

SUNDARAKĀṆḌA

A Beautiful Story of Hanumān's Success



Translated by

Krishna Kota

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**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
TIRUPATI**

SUNDARAKANDA

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FOREWORD

Valmiki's Ramayana, the first poem in Sanskrit beautifully describes the story of Sri Rama the encarnation of Sri Mahavishnu in six Kandas. Sundara Kanda the fifth chapter in the poem is really sundaram. It describes the most exemplary qualities of Hanuman engaged in search of Sita Devi taken away by Ravana to Lanka. Sundarakanda is believed as most sacred book and people do parayanam of this for the fulfilment of their desires. The following sloka describes the excellent effect of Hanumatsmaranam.

**Buddhir balam yaso dhairyam
Nirbhayatvamarogata
Ajadyam vakpatutvam cha
Hanumatsmaranat bhavet.**


By meditation on Hanuman one gets wisdom, strength, fame, courage, fearlessness, goodhealth, alertness and eloquence.

I am very happy that the Sundarakanda translated in to simple and lucid English is published by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for the benefit of the english readers especially young boys and girls.

I thank Smt. Krishna Kota (U.S.A.) for translating this book into english.

I hope the youngsters will read this book and emulate the excellent qualities of Hanuman.

In the Service of the Lord



Executive Officer

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams
Tirupati.

Tirupati
30.09.2013

About the Author Smt. Krishna Kota



Mrs. Kota, a spiritual seeker and researcher, combines her thirst for knowledge in Hindu scriptures and mythology with her desire to spread the applicability of those scriptures to people's lives. Mrs. Kota, born in 1945 and raised in Northern India (Delhi, Mussorie) was born to linguistics scholar, Professor Kota Sunadara Rāma Sarma and noble mother, Balā Tripura Sundari. Her childhood, married life, spiritual service,

technical and analytical background readied her for this work, allowing the words to flow through her. Throughout her childhood she was a devotee of Lord Venkateswara Swami; her exposure to many spiritual paths, walks of life and forces of nature, complemented her inherent free-spirit, intuition and serving attitude.

Mrs. Kota has been a *Sadhaka of Bhrukta Rahita Taraka Raja Yoga* founded by Master CVV, since 1969. During her four decades in the USA, she has held on to Hindu traditions, and also encouraged immigrant Indians and their children to understand Hindu philosophy and traditions. In 1989, she brought the idea of *Samoochika Poojas* to the San Francisco Bay Area, guiding hundreds of people to conduct Poojas in unison. For those who wish to understand Hindu chantings and pooja methods, Mrs. Kota also directed the publication of several English booklets including *Śrī Ganesha Pooja Kalpah*, *Śrī Lakshmi Pooja Kalpah* and *Śrī Satya Nārāyaṇa Pooja Kalpah* and *Śrī Venkateswara Swami Pooja*. She has also been working on a multi-volume text expounding the inner meanings of the *Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma*. Her commitment to uplifting community members' awareness of Hindu tenets is most prominent in over 1500 Poojas conducted by her husband, Dr. Sastri Kota. On weekends, they devoted themselves to assisting

families' understanding of pooja methods; from needed items, to doing the poojas, involving their children, explaining the stories and elucidating the morals.

As a computer aided design engineer, Mrs. Kota spent seventeen years at Sun Microsystems (now Oracle), Faraday Electronics and Olivetti. She has a Master's degree in English and completed graduate studies in Computer Science. She resides in Sunnyvale, California with her husband Dr. Sastri L. Kota, a senior scientist. She is very close to her daughters and their families, Dr. Aparna and Keith, Padmaja and Pradeep and her grand children Sachin and Uma. She is a natural gardner, nurturing flowers, vegetables and fruits. She loves cooking and follows the tradition of *Atithi devo bhava*, welcoming and nourishing those who come to her home. Mrs. Kota has always been creative, learning oil painting, cross-stitch, sewing and knitting. Devoted to service, she is also supporting Tripura Sundari Foundation of Machilipatnam, India, a free Diabetic Clinic, Computer Learning Center, and Vocational Study Center for the disadvantaged.

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Foreword

वेदवेद्येपरेपुंसि जातेदशरथात्मजे

वेदः प्राचेतसादासत् साक्षाद्रामायाणात्मना

vedavedyeparepuṁsi jātedaśarathātmaje
vedaḥ prācetasādāsat sākṣādrāmāyāṇātmanā

Veda Vedyā Bhagavan Śrīmannārāyaṇa, the unborn paramātmā, was born to King Daśaratha and Kausalya as Śrī Rāma. The Vedas also followed Him to this earth. Śrī Rāma's life became the epic story, Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa in the hands of Maharshi Vālmīki. Vālmīki was a kavīkokila or singing poet. The Rāmāyaṇa was played musically under the guidance of Vālmīki, by Lava and Kuśa, the twin sons of Śrī Rāma.

