana ordered the army to get ready for a war the next day. Ravana said the attack shall be from the south of Lanka for us and in other words north gates for the enemy.

He told he had seen from the ramparts of the fort that enemy Vanaras occupied every inch of free space from the fort to the sea.

Ravana addressed his sons, army commanders and leaders of the elite forces. Ravana exhorted them "I do understand from the messages our enemy Rama had sent to me, that his Vanaras were highly motivated force. We consider them as monkeys and hastily we conclude them as weak forces. I do say again do not underestimate the enemy particularly because they are numerically so much superior to us that it is beyond anyone's imagination. But remember their single most of objectives is to take away Sita who these Vanaras consider as the daughter of the jungle. So concentrate on the walls of Ashoka Gardens!" He exhorted again

his special commandoes and regular forces to keep watch on the walls of Ashoka Gardens.

Ravana said “We all know that Hanuman, that great monkey, had seen our vast and beautiful garden earlier. He knew every part of the city as well. Our enemy was in the full knowledge of the city, the plan of the fort including the exact location of our armoury where our most precious weapons are stored, and most probably they might have good knowledge of the exact numbers of warriors we have and may even be in clear estimations of how exactly we manage our logistics. All this knowledge has been of great use for the enemy. This intelligence of our enemy is evident because and only because, of my shameless, renegade brother Vibhishana also should be wearing battle dress on the side of the enemy and he might have already provided every single detail of information about us with which the enemy attack should start for sure”.



WAR OF VANARAS AND RAKSHASHAS

Early in the morning, as the Sun came out of eastern horizon, Rama gave a call for the war. On the instant, Vanaras had blown conch shells and each group by blowing their trumpets, conch shells and beating their drums, started signaling and inspiring brother Vanara groups to be ready for the war.

On the other side, Ravana's army had blown trumpets and started beating the huge drums with golden sticks from the ramparts of the fort. The army's special commando division under the command of Prince Thrishira, son of Ravana, jet black in complexion with his three heads was sporting a beard and with ash smeared on his forehead, this Shiva devotee, sitting on a chariot made of bamboo sticks with a basket for him to stand and shoot the arrows, had blown his long trumpet. And conforming to the trumpet, huge drums were beaten on the walls of the fort of Ravana.

Thrishira, the most feared Asura, the rakshasha, was wearing a steel jacket and three steel helmets on each of his three heads, and standing on a high speed chariot which could take turns very fast as it was very light weight bamboo chariot drawn by eight powerful black horses. He had set three arrows with sharp and long blades, on his bow, and prayed to the Lord Shiva, at the height of his voice, "Namah Shivaya" (salute to the Lord Shiva) and then shouted "Go!"

Asura, Thrishira's chariot came out of huge steel gates in the walls of the fort and was going with full speed towards outer walls of the city. Three hundred commandos with steel jackets and helmets and half of them astride on black horses were around the chariot in three layers protecting their warrior leader holding

huge, round and very thick leather shields in their left hands and javelins in their right hands fixed with sharp and wide blades. The famous Thrishira was shining with confidence in the morning sun light.

At Rama's order, the Vanaras were pounding the outer walls and many Vanaras were trying to climb those very high outer walls. Some Vanaras had already destroyed one or two of the great arches and some destroyed even the ramps. Vanara army was mostly haphazard and disorganized.

Thrishira came out of the outer wall gates and immediately pulling his bow string up to his ear, released his three powerful arrows. His commandos were using swords and javelins to kill Vanaras, by stabbing their chests and cutting their heads with long swords as those Vanaras started jumping on them.

Thrishira's bow string gave a very loud twang sound and his arrows made earsplitting noise as they were shooting across the battle field. His arrows neither could be stopped nor diverted by Vanara warriors with their long sticks. Vanaras heads were cut off and their heads flew in to air ten at a time but as a reaction to the waves of arrows of Thrishira, there was an ensuing stampede of Vanaras in their disorganized attack on Thrishira. Vanaras were making vain attempts at stopping him with bamboo sticks. Thousand Vanaras were pelting stones at him and at his chariot. The infantry guards of Thrishira were protecting him from stones with their huge thick leather shields. While Thrishira's commandos were shooting with javelins which were piercing hearts of Vanaras who were even hundred yards away.

Thrishira's chariot picked up speed and it was wading through the multitudinous Vanaras through the gaps made by him with his arrows shooting in all directions. Thrishira's chariot was riding over their dead bodies and his chariot wheels are wet with blood of Vanaras. Thrishira's commandos protected by steel jackets were killing every Vanara who tried to penetrate the circle of protection around their warrior leader Thrishira.

Angadha caught those commandoes with steel jackets and threw them away in to the air. When this gap was created by the rampage of Angadha, by his fists alone, many Vanaras ran through the gap created by Angadha and jumped on the chariot of Thrishira. Vanaras were hanging on to the chariot on one side. Thrishira was shooting his arrows, rotating himself on all sides in his chariot, killing Vanaras as they tried to mount his chariot after breaking his circle of protection ring of commandos. The chariot of Thrishira thrust in to the Vanaras and his attacks became so fierce that his own chariot created a battle ground for itself within that great war of rakshashas and Vanaras. But by the afternoon the whole scale of war was primarily bombarding against the outer walls of the city by millions of Vanaras, in the direction of Ashoka Gardens.

As war approached a wearing out phase by late afternoon, hundreds of Vanaras pushed on with suicidal attacks on the chariot of Thrishira and could finally penetrate and obliterate the commando ring which was lost itself in the multitudinous haphazard attacks of Vanaras. The commandoes of Thrishira were finally trampled under the feet of Vanaras who were running over them waves after waves. A hundred more Vanara warriors stormed on the chariot of Thrishira in a suicidal attack.

This great warrior Thrishira, son of Ravana turned out to be very dangerous for Vanaras as he was shooting them down with so many arrows at a time that his arrows were like a rain of flames from the sky. Vanaras had tugged and pulled his chariot, jumping on it, on one side; they could hang on it and finally after so many Vanaras in their do or die attacks lost their life, Thrishira's chariot was overturned in the battle ground. Thrishira fought well like a brave warrior standing on the ground for more than an hour. But without advantage of any movement of a chariot to evade and avert the main thrust of the enemy who were hundreds of Vanara warriors who surrounded him like packs of forest hounds on a lion and finding himself without any protection from body guards who were either dead by pelted stones or trampled under the feet of Vanaras and without logistical support of

replenishments of his forces, Thrishira found it increasingly difficult to fight with Vanaras. Thrishira was killed.

After the death of Thrishira, rakshashas lost their momentum as their great leader was dead; they started to recede from their penetration in various prongs deep in to Vanara army. In another hour of time, with thousands of casualties on both sides but with high casualties particularly to Vanara side, rakshashas were finally on back foot in the evening. The huge doors on the north of the fort were opened with great noise accompanying blowing of trumpets by rakshashas standing on the walls of the fort as the sun light was fading away very fast. And rakshashas, hundreds of them accompanied Thrishira's own chariot which carried the dead body of Thrishira to inside the fort. The huge steel doors of the fort were closed and soon the darkness fell on the city of Lanka.

Inside the fort, there was an eerie silence and darkness was fast spreading. The lanterns were brought by dozens of maid servants. There was only one lone voice of a woman sobbing with heart rending cries over the dead body of Thrishira. She was mother of Thrishira known as Dhanyamalini and one of many wives of Ravana.

Ravana was standing over the dead body, of his son, the great warrior Thrishira while tears were rolling over his cheeks. He was completely silent.



INDRAJIT IN THE BATTLE FIELD

There was a lull in the palace complex of Ravana. His son Thrishira's cremation took place next day on the side of southern gates of the palace complex. His body was lifted with long swords and javelins joined together befitting a warrior. Thrishira's own brothers Naranthaka and Deventhaka, including Indrajit their half-brother and others were the pall bearers to the cremation grounds. Ravana himself had set fire to the funeral pyre with the dead body of his son. There was silence everywhere in the palace.

On the following day, King Ravana came to his war room and stood there. His prime minister, including his cabinet ministers and military generals were present. Ravana's another son who was a famous warrior called Indrajit by his queen Mandodari was summoned.

In the war rooms King Ravana declared the day as day of mourning for his son Thrishira and a rest day for all warriors. He also said he was to perform some religious rituals for his son who attained martyrdom and who had dedicated his life to the cause of Lanka.

Ravana said "My warrior son Thrishira could fight for only one day! And that too with Vanaras! What kind of warrior he was? Now onwards beware of the enemy and do not underestimate the driving motivation of the Vanara army and numerical superiority of the enemy".

He turned to Indrajit and said "Indrajit, you should have understood by now that the best method should be confusing the enemy, dissipating their energies which should lead to the victory in the war. The weakness of the enemy is that Vanaras are a disorganized force. But the strength of the enemy is that they

have numerological superiority and they are simply far higher in number than us. But most of them are servants. These slaves and servants of Rama are more in number than those warriors among them. What is the army of enemy? These are indeed monkeys armed with stones and wooden sticks with high motivation as well as a blind belief that their leader Rama is an Avatar! This blind belief of these Vanaras that Sita is the daughter of the jungle and their Rama is the Avatar is moving the mountains. I heard that faith moves mountains. Their battle of yesterday with Thrishira was a proof; they were just jumping on him and dying under the wheels of his chariot all the while chanting “Jai Shriram, Jai Sita Ram”! We are fighting with highly motivated Vanaras with their blind faith who may probably think that dying means going to heaven. We have to fight with the stupid’s blinded by their faith. At least tomorrow, my dear son, Indrajit, use all your powers of magic or tantric methods or whatever may be required, use them all so as to finish these warriors called Rama and Laxmana and believe me, when I say this, all these Vanaras without any objective in the war will run away to Kishkinda. That is how we shall vitiate their blind faith. They go away and it shall be only a matter of time before they begin to run away from battle field to Kishkinda. Our only enemy is Rama who has millions of slaves but only a few warriors”.

All the military generals, commando leaders were attentively listening to Ravana and his theories of battle which was fought yesterday with high number of casualties on their side as well.

Indrajit was about to speak and every one stood in attention including his father and the king Ravana.

Indrajit said “Dear father, I have identified the enemy and I think I have understood the enemy and his weakness!”

Indrajit continued, “If Laxmana is killed in the battle it should be enough to drown Rama in the waves of depression and his strength to fight shall be evaporated. He will weep beating his chest and carry his dead brother on his shoulders. That Rama shall throw the war to the wind and along with the mortal body

of his dead brother he will run away to Ayodhya. And all these Vanaras, these foolish monkeys follow him with the slogans of “Jai Shri Ram” until they climb those little gates of Ayodhya. And I am really brooding on a strategy to confuse the enemy, the way they never could imagine it when they shall die in their own stampede and they shall be lost no sooner than they start the battle with me. Father! You must allow me to go to my cave on the hills in the middle of the Sea to practice my sorcery and put to use all my tantric rituals and mantras for a trial.”

Indrajit left to his secretive place in the cradles of some hills half-submerged in the middle of the Sea waters but not very far from the sea shore and the battle field. Indrajit had his secret place in a cave atop a hill.

There was a place in the cave where Indrajit who was very adept at black magic had been consistently performing tantric rituals and chanted mantras throughout the nights as a dedicated devotee of Goddess Kali.

Indrajit had finally created a duplicate Sita with his power of mantras and sorcery some days ago. It was a doll, life size, which looked exactly like Sita. The doll was of the same height as Sita and wearing same coloured sari and blouse.

And then, Indrajit gave commands to this duplicate Sita, the doll, which he created using white cotton and clay, combined with coloured rags of cloth to test his mantra powers. This was his duplicate Sita which was amazingly a look alike of real Sita, which Indrajit carefully kept on one side of his cave. Indrajit, sitting there in that cave, uttering some mantra syllables coherent only to him, started giving commands to this doll. The doll then acquired a life of its own imbibing the power of mantras and that doll looked exactly like actual Sita. The doll started obeying the commands of Indrajit causing a tremendous illusionary effect.

Indrajit commanded the doll, “Weep Oh! Sita! Weep” and that duplicate Sita started weeping, with its head bent on one side. The duplicate Sita was sobbing now until Indrajit commanded it

to stop. The duplicate Sita's hair was same and her eye brows were as much the same. Indrajit made few corrections to his doll.

Duplicate Sita did not have anklets made of gold with bells which real Sita in the Ashoka Gardens was wearing on her ankles.

So Indrajit brought a pair of anklets and put them on her ankles. Sita duplicate could not walk but only slide on the earth based on small, tiny wheels fixed under the soles of her feet. However hard Indrajit had tried with all his powers of black magic, he could not make the duplicate Sita walk in the style of real Sita. If anyone sees this Sita, a creation of Indrajit from very near he might get shocked to know that it was only a duplicate!

Indrajit thought he should better fight only a night war. He was not satisfied much about his "doll Sita" but he thought "It could still be devastating in a Moon light in the middle of a battle field".

On that full Moon day, when in that Moon light you could see everything, and yet not very clearly, at half past twelve in the middle of night, when even a ruffle of dry leaf could be heard, the north gates of Lanka's fort were opened and Indrajit with his chariot and a large contingent of special commandoes forming a ring of protection around him, ominously came out. In the chariot of Indrajit, his duplicate Sita was sitting in the front of the chariot covered by a thin piece of cloth which he had removed once he came out of his fort and behind her was sitting dangerously looking Indrajit even in the moon light. He blew his conch shell and kettle drums were beaten synchronously by rakshashas. Indrajit was protected by eight hundred commandos on the front and back and on all his sides in steel jackets and steel helmets astride powerful black horses with long swords and javelins. The chariot of Indrajit came out of the outer walls of the city.

Vanaras woke up from sleep and started running helter-skelter for a time as they were terribly confused and could not understand what was happening. Vanaras recovered from their initial shock and went in to a defense mode at least in the beginning.

Indrajit pulled his bow string and released his dozen arrows with golden shafts at a time. Vanaras cried, shouted in pain and some of Vanaras threw up in the air by the force of the arrows of Indrajit and fell down dead and some Vanaras were dragged for several yards in the dust by the sheer force of these arrows.

Indrajit's chariot picked up speed and Vanaras had woken up fully and came to their senses, rubbed their eyes and saw to their horror the ghastly sight of Sita sitting in the front of the chariot of Indrajit, with fear stricken face, she was holding on to the chariot railing with her left hand and she was weeping helplessly with her head bent backwards. Vanara warriors looked at her with utter disbelief and shock. There were dark rings around her eyes with days after days of weeping. It was a horror which they could not imagine even in their dreams. Some even thought if it was a bad dream or real and the great Vanaras started rubbing their eyes again and they jumped over the shoulders of other Vanaras to see her again?! Indrajit gave out a war cry and very loudly stated that in this night of Moon light, all the Vanaras should witness the end of Sita. He announced again that he brought Sita on his chariot to take revenge for his brother's death, when one man, his brother Thrishira was surrounded and killed by thousand Vanaras.

Sita was wailing in the front of the chariot of Indrajit with her darkened eyes. Vanaras shouted "no, no" and these horrified Vanaras rose up like sea wave towards Indrajit's chariot to save Sita's life.

Chariot of Indrajit was rotating with speed. His body guards on black horses were going around the chariot raising huge swirl of dust. In this moon lit night it was a horrific sight for Vanaras.

Thousands of Vanaras who were far in the battle field, lit up wooden torches using fire wood weaved with cloth on the tips, doused in oil. A sea of Vanaras carried these torches in waves after waves to see to their horror, Sita who was sitting in the front of Indrajit chariot was weeping and wailing.

Hanuman who could see even the lost and forgotten objects miles away was also very tragically mistaken in the half lit Moon light to cry himself in horror. At the height of his voice the great Hanuman shouted in horror “mother Sita!” , and this voice of Hanuman could be heard all over the battle field. Vanaras rose up in waves and moved to stop Indrajit’s chariot.

But this wily rakshasha, son of a tantric mother Mandodari, Indrajit set a dozen black arrows on his bow and with his long powerful hands , pulled the string up to his ears and released those arrows. Indrajit’s arrows went up and down in waves, like sea waves in hurricane, escaping enemy hindrances, maces and huge trees to stop them. These powerful and mythical arrows of Indrajit unleashed mayhem leading to tragic deaths and destruction in the battle field. And as could be expected there was a complete pandemonium among the ranks and file of the irregular army of Vanaras who never fought wars and were used to sleep on the trees. Word spread about the horror among Vanaras that there was Sita on the chariot of Indrajit, son of Ravana and there ensued agonized cries among Vanaras everywhere in the battle field.

Vanaras were rising in the air and falling dead in waves after waves as the piercing arrows of Indrajit were shooting across the battle field and in that Moon lit night and semi darkness there was a stampede caused by confused Vanaras moving in haphazard ways, doubling their agony. These arrows of Indrajit after piercing the bodies of Vanaras seemed to be returning to Indrajit but none of the Vanaras were clear about nature of these arrows and Indrajit, the enemy warrior was like an enigma, a sort of puzzle for them.

Sita was sitting on the front portion of the chariot of Indrajit and Sita as perceived by the multitude of Vanaras was totally helpless and she was weeping beating her chest with her right hand.

Hanuman pushed away his own totally disorganized Vanaras who were in the state of a stampede and himself waded through his own army of Vanaras trying to reach chariot of Indrajit. The

chariot disappeared in thin air as Hanuman neared it and appeared far right to him among the running and stampeding Vanaras.

Rama and Laxmana woke up and could not believe their eyes. Rama shouted at Indrajit who was coming towards them with Sita sitting in the front of his chariot. Rama himself jumped forward with heart rending cries of “Sita! Sita” but Rama’s cries only reached the skies.

Vanaras began to move on either side and gave space to Rama and Laxmana who struck themselves by shock and awe of Indrajit and his chariot drawn by eight black horses in this semi darkness of the Moon light. Rama cried “Sita!” while himself almost falling backwards. Rama was horrified and nearly fainted. Hanuman brought some cold water from somewhere even in that midst of that battle and sprinkled cold water on his face. Rama looked at Sita on the chariot of Indrajit, which was rotating nonstop, round and round in the battle field, while with his horror filled eyes, Rama was in complete shock.

Indrajit took Sita’s hair in his fists from behind her and raising his whip in his right hand, standing up, he gave a whip lash across the face of Sita. Sita let out a heart rending cry and her head bent backwards, her left eye turned to brown colour with the bruise caused by whiplash, was dripping blood over her beautiful cheeks. Looking at this in shock, Rama cried at the height of his voice “Sita!” While Indrajit waded through Vanaras who were jostling each other to move towards his chariot and while Indrajit protected by his special commandos in steel jackets on all sides, was shooting his black arrows killing Vanaras who were dying in waves after waves, letting out horrifying death cries.

That full Moon sank half of it under the passing black clouds causing an enveloping semi darkness which crept all over battle field like an all pervading shadow. And in that battle field, one can only hear cries of death everywhere.

Rama could finally recover himself and as a true warrior, great Rama set his arrows on the bow and pulling the string to its maximum length, released his arrows. They made a reverberating noise loudly heard and echoed even inside Ravana's fort faraway. But Indrajit disappeared in a split second and appeared again on the far right side of Rama, appearing as if his chariot was floating in the air with high speed.

Sita's cheeks were black; her black eye liner melted in her tears, and smeared itself irregularly on her cheeks in black colour lines. Sita was helplessly sobbing beating her chest with her right hand while holding herself to the chariot of Indrajit with her left hand.

Rama set his arrows on his bow again, but Indrajit released his arrows in hundredth of a second as a well-trained archer, which pierced right shoulder of Rama with extreme precision and those arrows penetrated deep inside as if these arrows had their own energy. The arrows appeared to be sucking Rama's blood as the tails of these arrows were shaking. Rama, the great warrior, staggered backwards but somehow could withstand the impact of those arrows of Indrajit. The chariot of Indrajit was moving deadly fast and his commandoes were shooting with hundreds of their javelins. Indrajit now released six arrows at a time and they were literally swimming in the air, moving upwards and then downwards, these arrows as they were aimed at Laxmana were shooting across battle field over the heads of Vanaras towards Laxmana who was standing on the right side of Rama.

Indrajit now pulled the hair of Sita again while she was weeping and Indrajit started mercilessly beating her with his whip on her back. Rama her husband started crying. Hanuman shouted "Indrajit you bloody sinner. How can you touch the hair of Sita, such a pious woman? You will never recover from your sins for seven births, you loathsome rakshasha!" Hanuman shouted and tried to push himself among waves of Vanaras moving towards the chariot of Indrajit.

Rama with his great bow, Kodanda, aimed and released his arrows at Indrajit, in this full Moon night which appeared bright

yellow but Indrajit seemed to have disappeared, which even Rama could not make out clearly in this utter chaos and confusion of a totally disorganized army of Vanaras running everywhere. The Vanaras were jumping in the air to escape the arrows of Indrajit and the javelins of his commandoes.

This Moon light seemed to have given extraordinary powers to this wily rakshasha Indrajit. Rama now again clearly had seen Indrajit's chariot appearing right in the front, face to face as if the chariot emerged out of the crowds of Vanaras like a snake emerges out of a bush of flowers. All of a sudden Indrajit started rotating his chariot in a circular movement right in front of Rama and Laxmana with great speed while shooting Vanaras with his sharp arrows. Indrajit was killing Vanaras with impunity. He was killing hundreds of Vanaras, while their heads started rolling on the ground and their blood swirling up in the air looked black in the moon light. Everywhere there were cries of death. Some Vanaras fallen on the ground were unable to bear the pain of arrows started weeping. There was literally a rain of arrows, filling the moon lit sky like a torrential rain in a monsoon.

Indrajit's arrows hit Laxmana and he fell. There were cries of horror and confusion which led to stampede of Vanaras when Laxmana fell down. Hanuman lounged forward to rescue Laxmana but it became very difficult even for Hanuman to retrieve Laxamana's body from under the running feet of thousands of Vanaras in that semi darkness of moon light. Laxamana's injured body was ridden with arrows.

Hanuman started throwing away his own Vanaras in to the air, to find Laxamana's body which he finally found. Many Vanaras were thrust forward by the Vanaras coming from the behind, trampled on his body. Laxmana was full of arrows pierced through him and his body was stuck half deep in the loose soil of muck and mire soaked in the blood of Vanaras. Hanuman could only keep Laxamana's body on his head since the arrows were so many and carrying his body on shoulder was not possible. Hanuman was wading through Vanaras who were running haphazard. Hanuman

headed towards a safe place for Laxmana while Indrajit was rampaging through the Vanaras wantonly killing them. There was no more a war between rakshashas and Vanaras but only a massacre unabated by Indrajit during this fateful moon lit night.

Rama set his arrows on his great bow even with stuck arrows in his shoulder and shouting against his own Vanaras who were coming in between him and Indrajit by force of a wave of an irregular movement. Rama jumped forward in the air and released his arrows. The arrows of Rama made an ear splitting noise which could be heard miles away, reverberating in the hills faraway. But Indrajit disappeared on his own chariot for a moment and appeared again slightly to the left of where he was earlier and his chariot picked up terrific speed surrounded by concentric circles of eight hundred warriors in steel jackets who were running on either side of Indrajit's chariot astride powerful horses. Rama's arrows which killed four hundred rakshashas in half an hour in Dandaka forest could do nothing to vanquish or even stop Indrajit! Rama's arrows which could blow away huge trees uprooting them, like in a hurricane could do nothing to bring to a halt to that bamboo chariot of Indrajit. All the Vanaras watching the plight of Rama thought for a time that Indrajit was invincible.

Rama looked at chariot of Indrajit with Sita wailing in the front while the chariot lounged forward directly towards him. Indrajit took his whip in his hand, and raising the whip high over his head swirling it in the air, giving a "swish" sound weaved it and gave a harsh high whiplash across the face of Sita so hard that her left part of the face was slit open and her left eye ball gauzed out, with blood flowing down from her eye socket, and agonized by this pain Sita let out a cry of death. Rama cried "Sita"! So much loud and so much heart rending that it was heard all over the battle field. All Vanaras stopped still for a moment.

Rama recovered and tears rolling down his cheeks and his hands involuntarily shaking he had set his arrows in his bow, Kodanda but Indrajit's arrows were already floating in the air and with

their wavy movement these arrows were swimming in the air, which Rama could not shoot down!

Rama's arrows never missed but they were missing to stop the arrows of Indrajit. At the same time, arrows of Indrajit, escaped the oncoming arrows of Rama pierced Rama's left shoulder. Rama was incapacitated for a time, with arrows on his left and right shoulders. Then Rama faced Indrajit who was coming straight opposite to him, whose rain of arrows penetrated all over the body of Rama. The thrust of arrows were so forceful that Rama staggered and fell backwards. But Rama could somehow stand up and still he was able to set arrows in his great bow but Indrajit was nowhere to be seen in that semi dark moon light. Jambavan who reached the spot said it was a great mistake to fight with rakshashas in the night as they turn out highly dangerous and powerful during night wars.

Indrajit and his highly elusive chariot appeared again. Sita was uncontrollably weeping in the front of his chariot. Sita's left eye ball socket was full of blood. Her face was strewn with red lines of whip lashes. Half of her face turned bluish black with injuries; there were very large dark rings around her two eyes. She had an ominous look on her face. She was weeping leaning on one side of the chariot of Indrajit while the chariot itself was rotating in the battle field with its galloping horses.

Indrajit arrows hit the shocked Rama who was immobilized for some time looking at the condition of Sita on the chariot of Indrajit. Rama's throat was parched and he became dumb, he lost his strength and he had bent on his knees in sorrow and pain, after seeing the condition of his wife Sita. He lost all his hopes of protecting her.

Rama fell down indeed! At least one hundred arrows of Indrajit hit him from his chest down to his feet. Rama's body was full of arrows.

Vanaras lounged forward in a do or die campaign towards the chariot of Indrajit to catch him alive but they were shot down by

his sharp arrows. They fell down like birds in a hail storm. Their bodies swirled up in the air and fell down with the force of his arrows. It was a hopeless night and a battle of attrition for Vanaras. Their dead bodies fell down in heaps with black arrows of Indrajit deeply stuck in their hearts.