Though there are seven Kāṇḍas or segments in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Pārāyaṇa or recitation of the Bāla and Sundarakāṇḍas are often considered the most important. The significance for selecting these two segments might be that the Bāla and Sundarakāṇḍas embody the strength of the Rāmāyaṇa. They signify the unification and reunification of the prakṛti with puruṣa. One who can perform this divine eternal unification is known as a Guru or great spiritual teacher. It is the true ultimate goal of the soul to reach the abode of the super-soul or paramātmā.

In the first kāṇḍa, Viśvāmitra describes this unification in the form of the wedding of Śrī Rāma with Sīta Devī. Whenever there is a separation of the soul from the Lord, a spiritual leader or Guru will make efforts to reunite them. In the Sundarakāṇḍa, that Guru was Hanumān or Āṇjaneya.

Thus these two Kāṇḍas attained great importance because of their dedication towards their Lord's happiness.

पाण्डित्यं नेर्विद्यखाल्येनतिष्ठासेत्

pāṇḍityaṁ nervedyakhālyena tiṣṭhāset

If you excel in your intellectual capabilities, be cool and calm and realize that all you have attained is by the Lord's grace. Viśvāmitra did the same in Bālakāṇḍa.

दातोहं गमिष्यामि रामशासनात्

dātohaṁ gamiṣyāmi rāmaśāsanāt

Ānjaneya, no doubt, is a great yogi. Whatever spiritual power he obtained was because of Śrī Rāma. Also he declared that he has crossed the ocean by the Lord's order. The strength is Śrī Rāma's.

भीषास्मात्वातः पनते भीषोदेतिसमर्थः

bhīṣāsmātvātaḥ panate bhīṣodetisamarthaḥ

Ānjaneya declared this in many sentences in Laṅkā.

दासोहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः

dāsohaṁ kosalendrasya rāmasyākliṣṭakarmanāḥ

He declared that he is for Śrī Rāma and for Rāmakārya (Śrī Rāma's work).

नमोस्तु रामाय स लक्ष्मणाय

देव्यैचतस्यै जनकात्मजायै

नमोस्तु रुद्रेन्द्रयमानिलेभ्यो

नमोस्तु चन्द्रार्कमरुद्गणेभ्यः

namostu rāmāya sa lakṣmaṇāya
devyaicatasyai janakātmajāyai
namostu rudrendrayamānilebhyo
namostu candrārkaṃmarudgaṇebhyaḥ

This mantra in the Sundarakāṇḍa is the most effective for anyone who is seeking a job and is in difficult situations.

अस्मिन् कार्यं समारंभेप्रचिंतमयदुत्तरं

त्वमस्मिन् कार्यनिर्योगेप्रमाणम् हरिसत्तम

हनुमत् यत्नमास्थाय दुःखक्षयकरोभव

asmin kārya samārambhepracintamayaduttaram
tvamasmin kāryaniryogepramāṇam harisattam
hanumat yatnamāsthāya duḥkhakṣayakarobhava

In one word, the Sundarakāṇḍa is Mantra Rājoyam. A person who reads at least one shloka of the Sundarakāṇḍa

daily, realizes the mantra in his or her life. That is the wealth or sampada of Vālmiki.

In the 27th sarga (section) of the Sundarakāṇḍa, the Gāyatrī Mantra is explained in Thrijaṭa Swapna Vruthantham. When Hanumān burnt the whole city of Laṅkā, Vālmiki said, sacred Sīta Devī did not burn. Vālmiki wants to say that Laṅkā is the body, and Sīta represents the soul.

Many mantra rahasyas (secrets) are there. God Ānjaneya, blesses everyone who reads the meaning of the Sundarakāṇḍa.

-- Pundit Srinivasacharyalu

Preface

The Sundarakāṇḍa (The Beautiful Story) is a section of the Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa, considered to be the first great epic poem in Sanskrit. Authored by Śrī Vālmīki, the Sundarakāṇḍa provides an outstanding characterization of Hanumān who, with his valor, dedication and other divine qualities, overcame many obstacles to cross the ocean in his search of Sīta Devī (Goddess Sīta). Hanumān's mission was to locate Sīta Devī and bring back information regarding her condition to Śrī Rāma.

The narrative includes how Hanumān planned the task of searching for Sīta Devī, crossed hurdles as they arose, solved insurmountable problems using his own ingenuity, located her in Laṅkā, and finally returned to report the details to Śrī Rāma. His character exemplifies the noble qualities of focus, persistence, dedication and problem solving. These traits are essential to achieve success in every project one undertakes.

This book is a revised version of the Sundarakāṇḍa that was published on Śrī Rāmanavami, April 13, 2002. Recently, I was narrating the story of Hanumān from the earlier version to my grandson who was five years old at the time. He enjoyed the episodes of Hanumān's adventures, and asked, "Grandma, why don't you keep this book in the public library so that everyone can read it?" The current version of the book emerged from that conversation.

The purpose of this book is to share the beautiful descriptions and the exemplary character of Hanumān as given in the magnificent epic of the Rāmāyaṇa. I chose to write the book in English so that children not familiar with Indian Languages can enjoy and learn from the story. The purpose is to provide a role model in Hanumān, to encourage growing children to emulate his qualities. It is not a verbatim

translation of the Sundarakāṇḍa. Some lengthy descriptions and repetitions were summarized to be more appropriate and comprehensible to children.

My heartfelt thanks go to my husband, Dr. Sastri Kota for his constant support and encouragement. I kindly thank Dr. Srinivasacharyulu Garu for contributing the foreward. I sincerely appreciate Śrī Sivaji Tumbali for providing excellent illustrations. I thank Smt. Prashanti and Sri Vinay Mamidi for the preparation of the first edition of this book. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Aparna Kota, Dr. Jean Herbert, and Smt. Padmaja Iyer for their reviews and valuable feedback and to Smt. Ranjana Gobburu for her supportive role in the first edition. I would like to appreciate Śrī Malladi Vidyaranyaulu for publishing the first edition. My thanks are also due to Sri Harbir Singh and Sri Prashant Padala for their valuable support of this edition.

May Śrī Hanumān and Śrī Rāma bless everyone who reads this book with peace and happiness.

एकैकमक्षरं प्रोक्तं पुंसां महापातकनाशनं

ekaikamakṣaraṁ proktaṁ puṁsām

mahāpātakanāśanaṁ

Every letter of Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa uttered or read will destroy all the bad omens and sins.

This book is possible with the blessings of my Masters
E.K. and C.V.V. Namaskarams Master E.K.
 Namaskarams Master C.V.V.

--Krishna Kota

Sunnyvale, California, USA
22 March 2012

About the Enclosed CD

This book is accompanied by a CD containing several important slokas and hymns including the Nāma Rāmāyaṇa, Hanumān Cālīsā and Mangalam on Hanumān. Since this book is dedicated to children, the CD should enable them to learn and sing these beautiful hymns in praise of Hanumān and Śrī Rāma. Also enclosed is a CD Booklet containing the lyrics in Sanskrit and transliterated in English so children can easily follow along. The eloquent voices on the CD are those of young children ages 7-12; they are Soundarya Jayaram, Sahana Prasanna, Srividya Seetharam, Aarthi Venkat, and Sandhya Vijapurapu. We are grateful to them for lending their time and voices and singing these prayers with such devotion.

This CD was directed and produced by Smt. Prema Sriram. Her attention to detail, dedication, and devotion are unmatched. We are very thankful to her for seeing this project through with such energy and commitment. We also thank Ravindra Neelakant, Recording Studio Engineer, for his sound studio and producing a quality recording. The young voices were ably accompanied by Shishir Neelakant on Harmonium, Ravi Gutala on tabla, and Ashwin Krishnakumar on flute, keyboard and manjira. We thank all the instrumentalists for their lovely accompaniment and commitment to this project.

May Lord Hanumān Bless Them All.

--Krishna Kota

Guide for Pronunciation and Transliteration System

Letter	Equivalent	Pronunciation (as in)	Letter	Equivalent	Pronunciation (as in)
अ	a	ab <u>o</u> ut	ठ	ṭha	ligh <u>th</u> ouse
आ	ā	f <u>a</u> ther	ड	ḍa	<u>d</u> ig
इ	i	s <u>i</u> t	ढ	ḍha	god <u>h</u> ead
ई	ī	el <u>i</u> te	ण	ṇa	<u>u</u> nder
उ	u	pu <u>t</u>	त	ta	pi <u>th</u> y
ऊ	ū	flu <u>t</u> e	थ	tha	<u>th</u> under
ऋ	ṛ	tr <u>i</u> p	द	da	<u>th</u> is
ए	e	es <u>k</u> imo	ध	dha	breath <u>e</u>
ऐ	ai	high <u>h</u>	न	na	<u>n</u> ice
ओ	o	fo <u>e</u>	प	pa	sp <u>o</u> t
औ	au	lou <u>d</u>	फ	pha	looph <u>o</u> le
अं	m̐	<u>a</u> m	ब	ba	<u>b</u> ed
अः	ḥ	<u>a</u> h <u>a</u>	भ	bha	<u>a</u> b <u>h</u> or
क	ka	sk <u>i</u> p	म	ma	<u>m</u> unch
ख	kha	sink <u>h</u> ole	य	ya	<u>y</u> ou
ग	ga	g <u>o</u> at	र	ra	d <u>r</u> one
घ	gha	dog <u>h</u> ouse	ल	la	<u>l</u> ink
च	ca	pin <u>ch</u> hit	व	va	<u>v</u> ery
छ	cha	catch <u>h</u> im	श	śa	<u>sh</u> ow
ज	ja	j <u>u</u> mp	ष	ṣa	bush <u>h</u> el
झ	jha	hedg <u>e</u> hog	स	sa	<u>s</u> ong
ट	ṭa	st <u>o</u> re	ह	ha	<u>h</u> ave