There was pitch darkness for a short time as Moon was covered by thick clouds of the night and all of a sudden it started drizzling. There were horrible cries, shouts, wailing and weeping of brave Vanaras in this unknown land of Lanka who filled the battle fields and their helpless, hopeless crying was heard by none and in that drizzling dark night their cries were muffled when the drizzling rain intensified.

All over the battle field the weeping and wailings of Vanaras could be heard everywhere throughout the night and as the night passed by with their agony, there was sudden day break bringing full light on the battle field.



INDRAJIT GOES INTO HIDING

In the court of Ravana, a grand welcome was arranged for Indrajit, the warrior and the victor of yesterday's night war. All of the great warriors and military leaders were present in the court.

King Ravana was sitting on his throne in royal robes wearing a crown studded with one thousand diamonds.

Indrajit who was standing in the center of the court, declared himself in front of his majesty the King Ravana that he had killed both the brothers Rama and Laxmana. There was a complete disbelief on the faces of all those present and with their bewilderment stamped on their faces, they all looked on silently at the King Ravana. And this disbelief was particularly obvious on the faces of all those who took part in yesterday's night war.

King Ravana very calmly listened to his son Indrajit's version of that intense battle waged yesterday night and said "Indrajit! You should never underestimate the enemy. These enemies comprising human beings and monkeys, who call themselves as Vanaras, are very clever people. I shall say "hell, with their bloody tails". And I shall express my doubt; they might not have died and since it was a night war, you had been in a dream of illusion under the influence of your own wishful thinking."

But Indrajit insisted that Rama was shot with one hundred arrows by himself and Laxmana had been shot with as many arrows and both should have been died. In fact Indrajit argued saying "Laxmana had come under the feet of their own Vanaras , who started running away from battle field very much terrified by my arrows and that disorganized force of Vanaras drowned in fear trampled Laxmana under their feet suffocating him. And Laxmana beyond doubt lost his life. Those Vanaras were not

warriors except for a few, and they cried in agony, terrified by me in the night. I killed them in thousands. They heaved up and fell down in the battle field like birds hit by a storm. My arrows rained on them with fire. And it was a scene to be seen to be believed, I just massacred them.”

King Ravana said it was most commendable act and commented that Indrajit’s bravery alone could achieve this great victory. Ravana, the king did his best to cover up for the tantric and totally unethical methods resorted to by his son Indrajit through the use of sorcery and his illusionary effects of magic and also his most disgusting methods of terrifying the enemy.

Ravana declared in the full court, Rajyasabha that there were no tantric methods and no black magic techniques were used, by Indrajit and the cause of the victory was because of exemplary bravery and skills of archery of his great warrior son Indrajit. Ravana said that the whole world now, recognized Indrajit for his unmatched skills of archery. Ravana said Indrajit’s bravery alone had broken the back bone of the enemy and Ravana declared that it was only a matter of time before those Vanaras would run away from Lanka with their tails between their legs.

Ravana the king loudly repeated “Those Vanaras shall go away, carrying the dead bodies of Rama and Laxmana all the way to Kishkinda once their hopes of resuscitating those brothers were dashed to the ground”

And hence Ravana declared “there shall be a respite, tomorrow, a rest for the raging battle”.

Indrajit interfered and tried to make some derogatory comments on Sita which enraged Ravana very much. Ravana shouted at his son Indrajit and admonishing him in the full court, told him that the word “Sita” should never come on his tongue again.

He then ordered his son Indrajit to go in to hiding in those caves of the cluster of hills half submerged in the sea. Ravana also told his son never to reveal his hideout.

Ravana turned to his court which was full of members, and declared that those enemies called Vanaras were very highly motivated. The king said they would not keep themselves silent just to remain pall bearers for Rama and Laxmana. These Vanaras particularly powerful among them like Sugreeva, Angadha and Hanuman and his own renegade brother Vibhishana should be making a treacherous plan to murder Indrajit. And hence it should be very important for Indrajit to go underground to a secret hideout. Indrajit tried to intervene with his own impressions about himself but Ravana curtly told him to maintain strict secrecy about his place of living and also advised Indrajit never to come out for a few days.

Ravana again repeated in a very grave manner, that enemy should not be underestimated and without mincing words he expressed his doubts about the death of Rama again. “But in case, if it were true”, Said Ravana and declared “Sita has every right as a wife of Rama, to see her dead husband and arrangements should be made to take her to the battle field”.

Ravana issued orders stating that Sita should be taken to battle grounds in his helicopter “Pushpak” without any delay and that “Trijata” should accompany Sita along with twenty other rakshasha women to the battle field”

A court clerk ran out to Ashoka Gardens with these orders of the king.



SITA VISITS BATTLE FIELD

It was a late morning and Sun was shining bright in the battle field. There were thousands of Vanaras groaning with pain and the battle ground was soaked in blood. In certain parts of the battle field there was an eerie all-pervading silence generally observed in a crematorium. The tragedy and the disappointment could be seen on the faces of Vanaras who were aimlessly wandering here and there on the battle ground in that bright morning time. At the end of this battle field nearly on the sea shore, Laxamana's dead body was lying on a bed of banyan tree leaves. There was not even a single Vanara near his dead body. Many Vanaras were roaming around on the sands of the sea coast with hopelessness and with very depressive faces. The situation was grim.

A little bit away but on the side of Laxamana's dead body, Rama's body was lying on green tree leaves and he was pierced with arrows on every inch of his body. Great Vanaras like Sugreeva, Hanuman and even Jambavan felt that Rama was still alive but even they had their own doubts about sustaining his life breath which could be hardly heard. And about Rama's life force which was probably hanging by thread, there were lingering doubts in the minds of Vanaras. Sugreeva declared that Rama was alive for sure because a very thin cotton thread which he had placed on the nose of Rama was heaving up and down according to his observation, while all others, including Jambavan did not agree.

The king of Vanaras, Sugreeva proposed a plan. He would carry Rama's body to Kishkinda for treatment by an Ayurveda doctor who could easily remove all those arrows by surgery and with his medication he was sure Rama would survive. Sugreeva emphatically said their Vanara doctor could put back life into Rama. Sugreeva said, "If we have to take Rama to Kishkinda",

Sugreeva implored with all Vanara leaders to accept that “we must kidnap Sita from Ashoka Gardens and take her to Kishkinda along with Rama”.

Hanuman had been weeping since the last night and he was not in a mood to listen or to talk to anyone. That great Hanuman collapsed beside Rama and had been crying since yesterday night. Hanuman replied at last to Sugreeva and told him that he did not know what to do and he could do nothing because he had no power to do anything at all without Rama.

And all Vanaras looked up to the sky because they started hearing a motor fans whizzing noise in the sky. Ravana’s helicopter “Pushpak” was flying in the air and hovering around the tree tops nearby and it was also descending down fast towards them. All Vanaras including Hanuman got up, and all of them moved a little bit forward, and they were all intently gazing at the helicopter “Pushpak” which was flying very low to the ground and was flying very near to them going around the battle field. Hanuman was the first one to observe and with an exclamation he said “Sita is coming!”

Sugreeva all in haste told all other Vanaras particularly to Hanuman that there should be no need to kidnap Sita as they were very lucky. Sita was herself coming and all Vanaras thought that, it was a God sent opportunity and should be considered as nothing less than a miracle. Since Hanuman was the only one who had talked to Sita earlier in Ashoka Gardens, Sugreeva thought that Hanuman would stop her and talk to her to convince her to fly in that same Pushpak to Kishkinda along with injured and unconscious Rama. Sugreeva told them all that Pushpak should be hijacked after dumping those rakshasha women. Sugreeva continued and said to all including Jambavan that, “This simply means we shall fly to Kishkinda by this same helicopter “Pushpak” along with Sita and Rama and the dead Laxmana as fast as we could and with such an urgent treatment only we could save precious life of Rama”.

Every Vanara was so much tensed up with that after shock effect that they could hardly be breathing while looking at Sita in that helicopter who was sitting among those rakshasha women like a lamp in the middle of a dark house. Their bad memories of last night battle with Indrajit had been still very fresh. It was not very difficult for those ordinary Vanaras to realize that they were all hallucinating during yesterday night battle with in that circle of black magic weaved by Indrajit. It seemed that the robot pilot of Pushpak had located the area as the helicopter which hovered around until then, was landing very near to them.

Sita first got out of the “Pushpak” all in haste and was walking fast towards them. Other rakshasha woman got out slowly and walked behind her towards where Rama was lying on a bed of tree leaves.

Sita was obviously terrified when she had seen her husband. She sat down there beside Rama cross legged and pulled Rama in to her lap. She looked down intently watching her husband’s face with love, and then she broke down. Bursting with tears, she accused herself first, saying she did not listen to Laxmana and insisted on catching that golden deer.

Sita was sobbing. She spoke in between while sobbing, “How can these happen to a great warrior?! I thought his arrows would burn Lanka one more time. I dreamt of a rain of arrows of Rama shooting over the Lanka to dry all their wells. Oh! Warrior, my darling husband, is there anyone in this world, who can shoot arrows at you? You are the greatest warrior of all time oh! My dear! What happened to your great bow Kodanda?”

Sita was weeping inconsolably with Rama’s head in her lap. One hand on the earth and one hand on the forehead of her husband Rama, Sita questioned herself “How can this happen? How Indrajit could shoot arrows at you? When mighty gods are afraid of you?” Sita’s tear drops were rolling down her cheeks. Sita said while sobbing “Oh! Mighty! Warrior! You look like a porcupine! Is there any space anywhere, not even an inch in your body

without these black arrows? What is that bow which had shot these arrows? What are those arrows?"

Sita was weeping her heart out and while sobbing she said "Astrologers said I would become an empress with many sons? But why am I here in this island of rakshashas, nowhere in the middle of this Ocean with my warrior husband of great reputation in the dust? How am I witnessing this? My dear husband now looks like a porcupine. Oh! Shiva! Oh! God! Why are you so cruel? What harm have I done to anyone? Why is this Karma?"

Sita was weeping very horribly. Many Vanaras who were nearby also started weeping. While weeping she said "I myself have the knowledge of science of body parts by which predictions are made for future life. I have round breasts and my navel is deep and my eye brows are excellent bending like a bow and my eyes are large and clear. How can I become a widow? How can those predictions of symbols on my palm and all that palmistry go terribly wrong? And how can those benevolent lines on my palm could bring upon me, such a horrible fate? And what harm have I done to anyone to have this tragic life which I do not desire to happen even to my worst enemy. Sooth Sayers, Astrologers of great reputation and palmists told me I shall be wife of a great emperor and as I have a star on my palm on the mount of Jupiter I shall have worldwide fame!? What happened to my life? How everything, every prediction could go so much terribly wrong and now I become a widow? Oh! My god! How can I bear this idea of myself a widow! How horrible is this life to me?"

Sita suddenly stopped weeping. She was breathing heavily. She looked at her husband intently, as if she could not believe her own eyes. She then took a deep breath and for a moment she closed her eyes, chanted some mantras and put her hand on the forehead of Rama. After a little time later when everything fell silent, Rama moved slightly and light came up on his face which was very obvious for everyone to see.

Sita pushed away Rama's head with both her hands from her lap until his head slipped on to the ground. She suddenly got up, shook her sari fringes and she wound her sari's long edge round her narrow waist, and over her stomach, after taking out her long braid of hair over her sari, she started walking fast towards Ravana's helicopter "Pushpak". Sugreeva told Hanuman to stop Sita. Hanuman hesitated and told Jambavan to stop her. Jambavan in a hurry, told Sugreeva to stop Sita. But by this time Sita climbed in to Pushpak of Ravana and immediately following her all the other twenty rakshasha woman got inside. Within no time Pushpak took off in to the sky. All the while Vanaras were kept looking at that Pushpak with their mouths gaped.



RAMA LAMENTS

Rama regained consciousness. Once he came back to his conscious state of mind, he looked around by turning his head. Rama was unable to move his body, even with great effort, due to arrows deeply struck in his body causing excruciating pains. Sugreeva and Jambavan ran near him and kneeled on the side of him. Hanuman, who was sitting beside Rama weeping all the time looked at Rama with devotion and with his affectionate, love filled eyes, was looking at him when Rama became full aware of himself and his surroundings. Rama was lying on the bed of tree leaves, with full of arrows in his body, writhing in pain he was muttering unclear words while his teeth were chattering. Rama was unable to move his hands. Rama's face was contorted with extreme pain when he exerted himself to move. He turned his head to look on his side, and found his brother Laxmana's dead body kept a bit away from him. Rama looked again and realized that Laxmana was dead. Sugreeva consoled him saying Laxmana might be still alive with a little of his life force still left inside his backbone. But Rama broke down and started wailing for his brother, while Jambavan and others tried their best with their soothing words to console him. Rama could not stop weeping.

Rama began to question his own decisions and waging a war of attrition where no one seemed to win. Rama started asking questions himself. "What answer he would give to his mother if she enquired about Laxmana?" Rama started talking to himself. He said that the moment he reached home, his mother Kausalya would ask "Hare Rama, Where is Laxmana?" And then what answer he could give her. His mother Kausalya would look around expecting that Laxmana was far behind and with expectant eyes she would wait at the door for Laxmana.

About this time, while Rama was still inconsolably weeping looking at his dead brother, they heard an eagle's very shrill, high pitched peal, a whistling noise for its prey very high in the sky. When all the Vanaras looked up, they saw a huge eagle which was much bigger than even a boat. The eagle was swooping down from the sky with a high peal repeated again and while that great eagle was moving in circles in the air, all the snakes on the ground and on the sea shore and everywhere started creeping away deadly fast with death like fear in their eyes, escaping in to holes in the earth and burrows of trees. And some snakes were fast disappearing in to the maze of ant hills on the open ground in the dry grass.

The eagle landed beside Rama. It was very tall, several feet high on its legs, much bigger than Vanaras imagined when they had seen this eagle high above in the sky. The great eagle, with a golden nose ring, put its long leg with long talons on the chest of Rama. All those black coloured arrows struck deeply in the body of Rama turned in to snakes. These highly poisonous snakes of black colour were protruding out of Rama's body to escape the eagle's beak. But the eagle made very shrill, whistling noise and sucked the snakes with its long, curved beak wide open. Even while in sitting posture, the eagle was as big as ten feet tall. Along with the air, these snakes were sucked by that great eagle. That great eagle Garuda, with its huge beak, was poking at some snakes with its sharp beak, and after pulling them out of the body of Rama, it was eating them voraciously. All snakes stuck deep inside the body of Rama were now cleared by that great eagle. Vanaras realized it was that great mythical bird Garuda, the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu about which they heard great many stories but had never seen it. And one of those stories Vanaras heard was remembered by them in that moment. It was an interesting story of Garuda.

“Garuda was swift and powerful in the air. And at one point of time the pot of nectar “amrita” of Gods, an elixir which prolongs life forever, was thrown by Lord Vishnu in to the celestial world of stars and planets. However the pot was almost empty except

for a few drops of the elixir which stuck to the inside walls of the pot like a moisture. Ravana was one rakshasha who flew in the air and chased that pot of “Amrita” thrown away by Lord Vishnu, but Garuda swiftly reached and got the pot in its talons. Lord Indra Bhagvan who was flying along on his chariot thought that Garuda was causing nuisance, and threw his sword of diamonds at Garuda. But the speed of Garuda with elixir pot in its talons was much greater than Indra Bhagvan sword. And it was a humiliating situation for the king of Gods Indra Bhagvan as all the “Asura” or Rakshashas and *devatas* or Gods were witnessing this celestial event. Garuda thought he should save Indra Bhagvan from an embracement and humiliation and hence it stretched its wings so that the sword of Indra Bhagvan could at least cut the fringes of its feathers of his wing. The sword of diamonds at last could cut off one feather of Garuda which was a saving grace for that Bhagvan.” That was the strength of Garuda and all the Vanaras very much heard of this incident and its celestial event which was spectacular at that time.

While all the Vanaras were watching Garuda with admiration, all those snake arrows had been eaten, by that great eagle Garuda. It had then put its right leg with its talons, shrunken and folded, on the forehead of Rama and then put its beak on the center of his head to suck all the poison. The high fever of Rama immediately subsided and Rama started sweating. Rama then started shivering a little but he felt relieved of all the pains and became fully conscious.

Rama now sat up with a drowsy face, with blood marks, and incisive injuries all over his body. Rama asked the eagle in a feeble voice “Who are you? Oh! Mighty Eagle! May I know your name?”

The eagle started speaking to the surprise of Rama but that was not a surprise for Vanaras and their leaders standing there. The eagle with human like forehead and huge beak told Rama “Oh! Rama! I am Garuda. I am the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, the preserver of this Universe and I came from heaven. Now you will

not understand me as well as the reasons for my arrival here. But as the time passes you might understand, Oh! Rama! There is a time for everything and the significance of my arrival here shall be revealed to you in due course of time”

That Garuda made a great peal, a very high shrill whistling sound which frightened every bird in the vicinity. All the birds on all trees fluttered and flew away high in to the sky frightened by the peal of Garuda. That huge eagle took off in to the sky and it flew to such heights that it had soon disappeared in the clouds.

Rama was sitting, fully aware, without fever and pains and hence he started weeping with full energy and much more loudly looking at his brother's dead body. The pain of death of his brother with separation anxiety was extreme for him. The snake arrows penetrated deep in to the body of Laxmana were also already eaten by that eagle Garuda, while most of those snake arrows scurried in to holes escaping that eagle.

There were no arrows on Laxamana's body and later on all sorts of attempts to revive him by Jambavan and Sugreeva miserably failed. Sugreeva, Hanuman and Jambavan all felt hopeless. Rama did not stop crying for his brother. Rama fell on the body of Laxmana while shaking him and calling his name to wake him up. Rama said he would not return back to Ayodhya even with Sita. While lamenting death of his brother Laxmana, Rama said he would rather commit suicide in Kishkinda than face his mother in Ayodhya.

Then Jambavan spoke some soothing words to Rama and told Rama that it was possible to resuscitate Laxmana. Jambavan said “Oh! Rama! There is only one way out for all us if it could be done within two days from now. There is a plant called “Sanjeevini” an Ayurveda herbal, which can bring back Laxmana alive with its smell or else an extract of its juice should bring back Laxmana alive. The plant glows like a small lamp with its own luminosity. It would not be very difficult to identify the plant but it is available only in Himalayas located far away from here”.

“But who would go there” asked Rama. Jambavan said “Hanuman should go there and he could bring the “Sanjeevini” plant.

Rama was still too weak to get up, due to effects of the poison of a hundred snakes on his body stuck deep in to his muscles for the whole of previous night until Garuda saved him by eating them. Though poison flowing in Rama’s blood was sucked by Garuda, he was still slipping to unconscious states of mind, now and then due to its after effects and was coming to consciousness only to cry for his brother. In that situation, Hanuman was encouraged by Jambavan to become aware of his powers. Someone had to remind Hanuman of his enormous strength and Jambavan made Hanuman remember his strength. After a lot of coaxing and making him chant the name of “Rama, Rama” finally Hanuman’s energy came back and he became aware of his own enormous strength and his ability to fly with the speed of wind.

Hanuman was getting ready to jump again across the Ocean.

Jambavan said “Hanuman it is very important! You must return at least on the second day with the plant or else Laxmana would never wake up. In which case, without Laxmana, Rama may not be able to wage this war against Ravana. And we may have to carry Laxmana’s dead body across the bridge we had constructed on the sea. It would be a shameful defeat and loss of face and may finally lead to the terrible eventuality of leaving Sita behind in Lanka. That would be what we shall never forgive ourselves.”

Hanuman took off in to the air forthwith without any preparations and Rama slipped again into unconscious state of mind.

The day of all unforeseen events came to an end as the darkness was spreading its wings with the fall of night. Vanaras lit up many camp fires to warm themselves in the battle field where dead bodies of rakshashas and Vanaras were strewn across and in some places dead bodies were piled up. It was bitterly cold winter and in all the camps wooden torches were lit up all over battle

field. Vanaras depressively thought that it was the most tragic night of all nights in Lanka with the dead body of Laxmana lying on the bed of leaves.



LANKA BURNS AGAIN

Many Vanaras were sitting on the outer walls of the city of Lanka observing the reveling rakshashas in utter jubilation of their recent victory. They were singing songs and dancing with joy. They had lit up lanterns and dancing around camp fires everywhere. They were all drowned in their glory that their victory had brought them. All that the Vanaras could see was a sea of dancing rakshashas around the fireplaces everywhere.

Vanaras then started talking among themselves about taking revenge. A thousand Vanaras beat the earth with their tails and shouted “revenge”. They stomped around the fire places of their own to nurse their wounds and to console each other. Many Vanaras started shouting slogans to avenge the insult Indrajit wantonly brought upon the effigy of Sita. Vanaras were very angry with Indrajit for his sorcery and his war of perfidy. The restless, sea of Vanaras huddled in to groups was highly agitated and were going berserk. Aided, abetted by rumour mongering, these Vanaras in a chaotic state erupted in violence and were on the verge of total disobedience. Vanaras in large numbers started running towards the city walls to creep up and climb to the heights of the arches of the city to peep inside the vast city with reveling rakshashas completely oblivious of the plight of Vanaras who were burning with anguish and seething with anger who wanted nothing but revenge. Vanaras had seen celebrating rakshashas drinking and reveling with joy rousing a terrible reaction among them.

Vanaras climbed down the city walls and said to themselves, “we shall teach these rakshashas a lesson which they should never forget”.

And a hundred thousand Vanaras huddled in to several groups spread across a wide area started shouting at the height of their voices their deadly slogan of “revenge”.

Jambavan warned Sugreeva not to encourage any Vanara demanding for “revenge” at least at this point of time when the leader Rama himself lied in unconscious condition. The whole movement of Vanaras without a leader meant self-destruction, a clear indication of danger and unpredictable consequences according to Jambavan. He said to Sugreeva in a very convincing voice “The first reason should be that these Vanaras became restless without an aim and without a leader they would be left with no direction at all. The great leader Rama is now unconscious again”.

Jambavan said “Oh! Sugreeva, take up the leadership and pacify your Vanara army. You must give them a noble cause and purpose to them and make them quiet by diverting their attention at least for the time being”

But Sugreeva himself was highly restless. Sugreeva told Jambavan “Whatever my people are demanding is not wrong. We must set fire to Lanka again to avenge the insult meted out to Sita though the insult, Indrajit had caused was only to her effigy, which was a doll of Sita controlled by his sorcery, it was still unbearable for my Vanara army. It was horrible and an extreme insult. We adore Sita as the daughter of the jungle”

Sugreeva continued, “But since all that had happened throughout night of the previous day had been perceived by us as the real Sita, and it had been still painfully lingering in the hearts of us, it is still burning us to our bones. Another terrible damage through this war of sorcery was the death of Laxmana which is real, the fall of Rama in unconscious condition is real and reality of thousands of Vanaras dead and their mortal bodies scattered all over the battle field is real which is causing burning anger in all of us for the sorcery of Indrajit and for his utter non-ethical war. All this carnage, and piled up dead bodies of Vanaras is a witness to the insidious nature of Indrajit for which this Lanka has to pay

and stooping so much low to do it again should never enter their brain. These rakshashas shall shudder to think to wage an unethical war anymore. Their memories of Lanka should never erase after this. So, I say, oh! Jambavan, Lanka shall be burnt down again”.

A dozen Vanaras held a huge ladder of a great height for Sugreeva who climbed the ladder and holding a wooden torch aloft in his right hand, he addressed a sea of Vanaras with emotion filled speech, “Comrades! Compatriots! This rakshasha Indrajit insulted Sita, though it was an effigy of Sita’s lookalike doll, life like by his black magic, it was still a great insult to Sita! And Indrajit confused us, killed us, and now Laxmana lies dead on the sea shore and Rama was lying unconscious. I am concerned and with sadness I shall have to say that many thousands of Vanaras who came all the way from Kishkinda and toiled day and night to build the great bridge “Rama Sethu” across the mighty Ocean were all now lying dead in this battle field, in the pools of blood martyred for a cause. But the deaths of these brave Vanaras was because of insidious methods adopted by Indrajit using his sorcery which was against the rules of war. Even the war has its own rules and a real warrior has to abide by it. Oh! Comrades! We shall take revenge! Yes revenge! You shall burn Lanka, set fire to all the houses!!” Sugreeva exhorted his army of Vanaras at the height of his voice

Then Sugreeva continued, “We shall set fire to whole of Lanka and burn the whole city by day break! Do not go to north-east side, there is Ashoka garden where Sita is sitting. Spare the palaces of Ravana. We need them once we win this war”

Word spread from commanders to warriors and from one group leader to another group leader of the Vanara army of Sugreeva.

Vanaras wound rags, clothes, or dry grass ropes on the tips of long wooden sticks which were doused in oil, and then they were set on fire. A million Vanaras holding these wooden torches which Vanaras called them as “*khagadas*” jumped over the outer protection walls of the city of Lanka and entered the city while

most of the rakshashas were celebrating their victory with song and dance. These Vanaras clutching wooden torches or “khagadas” in their mouths between their teeth were jumping high on to roof tops of houses and then jumping from one house to another house like fireflies in the pitch darkness of a forest. Lanka started burning. Vanaras were dashing across through the houses and climbed to roofs of houses to set them on fire. Vanaras ran through bungalows, corridors, shops and even climbed the lighting tower at the city center.

The great city of Lanka was burning for the second time, but this time almost the entire city caught fire. The smoke billowed up. Lankan people ran out of their houses, housewives with babies in their arms ran through the streets, in pitch darkness crying horribly, they started beating their chests. The darkness at many places was lit up only by torched houses which were on huge fire. The fires flared up when Vanaras started throwing palanquins, carriages and chariots in to the fire. Ravana was watching helplessly this arson and looting of Vanaras and the burning Lanka from his palace roof.

Ravana’s army tried to douse the fires as much as they could and they could even kill some Vanaras to contain their arson and loot of the food and clothes from houses. But the fire was unabated as it was spreading fast all over the city and the Lanka was burning until for another two days.



HANUMAN BRINGS SANJEEVINI

Hanuman went to the slopes of Himalayas and found the Dronagiri Mountain which was known as Gandhamadana Mountain but his search for Sanjeevini herb did not end.

Hanuman decided at once that if Laxmana were to survive, the only way was to find the plant Sanjeevini, the juice of which could bring back Laxmana alive according to Jambavan. Hanuman realised that there were not many options for him.

Hanuman decided at once to lift the smaller mountain of Dronagiri from the mountain ranges where the plant “Sanjeevini” was probably located. Hanuman increased himself to a giant size so big that he kept the entire mountain on his palm and took to flight through the clouds to reach Lankan sea shores.

Hanuman landed at the sand shores of Lanka, early in the morning, in an area where Laxmana and Rama were lying a few hundred meters away. When hanuman placed the hill down on the sands of sea shore, Jambavan and Sugreeva immediately climbed the mountain to find the plant “Sanjeevini”. In a search, Jambavan found it quickly. Sanjeevini plant was burning itself, glowing.

Jambavan told Hanuman “You should hold both your palms together and hold this plant in the cup of your hands. It is enough if the Laxmana breaths the smell of this plant which should be enough to revive him. He should come back to life”.

Hanuman was holding the plant in the cups of his hands while himself floating in the air as if he were swimming in the air, moved towards the place where Laxmana and Rama were lying on the bed of tree leaves. The plant Sanjeevini was glowing like a small lamp burning out slowly, extinguishing itself, while it was spreading its effervescence.

When Hanuman was about to approach Laxmana, he saw Lord Rama who was sitting and already in waiting for him, ordered Hanuman to stop there.

“Do not move Hanuman” Rama ordered.

Rama told Hanuman “You should not revive Laxmana until you revive all other Vanaras who were dead due to arrows of Indrajit. And hence you should first of all move among the dead Vanaras and then come to my brother Laxmana. We should not forget that everybody should have equal opportunity”

A dumbfounded Hanuman expressed his objection.

Hanuman told Rama, “Rama! Oh! Lord! As for your sense of justice I should not have any objection. You are an embodiment of truth! Oh! Rama! What can I tell you? But if I move among those dead Vanaras lying among rakshashas, it is unavoidable that I may be moving among dead rakshashas as well so they will also come back alive and rise again but they are our enemies!”

Rama insisted that Sanjeevini must be shown to the dead Vanaras and said “Hanuman! Everyone is equal. If Vanaras fought for me, the rakshashas fought for their Ravana’s Lanka! And without even second thought you must move among dead Vanaras with Sanjeevini”

Hanuman again raised objection by saying “Rama, my lord, in that case there might not be enough time. This Sanjeevini is glowing as you can see it. This Sanjeevini burns itself out by the time I may come back to Laxmana”

Rama insisted that Hanuman must move fast and if Sanjeevini burns itself out so be it. Rama said “in that case, it shall be the fate of Laxmana”

Hanuman started floating in the air and with certain speed he started moving among the dead Vanaras. These Vanaras coming alive got up and were looking weird. But among them rakshashas who were dead also came alive, and they got up and then they started running towards the city, while all the way hooting and

howling. But unfortunately for rakshashas, so many of their people were already cremated by their kinsmen who came to collect their bodies for an honorable cremation.

Hanuman completed the tour of the battle field as fast as he could and returned back to the body of dead Laxmana. The Sanjeevini plant was burning out and there was very little light still left in it with which Sanjeevini was still glowing when it was finally brought to the nose of Laxmana. At last to the delight of his brother Rama, Hanuman and other Vanara leaders, Laxmana got up alive.

The moment Laxmana got up alive; he hugged his brother and wept on his shoulder. After a little time of interaction and dialogues between two brothers, Laxmana spoke of taking revenge for the witchcraft, sorcery of Indrajit! Laxmana said that those tricks of sorcery were all against the rules of war and the rules of war were flouted by Indrajit wantonly and his only aim was to kill us both the brothers. Laxmana talked about this in detail and he expressed his confidence to face Indrajit in a hand to hand combat.

Laxmana said to all present there “First we have to find the place where Indrajit stays in that palace complex and I shall surreptitiously enter without a sound, like a snake through his window and I shall cut his neck with the blades of my sharp arrows. And I shall say that nothing is wrong in this attempt and no method could be wrong in killing a person like Indrajit who is an immoral rakshasha.”

While all this discussion was going on, Vibhishana, the renegade brother of Ravana came there to enquire about the health of Rama and Laxmana. It was midday time in the afternoon.

Vibhishana looked like Indrajit with a very close resemblance which caused Vanaras to mistake him to be Indrajit and took to flight in terrific fear. Vanaras who were sitting around Rama and Laxmana also got up and ran away with fear by shouting and

spreading the rumours all over that area so much that other Vanaras who were far away also started running towards the sea.

Vibhishana announced that he had a plan ready to put an end to the life of Indrajit.

Vibhishana said “I got an inside information from a very reliable source. Indrajit was advised to hide in some place by Ravana, his father. Indrajit was hiding in a cave in the cradle of hills on the south near the sea coast and in fact that particular hill among the cluster of hills in which his cave is located is nearly two miles deep in to the sea waters and half of that hill was submerged in the sea. I know the place very well.”

Vibhishana gave a map of the location plan and told Laxmana, “Do not expect to find a sitting duck there and an easy walk with a victory. Indrajit is an excellent fighter with javelin. He is most feared person on the earth with his favourite weapon javelin. Indrajit was the warrior who fought and defeated Indra Bhagvan and acquired an apt name Indrajit which meant the conqueror of Indra the king of gods. You must remember that Indrajit is a great warrior who can fight hundred people at a time. He is a devotee of goddess Kali and at this point of time, I am sure he must have been sitting in front of idol of Goddess Kali, deeply immersed himself in worshipping the goddess”.



RAMA'S ULTIMATUM TO SUGREEVA

Rama learnt that everything went unexpected when he was himself lying unconscious and his brother Laxmana was almost dead.

Through the account of Hanuman, Rama was astonished to know that his wife Sita arrived by Ravana's helicopter Pushpak to the battle field and wept her heart out with his head kept in her lap. Rama was also shocked to learn from Hanuman that Sita left him in haste just before he had himself regained consciousness. She did not show any interest to stay back and all the plans of Sugreeva to take her away back to Kishkinda were all foiled, and all that great opportunity was lost only because she sat back in that Pushpak without sparing a minute of time. Hanuman clarified to him that Sita did not talk to anyone of them and had not shown any interest to talk to anyone or to stay back even for a minute.

After listening to Hanuman, Rama felt very lonely, sad and slipped into a depressive mood. Rama sat there in complete silence.

After sometime, Jambavan informed Rama that the city of Lanka was set on fire, with deliberate planning and preparations by Sugreeva and his hundreds of thousands of Vanaras who were actually turned in to uncontrolled frenzied mobs at the time. Jambavan lamented that it was a very regrettable act by Vanaras which he tried to stop by goading Sugreeva to tame those Vanaras who were clamouring for revenge but Sugreeva refused to be pressurized as he was himself bent on avenging deaths of Vanaras due to sorcery of Indrajit.

Jambavan commented that if not for that Garuda eagle that descended from heavens, which saved you both, it was actually a dangerous time and the life was on the precipice edge of death, and was just hanging by thread for both you, brothers. Jambavan loudly remembered that everyone almost assumed that war was over, and in fact Sugreeva was considering various plans to carry both of you, to Kishkinda for treatment.

Rama listened to Jambavan with attention and first of all issues, Rama questioned the wisdom of Sugreeva in taking revenge on Lankans. Rama told Jambavan that he could not understand the fault of rakshashas of Lanka in the actions of Ravana abducting Sita and their king's decisions to wage a war.

Rama told Sugreeva to assemble all Vanaras and told him that he wanted to speak to his army of Vanaras directly.

In the sand dunes extending miles together, all Vanaras gathered to listen to Shri Ram who was standing on a huge rock, several feet high which Hanuman brought to be used as a high pedestal. On the right side of Rama was Laxmana and on his left was Sugreeva and further right and left beside Laxmana and Sugreeva respectively standing were Hanuman and Angadha. Jambavan was standing on the ground below.

Rama was Shri Ram and he was the Avatar for Vanaras. He was their lord and they worshipped him as God. In their mood of listening to their God's own words, more than a million Vanaras were all standing in complete silence when the bird chirping faraway could be heard.

Shri Rama, the lord said "I was in the forefront of the war like Laxmana, Hanuman, Angadha and Sugreeva. I was seriously injured by Indrajit and fell unconscious and my brother Laxmana was almost dead".

"I have your chief of the army and the king Sugreeva standing by my side. And also I have your greatest warrior and world's most powerful person Hanuman here standing on my side along with Angadha. I would like to tell you, if you kill innocent people and

burn their houses, loot their food and clothing, it is not called war. You are not waging war by killing innocent people. I advise you should not hate anyone. If you are fighting for your cause, rakshashas have been fighting for their country”.

Rama after a brief respite continued “If you still think that killing rakshashas is always correct simply because they are all born as rakshashas and pave a path for your greatness by killing them, I am compelled to tell you, this war is over. And you can leave immediately forthwith to Kishkinda. I do not want, Sita, to come to me, walking through the blood soaked path of innocent people. If that were the only way, to get Sita then I do not want Sita. It is my personal life if you want to think in that manner. I was unconscious on that day and you were misguided by your chief of the army and your own misplaced emotions led you to burn the city of Lanka”.

“Hence forth if you Vanaras attack even one single innocent citizen of Lanka, I shall call off the war and that should be the end of the war. I can fight directly with Ravana in a duel. You can go back to Kishkinda leaving me and my brother alone here. I shall not worry about your leaving even a little but it pains me more if you kill innocent citizens of Lanka”.

Rama finished his speech and immediately climbed down from that huge rock and sat in meditation on the sand dunes of Lanka.

Vanaras were stunned to believe what they heard and they were dumbstruck by the words of Shri Rama, the Avatar. There was an eerie silence pervaded everywhere.



WAR OF BEARS

Sita had been living in Ashoka Gardens for the last one year and more, by that time, started complaining about extreme pains in her hands, in her feet and in her joints in the knees and elbows. She said she was feeling like sitting nearby fire bearing extreme heat.

She sinks to the bottom of that pond every day in that bitterly cold morning in that extreme winter and sits in meditation under the Ashoka tree with her wet cloths.

Sita came to know through rakshasha woman Trijata, who took a liking for Sita, that Rama and Laxmana were alive again and planning for an all-out war.

In that evening of that winter, when the night fall was early, a bear with a baby in arms crept up the city's outer walls and walked through the trees and climbed up again on the high walls of Ashoka Gardens. The she-bear sat on the wall and observed Sita who was incessantly weeping under an Ashoka tree in that evening just before the night fall.

The bear called out, for other bears somewhere in the Ashoka gardens and cried. The bear was speaking in its own language calling out for help from its entire bear heard and explained with remorse in a voice of concern that the daughter of jungle Sita had been a captive by this rakshasha Ravana about whom, we had been since then largely ignored it.

That bear made a heavy roar which could be heard in the hills. Many bears in the caves of the hills on the sea shore came out of their caves and roared, in repetition signaling all others to come, and thousands of bears made a long yawl to communicate with other bears. Some bears made a loud hauling which resounded in

the hills and some made a very high pitched barking and then started roaring.

Then hundreds of thousands of bears some in white colour and some in black colour started coming out of caves of the high hills and many from the thick forests nearby jumped out from trees and started their great march towards the battle field.

Jambavan a bear with a human body and blessed by Lord Brahma, with some super natural powers had been like an advisor to Rama and Laxmana since the incident at Kishkinda and continued to be with them, after Sugreeva became the king of Kishkinda.

Jambavan came to the center of battle field and roared signaling other bears to come to battle field. Jambavan with a red vermillion mark on his forehead and a long piece of cloth across his shoulders started speaking in the language of bears, and hundreds of thousands of bears listened to him in the battle field, just outside the city's outer walls.

After Jambavan started speaking the horrors of immoral war of Indrajit and his cruel methods of using snakes as arrows with his sorcery and the night war of that rakshashas creating hallucinations with his magic, the blood of the bears started boiling. The bears ground their teeth and made a terrific roar. Jambavan spoke in the language of bears and used his hand signals to convey a message for the need of their sacrifice to save Sita. All those hundred thousand bears roared with their heads upwards.

It was like sea wave of bears very soon. It was the Moon light shining bright in the battle field as a million bears were rising up to cross the outer walls of the city while on the other hand thousands of other bears were warning them to wait until the day break for a pitched battle with rakshashas. In that Moon light bears with white fur were shining with their fur and the black bears appeared like moving shadows of huge clouds.

Early in the morning as the Sun was rising over the sea, at least a hundred thousand bears raised their heads to the sky and roared

high, baring their teeth which resounded in the palaces of Ravana. They were expressing their terrific anger at the confinement of Sita in the Ashoka Gardens. Their roar could be heard all over the Lanka. It was a battle cry of the bears.

The woman and children of the city ran inside their homes early in that morning time terrified by the roar of the bears, and their children gripped their mothers with fear. Some bears made a high pitched bark which could be heard miles away. The bears were moving along the walls of the fort thumping their feet which could be heard inside the fort of Ravana. Thousands of bears at a time were jumping several feet high in the sky, towards the fort of Ravana like a dark cloud in the sky. And the earth began to shake when a hundred thousand bears were advancing towards the fort walls of Ravana thumping their feet and running forward they were bombarding themselves against the city gates made of steel.

Bears were holding stones and sharpened wooden sticks, which were sharpened by their teeth. Some bears got hold of steel bars. Many bears stood there in a fighting position with bare hands with their long nails and with very sharp teeth.

Some bears were even holding their babies in their arms, and these mother bears hundreds of them were all sitting on the walls of Ashoka Gardens, started weeping when they watched wailing and sobbing Sita sitting under the Ashoka tree. These bears also made a huge noise by yelling and weeping, grunting and growling. These incessantly weeping and wailing bears sitting on the walls of Ashoka Gardens attracted the attention of the fighting bears motivating them to fight to death.

These bears lifted their heads, bared their teeth and made a long yawl, communicating to all other bears to come down to look at Sita, who with an emaciated body had been weeping under the Ashoka tree.

King Ravana's palace complex and its doors of the fort on the north for bears were opened wide through which rakshashas

division of chariots with bowmen ready to shoot arrows and then cavalry regiment with powerful horses carrying mighty warriors with long swords, came out in an order with a discipline of a professional army.

Rakshashas regular army on foot, the infantry which was most feared by Vanaras came out from the east side doors with javelins, or long swords in their right hands and with huge metal shields in their left hands. They were marching dressed in very thick leather jackets to the battle fields in exact file formations obeying the orders of their commanders.

The battle enraged between rakshashas and bears was very fierce. A few hundred thousand bears were headed by Jambavan. A contingent of Bears climbed the Fort walls easily clutching with their long curved nails over the well-built fort walls and harassed the reserve army inside the fort. On the outside a wave of bears were jumping on each of the chariots of rakshashas and were trying to overturn them. Most of the bear attacks were highly suicidal attacks. Bears were dying in hundreds pierced by the arrows and javelins of rakshashas. There were either hit or torn by swords of rakshashas while at the same time rakshasha warriors, though fighting valiantly were finally succumbing to suicidal attacks of bears. When bears in hordes were attacking their chariots they were overturned and their throats were slit by sharp nails of bears. And their stomach was torn open by the wave after waves of bears with their sharp nails.

Until this time, the great Vanara warriors who were watching on the side lines also jumped in to the middle of battle in support of dying bears by afternoon. The enemy rakshasha warriors on chariots were very fierce and highly skillful with their bows and arrows. As many waves of bears attacked these chariots with bare hands and they were all being shot down by rakshashas like birds were hunt down by excellent bowmen. The great bears were very brave with the only option of pelting stones and jumping on to the rakshashas to bite their necks. And the infantry division of rakshashas was desperately trying to escape the onslaught and

fury of bears by afternoon. Infantry rakshasha warriors were succumbing to the bears that were jumping on them in huge herds and moving together like a black cloud.

When Vanaras jumped in to the middle of battle by afternoon to support the fighting bears, the scene of the battle turned to another dimension.

Hanuman uprooted a huge tree from nearby hills, carried that to battle field with which he killed hundreds of rakshashas. Hanuman and Angadha roared so loud that Indrajit who was inside his cave in the Nilakumba hills near the shore, heard their roar and thought of coming out but restrained himself remembering the advice of his father. The death cries of hundreds of rakshashas in horror moved him.

Rakshashas unabated cries in horror terrified by flying Hanuman in the air, and their death cries reached the ears of Indrajit whose tantric practices were disturbed.

Hanuman from nearby forest plucked out a huge Sal tree of sixty feet length which he was holding it like a walking stick, after increasing his body size. He started attacking rakshashas with full force with that tree trunk. The death cries of rakshashas, who were flying up dead like specks of black soot from a great fire, were letting out horrifying cries which resounded in the clouds and as well resounded in the hills of Nilakumba where Indrajit was in hiding where he was himself deeply immersed in worshipping Goddess Kali with his practices of tantra.

Indrajit, who was doing a black magic on a doll of Sita, a replica, by piercing it with needles, to cause the actual pain in the bone joints of real Sita, felt disturbed. He got up; as he was unable to restrain himself, he started dressing for the war without a strategy and without a plan. Indrajit was preparing to enter battle field all in haste which was strictly prohibitive to any warrior.

Indrajit reached the shores in highly decorated boats and his hundred body guards were waiting for him on the shores.

Indrajit put on his steel jacket studded with precious stones all over and put on his steel helmet. He took his very long and wide bow made of alloy steel with an alloy wire string to it. He took hold of quivers of thousand arrows which he carried on his shoulders and walked to his chariot all in a hurry. Seven black horses were tied to the chariot and a charioteer was ready with steel jacket and a steel face mask with perforations.

After sometime, in the battle field of bears joined by Vanaras, Laxmana and Vibhishana both were taken by surprise by the arrival of Indrajit in to the battle field with all his ferocity. Their plans to attack him in his cave were all redundant when Indrajit appeared all by himself.

Indrajit's chariot was surrounded by hundreds of his body guards in steel jackets at the moment of his entry in to the fiercely raging battle field from the north-side gates of city walls. These body guards were holding sharp javelins. The charioteer of Indrajit was highly efficient and adopted a strategy of rotating his chariot terribly fast to avoid oncoming stones and boulders from Vanaras and bears.

Indrajit's speed on his chariot with his lightning fast arrows was like sparks of fire raging in the middle of battle field. His setting of arrows and pulling the string to release those arrows with the deftness of his hand was so much miraculously fast that even Hanuman's eye could not catch it.

Indrajit was shooting arrows with both hands. His chariot was at lightning speed. He was one of the greatest archers praised by God Indra Bhagvan. The chariot of Indrajit was nearing Laxmana in the battle field and he had set twelve arrows on the string, pulled the string to full length and released them. Laxmana could hardly escape and was severely injured even though he had bent himself and rolled on the floor to escape those arrows. Indrajit used ten arrows on Hanuman and even Hanuman could not escape them in time with his speed and agility. These arrows pierced hanuman's body. And there ensued a terrible fight with arrows and javelins between Laxmana and Indrajit. The

valour of Laxmana in this duel could stop the progress of Indrajit and Laxmana could face him. Laxmana was on the ground and Indrajit was on a very fast moving chariot making circles around Vanaras who were trying to fight with him and its charioteer was very skillful avoiding streaming sharp arrows of Laxmana with a deftness that was unparalleled.

Hanuman asked Laxmana to climb on to his shoulders so that Laxmana could shoot arrows with the speed of the wind of Hanuman's movement.

Laxmana and Indrajit fought with arrows of various types and missiles of various natures. Laxmana was highly lacerated and bleeding with hundreds of cuts caused by arrows of Indrajit grazing past him everywhere on his body. Laxmana started bleeding heavily and at many places his blood was gushing out of deep wounds on his body. And Laxmana with his own blood dripping from head to foot, spilled all over him, and with blood jetting out from deep wounds, Laxmana was drenched in his blood and was looking like a flame without a smoke in that bright afternoon, in that battle field. He was looking like trees with full bloomed red flowers without leaves in summers of the forest. Injuries on the body of Laxmana were countless.

There were many Vanaras in the battle field. They had seen the condition of Laxmana while fighting and his valour of resisting fierce arrows of Indrajit which were shooting at him like sparklers which could be seen for a few seconds before they hit. The rains of arrows were like rain of fire sparklers from Indrajit and these arrows were piercing everyone in a wide area of the battle field. Many Vanaras in groups of hundreds started running away from piercing arrows of Indrajit which were hitting them from every side and hundreds of arrows were raining from the skies! All these Vanaras were in a very tragic situation as they were at a loss to understand the nature of arrows and the directions in which they could be expected. Vanaras thought they had only one choice and that was to run for their life. Some Vanaras who collapsed down in the battle field started crying

terrified with pain and fear. Laxmana was seriously bleeding everywhere on his body even while sitting on the shoulders of Hanuman. Even though Hanuman was moving with the speed of the wind in the battle field, Laxmana was finding it extremely difficult to escape arrows of Indrajit and to counter them was more difficult as well as dangerous. But the brave Laxmana did not stop fighting with Indrajit.

Vibhishana, renegade brother of Ravana, ran behind Vanaras who were running away from battle field, and in a very loud voice he shouted at them, calling them back. Vibhishana gave them courage saying that Indrajit was not an invincible warrior and like thousand headed serpents would die by the swarming attacks of ants, Indrajit would also sure to die. Vibhishana said “if all of you Vanaras were to combine your strength and attack him like a swarm of ants on a vicious snake, Indrajit would be defeated”.

Vanaras took courage with the words of Vibhishana invigorating them; they turned around and tried to face the great warrior Indrajit. Laxmana regained his strength and recovered from his initial shocking injuries to his body. The great Vanaras who were huge in size and heavy in weight jumped up doing a pole vault with their long sticks and flew in the air to sit on the horses of the chariot of Indrajit in their suicidal attacks. The speeding horses of chariot of Indrajit were unable to bear the weight of dozens of Vanaras hanging on to them or sitting on their necks started limping and then finally collapsed. But in these suicidal attacks many Vanaras lost their lives coming directly under the fire of burning arrows of Indrajit and they were shot and thrown under the wheels of his chariot while his high speed arrows were striking in to their hearts. The cries of dying Vanaras and their cries of horror filled the sky.

While at the same time to save the lives of Vanaras from fierce arrows of Indrajit, and to provide for a cover to the suicidal attacks of Vanaras, Vibhishana, a warrior himself, lounged forward with his bow and arrows and could shoot one thousand arrows at Indrajit's chariot.

Indrajit without a chariot which was broken to pieces and was standing on the ground could not evade many arrows from Vibhishana. Indrajit was injured as his breast plate was broken and blown to pieces. And many hundred Vanaras jumped on the back of Indrajit who lost his balance and fell down on the ground.

Vanaras were so many and climbed on each other so much in their attack on Indrajit that in their confusion they could not find Indrajit in the center of them! And there ensued indeed a small stampede of Vanaras for a little time.

But Indrajit used his magical powers as a last resort to save himself and disappeared from the battle field to reappear in his palace safely inside the fort. But by the time, it was late evening, and conch shells were blown on both sides, calling for an end to the exhausted, waning and tired battle with high number of casualties on the side of Bears and Vanaras. The warriors on both sides with dissipated energies almost slumped to the ground or they were swaggering and limping back to their camps. Many Bears with serious wounds were carried by huge Bears of enormous strength back to their caves. It was battle of high casualties where the arch enemy Indrajit escaped.

Susena, the great Vanara physician assisted a seriously injured Laxmana, who was unable to walk to a safe place on his own. The moment Laxmana was carried by Hanuman to a safe place he had slumped to the ground. Susena, the physician shifted him to a bed of banyan tree leaves. He had burned banyan tree bark and applied the ash to the wounds of Laxmana along with other Ayurveda concoctions which were administered to an injured Laxmana with thousand cuts on his body.

Susena that Ayurveda doctor of Vanaras tried his best to treat the cuts and long lacerations on the body of Laxmana but some of them were deep injuries.

Susena increasingly realized that Laxmana was getting into a hopeless case for treatment with all types of normal medicines. The bleeding from wounds of Laxmana could not be entirely

arrested. Susena sutured some wounds of Laxmana and for others he applied lotions, creams etc., but as a physician Susena was honest to himself. He realized he could not save Laxmana with normal procedures of medicine and he should not waste precious time that was available.

But then he thought of “Sanjeevini” herb as the only one that could cure Laxmana of all his injuries and he had explained this as the only possible solution for the serious condition of Laxmana. Laxmana already started shivering and his body began to swell. Susena explained to Jambavan the condition of Laxmana and the necessity of curing those wounds only with Sanjeevini herb.

Jambavan, Hanuman, Angadha and Rama were sitting around Laxmana who had slipped in to a semi-conscious condition, moaning with terrible pains as the blood was still oozing out of bandages of more than hundred cuts on his body. Laxmana’s life was hanging by a thread and his brother Rama and other Vanaras perceiving that Laxmana was on the verge of death started weeping silently. Jambavan finally said that there should be at least one more plant of “Sanjeevini” in the Himalayas if not more on some other hills of Himalayas. This led to a big discussion among Sugreeva the King of Kishkinda, Jambavan and other Vanaras. Finally Sugreeva agreed to the proposal of sending Hanuman again for the second time to Himalayas for locating and obtaining “Sanjeevini” herb. Sugreeva argued earlier that Laxmana could as well be treated in Kishkinda and that of finding another “Sanjeevini” might be near impossible which would be a futile search and waste of precious time.

Next morning Hanuman flew to Himalayas again for the second time, and he brought a whole lot of medicinal plants in huge bundles since he could not identify the correct one even this time as well. Susena identified that “glowing” herb of “Sanjeevini” among the huge pile of medicinal plants, and treated the injuries of Laxmana with its extract which had immediate effect of healing the wounds of Laxmana.

Laxmana miraculously recovered from all his injuries of lacerations and deep cuts which were disappeared in a day leaving only faint traces on his body.



INDRAJIT COMES AGAIN

Indrajit the most feared rakshasha by Vanaras arrived at the battle field after a gap of full day of rest for Vanaras and rakshashas. He was blowing his conch shell in the battle field early in the morning and the face of Indrajit was glowing with confidence. But it was a terrifying face for Vanaras. Thousands of Vanaras started running away from battle field even without any fighting. Indrajit was protected on all sides with more than three hundred special guards of the army's cavalry regiment on black horses and all of them were wearing protective steel armour. They were wearing steel jackets and face masks of steel with perforations. They held long swords and some of them were armed with very sharp javelins. And with thousand arrows and wearing a golden breast plate and jewel studded alloy steel helmet, holding a great long bow made of alloy metal, Indrajit arrived in a chariot driven by seven black horses. He garlanded himself with finest flowers of Lanka. After all, Indrajit was a professional warrior who would not under estimate the enemy even after all these successive victories against Vanaras.

Laxmana was the warrior daringly opposed Indrajit again and with his sharp arrows shooting across; he could stop the advance of Indrajit and his massacre of Vanaras moments after he entered the battle field.

There was a fierce battle raged between Laxmana and Indrajit which was never witnessed before in this war of attrition particularly led by Indrajit between Vanaras and rakshashas. Both Laxmana and Indrajit blamed each other and both were enraged. Laxmana blamed Indrajit for using sorcery in a fight which was against the rules of war naming Indrajit as the "historical clown" and a coward. Indrajit blamed the stupidity of both the brothers Rama and Laxmana for setting fire to the city

of Lanka and their cowardice in killing innocent citizens of Lanka. Indrajit alleged that both the brothers harbour malicious intentions to kill innocent house wives and children.

The duel between Laxmana and Indrajit was so fierce that Indrajit used Brahmastra and Agneya Astra but both of which could not harm Laxmana at all which was frustrating for Indrajit and he was stupefied by the impunity of Laxmana for these Astra's. The fierceness of this battle in which arrows with the powers of mantras turned in to missiles, reached its most dangerous stage. These missiles were flying everywhere and these Astra's raised huge swirl of dust, with loud explosions bombards each other and countering each other with the resultant bellowing of smoke with loud bursts and as the arrows were raining everywhere with fire , they caused disturbance in the high skies with their sonic boom while travelling across like comets chasing each other. These attracted Gandharvas who were celestial demi-gods, and Kinneras, and other demi gods of war who were lined up on the horizon to watch this battle between Laxmana and Indrajit using missiles against each other.

Laxmana used an Astra called "Vishnu Astra" as a last weapon against Indrajit. Laxmana chanted mantras with the name of his brother, Sri Rama before releasing that Astra. Laxamana's Astra imbuing the powers of God Vishnu was highly potent and it could not be countered or deflected by the missiles of Indrajit. The warrior, Indrajit used his own Astra's to counter it and also in spite of all his valorous attempts to stop "Vishnu Astra", it was descending down from the skies, on him like a thunder bolt. This caused an immense shock to his protection ring of warriors who had watched helplessly. Vishnu Astra started circling and burning around the chariot of Indrajit in smaller and smaller concentric circles. Indrajit's head was cut off; his torso without a head rolled, and fell down from his chariot.



BODY OF INDRAJIT BROUGHT INSIDE

At the moment of death of Indrajit, Vanaras and rakshashas stopped fighting, in fact the entire battle abruptly stopped, it came to a grinding halt, and indeed there was a complete silence when the body of Indrajit rolled down and fell from his chariot without a head. Vanaras and rakshashas looked on with utter shock and disbelief. There was such a sudden silence that It was like every soldier stopped breathing. The body guards of Indrajit, the dangerous Rakshashas came in a long file waving a white flag and marched to lift the body of Indrajit. They could put back only his torso on his chariot which was earlier overturned and was thrown a bit away from his body. The body guards of Indrajit started searching for his head. And they found it.

Rakshashas drove the chariot towards the fort where doors of the fort were already kept open. The chariot of Indrajit with his dead body was driven slowly inside by his body guards who were chanting “Namah Shivaya” (salute to Lord Shiva).

Indrajit’s body was brought inside the palace complex of Ravana. All the outside doors of the fort were closed and locked.

Indrajit’s mother Mandodari was waiting at the fountain area inside the palace complex after listening to the news of her martyred son. Indrajit was her only son. The chariot was moving very slowly and there was pin drop silence except for the sound of hoofs of horses inside the palaces of Ravana. Small lanterns were light up everywhere as it was getting dark.

Mandodari, mother of Indrajit was sitting on the short perimeter wall of fountain in the middle of palace complex. The queen of Lanka was distraught; tears were rolling from her left eye. She

was about to burst. She was gripping the edge of that perimeter wall and was very sad.

The moment the dead body of Indrajit was brought, on an open chariot, Mandodari, the queen of Lanka, fell on the dead body of her son weeping and wailing. She cried and cried very loud without help and exhausted herself. She stopped weeping for a breath. She had suddenly got up, with her eyes burning red, looking at her husband Ravana who was sitting on the perimeter structure of that fountain pond. She was very angry with him. Mandodari in terrific rage coupled with sadness both at a time, speaking very fast, gasping for breath, ordered her husband to kill that Sita sitting in the Ashoka Garden.

Mandodari with a sad voice while weeping told her husband, “Look at that witch, that beautiful witch, sitting and weeping under that Ashoka tree day and night. She was the reason for the death my son, my only son. Sita is the harbinger of tragedy to me and for the whole of Lanka. She was the cause and reason for death of your son Thrishira earlier. What do you think? Oh! My great husband your ten heads do not seem to work when you are blind with passion. I say you should kill her, I repeat kill that Sita. Ever since Sita set her foot in Lanka, it burned. Sita set the foot and Lanka burned, not once but twice. You call her Laxmi, goddess of luck! What nonsense is this? What blindness of love is this? Do not you see, do not you understand these bad omens of Sita? She was ominous to me from the very beginning. I am your wife and “I say, go now”, she commanded her husband, shouting at the height of her voice she said, “Kill Sita”! Or else you give back my son! And in a high pitched loud wailing like voice she repeated “give back my son”!

Ravana had no tears in his eyes. He was totally shocked as if a thunderbolt had hit him right on the center of his head with full force. He fell down from the perimeter wall of the fountain with a thud to the floor like a huge rock of a hill would fall when stricken by thunderbolt from the sky. He was so much shocked that he could not weep for his son.

Finally he got up as if he had made up his mind. He was resolute with one decision in his mind and that was killing Sita.

Ravana got up and took a long sword; with his long legs he was taking long strides and swiftly he moved towards the Ashoka Gardens, all in haste.

Ravana entered Ashoka Garden, and when he neared Sita he stopped and looked at her. A love for her ebbed from his heart faded and quickly replaced by anger. He lifted his sword high up, to strike down on her beautiful, soft neck, but his prime minister who came running just behind him, had stopped him. The prime minister lifted his both hands and stood right in between Sita and Ravana. But the king Ravana did not hesitate and sternly warned his Prime minister to keep away. But the Prime Minister said in a cool manner, in a lowly voice, that he would move away obeying his orders, only after one minute on one condition and that was Ravana should listen to him in that one minute.

Ravana stopped. And that Prime Minister said to Ravana “You can kill Sita which is damn easy, which is so much easy that even I can do that and in fact that is what you should do, to ask me to kill her as she is an easy target and I shall do it without any problem. But the problem is the bad name you get by killing her.”

“Gods were afraid of you, Oh! Your majesty!! God Vishnu ran away from his “*Vaikunta*” which is part of the heavens and ever since he had been on the run to save his life from your anger and may be hiding in the Milky Way of stars. Now all these Gods, and demi gods like Yakshas, Kinneras, Kimpurushas and all other celestial beings in the heavens and on the earth will start laughing at you and I do not want your majesty the great King Ravana turning in to a butt of jokes for them”.

“Oh! King Ravana! Your majesty! They will all laugh at you. I think even our own rakshashas start laughing at you because all these beings, in the celestial worlds think that instead of killing her husband Rama, unable to fight with him and also mortally scared of him like any coward you killed his wife instead”!

Ravana turned back with his sword. He had thrown away his sword.

He gave orders to stop the funeral preparations for his son Indrajit until he brings the dead body of Laxmana who killed him! “Laxmana shall be cremated along with my son” said Ravana. Ravana stopped and looked at the dead body of his son Indrajit for a long time and suddenly remembered his brother Kumbhakarna and his sister Vishalakshi and other family members.

Ravana shouted looking at the empty palace corridors, “Kumbhakarna, Vishalakshi! Where you are?” Ravana broke down and then loudly wept for a while.

And Ravana, the ten headed demon, remembered that his brother Kumbhakarna had been sleeping for the last six months.

Ravana the King ordered that at least a hundred people beat drums and another hundred wrestlers to beat on the stomach of Kumbhakarna with heavy wooden sticks to wake him up. Ravana shouted with anger for the indifferent attitude of his great brother Kumbhakarna who was sleeping while Lanka was burning.

King Ravana ordered “Wake up my brother! He was sleeping while all this was happening and now my son Indrajit had also become a martyr. The mighty Kumbhakarna, the most powerful man on the earth must be woken up at any cost. My brother Kumbhakarna will finish this war with his left hand”.

Ravana ordered that all necessary arrangements should be made for him as he himself would go to war tomorrow targeting Laxmana.

Then at sunrise rakshasha Ravana who was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, started his worshipping of Lord Shiva by chanting Yajur Veda, one of four Vedas and by giving ritual bath to his idol. He acquired his ten heads to chant these mantras ten times all at once to please Lord Shiva.

The early morning worshipping of Ravana was completed. The morning Sun came up in the east. War drums were beaten with golden sticks to announce the King Ravana who was preparing to go to war. His body guards were wearing steel jackets and Ravana, the king's chariot was getting ready with hundreds of quivers full of arrows and a bunch of javelins.

Ravana started on his chariot of seven white horses and other great warrior rakshashas who were legendary figures themselves like Atikaya, Prakampana, Prahasta, and Akampana followed him on their chariots on the left and on the right sides of his chariot. These were great warriors themselves and legendary figures all over the world.

The infantry comprising several thousand foot soldiers armed with swords and javelins followed Ravana, the legendary king of Lanka who was standing on his chariot with a great bow, and the one who acquired all his ten heads. He had his quivers full of his golden arrows which imbibed powers from his mantras turn themselves into missiles when they shoot across to the enemy. King Ravana who was also called "Dashakanta" or ten headed monster, had boons from Lord Shiva, the annihilator of the universe and Lord Brahma who decides fate of each being, was a great warrior by himself even before all these boons were bestowed on him by Gods. The chariot of Ravana was gifted by king of Gods Indra Bhagvan as a way to please Ravana out of sheer fear.

King Ravana, the moment he entered the battle, started shooting his arrows without giving any warning or time to Vanaras taking them by surprise. Ravana's arrows were shooting across killing Vanaras in a horrible way. Vanaras were flying in the air dead with the power of Ravana's arrows. The arrows started slicing the throats of Vanaras in dozens at a time. The chariot of Ravana was rolling over the dead bodies of Vanaras.

At a far distance and deep in that battle field, Rama asked Jambavan and Hanuman looking at that person in that chariot of gold, whose face was shining with effulgence which he had never

seen so far in his life. Rama pointing at that person, asked Jambavan “Who is that person who has such great power and such a confidence on his face, with divine effulgence that is incomparable. I had never seen a more handsome person than this one on that golden chariot shooting arrows with golden shafts”. Hanuman answered saying “That person is Ravana”.

Ravana’s chariot was fast approaching Laxmana. Since so many Vanaras were dying, Laxmana shouted at them to run away and to give way to him. Laxmana shouted at the height of his voice addressing all the Vanaras, “that must be Ravana, “Dashakanta”, make a way for me, do not die any more of you, run, and run away from him”. Laxmana was himself pushing ahead to face Ravana.

Ravana the king of Lanka with his great bow had set ten arrows on his bow, and pulling them to the full length of the string, released them. Laxmana fought well, he could indeed withstand for some time against the onslaught of Ravana but those highly potent Ravana’s arrows which imbibed the power of his mantras proved dangerous for Laxmana. Laxmana could not withstand any longer and Laxmana’s bow was pierced by Ravana’s arrows. Ravana stopped shooting his arrows. Laxmana tried to fight with his Javelin. Ravana stopped his chariot, got down, and pulled out a long javelin from the sides of his chariot. With Javelin in his hands and rotating it with terrific speed, Ravana approached menacingly towards Laxmana. Ravana started approaching Laxmana with fire burning in his eyes, and the intentions of Ravana was to capture Laxmana dead or alive and then carry Laxmana bound by ropes to the cremation grounds along with his martyred son Indrajit.

Hanuman jumped there as if from nowhere in between them to save Laxmana. Hanuman tried to stop Ravana by punching on his shoulder but Ravana could evade the blow from Hanuman and at the same time within tenth of a second of time, Ravana clenched his fist and gave a forceful blow on the middle of the chest of Hanuman. Ravana’s blow was so powerful that even Hanuman reeled, did spin on one foot, on his tow finger and vomited blood.

Hanuman was holding his stomach with his two hands and kneeled down on the earth.

Ravana holding Javelin tried to stab Laxmana but Laxmana could somehow escape Ravana's skillful javelin and evading it he ducked beneath it to fight with Ravana. A fight with javelins ensued between them. And Ravana's javelin, gifted by God Indra Bhagvan, turns burning hot, once touched by anyone; it gave hot fumes burning the skin. Ravana was very deft with his Javelin as he was dexterous with extreme speed, causing serious injuries of lacerations all over the body of Laxmana. Laxmana fell down flat on the earth with face down, severely injured with stabbing wounds of Javelin all over his back.

Ravana started beating Laxmana with his javelin using the weapon's full length the way a farmer in the field try to kill a snake beating it again and again until it is dead. And Laxmana started rolling on the floor trying to escape the beatings of javelin but could not avoid the strikes of Ravana. Laxmana was twisting, turning and wreathing in terrible pain. Ravana's javelin was so hot that Laxamana's skin on his back peeled off along with each blow of Javelin. Ravana was mercilessly beating Laxmana with full force and Vanaras who ever went near Ravana to intervene got deadly stabbings of his javelin resulting in the death of Vanaras while their stomachs were slit open in one tenth of a second. When Ravana diverted his anger and his dexterous movements with his sharp Javelin on Vanaras they flew in the air in several directions and each one fell dead several meters away. Laxmana was rolling in the dust while his skin was peeling off along with Javelin of Ravana. Laxmana was crying and wreathing in pain and he started showing signs of getting unconscious, slipping precipitously close to the last stages of his life.

Ravana stopped beating and started poking Laxmana on his back with the sharp blade of his javelin with intentions of torturing Laxmana. All the while Ravana was gnashing his teeth. Then suddenly Ravana turned around and threw away his javelin in to his chariot. Ravana bent forward to lift Laxmana up from the

floor, from the mother earth while Laxmana crept forward with his face down, and with his bare palms on the floor with hands stretched was trying to clutch the earth like a wrestler who drives all the power of his body to lie flat on his face to avoid an utter defeat of rolling over on the back. Laxmana opened his palms and he pressed his both palms against the mother earth with Yoga force “Garima”.

The body weight of Laxmana was increasingly becoming difficult for Ravana to move it. Ravana put both his hands under the belly of Laxmana on either side of his waist and tried to lift him up off the ground but he failed to lift Laxmana even an inch off the ground.

Ravana used his mythical energies to lift Laxmana but it became impossible for him to lift Laxmana off the ground. Ravana who could lift the entire hill called Mount Mandhara and Ravana who could lift Mount Kailas, on which Lord Shiva was sitting at that time, could not lift Laxmana, off the ground even an inch. It was the surprise and shock for Ravana who reveled in his own megalomania. Ravana loudly questioned himself how a simple human could challenge him, when the mountains moved with his powers. After Seeing and feeling this miracle, Ravana understood that it was “Garima” yogic power of Laxmana, and an astonished Ravana, who with all his ten heads acquired, with all his demonic powers and spiritual powers gathered, tried again and again and summed up his enormous power to fight against “Garima” powers of Laxmana to lift him off the ground but failed miserably to move him even an inch. Ravana’s faces of all his ten heads were still dazed in amazement and then his eyes turned red with anger, and with utter frustration and humiliation while he himself was faltering, out of sheer exhaustion, he suddenly faced Hanuman, who lounged forward and gave a blow with his closed fist on the center of the chest of Ravana.

Hanuman’s blow on the center of the chest of Ravana just below the sternum on solar plexus caused Ravana to reel and spin. Ravana reeled on one foot, on his big toe, and rotated circularly

to balance himself. Ravana acquired twenty hands, ten on each side, and then stretched all his twenty hands on his sides horizontally to balance himself, and started vomiting blood from all his ten mouths of all his ten heads! Ravana was spinning, on his two legs, moving round and round avoiding a fall, while Ravana, the great demon's blood was gushing out of all his ears of all his ten heads and the blood thus spurted out of his ears was spilling all over his body. Ravana was circularly moving at a bigger radius, trying to balance himself avoiding a fall. Ravana's wide open eyes started dripping blood from all his ten heads down to his chest.

The great Hanuman said to Ravana like a father would speak to his erring child, "Ravana what is the use of your knowledge of Vedas? What is the use of you worshipping God Shiva with an "abhishekam" (spiritual bath for the God) four times in a day? What is the use of so many boons from Goddess Parvati wife of Lord Shiva? What is the use of so many Astra's you got from Lord Brahma, the one who writes the fate of humans? What is the use of your erudition, your knowledge and wisdom? Where they have gone? Do not you know that you should not beat a warrior who had fallen down on the earth and was not fighting with you? What is the use of all your knowledge and divine powers when you had abducted someone's wife"?

"Ravana with all your divine powers, you must know that God can appear in any form since the God is formless. The God can appear in the form of a bird or in the form of a monkey! God can talk to you in the form of your daughter or mother or your own wife. God can speak thorough the medium of anyone. God talks to you every day, in fact every minute. When you cannot recognize the God right in front of you what is the use of your worship? Lord Rama is the God. I shall ask for his pardon on your behalf. I shall fall on the feet of Lord Rama on your behalf. He will pardon you. You shall return Sita and there shall be no war and there shall be no destruction of your family and there shall be no destruction of this great city of Lanka. Ravana! Listen to me, please listen to me".

Ravana moved much backward tattering to avoid a fall and he had held on to his chariot, turned over on to the chariot side, and kept holding on the railing of his chariot to support himself. Ravana turned his ten heads again to face Hanuman and could only see a blurred image of Hanuman. Ravana heard what Hanuman was telling him but he was getting angrier in his own exasperated stage and fuelled by his own superlative ego.

The charioteer gave a whip lash to the horses so they moved forward. Ravana also had to run along his chariot holding on to its railings and for some time he was even dragged along. Other rakshasha soldiers lifted Ravana up and put him in the chariot. The chariot picked up speed which enraged Ravana. The charioteer replied that it was the best option under the circumstances. Ravana shouted at the charioteer that he did not order a withdraw or even the worse a run away from battle field which was worse than death and that he had abruptly ended the battle in utter shame because of his stupid attitude.

Ravana abused and threatened to kill the charioteer. Ravana ordered the charioteer to get back to the battle field.

While the battled field was full of Vanaras and rakshashas who were watching all this with shock and awe, the great Ravana with all his ten heads, sitting on his golden chariot, came back again.

He had set twenty powerful arrows on his great bow and released them. Within less than a second he had shot as many arrows from his great bow again. Many Vanaras fell down like the birds would fall down in a storm. Ravana took on his fierce form and his chariot picked up dizzying speed. Ravana used his arrows with mantras to throw sparks of fire all over the battle field. Every Vanara was running helter, shelter causing a terrible confusion and even a stampede with their irregular, haphazard movement. Terrified by Ravana, and running away from him, Vanaras were dying under their own feet.

Rama, the lord of Vanaras reached this spot along with Vibhishana and on the instant with his powerful arrows Rama stopped the advance of the chariot of Ravana.

Rama set arrows on his long bow, Kodanda and released four arrows which made a reverberating noise resounding in the hills located faraway. The arrows of Ravana could not stop them. Rama had set one more arrow on his bow, pulled it up to his ear and released it with a big twang sound. The arrow lifted up the chariot of Ravana which was with some speed and it fell down with a thud. Ravana's chariot wheels came off disengaging from its axils causing Ravana to fall down from his broken chariot.

Ravana got up covered in dust, and shaking off all that dust off his silk clothes, tried to set an arrow on his bow but even before he could set the arrow, Rama reached him in few long steps and caught the bow of Ravana, took the string off it, and then gave a big lash across the face of Ravana with his own bow, with such an extreme force that Ravana faltered and took a few steps backwards and fell in the dust. Ravana could muster his strength almost immediately and got up as much fast. This surprising strength of Ravana was like a wonder for Vanaras who were watching the fight. Meanwhile rakshasha warriors brought another chariot to take Ravana away from the war.

Rama went near Ravana and told him "I understand that until now you are fighting with Hanuman and Laxmana and you are exhausted. Your son Indrajit also died at this time and has been awaiting cremation since yesterday. Ravana! You are very tired. Come another day, we will fight. Today, you shall conduct the cremation of your son Indrajit and give some emotional support to your tragedy stricken wife Mandodari"

Ravana moved away on his chariot towards his palace complex in his fort.



KUMBHAKARNA AWAKES

Kumbhakarna the younger brother of King Ravana had been sleeping nearly for last six months. In another fifteen days Kumbhakarna would have got up from his sleep, all by himself. At that time, it was indeed an emergency which prompted Ravana to wake up his legendary bother.

Kumbhakarna had a curse to hibernate in sleep for six months and to go on work, read and be at war if needed for six months at a stretch.

On the orders of Ravana, his ministers tried their best to wake him up but failed. Kumbhakarna, who was forty feet high, was sleeping in his bedroom which was as big as an auditorium. Kumbhakarna was also great warrior and to the surprise of many he was a scholar who speaks highly sophisticated language. Kumbhakarna was sleeping on a long cot made of gold.

At least one hundred people were trying to wake up Kumbhakarna since yesterday but all their efforts were in vain and they were all almost exhausted.

They had blown heavy trumpets in his ears while at least fifty heavy weight wrestlers walked on his stomach, but when Kumbhakarna coughed up heavily in his sleep they were all blown away and banged against windows fell dead. And a dozen others who crept up to his stomach using a ladder earlier fell from his stomach to their death. Some rakshashas standing on tall ladders tried to pierce his ears to wake him up but that did not work even after they pierced two ear lobes of Kumbhakarna at least a dozen times. Some rakshashas died even in this attempt. Kumbhakarna suddenly turned to one side in his sleep, and many rakshashas were crushed under him.

Everyone would be surprised to know that Kumbhakarna was a voracious reader of classic texts and he had read almost all books in his library. Kumbhakarna performed long years of penance and worship of Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of learning with a yearning for a sea of knowledge prompted by a desire to defeat great scholars in debates. Finally his long penance had resulted in Goddess Saraswati herself appearing before him. Kumbhakarna asked for a boon from Goddess Saraswati, but by mistake he pronounced “sleep” instead of seeking a boon to enable him to study “without a sleep”. As the goddess granted whatever Kumbhakarna wished for but his accidental pronunciation for a boon resulted in his unexpected deep slumber for six months at a time and the rest of the time, without a sleep he fully devoted to his inventions of weapons and study.

Rakshashas of Ravana wanted to implement their king’s order even if it meant death to them; these rakshashas finally got an idea. They remembered that Kumbhakarna was also a great warrior and imaginative war games were his pass time. Then these rakshashas requisitioned about a hundred rakshasha warriors to be present in the hall and perform a military parade of discipline including battle cries all at once. Rakshasha soldiers and warriors did exactly that by stomping the floor all at once in their parade with battle cries and this indeed worked at last waking up Kumbhakarna from his deep slumber.

That great monster Kumbhakarna rose up from his bed and asked them the reason.

His big brother King Ravana’s orders were read out to Kumbhakarna and an audience with the king was an emergency as per the orders. Kumbhakarna got up, washed himself under a high fountain of water, changed his clothes which were very clean and dry and started walking in between the palaces with royal emblem golden stick in his hands.

Kumbhakarna was received by his elder brother King Ravana with all the love and affection.

Kumbhakarna enquired his bother “Why did you wake me up in this urgent manner?” King Ravana was standing on the balcony of his second floor building, to be equal, face to face with his brother who was sitting on a huge stone platform in the courtyard in between the palaces.

Ravana told his brother with a very grave face “Kumbhakarna, there is a war outside. Vanaras have been ready to occupy Lanka. You have to kill Rama and Laxmana, both the brothers, who were long time ago, princes of Ayodhya but not anymore. And also there is one great Vanara called Sugreeva who leads these Vanaras from Kishkinda”.

Kumbhakarna said “My great brother! Even before I went to sleep, I heard it twice and twice I thought it was a joke. I was immersed in studies in my library and forgot to ask for details as I was not much interested in politics. And my weakness for sleep took over me later on for another six months. My dear brother, you do one thing immediately. You shall send away Sita with all the respect and they will go away. Why you are creating trouble for yourself and for others? The moment I got up from sleep, I heard from our people that our son Indrajit became martyr and Thrishira also was a martyr in the battle field much earlier. What nonsense is this infatuation with Sita?”

Even while Kumbhakarna was talking about the unfortunate deaths of Indrajit and Thrishira, he was looking at his brother and felt that his brother Ravana did not bother about deaths of his own sons. Kumbhakarna burst out and shouted in a tragic voice at his brother Ravana. Kumbhakarna, himself full shaken, he was teary eyed for the deaths of dear most family members Thrishira and Indrajit.

My great, legendary brother! Kumbhakarna continued, “Oh! You remember? Your own daughter was thrown away in a sealed box on the day of her cradle ceremony some thirty years ago. It is quite possible, my dear brother! You may have to think. You are a genius. Find out the birth of this Sita to know, if she were not

your daughter first of all and Oh! Brother, be careful about our own stupid sister, Vishalakshi, I request you do not listen to her!”

Ravana was furious. He shouted at Kumbhakarna to stop his stupid oration and unsolicited free advice.

King Ravana said to Kumbhakarna “Do not talk nonsense Kumbhakarna. And for the Lord Shiva’s sake do not try to teach me what a righteous action is. Do not tell me to handover Sita and tell me to surrender to that human being called Rama and his monkeys called Vanaras. You must have minimum courtesy when you talk and you should not forget that you are talking to your elder brother. And for God’s sake when Lanka was burning where you were? You were sleeping! Today you come here and try to teach me what is called “dharma”? What a joke! That Sita is a human being and we are a family of rakshashas, we are a different species, we eat differently, we think differently, and we worship different Gods”!

Ravana continued “You go to sleep Kumbhakarna, go to sleep my darling brother! And I shall instruct your sister-in-law and my wife Mandodari to cook one hundred quintals of goat meat ready! Get lost! I tell you I shall take care of myself and Lanka all alone. I am in trouble and I have lost my sons, and our great country Lanka was burned twice and you talk as if you were not my brother? Oh! Kumbhakarna, you are very indifferent and your behaviour surprises me. And how dare you insinuate that Sita could be, Oh! God! My daughter!! What nonsensical talk is this! How much irrelevant! Dear Kumbhakarna! Do not you find any other way to insult me? What do you mean by that? Do you mean to say that I am blinded by my own desires? I can take care of Lanka all alone, I repeat. You get lost. You go to sleep”

Kumbhakarna told Ravana “I am ready to die oh! Brother! I do not want any trouble to you and I wanted to tell you the easiest method. But you are adamant about your own ideas of superiority. You do not admit your fault. In that case, whatever happens may happen. I shall walk in to the battlefield and eat all those Vanaras. I am also very hungry as well.”

Ravana was very much pleased. He smiled and looked at his brother Kumbhakarna with all the great affection of an elder brother. King Ravana immediately ordered for a golden alloy breast plate, which was a huge one which could be fixed on the chest of Kumbhakarna. When Ravana was fixing this golden breast plate, with the help of a dozen heavy rakshashas who used pulleys and ladders, Kumbhakarna was all smiles and happy like any younger brother would be when an elder sibling was giving him a valuable gift.

Kumbhakarna walked out of the north gates of that great fort of Ravana. He was crouching and creeping to get out of those highly arched gates. He plucked out a solid steel lamp post on the way, and rotated that on his palm as if it were a walking stick. He held it high aloft higher above the buildings.

A huge eagle flew down and sat on the top of his steel lamp post. The eagle made a high pitched peal and with a deep and scary whistling noise the huge eagle repeated it with a peal again. Kumbhakarna shook his rod to wish away the eagle. The eagle flew up and sat again on the top of his solid steel pole. And then the eagle vomited its blood on the rod, while rubbing its beak left and right on the steel pole. The blood vomit of that eagle started dripping on to the face of Kumbhakarna as he had held the pole straight up in the sky in his right hand grip. A group of street dogs huddled together lifting their mouths towards the sky, started howling and whining. They all wept.

Kumbhakarna ignored all these bad omens while going to a war. He seemed to have resigned to his fate. There was a black ring of cloud formed like an umbrella around the midday burning Sun.

Kumbhakarna walked in to the battle field and made huge, bellowing noise.

Vanaras were terrified to look at this huge monster of a man who announced his name himself as Kumbhakarna. "I am Kumbhakarna!" Kumbhakarna roared and the sound of his loud voice resounded all over the battle field.

Vanaras threw stones and tree branches at the towering figure of Kumbhakarna which were like house flies for him.

Hundreds of Vanaras cried in horror while running away from him and many of them were caught and eaten by him.

Kumbhakarna beat them with his steel lamp post and all those Vanaras who came under that huge, very long steel pole were turned round and red like meat balls. Kumbhakarna ate them.

Vanaras who were terrified started running away from him. Some daring Vanaras started climbing on him and some Vanaras indeed reached his shoulders. Kumbhakarna plucked them out and put them in his mouth. And under his teeth they were all crushed. Sometimes he gulped them and sometimes he spit out their bones and skulls after munching them and relishing the taste.

Some Vanaras who were hanging on his ear lobes were slipped down and fell to their death. Kumbhakarna now became much hungrier, and he started beating with his steel lamp post killing Vanaras in hundreds at a time. There was even a stampede among Vanaras while they were trying to escape the wrath of Kumbhakarna. Vanaras started chanting “Rama, Rama” with terrible fear.

Lord Rama, the leader of these Vanaras shouted at the height of his voice to run away from Kumbhakarna. Some Vanaras listened, and some Vanaras did not listen. These Vanaras started climbing on Kumbhakarna trying to reach his eyes and some his nose. Some Vanaras were trying hard to stab on his chest with their sharp claws but there was a very strong breast plate made of gold worn by Kumbhakarna.

Kumbhakarna sat on his knees. He plucked Vanaras with his huge hands from his eye brows and from ear lobes and started eating them. Vanaras started running seeing this horrible Kumbhakarna.

Rama shouted at all of the Vanaras to run away from Kumbhakarna again and again.

Kumbhakarna directly faced Rama but he was still standing at a few hundred yards distance from Rama, and then challenged him saying “Ram, Ram Oh! Ram! You have a great passion for archery? Do not you? Enjoy yourself before death comes to you”.

“It is a great fun indeed” continued Kumbhakarna. “Eh! Ram! Now shoot your arrows!” Kumbhakarna showed his right ear by swaying a little, while at that time, some Vanaras who were climbing up over his legs and over his knees were plucked by Kumbhakarna and he had pushed those in to his mouth. He started munching them voraciously and he spat out their tails and bones.

Rama took two arrows, and pulled the string of his famous bow “Kodanda” up to his ears. Rama shot his two arrows which made huge noise like a thunder in the sky along with a high hissing sound which resounded. And they were shooting across to Kumbhakarna like two steel birds. Kumbhakarna swayed his long steel lamp post with lightning speed from left to right. The two arrows were hit by the rod and as they were swayed away, changed their direction under force and those two arrows of Rama hit against the trees far away by uprooting them to the sky.

The arrows of Rama which killed thousand rakshashas at a time, arrows of Rama which could lift entire hills on the sea while making a bridge over it, were the arrows which were hit away by Kumbhakarna only to bombard against the trees! Vanaras were shocked to witness this spectacle and chanted “Rama, Rama”!! The hand movement of Kumbhakarna was highly dexterous and the speed of steel lamp post in his hands was so much deadly fast like a lightening to throw away even Kodanda Rama’s arrows! The legendary Rama’s arrows could not hit Kumbhakarna! And Rama was amazed to see the speed of Kumbhakarna with his steel lamp post!

But Kumbhakarna also looked serious; his heckling attitude which was ludicrous against Rama had disappeared. Kumbhakarna was sweating and his face was red with anger because those arrows of Rama, he realized, were indeed dangerous. He had seen the

impact of Rama's arrows and their speed. Kumbhakarna observed that the sound of Rama's arrows could be heard only after they were diverted and hit those trees. The sound reverberated in the sky above after a hit. He had diverted them indeed but his own valour or his speed could not be satisfying to him.

In spite of that awareness and his being alarmed by the speed of Rama's arrows, Kumbhakarna heckled again at Rama saying "Eh! Ram! Ram! Why do not use two more arrows? You like to shoot arrows at rakshashas killing them? Do not you? You enjoy killing us! Our species! And exactly how many did you kill? Do not you enjoy killing? Yes. You are a specialist in killing. Oh! Ram! Use two more arrows!"

Kumbhakarna swayed to the right showing his left ear pointing with his huge left hand.

Rama who was standing a few hundred yards away looked unsure of his own arrows for the first time in his life as a warrior. Rama with his bow "Kodanda" in his left hand looked at Kumbhakarna with an astonished face. Rama set two more arrows on his bow string and pulling the string up to his ear, released the arrows. Kumbhakarna tried to sweep them with his huge steel lamp post from right to left at terrific speed. Kumbhakarna could hit only one arrow. One arrow of Rama cut off the right ear lobe of Kumbhakarna.

Rama released two more arrows immediately in less than one hundredth of a second of time. Kumbhakarna was swaying with his steel lamp post vigorously while walking towards Rama with his long strides but his aim was lost and again Kumbhakarna could hit only one arrow while another of Rama's arrow cut off the left ear lobe of Kumbhakarna.

The left ear lobe flew away a few hundred yards in the air. Kumbhakarna roared due to pain and his blood started oozing down. Kumbhakarna then started walking with long strides towards Rama and Laxmana and both the brothers ran backwards. Kumbhakarna was coming towards them, with his

steel lamp post, now and then thumping the earth with the pole. The earth was shaking under his feet.

Rama set two more arrows while still walking backwards, and pulling the string up to his ear, released the arrows. Kumbhakarna, shouting very loudly, swayed his steel lamp post to hit the coming arrows. That very long lamp post was flying in the air with such a speed which was impossible to see with a naked eye. Even then one arrow could hit the right shoulder, of Kumbhakarna cutting off the hand off the body of Kumbhakarna. The cut off hand fell on the Vanaras down below, killing a hundred Vanaras. Rama had sent two more arrows at Kumbhakarna who was coming fast at them, swaying the long steel post with his left hand. In an amazing show of skill, even with one hand Kumbhakarna could hit one arrow of Kodanda Rama. Again only one arrow of Rama could somehow hit the left shoulder of Kumbhakarna cutting off his left hand at the shoulder joint and the hand fell down with great sound on the Vanaras down below killing hundred more Vanaras.

Kumbhakarna knelt down on his knees and sucked the air. A few dozen Vanaras flew with the air in to the mouth of Kumbhakarna. He chewed them, gulped them and spit out their bones and tails, while roaring with pain as his two full hands up to the shoulders were cut off. Kumbhakarna without his hands, which were cut off, up to his arm pits and blood running down all over his body, looked very menacing and started coming forward heavily stepping and thumping the earth with his long legs and with his huge sized foot.

Rama had shot one more arrow while the Vanaras were running away helter shelter. Rama's arrow hit Kumbhakarna right knee cutting off the right leg up to his knee. Within less than a second Rama's second arrow cut off the left leg up to the knee of Kumbhakarna.

Kumbhakarna bent on his half cut legs started walking on those stumps of his half-cut legs, while his blood was flowing out like fountains, he moved towards Rama to kill him. While at the same

time Kumbhakarna was roaring with pain and anger. Some Vanaras climbed on Kumbhakarna from his back and were near around his neck. Kumbhakarna bent down and sucked a few Vanaras in to his huge mouth and started chewing them. And still Kumbhakarna was walking on his half cut stumps of legs towards Rama while himself roaring. Like small ants, Vanaras were scampering away in terrific fear.

Rama set a long arrow and after muttering a few mantras, he released that arrow making it a missile.

Kumbhakarna was lifted by Rama's arrow which was stuck deep in to his heart, after shattering his golden shield. The arrow lifted his body several feet high in to the sky. Kumbhakarna was thrown in to the sea faraway by the force of Rama's arrow. When dead body of Kumbhakarna fell with a thud sound in the waters of the sea, a hundred thousand fish and turtles were dead and floated belly up with that impact. After sometime, dead body of Kumbhakarna floated up in the waters of the sea with his belly down, face down in the swaying waters of the Sea.

Death of Kumbhakarna was shocking news to all the rakshashas. Ravana wept uncontrollably when he heard the news of death of his brother Kumbhakarna. Ravana ordered a special cart to bring dead body of his brother. The body parts of Kumbhakarna were collected and sewn together and thousands of rakshashas chanting the name of Lord Shiva carried the mortal body of him in to the fort for cremation. The cremation preparations were ordered.



ENIGMA FOR RAVANA

After the cremation of Kumbhakarna, his brother Dashakanta Ravana started preparations for a Yagna to propitiate the Gods. King Ravana thought that misfortunes were visiting him at every turn of his life and highly distressing events were happening to him when he could not expect them.

Ravana decided to perform a Yagna along with Rishis with their powers of penance and with devotional chanting of all the Vedas, in praise of his beloved Lord Shiva, also called Rudra, a day after cremation of Kumbhakarna. King Ravana declared two days as days of “no war” while himself was drowned in the tragic death of his brother Kumbhakarna. Though his brother Kumbhakarna died in the war, his death never was expected, the way he died by Ravana, and the way he succumbed to the arrows of Rama. The king Ravana thought that it was part of a continuing tragedy for his family because he felt that the “nature” was bent upon taking revenge on his family. He thought that it was like a curse that was hanging on his family. He wanted to re-affirm himself and gain self-confidence through performing this great Yagna, which he called as “Mahan Yagna”.

Ravana was a devotee of Lord Shiva, the ultimate God of destruction of the Universe. Ravana was blessed by Lord Shiva. Ravana’s family traditions were not very different from his own spiritual attainments. Ravana composed the fourth Veda, Sama Veda and with super natural powers bestowed upon him by Lord Shiva, he had ascended to heaven and threatened Gods.

Since the time of war with Rama the unsolved puzzle for Ravana had been the power of a simple human being who called himself “Rama”. Rama was like an enigma for Ravana.

After his spiritual conquest and blessed by boons from Lord Shiva, Ravana sought the last and ultimate boon which shall give him everlasting power of living without a death and without pains of old age. Again he sat in a penance for two decades and Lord Shiva pleased with the devotion and penance of Ravana granted him whatever Ravana desired to possess. Ravana asked for a city of Lanka in the middle of the sea, birth of a daughter and a boon to live forever. Lord Shiva, who granted all, imposed some exceptions to his desire of living forever. Lord Shiva granted the boons with some conditions attached to it. The exception for this desire of Ravana, never to die, was that he could die in the hands of a simple human being. Ravana laughed and laughed for days and nights out of sheer happiness because he thought a human being could never be more powerful than him and hence, by that logic he should live forever. Lord Shiva's assurance that gods of heaven could not conquer him made him immensely happy. He also reveled in joy for the prospect of begetting a daughter in future and a city of Lanka paved with gold. Until then he had only sons and the prospect of begetting a daughter filled him with joy.

Ravana was totally oblivious of the powers of "Karma", the nature's law, the cycle of Karma that could not grant anything without the attached result that comes back, either good or bad. But Ravana, though a genius at studies and warfare was not ready to accept the power of Karma. He could not accept a simple philosophy that whatever the God gives, one must learn to accept it and also be satisfied with it. And whatever the God gives he can also take away. In fact the opposite had happened within him. Ravana had an unquenched thirst to challenge the Gods.

One day, Ravana went to Himalayas and reached the foot hills of Mount Kailas, on the top of which, Lord Shiva resided along with his wife Parvati. Ravana wanted to lift the Mount Kailas and shake it so that Lord Shiva should be scared of him. Ravana put a great effort to lift the Mount Kailas, but Lord Shiva pressed that great Mount only with the toe of his right foot. Ravana collapsed down on his knees and then begged pardon of Lord Shiva.

Such was the arrogance of Ravana, though he was a genius, a great devotee of Lord Shiva with boons and powers of penance culminating in his own spiritual conquest, he could not understand the laws of Karma. He wanted a daughter to be born to him and was indeed blessed with a daughter. Ravana thought when a daughter was born that whatever he wanted, God had granted.

But the power of time had overtaken Ravana to be mired deep in sadness and worry about “an ordinary human being” who was challenging him. He thought he could not understand the power of Rama, and puzzled because he was after all a human being.

Ravana got a golden city of Lanka and also he was blessed with a daughter but his happiness of begetting a daughter could not linger any longer than the little baby’s cradle ceremony. He could never come out of that tragic memory of how his wife Mandodari had thrown away the baby in to the sea.

At one point of time Ravana was so much arrogant that using his spiritual powers, he ascended to heavens in his mortal body and disturbed Gods there who were watching dancing of celestial nymphs. He threatened Indra Bhagvan, the king of Gods with dire consequences. Ravana threatened that he would forcefully take away Indra’s sexiest wife Sachidevi. All rishis, sages and gods in heaven ran away along with their wives.

All these Gods, Sages, Rishis in heaven ran and jumped in to the Ocean of Milk and swam upwards, through the body of thousand headed snake called “Adi Shesha” and finally at the end under the hood of thousand headed snake, they found Lord Vishnu, one of the three gods who was controlling this world.

Lord Vishnu was shining like a blue star and his wife Goddess Laxmi was shining like an orange colour star at his feet on this Milky Ocean which these Rishis had already seen in their meditations as ebbing and flowing with the white fluid inside their snake like spinal cord.

All these Gods, Sages and Rishis stood in front of Lord Vishnu and wailed there beating their chests praying him to save themselves and their wives from Ravana.

Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe who controls it and maintains it, finally decided to put an end to Ravana by fighting with him, himself and on this difficult task, while God Vishnu, was going passing through the celestial world and then on the earth, he met Lord Shiva who was doing penance under a banyan tree in the cremation grounds.

Lord Shiva warned Lord Vishnu not to risk a human birth. Lord Shiva explained to him the dangers. That phenomenon of taking birth as human being itself meant that he would be less powerful than Ravana, who was half rakshasha and half a human being by the genes of his father but definitely more powerful than all those Gods.

Lord Shiva warned Lord Vishnu “Oh! Vishnu! A human cannot go through his life without his own suffering. If in case, you still decided to take birth as a human being only so as to kill Ravana, do remember that you would not win over Ravana without my help, since all such divine energies which were used against him, had been dissipated by Ravana many times like a high wind would drive away the smoke. Gods were neutralized by him. Ravana was impervious to all such destructive but divine forces directed against him”.

However Lord Vishnu decided risking a birth as a human being which was fraught with dangers of a human life to go through all the emotional upheavals enveloped in Maya or illusions of life. God Vishnu decided to take human birth despite warnings of Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva warned him again that of all births of all types of creatures on earth, human being suffers the most because of a human being's higher level of consciousness in the universe.



YAGNA OF RAVANA

The preparations for Yagna of Ravana were in full swing. Ravana who was so powerful to challenge the Gods of heaven, invited all the “Saptha rishis” or seven great sages of heavens to perform his Yagna to appease Lord Shiva.

Ravana was in the middle of preparations for such a great yagna and ordered nine different types of grains, powder of cow dung, rice flour, flower garlands in baskets, and pots of ghee and ladles of various types to make offerings to gods and for propitiating them starting with Fire God.

All oblations were meant to be offered to the sacred fire in the “*homa gunda*” or “Yagna *Vatika*” at various stages of propitiations to Gods. Rutvika, a rishi, the one who chants Vedic verses of Rig Veda, Rishi Udgatri, who sings verses from Sama veda, Rishi Advaryu who has knowledge of conducting rituals along with chanting from Yajur Veda and another four “Hotris” along with Brahmans and Pundits who also chant along with other rishis and work as assistants to conduct this Yagna, were all assembled at the invitation of Ravana.

Ravana often thought that he became despondent after the death of his younger brother Kumbhakarna. Ravana thought he was suffering from negative thinking and thus he had been attracting negative results. Ravana wanted to gain courage and a determined resolve to face an enemy who he had grossly underestimated. Ravana wanted a resolve to defeat the enemy and seek the blessings of Lord Shiva.

Those great Rishis vigorously churned a wooden stalk by their hands in the hole of another dry wood to create a sacred fire for Yagna. Starting with prayers to Lord Ganesh, the great Yagna of Ravana started.

Ravana was himself a Brahmin and the hundreds of mantras composed by himself through his devotion and along with Vedic verses compiled by him were all recited by him to appease Lord Shiva in the beginning. Ravana's compositions of mantras compiled in to Sama Veda were chanted by erudite pundits and rishis at the second stage of Yagna.

All these rishis who came to perform the rituals of Yagna like Udgatri, Advaryu, Rutvika and Hotris, all were very much aware of the fact that they were no match for Ravana and they were all in fear of Ravana for any inadvertent errors which they might commit while chanting. At the same time they had great respect for him. They all admire him. That Udgatri or Rutvika or Advaryu had spent whole of their life time to study, memorize and chant just one Veda and even that one Veda they cannot interpret in all its aspects.

And even that chanting of one Veda may have mistaken pronunciation and if at all such a mistake happens, Advaryu Rishi would correct such a mantra and to remove any bad effects for the wrong words which were pronounced, this same Advaryu would chant verses from Atharvana Veda as atonement.

Ravana himself had taken the lead in chanting his own Sama Veda and other Rishis started chanting along with him. Advaryu and Rutvika were chanting some mantras and verses from Rig Veda and also from Atharvana Veda in a synchronized manner.

The Yagna proceeded with various "kratus" and various grains were offered to the fire god as oblations. Ladles of ghee were offered to fire gods at the starting point.

And then chanting of verses of Sama Veda by Ravana the Brahmin rakshasha started at a high pitch, breath taking, and non-stop with perfect pronunciations and intonation. Ravana was chanting verses of Sama Veda with all his ten heads all at a time and offering grains and ghee with all his twenty hands.

At a point, after so many "kratus" were performed and mantras were chanted, Ravana was offering ghee from the cup of his hand

praying to God Shiva to come and take the sacred ghee, purified by his mantras as part of the rituals of Yagna. It was a regular ritual which was highly symbolic in offerings. Ravana offered the sacred ghee while chanting mantras from Sama Veda.

All of a sudden Lord Shiva rose up from the fire of Yagna Kundali up to his chest level and held Ravana's hand to put it in his mouth.

Sages and Rishis who were chanting verses from Vedas, and who were offering oblations in the Homa, watching the Yagna themselves fell backwards due to sudden wave of shock and fear when they had seen the God himself appearing in a bodily form. Their brass tumblers rolled on the floor. Their eyes were wide open with disbelief and they were all frozen with shock and awe. They were witnessing the most unbelievable phenomena of their life.

In a few more seconds of time, Lord Shiva disappeared. Ravana started chanting mantras of his own Sama Veda at a high pitch. The Yagna went on and on, non-stop until the next day when Ravana finally stopped.

Ravana with all his twenty hands picked up various articles used in the yagna for the last twenty four hours.

Ravana took an earthen pot of milk in his right hand and an earthen pot of curd in his left hand. A pot of honey, a pot of sugar, a pot of jiggery, a pot of water, and a braid of dry grass used in Yagna and held about twenty items used in yagna in his twenty hands and started walking towards Ashoka Gardens with his ten heads held high with spiritual shine on his faces towards the Shiva temple in the middle of the garden.

Ravana with all his ten heads, and glowing skin of his healthy and most handsome body and a sacred thread around his shoulder like any Brahman would wear entered the much ornate gates of Ashoka Gardens.

The huge temple dedicated to Lord Shiva had domes made of pure gold and turrets of the temple were touching the clouds.

There was a pond opposite the temple lined with black stone and Sita was sitting under an Ashoka tree on the path to that temple at that time.

Ravana entered the Ashoka Gardens and was walking towards the temple. He stopped to look at Sita. Sita was sitting on the earth with her legs crossed and folded at the knees and was in deep meditation. Ravana watched her silently for a moment. Ravana said to himself “how extraordinary is this Sita! She has an aura around her head in orange colour”.

Ravana stopped there looking at Sita for a long time forgetting that he had just performed a great Yagna. He forgot everything in life for some time observing the beauty of Sita.

He entered the Shiva’s temple to perform a ritual bath to the idol of Lord Shiva with chanting of “*Rudram, Namakam, and chamakam*” mantras from Yajur Veda. All those attendant Brahmins consider it only as an idol of Lord Shiva made of stone, but for Ravana that was not an idol at all, but was his Lord, God Shiva alive and watching him.

Ravana started “*Rudra Abhishekam*” or the “ritual bath of Lord Shiva” by chanting mantras from Yajur Veda by heart which were hypnotic even for the attendant Brahmins and rishis there. It was so much hypnotic even for the ordinary rakshashas who were standing guard there. Ravana chanted all eleven “*anuvakas*” or chapters of Yajur Veda with all his ten heads at once, and repeatedly recited them, with first one after chanting second one, then first one again and again the second one, sequentially repeating all the eleven “*anuvakas*” or parts of verses from Yajur Veda. And again Ravana started chanting all the verses one hundred one times without missing even one syllable and poured ghee, honey, milk, curd, jiggery and water over the idol, pots after pots of water giving a ritual bath for Lord Shiva, he completed his ablutions as well as the end part of his Yagna.



RAMA IN MEDITATION

Rama, on those sands of the Ocean sat in meditation in the Moon light on a big boulder. Hanuman and others like Jambavan, Sugreeva, Angadha and other Vanaras sat very close to him. But hundreds of thousands of Vanaras also sat in the sands for many more miles facing Rama to watch a spectacle which they had never seen.

Rama was deep in meditation, there was a big orange colour aura encircled around his head, forming a halo. It could be seen by all Vanaras who sat around him. It could even be seen by all those Vanaras who were sitting faraway. Vanaras had never seen such a halo around the head of a human being. Hanuman touched Rama's feet looking at Rama in awe. Whole of Vanaras who were sitting very far from him also saw this halo around Rama's head and they started chanting his name "Rama, Rama, Jaya Rama, Rama". It was a very bright Moonlit night and everything was very peaceful and silent. Rama was still deep in meditation.

Only Jambavan seems to know that the bow which was named "Kodanda" used by Rama was bestowed by Sage Vashista when Rama with his wife Sita visited his ashram in Dandaka forest. At that time Sage Vashista was performing a Yagna in his ashram. Rama with his wife Sita though visited the ashram just like he was visiting other Ashrams of Sages, in Dandakaranya, that famous Sage Vashista was telling others that Rama shall come to his Ashram and he had been expecting him much before such a visit actually took place.

On that day, when Rama came to his Ashram along with his wife Sita as a visitor, Sage Vashista gave him an excellent bow made of alloy gold and told Rama "This bow was made of alloy metals with a mix of gold and other rare metals. This bow is very malleable but very tensile and very strong, and it can be bent

only by a powerful warrior. It can propel an arrow for many miles”.

The great Sage Vashista revealing the secret of that mythical bow said, “Oh! Rama! , It would not be very imprudent to tell you at this point of time that this bow was used by God Vishnu, the preserver of this great universe, who had left it here with a promise to pick it up again by him but that great God Vishnu, never ever appeared here again. I think, as a warrior who stands by the truth, you deserve this great bow to protect innocent people, you must use it”.

At that moment Rama as a warrior who was very inquisitive in his natural behaviour bent the bow and then adjusted the string to it, tested its malleability and its strength. Then Sage who was observing said “I shall speak the truth. Oh! Rama! I bestow this bow to you as you deserve it. It is also because the one, who is destined to use it, shall come here without being aware of it and the destiny of the bow also dictates that the one who holds it shall bend it without effort”.

Rama smiled and as a warrior he had liked it after bending it and testing every inch of it. From that day onwards Rama has been using that same bow but the earlier name to his bow “Kodanda” continued.

At that point of time, on the sand of that Ocean, in the full moon light, when Rama was in deep meditation and when a halo of orange colour enveloped in circles around his head which had been witnessed by every Vanara there, it was an all pervading silence and a very peaceful Moon light. All Vanaras were looking at Rama with admiration and love.

Rama came out of his deep meditation and was very peacefully and slowly talking to Hanuman and other Vanaras sitting around him. In that Moon light Rama’s face was very bright with radiance and a halo around his head. Hanuman was sitting at his feet. Jambavan was standing to the right side of Rama.

Vibhishana, the renegade brother of King Ravana, came along with a book in his hand and red vermillion mark on his forehead exhibiting himself as devotee of God Vishnu in stark contrast to all his family members and rakshashas who were all devotees of Lord Shiva. Vibhishana brother of Ravana lived for all his life in those huge palaces and the fort. He had been getting all the information from people inside the fort, of everything whatever had been going on inside the fort, all the time.

Vibhishana told all the Vanaras present there, the story of Trijata, a rakshasha woman. Vibhishana started revealing her birth details and her growth which surprised everyone, who were listening to him but particularly Hanuman who had seen Trijata in Ashoka Gardens, sitting very close to Sita.

Vibhishana started telling his own life story which was actually his secret affair with a concubine in the palace and about how he begot a daughter with her. He named that daughter as Trijata. When Ravana, the king was informed by others that Trijata was his brother Vibhishana's daughter, Ravana insisted that Vibhishana should marry his concubine Sarama to give dignity and sanctity to that infant child called Trijata.

Ravana asserted that "If Trijata should live with dignity, you Vibhishana, must marry your concubine and give her a status as wife to give sanctity to your daughter Trijata". But Vibhishana rebelled against his brother Ravana and refused to marry mother of Trijata.

Some days ago Trijata told her father Vibhishana about a dream she had dreamt in which the king Ravana with a shaven head was drinking oil from a lamp which he was carrying to dispel darkness while swans were carrying the palanquin in which Rama and Sita were sitting. Trijata interpreted her dream and told him that hard times were ahead for her uncle and the king Ravana and her dream might also mean defeat and death for the mighty King.

Vibhishana concluded his "secret" story by emphasizing that victory was very near. Vibhishana said "Rama! We shall

henceforth conduct the war in much more fierce manner so that it would be finished in a day. Now I know that Ravana could be defeated because Trijata had premonitions of disaster for Ravana through her dream. It cannot go wrong and this might also mean he could be killed, which I had thought was impossible. The dream of Trijata could not be wished away as insignificant”.

Jambavan had been very averse to Vibhishana since the very beginning and could not agree with what he had been suggesting.

Jambavan said “We must sent an emissary to Ravana either to agree to handover Sita with respect so that we will go away from here or else only he alone, as the king and warrior should fight a duel with Rama. Both Rama and Ravan shall stand face to face in a fight with complete exclusion of anyone else. We do not want any war of attrition anymore, prolonging in this manner with a lot of blood shed on both sides which we could not foresee in the beginning of this war. These high scale mortalities on both sides and a war of attrition, I believe is unnecessary and we can avoid it”.

Rama spoke in support of Jambavan and said “there have had been terrible casualties and that I should not desire any loss of blood anymore and it has been high time we shall find a way to stop this type of high scale war”.

Rama spoke to Hanuman and Jambavan at length and after serious discussions and imagining how Ravana, the king of Lanka could react to the deliberations of our emissary, Rama finally said “I should fight with Ravana all alone if that was the only option left to us. And let our fate decide whether Rama should survive or Ravana. We both of us know that either Ravana should kill me to put an end to this war or I shall kill Ravana. Let the nature’s law decide that there shall be “*Rama Rajya*” or not. If that so called God decides that Ravana should win and there shall be “*Ravana Rajya*”, so be it”.



WIFE OF RAVANA OBJECTS

Inside the fort, and in the palaces of Ravana, there was a tensed atmosphere.

Ravana met his wife, Queen Mandodari in her puja room where she was worshipping Lord Shiva and his consort Goddess Parvati. Queen Mandodari was wearing a saffron coloured sari and same colour blouse. As Ravana was looking at her from behind, he immediately remembered Sita.

She had a decorated long vermillion mark on her forehead like red flame in between her eye brows. She had large, wide expressive eyes with a milky white body. And her face emanates radiance of her powers of penance and there was an unmistakable glow on her face. She was very simple, without adorning herself any jewelry. Her single braid of hair went down up to her hips. Unquestionably she was one of the most beautiful women on this planet called the Earth. She was a celestial damsel blessed by Seven Sages of Milky-Way of stars. She was blessed by Sages that she will become a queen of an empire and her kingly husband shall be very handsome, highly educated as well as extremely rich. At that time when great Sages blessed her, Mandodari as unmarried virgin girl thought that there will be luxurious, pompous life waiting for her after her marriage and there shall be nothing but joy for the rest of her life. But fate had its own cruel laws of life, and she did not realize at the time, that there shall be unending sorrows hiding in riches and luxuries while there shall be sweet realizations of truth, in one's own miseries of life. And to bestow the results of one's karma God has his own plans to make you travel through troubles and travails of life.

King Ravana summarily told his wife about the imminent battle between himself and Rama, face to face, one against the other in the battle field without army on either side.

Queen Mandodari was at once felt very upset. Queen turned towards her husband in a very slow, but a very grave and serious manner, suppressing all her emotions as much as possible for her.

And then Queen Mandodari in a voice choking with emotions and in her husky voice, she said “I am the queen of Lanka and you are the King. A queen should look upon her citizens of the country like her own children and that is “dharma” of a Queen. My Lanka was burnt twice by Vanaras. Did you inform the citizens of our city of Lanka before you had stolen that Sita from the forest? Who was the cause of this entire problem? In this war thousands are dying every day and our city of Lanka was burned. Sita was the cause of this entire problem! I repeat our Lanka was burnt not once but twice. Do you really concerned about us and about the citizens? Sita had set her foot and Lanka was burned. What do you think you are doing? Oh! My dear husband! My love! Think with your ten heads not once but ten times. I suggest one immediate action which in fact is your responsibility as the king of Lanka in the larger interest of our people. Give away that woman Sita. Send her away. We will get rid of a big problem of a ghost sitting in that Garden and importantly the ghost sitting in your head! There shall be absolutely no need for you to fight a dangerous dual with Rama”

Ravana began to think. In his mind, thoughts began to race with the ebb and flow of his own emotions. Ravana did not like the mention of Sita in so many ways, negatively, by his dear wife Mandodari. He thought that following the advice of his wife meant an object surrender to that stupid human being called Rama. Even if he were to decide to surrender Sita, he thought, it only meant the immense sacrifice of his two sons who became martyrs, and very cruel death of his brother Kumbhakarna in the battle field, had gone waste. Ravana strongly rejected the idea of handing over Sita. He thought that history shall never forgive him and his act might be interpreted as cowardliness and generations of people might think that after all Ravana, the great king of Lanka with ten heads had only clay feet. Ravana thought it all over again and realized that he had reached a point of no

return if he had to avenge the killings of his brother and sons by these two brothers called Rama and Laxmana. Ravana thought that between the two options of handing over Sita or fighting a duel with Rama, the later one shall be better for his prestige and for his life on the earth even if it meant death for him.

After a moment, of thought, Ravana in an indignant voice said to his wife Mandodari, "In other words, my darling Queen you are giving a stupid advice to me to surrender to that foolish fellow called Rama. He was supposed to be a king of Ayodhya but he bowed down to the words of a woman and left the empire to roam in the forests along with his wife. And that was my forest and I repeat Dandaka is my forest and this Rama went on killing my people, rakshashas in my forest. The man, who could not feed his wife with three meals a day for twelve years in the forest of Dandaka, should not have any right to talk about his lost wife in the first place let alone waging a war with me for her sake, and his immoral way of setting fire to the houses of innocent citizens. It shows and I realize that Vanara leaders are a pack of cowards with tails. And the biggest lie had been that this Rama who called himself as "*Maryada Purushottam*" or the person of dharma!! What a joke. My dear Mandodari you had indeed found a competitor in beauty and powers of penance in Sita and that is the cause of a rise of jealousy in you pushing you to the limits of hatred for her. You are obsessed with her due to sheer jealousy. Do not you? Am I not right?"

Mandodari replied to Ravana in a voice of concern, "Oh! No! That Sita is not a goddess for me. Sita may be indeed more than a goddess for you. For me she is a *rakshashashi* like all of us. Sita is actually a ghost whose sobbing's you could hear miles away all through the night. She had set her foot and Lanka burned. You praise her? For what exactly do you praise her? And you have an opinion that I have been jealous of her! Did I ever object to your womanizing? How many women of your choice and collection are there in your harem in the undergrounds of our palace? Did I ever object to your perfidy?"

“How much ever I wanted a serendipitous ambiance here in my palace, you vitiate the entire atmosphere of purity here and in spite of all this, I still love you more than my life. Oh! My darling husband! You shall use your brain. Why you have become so blind to the rationalities of thinking and realities of life? Only because you are infatuated with that rakshashi called Sita? Does she really know how to entertain guests in a house and does she know how to attend to gatherings , social life and does she really know how to behave in a society, in a party? Can she attend to a social function without causing an embarrassment to her husband? Does she really know how to talk and entertain in social groups? Listen to me. I am your wife and also the queen of Lanka, you should not forget that you have an immense responsibility and we both are accountable to our people”.

Mandodari continued after a brief respite “A man half naked with a bow and arrow with the help of monkeys had built a bridge across the mighty Ocean can never be an ordinary human being. He was God himself and an avatar of Lord Vishnu. A monkey who could not be destroyed even by Brahmastra cannot be called a monkey or a Vanara Hanuman but verily an Avatar of Lord Shiva himself.”

Mandodari continued, “That Sita must be a ruse they are using. I started doubting it from the beginning. She spells danger to me. I trust my instincts and I can sense the danger. My darling husband! My life! Please listen to me that Sita must be sent away from here. She does not forebode anything good to me. There is no need for any fierce duel with Rama. And I somehow feel, my sixth sense warns me that daughter of ours who we had thrown away in to the sea might have come back, and now weeping under that tree in Ashoka Garden all through the night, and I shall say this is the result of our bad karma”

After patiently listening to his wife for so long, King Ravana became furious. He could not contain his anger. He pulled away that golden plate, Mandodari was holding with both her hands on which there were offering to gods from her puja room and threw

it away. And Ravana said with anger “Mandodari you have lost your sensible thinking faculty. You talk with your two minds at a time and one each goes contrary to other. How a monkey could be my dear most God Shiva? How awkward it is for you to speak like that. I should say you need the treatment from a physician to check your mental health particularly because you imagine our daughter, a dead child at her cradle ceremony, thirty years ago, and again walking back in to our life? Gripped with fear you had thrown away daughter of ours in to the Sea. Can anyone survive in a closed air tight box that was thrown in to the sea? What nonsense is this even to imagine let alone talk about it? After thirty years. How I did not desert you even though you killed my daughter! Why I love you so much and why I am still afraid of you, I do not understand”. Ravana walked out in anger and frustration. He ordered for full scale preparations for himself to go the battle field next day.



RAVANA FIGHTS RAMA

Ravana the King's battle preparations were on foot. He went again to meet his wife Mandodari just before he left the palace. He asked for her blessings. She was sitting on the floor, completely sad, leaning against a pillar in the hall. She was weeping incessantly.

She wiped her tears with her sari end, and stood up to greet her husband. She was tall, curvaceous and her eyes were red, tears were rolling down her large eyes. As for the traditions, she had made a cut in her little finger and with that blood she made a mark on the forehead of her husband Ravana and said "My darling husband, victory shall be yours and the world should remember Rama and Ravana fight forever".

King Ravana alias "*Dashakanta*" bowed his head finally for the tenth time in front of idol of Lord Shiva and chanted "*Shiva Tandava stotram*" a mantra to invoke the power of Lord Shiva. Rakshasha Ravana acquired all his ten heads and twenty hands befitting his name "*Dashakanta*".

King Ravana along with his one thousand diamonds embedded crown stood on his chariot with supreme confidence.

Sri Rama was waiting with his bow and arrow. He was standing on the ground and he did not have any protective shield to wear on his chest. He was wearing "Dhovati" which was a single long cloth which covered his waist down to just above his ankles, tightly wrapping around each of his legs up to his ankles. The cloth was in saffron colour. Otherwise his chest was bare without a shield. There were many quivers full of arrows lying on the ground. One big basket like quiver Rama tied with leather belt around his waist and that quiver was leaning and hanging against his right thigh. He was almost seven feet tall and standing

straight with a broad chest. He was wearing leather sandals. Rama was very muscular and his muscular hands were shining in the morning sunlight.

Ravana arrived in a chariot pulled by seven black horses. And he stopped his chariot at a distance facing Rama.

Sri Rama set three arrows and pulled the string up to his ears and released the arrows. Ravana could shoot twenty arrows at a time. Rama's arrows could hardly cut across Ravana's arrows to deflect them. King Ravana had shot another dozen arrows within seconds.

Rama had to bow down so that Ravana's arrows fly over him and sometimes Rama dived and rolled on the floor to escape the arrows of Ravana. Sri Rama was shooting arrows three at a time, three times in a second to stop and deflect Ravana's arrows which were shooting across with lightning speed.

Ravana's chariot made of alloy gold was rotating around standing Rama deadly fast with lightning speed. It was circularly moving in the field of battle and Rama was literally in the middle of a fire of arrows raining on him. Rama was also in the midst of the swirl of dust raised by Ravana's speeding chariot. Sri Rama was shooting arrows three times in three seconds of time and yet a few arrows of Ravana grazed past left shoulder of Rama and one grazed the left thigh of Rama cutting his cloth and causing slight grazing injuries. Rama had to run to the left and then Rama had to run to the right and sometimes ducked on his knees to escape Ravana's arrows. It was a definite fighting between Rama and Ravana where Rama was not attacking but defending himself his own dear life.

Ravana stopped for a brief period of time, got down from his chariot and said, "He!! Ram! Ram! Who do you think you are fighting with? I am Ravan. Here is Ravan!" He shouted loudly with great pride showing off all his ten heads and spreading horizontally all his twenty hands. "It was easy for you to poison your arrow and kill Vali hiding behind a tree. I am not Vali, Oh! Ram! Rama! Rama! Now you are fighting with Ravan!"

Ravana mounted his chariot again. He chanted mantras to make his arrows in to missiles and shot them up in to the sky. Rama also had to use mantras to make his arrows in to missiles to stop Ravana's missiles which caused a great explosion in the sky which could be seen even by Gods sitting in the Milky Way and gods from heaven descended and were lining up along the clouds to witness that great Rama, Ravana historic battle.

The sky was thick with smoke and evaporation due to these explosions of missiles. And clouds gathered around evaporation and the arrows of Rama and Ravana were making a thundering noise causing the sonic boom in the skies. The skies were reverberated. The lightening's we normally see during rain were repeatedly happening along with a deafening sound because of Rama, Ravana arrows powered each by mantras were bombarding. They were becoming Astra's and missiles with their intense explosions were threatening the heavens. Gods appeared on the horizon alarmed by this war. Sri Rama for the first time, more than ever, realized the importance of education he received from Sage Vishwamitra.

It was all pitch darkness even before the night fall while it was still an evening time and Ravana taking his conch had blown it marking the end of battle. Ravana, Dashakanta, with all his ten heads and twenty hands, turned around his chariot and sped away. And for the day the battle ended which gave a great relief from trying and tense moments to Hanuman and Jambavan who were watching the battle of Rama and Ravana standing very close to Rama all the time.

Sri Rama was injured with several cuts on his body. Rama's whole left leg was soaked in blood. He was gasping for breath and tired. Rama was profusely sweating. Rama's hair tied as a knot like crown above his head was filled with dust. Rama's face and body was dabbed in the mix of a dust and blood.

Sugreeva brought juice extraction of many medicinal plants with which he bandaged Rama's injuries.



HANUMAN HELPS

Ravana was coming for the second day of fighting with Rama. Ravana blew his conch even when he was much far away but could be seen with his ten heads with ten crowns with all diamonds and his alloy golden bow. His wrists were decorated with very thick golden leaves studded with diamonds.

Rama was ready on the ground with leather belt on his waist tied to a quiver of arrows. Rama stood with his “Kodanda” a bow made of alloy gold, once used by God Vishnu.

Hanuman was standing beside him.

Ravana, the ten headed “*Dashakanta*” arrived and stopped his chariot at a distance.

Ravana gave the ultimatum to Rama saying “He! Ram! Do you completely wipe out our species of rakshashas? Who had given you the authority to wipe out entire species? You can never bring about your kingdom called “Rama Rajya” what shall remain forever shall be “Ravana Rajya” the kingdom of Ravana all over this earth. I give you time to leave! Just leave this Lanka! You are a brave man and a wise man as well. Like many brave men you do not die in a foreign land. Your monkeys called Vanaras destroyed a great city of a great civilization by burning it. Still I pardon you. I give a safe passage for you and all your monkeys as well, to leave from here while the peace prevails.”

Ravana’s chariot started running circularly around Rama who was standing on the ground. Hanuman told Rama “Please sit on my shoulders”. Rama mounted on the shoulders of Hanuman when Hanuman sat down on his knees to facilitate Rama’s climbing on to his shoulders. And Hanuman had immediately jumped in to the air with the speed of wind.

Rama set an arrow on the string of his Kodanda and released the arrow. It was like a steel bird released by an extreme force which created a noise that resounded in the sky.

King Ravana had shot three golden arrows, one of which could have hit Rama but Hanuman moved away swiftly in the air.

Ravana's chariot speed increased and increased again, and the chariot lifted high above the ground with its high speed and then almost instantly, Ravana had shot twelve arrows, made of gold. These arrows were deflected by Rama but one arrow was aimed at Hanuman. This arrow was caught by Hanuman by his teeth, and he had spit it out. Ravana, Dashakanta was shocked to see his arrow being sucked by Hanuman by widely opening his mouth and stopping the high speed arrows by his teeth.

Hanuman started rotating with speed of a wind very high above the ground, and Rama started shooting arrows at Ravana. Even though Ravana could deflect them, one of Rama's arrows when he had shot it within seconds of the first one, while Hanuman was flying high with the speed of wind, broke the hinder part of Ravana's mighty chariot. Still the fight between them went on unabated.

Rama started shooting arrows with terrific speed which confused Ravana and it became a challenge for him to deflect, avoid and shoot arrows again. Ravana's chariot was made in heaven and was given to him by Indra, the king of Gods out of fear. Ravana was using the speed of his chariot using its invulnerability and the strength of it up to its limits to avoid Rama's arrows.

As the evening was approaching, Rama's anger increased and his arrows, powered by mantras started penetrating Ravana's shields and armour. Ravana's charioteer got tired and was injured. Ravana was using the best of his arrows like arrows of fire and arrows of lightening but Rama could counter them effectively. Rama's arrow, a single one, could not be deflected and it had hit Ravana's crown. Ravana fell backwards by its force but sat up again to pull twelve arrows on Rama which Rama could avoid

easily while sitting on the shoulders of Hanuman who was moving circularly in the field of battle with the speed of wind. Rama's another arrow, with the support of mantras of Agni or the fire God penetrated Ravana's circle of influence, hit his shoulder cutting it off his body.

Ravana's right hand which was cut off fell down on the chariot. Ravana's chariot stopped. Ravana picked up the cut off hand, put it back in place and started chanting mantras of Lord Shiva. The hand was fixed in to the shoulder, neatly patched up again without any obvious injury at all. Ravana was sitting in the same position, and started shooting arrows again strengthened by his mantras as if nothing had happened to him!!

It was an amazing scene for Rama who was getting exhausted as well as puzzled. It was a moment of disbelief for him causing frustration in him.

As the evening approached King Ravana blew his conch announcing the end of the battle. Ravana stood up on his chariot, with all his ten heads and twenty hands. And Rama stood up on the shoulders of Hanuman, who was actually flying in the air at the same level as the Ravana's chariot.

Ravana said "He! Ram! Ram! What power is this? Is this the power of yours or the power of Sita?" Ravana's chariot turned away and with terrific speed it almost disappeared towards the west.



THRID DAY OF WAR

Ravana came on the third day, well prepared for the fight with Rama.

Ravana's chariot stopped very nearby Rama who was standing there without any shield or any weapons except his bow and arrows. He was wearing one single cloth, a "Dhovati" of saffron colour.

Ravana to everyone's surprise got down from his chariot and took out his long javelin with sharp blade.

This javelin of Ravana was a gift by King of Gods, Indra himself and it could not be held by anyone except Ravana. Its staff was burning hot for any other person to hold it and even to touch it was nearly impossible task for anyone else.

Ravana holding this javelin came towards Rama trying to stab him. Rama flipped to one side and pushed the javelin away while avoiding a hit, but this caused burns on the palms of Rama.

Rama took out a very long, six feet long steel arrow with sharp blade from his quivers and Ravana holding his javelin, and moving in a deceptive manner, ensued in a duel between them which soon turned into a dangerous, fierce fight between them. The fight seemed to be between equals and no one could be sure who will win. Dust was rising like clouds by the fast movement of both in the battle field. It was like witnessing two lions fight with each other. All Vanaras were tensed up because they had already witnessed Ravana's dexterity with javelin and the ferocity of his fight when he fought Laxmana with this same Javelin. Vanaras watched Rama and his fight with Ravana on the ground with their legs shaking with fear and trepidation.

Rama's steel arrow was broken for God's sake and then Ravana lounged forward with his javelin. He was rotating javelin with

both his hands much faster than a high speed wheel on an axis and tried to beat up Rama.

Rama fought with his empty hands. The pushes, the shoves and hand to hand combat raised dust and the battle field itself became wider and wider with their movement.

Hanuman and Jambavan were very closely following Rama and hundred rakshashas were shouting, crying, hooting and encouraging Ravana while all through it these rakshashas were running round and round in the battle field closely following Ravana.

At one point of time, Ravana could give a horizontal blow on the stomach of Rama with his iron hot Javelin, and Rama in last minute, stiffened his stomach muscles just to withstand the shock of the javelin strike flat across his stomach but the outer skin on his stomach was burnt along the line of javelin strike. Rama's stomach outer skin and layer of muscle peeled off along with Ravana's super-hot burning javelin.

Ravana gave another blow with extreme speed as Ravana himself was rotating much faster than a turning wheel, and this blow was horizontal on the stomach of Rama again. Rama this time put his elbow against it at an angle to the strike and this movement broke the mythical, God Indra's javelin which was considered to be unbreakable even by Gods, indeed was broken in to two pieces. One of the broken pieces of Javelin with the sharp steel blade attached to it flew up in the air with the force of its strike and came in to the hands of Rama in less than a second with which Rama stabbed Ravana. The javelin, in its half portion, was stabbed deep in to the stomach of Ravana, the king of Lanka.

It all happened in seconds with the great skills of Rama in combat. And with this javelin's sharp steel blade stabbed inside his stomach, Ravana let out a painful cry. But Rama pushed this Javelin with both his hands deep in to the stomach of Ravana with all his strength, and pushed it upwards which tore open the stomach of Ravana resulting in his entrails pulled out on the ground in a lump.

Ravana fell on his knees letting out a pitiful cry and was crying miserably in pain. Ravana though groaning in pain started chanting God Shiva's mantras from Yajur Veda's sixth part, and he was looking upwards while chanting. Ravana, as he was chanting mantras, had seen God Shiva appearing before him! Ravana then, invigorated by the presence of Lord Shiva, was chanting mantras of Yajur Veda, at a high pitch, without writhing in pain but instead immersed in devotion as he was watching Lord Shiva who was rotating around standing straight on his feet while drinking poison from a bowl holding it with both his hands. Ravana without feeling any pain started pulling out the javelin!

Rama looked in that direction at which Ravana was looking at with such a devotion, while chanting mantras, as if he had seen a God standing in front of him. But Rama could see nothing! Rama rubbed his eyes again and he was puzzled. Rama threw his hands in air, as if this were all nonsensical hallucinations for Ravana, who was dying. For Rama as he looked at it, it was all an empty space in the air. But that devotee of Lord Shiva that King of Lanka "Dashakanta" Ravana was still on his knees on the good earth and he was chanting mantras. And his God Shiva for him was rotating on his toes for Ravana's eyes. Ravana pulled out the Javelin. Ravana held his lump of entrails in his hands and pushed all of it back in to his stomach through that wide slit on his stomach, earlier tore open by Rama.

Ravana's devotion was so high that he could clearly see his God Shiva still standing there. Ravana continued chanting mantras loudly, audible to everyone in that battle field. Ravana was looking at his God and rubbing on his stomach which had been tore open, he had closed it, and his stomach muscles patched up leaving behind no trace of any injury at all.

The wound was healed completely right in front of everybody standing there and watching him, including Sri Rama who could see this miracle of all miracles, which was beyond imagination for him.

Ravana was about to get up when Rama moved forward and lifted his leg to kick Ravana on his stomach. Hanuman moved swifter than ever and pulled back Rama. Then Hanuman hugged Rama while pushing him much further backwards.

Ravana was still on his knees and said “Oh! Rama! You were known as “Purushottam” the best of human beings! Is this behaviour befits that eulogy from these monkeys! I am a Brahman and a devotee of Lord Shiva and I was chanting mantras of Lord Shiva. You came to kick me! And how great are you? Kick me then”. Ravana still on his knees showed his stomach challenging Rama to kick him.

Hanuman pushed Rama much further back by hugging him. But Rama was shouting at the height of his voice warning Ravana “I shall kill you for sure, Oh! Ravana! I shall kill you”.

Ravana got up and walked towards his chariot. Jambavan blew the conch, indicating that the fight was over, even though it was only a late midday time. Ravana sitting in his chariot drove towards his fort.



RAVANA IN BATTLE FIELD

On the fourth day, early in the morning as the Sun was rising in the east Lord Shri Rama took a dip in the river merging in to Ocean and prayed to Sun God as he was doing every day.

Rama came out of the river after completing his ablutions to Sun God and was dressing himself for a combat with Ravana which he thought was imminent. Then Rama had seen Lord Indra in a chariot descending from heaven. Lord Indra was glowing with the clothes of gold and with his bejeweled crown. Rama could not believe his eyes.

Lord Indra, the king of Gods spoke to Rama thus “Oh! Rama, I am Indra and I am the king of Gods. I shall say it is not easy to fight with that rakshasha Ravana. You are fighting with such a powerful demon very bravely standing on the ground but your bravery is misadventure which cannot lead you to victory. It is also a gross underestimation of your enemy. And your fight with Ravana standing on the shoulders of Hanuman had been only protecting you from Ravana’ weapons. You must have realized by now that you are fighting with the most powerful person on the earth and the one who had defeated Gods in heavens. That is why he is called Ravana Brahma. And to win this war you definitely need a mythical chariot with divine powers. If you still prefer standing on the ground to face Ravana Brahma that shall be a risk to your own life let alone killing him. You need to move fast against Ravana to avoid many of his arrows and you need a speed to give strength to your own arrows. You need a divine chariot like the one I have, with divine horses and you need divine Astra’s to put an end to the life of that demon Ravana, who has been harassing everyone of gods in heaven and humans on the earth. Ravana had been harassing all the Gods with his vile methods”.

And after this advice, Lord Indra handed over the chariot he had been travelling from heaven to the earth and told Rama that he would stay in the clouds as a celestial being and shall watch the fight to see the end of Ravana. Rama accepted that divine chariot with divine horses and expressed his immense gratitude to Indra Bhagvan.

As the time approached, everything fell silent, even the fish and croaking frogs fell silent. The birds on the trees fell silent and eagles disappeared.

Ravana was arriving at the battle field in full glory for the fourth day and the sound of his chariot was thundering through the battle field. Ravana blew his conch.

Thousand rakshashas were raising battle cries and victory slogans to Ravana in the battle field. The chariot of Ravana was looking well-polished and his diamond jewelry was shining brighter than ever. All rakshashas around him said “victory to invincible Ravana” and then they all shouted in one voice “we shall teach a lesson to that human warrior Rama.”

After stopping his chariot and getting down from it, Ravana in a threatening voice warned Rama “Oh! Rama! Rama! You must leave Lanka immediately. You can never kill me. If you still continue to fight with me, there shall be no tomorrow for you. And I promise to all your Vanaras that I shall mourn your death as you are a great warrior and I shall allow all those innocent misled Vanaras a safe passage to Kishkinda as pall bearers of your dead body.”

Rama kept himself silent and did not say anything in reply.

Rama stood on that divine chariot on its front part and the charioteer of Indra called “Mathali” was driving the chariot with great speed around the battle field.

Rama took out an arrow with powers of snakes which was called “Naga Astra” gifted to him by Lord Indra Bhagvan, along with his chariot, which he had set it on the bow, pulled the string, and even before Rama could shoot that arrow to cause devastating

effect in the very beginning of combat, Ravana tried and planned to deflect this arrow early on with his alertness, and deftness he had released twenty arrows by the time, Rama pulled the string of his bow and released this “Nag Astra”. The snake arrow, an Astra powered by Gods of Nether world and gifted by Indra, multiplied itself to give multiplying effects, took a full U-turn on its own tails and came back again to hit the heads of Ravana. Ravana shot arrows twenty at a time, to protect himself.

All of the five heads on one side and all of four heads on the left side of Ravana were all cut off the trunk of his body and flung from his chariot. Ravana’s heads rolled down on to the earth below.

Ravana, who had staggered backwards, recovered and balanced himself from the severe jolt, stopped his chariot, got down and kneeled on the earth. Ravana opened a very small golden casket which was hanging on around his neck, like a locket, hung by a string of prayer beads. He took out a two inch “Shiva Linga” out of the casket and chanted mantras. All of the nine heads cropped up again and the fallen heads in the dust disappeared.

Rama was amazed to see this and admired the power of his enemy. Dashakanta Ravana who was still kneeling on the earth, in morning sunlight fully immersed himself in devotion of Lord Shiva with half closed eyes and holding “Shiva Linga” on his open palms, kept muttering prayers on his lips. For the first time Rama thought that he had no clear knowledge of his enemy and kept on watching and admiring Ravana.

Ravana, with all his twenty hands wielding twenty weapons, one each, including a disc, swords, javelins and others, he had hurled them against Rama astride a chariot which was riding through clouds with extreme speed. Mathali, the charioteer of Indra Bhagvan knew exactly what to do in that situation.

Rama used many arrows, setting and shooting them with alertness and skill which were deadly fast. Any rakshasha could not have survived fighting against those arrows of Rama. And his

chariot gifted by Lord Indra was pulled by divine horses which were completely impervious to arrows of Ravana which had hit them, and also these horses were moving very fast while changing their directions at a high speed. Rama's chariot given by Indra was then riding through the clouds.

The divine horses were completely invulnerable to all the arrows shot at them by Ravana, who had intentionally tried to kill them or harm those divine horses which had become his primary target to bring a halt to the fast movement of Rama. When the arrows of Ravana hit these horses, mysteriously these arrows were turning in to lotus flower stalks on the necks of these horses.

At one point of time, the sky over the battle field was filled up with weapons. Dust rose up. Clouds formed around the midday Sun and there was darkness at noon. Birds started crying on the trees faraway and animals came out of their caves in the jungles. Lord Indra and other demi Gods were watching Rama and Ravana battle from the clouds.

Rama and Ravana went on with a combat that was unimaginable to describe even to Goddess of learning Saraswati. The war of arrows, Astra's and missiles striking and nullifying each other, waged on instilling fear in the hearts of Vanaras on one side and Rakshashas on the other side. Both of Rama's chariot, and Ravana's chariots were speeding through the battle field like electric flashes in the dark clouds of rain. At least two times Ravana could not deflect, or escape arrows of Rama and he was hit by these arrows of Rama.

Each time one of Ravana's heads were cut off and flew away under the impact of speeding arrows of Rama, but almost instantly new heads for Ravana cropped up when he stopped and chanted his mantras. At least a dozen arrows of Rama had pierced in to hands and chest of Ravana but Ravana plucked these arrows out and threw them away after briefly stopping his chariot and visibly nothing happened to Ravana while astonished Rama fell silent.

Rama thought his arrows were effective and deadly against thousands of rakshashas and he had killed Khara, Viraada and Kumbhakarna! But his arrows were all totally ineffective against Ravana, as much as flower stalks thrown at swans in a flower pond.

Rama felt hopeless, frustrated and he was visibly upset. Rama was highly perplexed and standing on that divine chariot, he felt he was exhausted. Few arrows of Ravana could cause severe injuries to Rama and to cure them he thought he had to depend on plant extracts given by Susena, the Vanara doctor. Finally at the onset of that evening, conch shells were blown by Jambavan and the combat between a human being Rama and Rakshasha Ravana known famously as “Dashakanta” ended for the day.

The day fifth of the war ended with Ravana who almost appeared as invincible to everyone which brought forth a realization for Rama that his fighting with Ravana, the rakshasha was nowhere near victory and it was also dawning on him that to think of victory or even imagining it was hopeless.

On the end of sixth day, late in the evening Dashakanta Ravana left the battle field blowing his conch shells. Shri Rama got down from that divine chariot and in that moment he collapsed on his knees on the ground in the center of battle field taking support from his own bow. Rama with his head bent, was totally exhausted. His face was contorted and for except a loud weeping, Rama’s face showed all the disappointment. The negative feelings about his victory were clouding his thoughts and Rama felt completely hopeless. .



SAGE AGASTHYA

Sage Agasthya descended from skies just before the Sun rise and there was still darkness enveloping the battle field. The sage was wearing only a single cloth. He had a crown like knot of hair on the center of his head and he was sporting a long white haired beard.

All Vanaras moved backwards in wonder as the great Sage descended from the skies. So many great Vanaras prostrated before Sage Agasthya and paid their respects.

Sri Rama was standing like a warrior with his bow “Kodanda” watching this great Rishi descending from the skies. The great Rishi seemed to be in haste.

Sage Agasthya expressed his dissatisfaction and clearly in a frustrated voice, and pointing a finger at Rama the great Sage said “Rama, the great warrior of Ikshwaku clan! Now whole of world is dependent on you and looking at you with great expectations, pinning all their hopes in your abilities to kill Ravana. But you are fighting with this Rakshasha Ravana as if you do not know how to fight. The fight between you and him is going on for the last six days without any result. Do you really want to kill Ravana? You are making all these halfhearted attempts due to a serious fault of thinking negatively about your own valour and you are harbouring sympathy for Ravana deep in your sub-conscious mind. If you really wanted to kill you should kill, do not hesitate and think. This is inappropriate for wasting time with a wavering mind and half-hearted attempts. You shall become resolute as well as confident of killing Ravana. That killing of Ravana shall not be felt like a personal revenge but the end of Ravana’s life is for the good of the whole world. It is not your own personal revenge that is important to me or to anyone in this world. You shall be serving the humanity by putting an end to this demon

Ravana's harassment of all the three worlds! Oh! Rama, this is not your family fight for your wife".

Sage Agasthya continued "I am a Sage and it is not our duty to kill a demon or a human or deliberately puff out life of any creature. We, Sages, should never do that. You are Kshatriya, a "warrior" must instill confidence in the innocent people by protecting them and that is a dharma of a Kshatriya! That is your "dharma" and you shall do your duty. You should kill that rakshashas Ravana and free this world from a great burden."

Sage Agasthya continued with his advice to Rama, "I shall teach you a mantra which is known in the world of spirituality as "Aditya Hridayam" which frees humans from delusion and despondency. It gives a powerful resolve to conquer enemies. It instills the confidence in the person who chants it. Like the Sun dispels darkness, chanting of this mantra removes negative thinking and brings clarity to your mind. And you shall chant this mantra along with all these Vanaras and you shall chant this mantra facing the Sun as it rises in the east".

Then Sage Agasthya started chanting the mantra of "Aditya Hridayam" or the "heart of the Sun God", or the secrets of the energy of Sun God. While that great Rishi Agasthya was chanting the mantra, immersed in devotion of the Sun God, Sri Rama standing in front of him and listening to him with rapt attention memorized it.

As the Sun was rising in the east, on that same day, hundreds of thousands of Vanaras stood all in attention along with Rama in the vast sands of sea shore, facing the east, to chant "Aditya Hridayam" eulogizing the Sun God. All these hundreds of thousands of Vanaras along with their beloved leader Rama started chanting "Aditya Hridayam" with one voice.

After this chanting, Sage Agasthya gave an arrow with its blade in the shape of a snake with its mouth open. This arrow mysteriously appeared in the hands of that Sage Agasthya. The blade of this arrow was made of gold. The shaft of arrow was

made of an alloy metal and feathers were from none other than the divine eagle Garuda, the vehicle of God Vishnu, the preserver of this Universe.

Sage Agasthya told “Rama, use this mythical arrow as the last weapon because you can use this weapon only once. Ravana should not survive after you had used this arrow and all the Gods shall help you. Entangled in the web of karma, that Ravana shall die in the hands of Rama. This arrow has the power of Brahma, it is a fateful arrow created by Brahma, the one who decides the fate of all creatures”.

After gifting Rama, the ultimate weapon, and wishing him all the benefits from Gods, Sage Agasthya blessed Rama and disappeared.



THE BAD OMENS FOR RAVANA

King Ravana was getting ready for his fight with Rama on the seventh day and was making last preparations inside his palace in the Fort.

Queen Mandodari his wife with a very disturbed face and highly agitated mind came into the hall to meet her husband Ravana to make a final appeal and her last attempts at convincing him against a battle at least on that day.

Mandodari stood very close to her husband Ravana and told him slowly while tears were welling up in her large eyes. She was unable to hide her fears. She spoke in an agitated voice “You should not go for a battle with Rama at least for this day, today, if not for a long lasting negotiated peace agreement with him. Oh! My dear husband! You must observe all bad omens today. As I have sat for worshipping of Gods today I have seen my Idols shedding tears and their tears were rolling down their stony eyes”.

Mandodari was making an effort, a deliberate attempt to restrain her own bursting out from complete breakdown.

“You must see how a cloud which appeared exactly like an umbrella circularly covering around the Sun. And there were clouds nowhere in the sky. Why do not you observe! The birds have stopped chirping, but they have been actually crying since the morning. One or other rakshasha woman has been coming today since morning to meet me only to inform me the death of someone of their beloved. The dogs in the horse stable were howling and weeping since morning. Your parrot stopped talking”.

“You should retire today. It is better we open up talks with Rama and other Vanara leaders like Hanuman and bears leader

Jambavan. We shall send away that rakshashi Sita out of that garden to that bloody battle field; let her husband take her away. She is young and her husband is young and it their time to enjoy their life and your interference, irrespective of your justification for it is totally unnecessary in their life. I do not want to hear her weeping and sobbing throughout the nights”

Ravana, Dashakanta was adamant. Even Ravana appeared to be little bit concerned about those bad omens but covered up his fears with his own wishful thinking and as his megalomania took over him, he had very decisively replied “My dear Mandodari, why should you worry? What may happen may happen! I shall never leave Sita; I could never let her go”

Mandodari collapsed down on the floor weeping.

Ravana’s dearest person was his wife Mandodari. But Mandodari, who really loved him, was weeping. He tried to console her and cajole her.

Ravana sat down with her on the floor and said, “My dear! Mandodari, do not weep. Events have come up to this stage. We cannot rule the time. The events started controlling us. My Lanka burned twice and you are the queen and you understand it better. Our own illustrious and warrior sons died. My own brother Kumbhakarna died. Except you, Mandodari, I do not have anyone in my life, who loves me. And you are weeping! What do you think? For whom should I be alive? You shall not weep Mandodari! You shall not. That Rama and all those monkeys should weep. Ravana waited for Mandodari to stop weeping. Ravana fretting and unable to bear the fact of his dear wife weeping shouted at her with an intense voice telling her to stop weeping. I am going for war, please get up and give me your blessings”

Ravana’s face with its great luster and luminosity started fading by each minute. There was very thin, dark shadow coming over his face like a very thin black veil would cover a luminous lamp. The most illustrious person called Dashakanta Ravana, in all the

three worlds looked himself distraught and very worried. Ravana was himself at a loss to understand his own despondency; negative ideas started clogging his mind before a do or die fight with Rama on that day.

Ravana did not listen to wife's erudite advice and was very indifferent to all of those bad omens as well. He scoffed at those omens though he sensed that something was going very wrong for him. He wanted to ignore those bad omens but doubts were haunting him.

When Ravana finally came out of north gate, someone with a sharp axe on his shoulder came in the opposite to greet him and wished him a success. A single Brahman who was going for his obsequies came in the opposite and greeted him. A widow was weeping while walking behind a bier with a dead body of her son. She crossed Ravana's path.

Finally Ravana arrived at the battle field while many eagles were hovering around very low in the sky, peeling at high intensity.



BRAHMA'S ARROW

Rama was ready for a battle with Ravana after chanting “Aditya Hridayam”. Rama was standing on the ground in the front of the chariot given by the King of Gods Indra Bhagvan. Ravana stopped at a distance, blew his conch and set arrows on his bow. He pulled all the twelve arrows and released them. Rama countered them all those arrows of Ravana with only one arrow.

Ravana's chariot was going around the battle field with terrific speed. His arrows created a black smoke which curled around Rama's divine chariot like a huge snake spread its hood all over a wide area and a very thick and dark smoke was hovering on the chariot of Rama.

Rama mounted his chariot and Mathali the charioteer had whip lashed the backs of those mythical horses to pick up speed.

Rama's arrows, cut through Ravana's arrows and cut off his heads several times, but new heads cropped up instantly. Rama with his one great arrow could cut off the flag mast of Ravana. When his flag mast was cut off, Ravana got very angry.

Ravana tried to kill divine horses of Rama's chariot by shooting them with his arrows but these arrows were losing momentum and falling on the necks of the horses turning as lotus flower stalks, and those horses were galloping as if nothing had happened.

Rama stood up on his running chariot. Rama took the arrow which Sage Agasthya had given to him. He set that arrow and with left foot to the front, he pulled the string of his bow “Kodanda” to the maximum length until his ears and released the arrow.

The arrow made a huge hissing sound of a snake with white smoke.

The arrow cut through all the arrows of Ravana and even missiles used by Ravana to counter that Brahma's arrow were turned to ash and even while Ravana's charioteer drove on taking sudden turns trying to escape from the arrow took sudden shifts of his chariot up in to the clouds, but that Brahma's arrow given by Sage Agasthya chased Ravana.

The chariot of Ravana took a sudden right turn again, but the arrow took a turn on its own tail and chased Ravana, had hit his armour on his chest, broke it to pieces, and then penetrating deep in to the chest of Ravana, that arrow came out from the back of him, along with his heart plucking it out of his rib cage.

That mighty Ravana's weapons fell from his hands. His body collapsed on the edge of his chariot and then rolled and fell down with his face up on the earth. Ravana was dead.

The earth was sucking his blood voraciously as if it were very thirsty.



VIBHISHANA LAMENTS

Vibhishana own brother of Ravana was the first one who ran towards the chariot of Ravana when he was rolling and falling down dead from the chariot. Vibhishana stood over his most illustrious brother's dead body in silence himself completely stunned as if he never expected it and after a moment of time, he broke down, started weeping while beating his chest with both hands.

Vibhishana while sobbing said as if he were talking to dead body of his brother "Oh! My great brother! Infatuation and uncontrolled passions brought death to you. No one can be blamed but yourself. It is unbelievable even now for me to see you dead here on this battle ground".

"Your diamond tiara is still on your chest. Your wrists are decorated with golden leaves. Indeed my heart breaks to see you here dead. Who could conquer you? Your boons from Gods had exceptions which you forgot!"

"Actually you should never have died, it is unbelievable, but you are dead. Rama is an avatar of God and finally my dear brother! You are dead. My heart, my energy, is not enough to weep, what a great person you are!! But how you are dead here, it is unbelievable for Me!" Vibhishana started weeping. Vibhishana fell on his knees on the earth and started beating his chest.

Vibhishana broke down and loudly started lamenting.

"Oh! My brother! How great you were! How proud was our mother seeing you growing up as a genius at studies? How proud was our father when you were learning Astra's, missiles and science of weapons listening to great Rishis only once".

"You are a great political philosopher. How much our Lanka people liked you, how much they admired you?! Now their dear

most leader popularly known as “Dashakanta” is dead lying in the dust here.”

Vibhishana started sobbing beating his chest; he collapsed in the dust near by the dead body of his brother.

Vibhishana said while sobbing for his dead brother “I gave you good advice. I told you to let Sita free and let her go back to her husband. I told you, avoid war, we do not need a war at all and unnecessary bloodshed, but you did not listen. You lived in your own delusion and suffered from your own terrible ego, megalomania and you are now dead. You never understood this unnecessary war”. Vibhishana’s eyes became red.

Rama started cajoling Vibhishana. Rama in a very soft but somewhat tragic voice said “You should not weep for a warrior who had fallen in the battle field. You should honour him for his bravery and for his courage to fight with me; you should appreciate his knowledge of weapons and his tenacity, his stamina and at his attempts to win the war”



MANDODARI ARRIVES AT THE BATTLE FIELD

Mandodari came to battle field in a horse buggy. The queen was helped to climb down from her horse buggy by Ravana's other wives and many other maid servants who followed the queen in other carriages.

Mandodari was not able to walk and would collapse otherwise. Mandodari was held by four woman on one side and another four another side holding her hands.

Following a tradition Mandodari set her left foot with golden shoe on the earth. She was limping. The hair of Mandodari was loose and her curly hairs were spread on either side. She was wearing a very bright red vermillion mark between her eye brows and up to the center of her forehead.

Mandodari was hopelessly sobbing. Finally when she reached her dead husband helped by eight women four on either side holding her hands, she wept very loudly and fell on him, and wept on his chest as if her throat muscles would tear off and she would become dumb forever. It was heart wrenching cries of Mandodari that filled the battle field.

Mandodari was wearing a saffron coloured silk sari and same colour blouse. She got up and limping, bending forward came near Rama who was standing there with his great bow in one hand and an arrow still on his other hand.

Mandodari joined her palms of both hands, said to Rama while weeping with tear filled eyes "Rama, why should not you kill me? You kill me also! Why should I live without a husband? And falling at the feet of Rama, she let out a big cry as if her heart would burst, bringing blood in to her mouth.

Rama swiftly moved little backwards so that Mandodari could not touch his feet and Rama's eyes were also welled with tears.

Rama was standing still and was hardly able to speak anything.

Mandodari was weeping her heart out , was still there begging Rama to kill her and Rama at last broke his voice , with some struggle he said "Mandodari! You know that in this battle between Rama and Ravana, only one would live, either me or Ravana. This power of nature or so called God has decided that Ravana should die. Ravana was a warrior, indeed a great warrior"

Mandodari got up and moved to her dead husband again. She fell on his chest and started weeping.

While sobbing incessantly, stopping for a breath, she spoke in between "If only I were a little crueler, I should have strangled the throat of our little infant daughter on that day of her cradle ceremony. Why I did not put rice husk in her throat to stifle her to death? on that day itself before throwing her away in to the sea".

Mandodari continued after a little gap between her sobbing's "What was that great harm from my husband to that Sita? What harm had he caused her? For what harm and for what danger Oh! My darling husband! This Rama has killed you! How much you loved Sita!"

"You are such a great devotee of Shiva. And you are an erudite pundit who wrote an entire fourth Veda. You are such a great devotee; the great Lord Shiva drinks sacred ghee from your hands in the Yagna! How come you became a target? An object of despise for your enemies?"

"All this while you were remembering the name of Sita, thousand times a day? What you have got in the end? This is the death in the hands of her husband? Now Sita would go with her husband happily without even looking back! Now I shall weep on your ashes and bones for the rest of my life"

“What is the reason for your attraction to woman of penance and who looks like a monk with her so called “tapas-Shakti”? You went around her like a bee around fire in spite of my warnings to you.”

“Only on that day of her cradle ceremony, I should have listened to the astrologers properly. Only on that day I should have believed them even more and made sure that she was dead before throwing her away. That rakshashi had come back and that is my doubt as astrologers predicted and warned, Lanka burned twice and now as for their indications, she was the cause of her own father’s death, doubly proving that she was “Sita” and she was born to kill her father”

But Vibhishana now got himself into angry state of mind which he himself could not understand.

Vibhishana in utter confusion and uncontrolled state of mind, with his clenched teeth between his tightly held lips, muttered and said “Karma comes back. He entered into the house of a Sage and raped her in front her husband and then roamed around unchallenged! There were no women who could have had chastity in his arm’s length, bloody womanizer”

Speaking in that manner Vibhishana moved forward in a frenzied state of mind and tried to kick the head of Ravana, his dead brother but Hanuman jumped forward and pulled him back.

Mandodari loudly wept at this brazen attempt to insult her dead husband.

Rama said to Vibhishana, “Vibhishana, you cannot cut off blood relation with Ravana, who is impossible for you to cut away from him. I am not concerned with his personal life at all. As far as I am concerned Ravana is a great warrior. I had to fight with him for seven days while no rakshashas could stand in front of me for more than a few minutes”.

“Ravana deserves all the respect of a warrior. You must complete all the rituals of death as per the traditions with great respect befitting a warrior.”

While Rama was convincing Vibhishana and reminding him of his duty, there were hundred vultures which were huddled together and which were coming nearer Ravana's dead body to eat him.

Agonized and struck by the tragic death of her husband Mandodari was fanning the dead body of her husband with her sari's end to shoo away the nearing vultures.

The cremation for Ravana was arranged by his brother Vibhishana. The dead body of Ravana was lifted on a bier of wooden sticks and was carried to cremation ground. Only one drum was beaten by a Shiva devotee and only one "*shahanayi*" was blowing some shrilled sounded tragic song.

When Ravana's body was taken to cremation ground, there his face was turned towards a very big idol of Lord Shiva in the posture of meditation.

A handful of curd rice was kept in the hand of dead Ravana was shown at the mouth of Lord Shiva's idol when rakshashas all at once broke down and started weeping. They all with one voice chanted "Om! Namah! Shivaya" and then Ravana's dead body was kept at the feet of Lord Shiva. Rakshashas poured pots of ghee or clarified butter on the huge pile of sandal wood on which Ravana's mortal remains were kept. Vibhishana brother of Ravana lit fire to this pyre while rakshasha Brahmins chanted mantras from Vedas.



SITA COMES FROM RAVANA'S HOUSE

Rama asked for Sita's whereabouts and instructed Vibhishana to inform Sita to come.

Vibhishana went to Ashoka Gardens to pick up Sita but once he entered Ashoka Gardens he told the ladies there to inform Sita to prepare herself to come out to meet her husband who was waiting at the sprawling front courtyard entrance of Ravana's palace. Vibhishana alerted them all to hasten the preparations for Sita as Sri Rama her husband was waiting.

And then, one of those well-known Rakshasha women Trijata informed Sita that their King Ravana was killed by Rama and she had herself come back from cremation grounds. And Trijata told about Vibhishana and his message from her husband Rama for her.

Trijata also told Sita to take care to get ready immaculately neat. Trijata also cautioned Sita to be very careful while preparing herself to meet her husband after a long separation of one and half years. So Trijata arranged for Sita to enter Ravana's palace for her bath and brought new sari and other clothes from Vibhishana's wife.

Sita went inside a portion of Ravana's palace and took bath in one of many rooms and anointed her hair with perfumed oil. She took care to prepare well for meeting her husband after nearly one and half years. Sita prepared herself wearing a new silk sari assisted by Vibhishana's wife in the palace.

Rama was standing outside at the palace complex huge entrance courtyard open to the sky, all the while looking intently at the

main entrance of the palace of Ravana expecting his wife Sita to come out.

After a long wait, Sita came out of the palace of Ravana wearing a new sari and well combed neat braid of hair dabbed in perfumed oil. She had put a bunch of flowers in her hair tucked into a hair pin. There were many people waiting outside the house including many rakshasha women of Lanka, maid servants of the palaces, men and women and many Vanaras.

The moment Sita came out of the main entrance of Ravana's palace, she became acutely aware of all those prying eyes at her who were intently looking at her and women waiting there were talking in hush-hush voices. When Sita came out she was feeling shy and blushing in expectation of meeting her husband. But as she walked ahead she became acutely aware of many people who were watching her every gait and Sita felt very nervous. Though she was walking to meet her husband, she was aware of the irony of her fate. Sita felt the whole situation was embarrassing for her and her face turned pale clutched in an unknown fear. Sita's gait changed and her walking towards her husband became very slow. She thought that was her karma.

Sita suddenly lowered her head. And Sita started walking very slowly with her head bent down.

She looked up and then down and walked towards her husband. She pulled around her new sari around her narrow waist.

Sita neared her husband and looked up at him. She was looking at him after a long separation of one and half years.

Sita looked at him again with a disbelief in her wide eyes. Her husband Rama was not exited to see her, and in fact he looked at her with indifference and disinterest.

There was a silence for a few moments and every one kept silent. Hanuman was standing nearby and Laxmana was standing on the right side of Rama.

It was Rama who broke the silence.

Rama said to Sita who was still unable to lift her head to look around while the whole of people there were intently watching her. Sita was breathing heavily. Sita was standing very near her husband with her head bent down and her hands twisting her sari's ends in a very nervous manner.

Rama said "Sita, I did not wage this war for your sake. You are free! Indeed you are completely free to go anywhere! If you want you can go to the north or else you can go to the south. The decision is yours. You can go with Laxmana, wherever you want, there you can see him standing! You can go even with Sugreeva if you want. I really do not care for the decision you take and I repeat I have not fought this war for your sake!"

Rama continued his shocking dialogue. He said "I know you struggled on the lap of that rakshashas Ravana, you sat on his thighs. I know he had held you by putting his arms around your waist while flying up in the air. His palms were touching your stomach, I know"

Sita broke down weeping. The pent up emotions inside the heart of Sita broke all inhibitions. She raised her head. She let out a big cry, a wild cry, a very loud one bending her head backwards. She closed her hands in to fists unable to bear the pain. Sita wanted to fall down on the earth and beat her forehead. But somehow she could restrain herself at this appalling situation and kept herself standing with a shocked and exhausted face highly offended by her husband for whom she kept herself alive and waiting for the last one and half years.

Then Sita suddenly became resolute while anger crept in to her face. She started breathing heavily. She got very angry, her eyes widened and her jaw stiffened.

Sita, wiping her tears rolling down her cheeks with her sari ends she spoke to Rama, "Oh! Hero! Oh! Great warrior Raghu belonging to Ikshavaku clan! Oh! Raghu you are talking without any shame. You are talking without any sense. How can you talk

like that to me? You forgot who you are and talking the way of a common man on the streets”.

“You are proud as a warrior! But what about the time when you came to Lanka weeping and crying like a woman “Sita, Sita”.

“Oh! Raghu! You should have told me on that day itself sending a message with this monkey”. Sita had shown Hanuman with her hands, and shaking her hands she continued “that you will not come to Lanka or you will not be interested in coming to Lanka and if at all you come then it would not be for me. And indeed there and then, if at the moment I heard it from Hanuman, immediately I could have jumped in to fire and ended my tragic life! I did not seek any comforts of life and pleasures while living with you all those twelve years in the forest. Yes, I did not!” Sita shouted at the height of her voice.

Sita pointed her finger at Hanuman who was standing there with his hands folded, and was looking at Sita with tears welling up in his eyes. Sita continued to argue at the height of her voice. Her eyes were red. She was not weeping. Sita continued “Oh! Raghu! Try to understand and talk properly. Do not talk like a fool. If that Ravana had put his arms around my waist and lifted me up, it was not my fault. If I had struggled in his lap, was it my fault?”

Sita said “Oh! Raghu! Remember the day of our marriage? When you married me who were you? You were a mere boy. You held my little finger and went around sacred fire seven times but at the time you were not aware of whom you were marrying! I am Sita. This earth is my mother and I am her daughter”.

Sita started weeping again. In between she stopped weeping and said “Why did you wage this war if not for me? Oh! Raghu! Why did you built a bridge across the mighty Ocean! What for? What for is this war waged on with lot of blood shed? Why so many hundreds of thousands of rakshashas were killed and why as many Vanaras and even bears lost their lives in this war? You should tell me exactly for what?” Sita shouted with a tragic stricken voice.

“You should have told me on that day itself, that you were not interested in me. I should have jumped in to the fire and immolated myself. Why all this war was fought?” again she repeated this question to Rama.

Sita shouted at Laxmana “Laxmana bring firewood large, quantity enough to burn myself”. “You shall bring the firewood now!” She repeated and ordered, “Laxmana! Bring the fire wood, I say that”.

But Laxmana was not moving. Laxmana looked at his brother for approval. Rama made a signal with his eyes and hands to go ahead with her orders.

When Rama gave signal to bring firewood, Laxmana got very angry. Laxmana’s eyes became red with anger. His body was shaking with controlled, suppressed anger. But he turned around to bring firewood obeying his elder brother.

But Laxmana suddenly turned around and questioned his brother Rama “Do you think I should bring the fire wood and lit up the fire?”

Rama simply said “Yes”

When a large quantity of firewood was brought by Laxmana, everyone there including rakshashas wanted to stop this suicide. But no one said anything and with anxious faces they kept watching.

Laxmana arranged firewood in a circle and set fire to that dry wood. The fire caught up with all the wood there and very soon there was a big fire.

Sita started shouting at Rama at the height of her voice. Sita was talking and shouting as if she were resigned to her fate. She said, “Oh! Raghu! You think you are a great Hero. You did not suspect Sita alone. You have not only insulted Sita but you have insulted entire species of women and women-hood”

Listening to these words of Sita, Rama broke down and collapsed down on the earth in the dust while still supporting himself with

his bow. Rama started weeping silently with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Sita started her prayers to the God Agni, the Fire God. She said aloud so much that everyone standing around could hear it clearly, “Let God of Fire reveal the truth. Let him burn me only if I were wrong”.

Then Sita said “Oh! Fire God do not burn me. Let the people know me. Let me prove who I am”.

Sita was weeping aloud and started walking circularly around the fire. Hanuman and other Vanaras were highly agitated and the clamour among crowds of Vanaras increased. But they were unable to intervene between husband and wife and the great Hanuman was feeling very frustrated and he was silently weeping, tears were streaming from his cheeks. And many Gods and angels appeared on the horizon and were repeatedly warning Rama. They were saying to Rama “stop all this fire, pour water in the fire”

But Sita was weeping and was walking in circles around the fire.

Sita suddenly leapt herself up in the air and jumped in to the fire. It all happened so suddenly that Vanaras were taken by surprise and could only see this happening in a flash.

The moment Sita jumped in to the fire, it engulfed her. Sita merged in to the fire.

A few moments of silence pervaded all over the place absorbing the shock. But Vanaras jumped forward to run in to fire and there were big cries and shouts of Vanaras. Some Vanaras started weeping. Some Vanaras were crying very loud falling down on the earth and beating the earth with their tails all in frustration. Hanuman and other great Vanaras like Sugreeva and Angadha started pushing all of them back. The crowds of Vanaras were increasingly becoming restive and they were being pushed away from the fire.

Rama watched all this for a moment and cried out very loud “Sita!” as he realized that Sita indeed jumped in to the fire.

But Sita was nowhere. Gods in the clouds shouted at Rama saying “this is most shameful”. And they all repeated in one voice, “this is most shameful”

Rama neared the fire and shouted very loud “Sita” and tried to put his hand in to the fire and he got burns on his fingers.

Rama took off his hand with pain. Rama started going around fire and started calling her “Sita, Sita”. But she disappeared in the flames.

Gods appeared on the horizon in the skies and told Rama not to weep and they all said in one voice “fire God should be kind to her”.

Rama started weeping hopelessly and totally shocked with this horrifying incident. He started talking to himself saying “I have become mad. What are all these gods? These are all my hallucinations. Where is the God? Rama cried and shouted at the horizon “There is no God”.

Rama cried aloud “Where is my Sita! Am I mad? Why are all these hallucinations? There is no God! If there is a God why shall there be troubles only for me. What harm I have done to anyone? Have I ever told a lie? Have ever done any harm to any one? What is my bad karma?”

Rama shouted very loud “there is no God!”

Rama sat down in the dust and was inconsolably weeping. Laxmana and Sugreeva did not come near him to console him by speaking some sympathetic words. Even Hanuman did not try to console him. Jambavan was extremely grave and silent.

And then Rama saw them coming down.

The great Seven Rishis from Milky Way were coming down to the earth chanting “Om! Namah! Shivaya”, One after another. God Shiva was coming down and he was so much tall that he was

touching the sky and he was adorned with a snake coiled around his neck, and then in the next minute he became very small to a human size. God Shiva was very muscular with a wide chest and very muscular long hands. Shiva's matted hair was flowing down to his shoulders, while snakes coiled around his wrists. His whole body was smeared in ash. And that Lord Shiva started walking towards Rama. All the seven sages from the Milky-Way standing on either side of that Lord on his path started chanting "Om Namah Shivaya" and prostrated themselves at the feet of Lord Shiva on either side of his path.

Rama was sitting on his knees and leaning against a mud wall nearby. Rama with tragic stricken face and looking highly disturbed had seen a blazing Sun like Lord Shiva coming towards him. As Rama was looking at him with shock and awe, God Shiva came near him, looked in to his face, and put his thumb pressing it between his eye brows. That was it. The electric current that passed through the body of Rama made him shiver with pain and fear. Panicky stricken Rama started kicking with his two legs in the dust, started shaking and crying "leave me, let me live, I am dying".

Then Rama had clearly seen in his mind's eye, a "*Vaikunta*" a world of heaven and abode of God Vishnu, and then Rama realized he was himself the God known as Vishnu for all the three worlds and he was reclining on the bed of a thousand headed serpent, floating and spreading itself on the Ocean of Milk and his wife Laxmi was sitting at his feet like an orange coloured spot of light. As the God from Vaikunta, he was watching the yagna performed by King Dasharatha and then he realized he was himself turned in to sweet nectar in that sacred bowl at Yagna and as consequence , he had seen himself taking birth to his human mother Queen Kausalya.

Rama who was leaning against the mud wall opened his eyes. There was no trace of Lord Shiva or the Seven Rishis from Milky Way.

Rama questioned himself very loudly “Where is my Sita?” Rama shouted and cried much more loudly and then started wailing. Rama cried with a heavy heart and said “There is no God. I am sure. I am getting weird hallucinations. This is not real. All of this belief in God is nonsense, this is all but hallucination”.

Rama continued talking to himself “Where is my Sita? Why am I getting all these hallucinations?” Rama questioned himself again and then he cried started weeping loudly.

The fire was burning. All the Vanaras were watching with astonished faces. They had never seen their God Shri Rama himself weeping so helplessly whereas none could do anything.

The fire was burning. A mythical goat with a small beard appeared with a garland of marigold flowers around its neck arising from the middle of fire. The God of fire was sitting on the goat in the front and Sita was sitting on the back. Sita walked out of the flames with the flowers in her hair intact while she was enveloped by Fire and its God.

God of Fire “Agni” said “Rama! Here is your wife Sita. She is so much pure that I cannot burn her”. Handing over Sita to Rama, the god of fire Agni disappeared.

Rama took Sita’s hand in to his hands and stood there looking at her.



VIBHISHANA COMES IN PUSHPAK

It was Vibhishana who insisted that Sita and Rama and other important Vanara leaders should travel by Pushpak helicopter to Ayodhya. Sri Rama agreed to fly by Ravana's Pushpak Vimana helicopter but he still could not decide the actual date of travel.

At that time, it was also important for Sita, Rama and Laxmana to reach Ayodhya as soon as possible after a long gap of fourteen and half years. They had to travel north to Ayodhya. The forest life as promised to his father Dasharatha came to an end after so many troubles and travails for all of them. It was a big transformational change for Sita while Rama proved that truth prevailed and evil was destroyed in spite of its empire, power, position and enormous wealth to back it. Rama's life journey was like a light emitted by a small lamp dispelling darkness for miles. But in this life's journey, his wife Sita walked through the fire. She paid for her karmic debt.

Sri Rama remembered his father and the painful feelings of realization that he would not meet him at home to receive him coupled with the pain of meeting his own mother Kausalya as a widow made him highly perturbed and nervous.

Laxmana, who was very tired, was avoiding getting in to sleep. Laxmana's body suddenly got in to highly relaxed mode and he felt as if he might fall asleep any time. He had to exert an effort to keep himself awake. He remembered his wife Urmila after so many years. In his dedication to serve his brother Rama and his sister-in-law Sita, Laxmana forgot his own wife Urmila all of these fourteen and half years. Through messengers long ago he had learnt that Urmila went in to deep slumber lying on grass mattress on the floor. Laxmana then had shown anxiety about the

health of his wife. The health of Rama's mother Kausalya, after the death of his father Dasharatha slowly deteriorated and she was in poor health and in a continuous state of anxiety.

Sri Rama and Laxmana, despite their obligations and anxiety decided upon a date for coronation ceremony for Vibhishana. His succession to the throne of Lanka was not opposed by Lankan people.

The coronation ceremony of Vibhishana was performed as a simple ceremony with Vibhishana anointed as the king of Lanka when the rakshasha priests conducted certain religious rituals. Sri Rama put the crown on the head of Vibhishana while Rakshasha gurus chanted mantras. It was a simple investiture ceremony when Vibhishana was officially declared as the crowned king of Lanka by Rama and Laxmana. And all the rakshashas hailed him as a great person and clapped for him.

Vibhishana arrived next day, in Ravana's helicopter "Pushpak" to the sea shore where Rama, Sita, and Laxmana were camping and waiting along with Vanara leaders Hanuman, Sugreeva and Angadha etc., .

King Vibhishana of Lanka had been planning and making all the arrangements for their journey to Ayodhya. Vibhishana had been insisting that Rama, Laxmana and Sita should travel only by air to reach Ayodhya because it had been a long time since they were separated from their families.

Sita, Rama, Laxmana and Hanuman, Sugreeva, Angadha and other important Vanaras got in to Pushpak on their journey back to Ayodhya. On the way they stopped at "Rameshwaram" near the start of the Rama's bridge on the Ocean and landed nearby a temple.

Rama and his wife Sita worshipped Lord Shiva while Brahmins chanted mantras; Rama had poured milk over "shivalinga" and worshipped God Shiva with all the rituals. Lord Rama prayed Lord Shiva for his forgiveness because he had killed Ravana, a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Finally after a full day time, journey

in the helicopter, they reached outskirts of Ayodhya where they landed.

King Bharatha, half-brother of Rama and the king, who ruled kingdom of Ayodhya during Rama's absence for all the last 14 years, arranged a grand welcome from outskirts of the city, with a golden chariot for Sita and Rama to take them in a procession to their palace with celebrations.

Rama was seated in that golden chariot. And Sita was seated in another chariot behind him. There were huge crowds, Bharata and government machinery was managing the entire population of the city, who gathered to welcome Sita, Rama and Laxmana and the entire city population lined up on either side of the streets from the outskirts of Ayodhya city.

The chariots proceeded through the streets of Ayodhya. Hanuman was walking in the front of the chariot of Rama. Angadha and Laxmana were walking on the other side of Rama's chariot. Lord Rama beaming with happiness was seated in the center of the chariot on a high seat.

While the procession of chariots was going on for some time, Lord Rama very perplexed asked Hanuman, "Dear Hanuman! Where are the crowds of people? In the front of my chariot there were very few and even those were scattered" Hanuman told Rama "My lord, we are much ahead. Please look back".

Rama turned back on his chariot and he saw the entire populations of Ayodhya were behind Sita's chariot, behind which, thousands of people were running along her chariot.

Sita was sitting on the back of her chariot, with her feet placed on the wooden steps of the chariot. Sita was facing the crowds who were following and running behind it. Men and women were pushing and shoving each other to touch her feet. And many married women lit sacred lamps and perfumed joss sticks to worship her on the way. Some even kneeled and took the dust from the earth that was run by her chariot and were rubbing it on their foreheads.

The preparations for coronation ceremony

The arrangement for coronation ceremony of Rama started again with the conspicuous absence of their late father King Dasharatha. The coronation ceremony of Rama was delayed by fourteen and half years.

And the queen Kaikeyi blessed the couple Sita and Rama before the ceremony.



REVENGE OF KAIKEYI

What the queen Kaikeyi at that time, fourteen and half years ago, wanted was the death of Ravana and the destruction of the city of Lanka and certainly not a throne for her son Bharatha seeking which was an immense risk for her own life. She was neither interested nor she was power hungry to install her son Bharatha against the opinion of elders and against tremendous popularity of Rama among the populations as a great warrior, honest person and also as the eldest son of King Dasharatha.

That young queen Kaikeyi at that time, was the most misunderstood woman by all her kinsmen, far and near relatives and all the people of Ayodhya when she could send Rama away to forests for fourteen and half years, by her insidious plan of misusing the boons given to her by the king Dasharatha long ago. Such a way of redeeming her boons was not only untimely but a contrived plan as well. It was perceived as the worst jealousy and selfishness of Kaikeyi.

According to her own late husband and the king Dasharatha as well as in the opinion of her own son Bharatha, she had treacherous plans for the son of her co-wife Rama and misused her boons with selfish intentions. She was damned for her “wily” nature.

But none understood the heart of Kaikeyi and tried to understand the working of her mind even though she was considered to be most benevolent of all the queens of King Dasharatha, until that time.

Queen Kaikeyi had a past history of burning desire for a revenge for untimely death of her own father, in the kingdom of Kekaya, and insult, injury and terrible humiliation in the hands of Ravana for herself. What Kaikeyi wanted was the death of Ravana.

As a beautiful maiden and loving daughter of her father *Ashwapathi*, Kaikeyi was also a warrior herself. Years before her marriage with King Dasharatha, Kaikeyi as prince accompanied her father in a fight with Ravana who came to occupy and loot their kingdom Kekaya. Prince Kaikeyi a warrior was well known all over the world at that time. Prince Kaikeyi at that time was humiliated by Ravana in the battle field in which her father was martyred. But this did not end her troubles because rakshasha Ravana, the king of Lanka wanted to expand his empire beyond Dandaka forest areas. All these tiny kingdoms of Dandaka forest could not challenge him.

When Kaikeyi was married to King Dasharatha, as the youngest queen and as his third wife, her life's journey of encountering rakshasha Ravana just repeated as if it were ordained by fate. It was a repetition of history. Queen Kaikeyi, whose hands were hardened like diamonds with the blessings of a Sage and with idea of revenge raging in her bosom decided to accompany her husband King Dasharatha in a battle with Dashakanta Ravana. She had convinced her husband King Dasharatha that she was a warrior herself with bow and arrow and also because she had an experience of a fight with Ravana earlier.

Ravana defeated Dasharatha decisively and spared his life only because Dasharatha pleaded guilty, kneeling in front of Ravana. Dasharatha begged for mercy.

A victorious Ravana at that time instantly recognized Kaikeyi, as former prince Kaikeyi from the kingdom of Kekaya, because Prince Kaikeyi was uniquely attractive and was a warrior woman. That rakshasha Ravana made no exceptions for a warrior woman and humiliated her once again for her audacity to come to fight with him. Queen Kaikeyi, who had saved the life of the King Dasharatha by stopping the wheel of their chariot from disengaging, also fought valiantly in the battle with Ravana with her bow and arrows. That was what made that arrogant Ravana very much angry because he had to fight with a woman for so long.

But Kaikeyi after the battle with Ravana swore vengeance in front of the gods, and took a vow to avenge the death of her father earlier and for her own humiliation.

The unforgiving nature of Queen Kaikeyi, and her manipulative strategies with sole aim of revenge for her perceived injustice to her, proved very costly for her life. She had no idea that her revenge should prove to be self-destruction.

She expected that Sita's unparalleled beauty will come to be known to Ravana who had been claiming entire Dandaka forest as belonging to him since so many years. What all she wanted was that Sita should live in Dandaka forest for fourteen years so that she would attract the attention of Ravana.

Ravana spread fear among all the smaller kingdoms of Dandaka forest. Ravana drove away any other groups of people of any other clan than his own rakshashas who were subservient to him. If kings other than rakshasha clans had not left their kingdoms on their own, those kingdoms were persistently harassed by him.

Queen Kaikeyi was a very shrewd woman and had been considering various methods to put an end to Ravana. And according to her calculations Rama and Ravana battle would be inevitable, for whatever reasons and shall lead to the destruction of Lanka leading to the total annihilation of Ravana's kingdom. And her manipulative plans were the only way for sending Rama to Dandaka forest. This Queen Kaikeyi considered that was the only way for her who constantly wished for the death of Ravana. Though the possibility of such an eventuality appeared remote to her and at times she even thought that it could even boomerang and her own wishful thinking might be leading her in to blind ending, ruminating over and over again, she had finally realized that she had no other option. Queen Kaikeyi, with a burning heart of revenge had no other better chance than using Sita as bait to finish Ravana. Queen Kaikeyi at the back of her mind clearly knew that it was highly risky.

Queen Kaikeyi planned, contrived and executed her boons given to her by her own husband King Dasharatha long ago.

Queen Kaikeyi, who was very intelligent, thought with all her shrewdness, that womanizers like Ravana would somehow come to know of Sita, if Sita were to live in Dandaka forests, specifically for such a long time of more than a decade. She thought that Ravana would definitely try to know details of a woman who shall be famous for her extraordinary beauty.

According to her planning and strategy it should be impossible for Ravana not to know Sita. Queen Kaikeyi expected that event to roll itself leading to the death of Ravana because her step-son Rama was a great warrior who was capable of fighting with Ravana. Kaikeyi always considered Rama as invincible.

Queen Kaikeyi had taken the risk of sending Rama in to exile even when he was very popular with the masses. She risked her reputation and she risked the health and well-being of her husband King Dasharatha who she knew sure to suffer from separation anxiety and still dared to venture upon implementing a highly dangerous idea.

The past had gone through unwanted consequences and yet she had an immense satisfaction when she heard that Ravana was killed and Lanka was burnt down with all its highly developed civilization, scientific advancements along with their own helicopters and science of alchemy of rare metals etc., . Kaikeyi was over joyed to hear that Vanaras had left Lanka in ruins. But her burning revenge had cooled down finally and found a solution as well as immense satisfaction in the death of Ravana.

As the days of coronation of Rama approached in the changed circumstances after fourteen and half years delay, Queen Kaikeyi was genuinely happy. After all the troubles and travails decades of her suppressed anger was finally subsided. And her wish for death of Ravana finally fulfilled at a huge cost for herself.



CORONATION CEREMONY OF RAMA

The coronation ceremony rituals started with Sita sitting on the left side of Rama, sharing a wide throne, while all the Seven Sages chanted mantras from Vedas. It was Rama who had insisted that Sita should also sit on the throne along with him. A glorious Rama was adorned with a crown embedded with thousand diamonds and Sages declared Sri Rama as the king of Ayodhya.

At the end of this anointing ceremony, Sita, Rama, Laxmana Bharata, and Shatrugna all stood up. All the great Sages one after the other blessed the couple Sita and Rama by sprinkling sacred water and later turmeric mixed rice over them.

Then the king Sri Rama decided to give away a very precious diamond gold necklace to someone most important. Sri Rama announced to the entire audience that his wife and Queen Sita will choose the most deserving person to bestow the gift of necklace from her hands.

Lord Shri Rama announced exactly in this manner, “I am handing over this necklace of diamonds to Sita. And Sita should bestow this gift to a person who she considers as most deserving one to receive this necklace, but I must say that if Sita considers me as deserving it, I should get it, so in a way I must confess I am also in this competition.”

Sita took the necklace from her husband Rama and looked at the entire audience. Sugreeva even moved a little forward expecting that gift from Sita. But Sita noticed that at the far end of the audience Hanuman was standing behind someone.

Sita called the name “Hanuman”! And Hanuman came forward and sat at the feet of Rama with his head upwards looking at Sita.

Sita addressing the entire audience said “Hanuman appears as an ordinary mortal very simple as village rustic but he is highly knowledgeable Vedic scholar, who has the knowledge beyond Vedas. His Guru was Sun God himself. Hanuman appears normal and sits in meditation but is a man of extraordinary strength who can jump 30 Yojanas over the Ocean. He is most humble in his attitude and never claimed superiority over anyone, never killed and ate anything other than fruits, milk and vegetables. Hanuman’s strength of mind is unparalleled. Hanuman’s devotion to his master and his loyalty is unmatched by anyone on the earth or even in the heavens. Anyone who chants the name of Hanuman even once gets immense courage to face the difficulties of life. Every ghost, goblin or rakshasha by hearing his name alone run away. One should chant the name of Hanuman when they are in trouble. Hanuman’s fame shall spread to all the four corners of the earth. Hence I shall grant him a boon. I grant him the boon to live forever on the earth. Hanuman henceforth is “*chiranjeevi*” which means the one who lives forever. All the gods shall be kind to him and forever eulogize his great deeds in heaven. I shall bestow this great Gift of his master Sri Rama to Hanuman and I shall announce that he alone deserves it”.

Hanuman knelt before Sita, bowing to her and joining his palms in the form of a cup, he received the necklace of diamonds from Sita. Everyone remained silent.

But Lord Shri Rama with all his benevolence and smiling face and greatly appreciating Hanuman, the best of Vanaras, started clapping his hands. Then all Vanara leaders and all sages and all Brahmins also started clapping for Hanuman.

Rama as the ideal king ruled the empire for one hundred years ushering in a society without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, colour of skin and belief. Everyone was given equal opportunity. Rama declared “everyone was equal before the law”. It was praised for generations as “Rama Rajya”.

In his court “Rajya Sabah” one day, all the members declared Sri Rama as God for ushering in a great concept of “Rama Rajya” and

also in its successful implementation as well. Except one member who was called Jabali. He got up and said in the full assembly “Rama is not God. I do not praise and sing along with you all eulogies declaring him as God. If you want to follow his principled life, which was a simple life, emulate him but I do not accept him as the God. I do not believe in the existence of god, let alone recognizing Rama as the God. Hence I declare Sri Rama the king as a human being like all of us.”

At this lecture of Jabali who considered himself as thinker and philosopher, who also earlier worked in the court of King Dasharatha, all the members of Rajya Sabah raised hue and cry and demanded expulsion of Jabali unanimously declaring him as undeserving traitor. But Rama got up from his throne and said to all “Jabali said nothing wrong. He has every right to speak his mind. And I respect his Atheism. I am not God. Like all of you I am a human being”.

Rama Rajya existed 2500 years ago.