Beginning Prayers

श्री गणेश प्रार्थन

Śrī Ganeśa Prārthana

1. Prayer to Śrī Ganeśa

शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवणम् चतुर्भुजम्

प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्व विघ्नोपशान्तये

śuklāambaradharaṁ viṣṇuṁ śaśivarṇaṁ caturbhujaṁ
prasannavadanaṁ dhyāyet sarva vighnopaśantaye

When you think of the Lord who is pure and vast as the universe with the moon's beaming light, all obstacles will disappear and life will be peaceful.

गुरुध्यानं

Gurudhyānaṁ

2. Prayer to Our Teachers

ॐ गुरुब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुगुरुदेवो महेश्वरः ।

गुरुसाक्षात् परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

om gururbrahmā gururviṣṇugurudevo maheśvaraḥ
guru sāksāt paraṁ brahma tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ

To the noble teacher who is the creator (Brahma), to the teacher who is the sustainer (Visnu), and to the teacher who is the destroyer (Siva); I bow down to that teacher whom I consider to be the absolute and highest creator.

श्री वाल्मीकि प्रार्थन

Śrī Vālmīki Prārthana

3. Prayer to Śrī Vālmīki

कूजन्तं राम रामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरं ।

आरुह्य कविता शाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकि कोकिलं ॥

kūjantaṁ rāma rāmeti madhuraṁ madhurākṣaraṁ
āruhya kavita śākhāṁ vande vālmīki kokilaṁ

While sitting in the branches of a poetic tree, Sage Vālmīki sings the sweet melodious songs about Śrī Rāma like the Kokila (singing) bird. The Rāmāyaṇa is the epic poem about Śrī Rāma. I bow down to the great Sage Vālmīki.

यः पिबन् सततं राम चरितामृत सागरं ।

अतृप्तस्तं मुनिं वन्दे प्राचेत समकल्मषं ॥

yaḥ piban satataṁ rāma caritāmṛta sāgaraṁ
atruptastaṁ muniṁ vande prāceta samakalmaṣaṁ

Sage Vālmīki who roamed freely in the sacred forest of pure knowledge, carried with him the auspicious characteristics of

Śīta and Rāma. I bow down to Sage Vālmīki and Hanumān
who possess pure knowledge.

सीताराम गुणग्राम पुण्यारण्याय विहारिणौ ।

वन्दे विशुद्ध विज्ञानौ कवीश्वर कपीश्वरौ ॥

sītārāma guṇagrāma puṇyāraṇyāya vihāriṇau
vande viśuddha vijñānau kavīśvara kapīśvarau

Respects to poet Vālmīki and the great monkey Hanumān who
roamed the divine forest of Rāmāyaṇa (filled with Śrī Rāma's
excellent characteristics) with enormous wisdom and
knowledge.

श्री राम प्रार्थन

Śrī Rāma Prārthana

4. Prayer to Śrī Rāma

आपदामपहर्तारं दातारं सर्वसंपदाम् ।

लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयोभूयो नमाम्यहम् ॥

āpadāmapahartāraṁ dātāraṁ sarvasampadām
lokābhirāmaṁ śrīrāmaṁ bhūyobhūyo namāmyaham

To Śrī Rāma, who is the destroyer of difficulties, giver of all
prosperities, and the Lord of the world, I bow down again
and again.

श्री राघवं दशरथात्मज मप्रमेयम्
सीतापतिं रघुवरान्वय रत्नदीपम् ।
आजानुबाहुं अरविन्द दळायताक्षम्
रामं निशाचर विनाशकरं नमामि ॥

śrī rāghavaṁ daśarathātmaja maprameyam
sītāpatiṁ raghuvarānvaya ratnadīpam
ājānubāhum aravinda dalāyataākṣam
rāmaṁ niśācara vināśakaraṁ namāmi

To Lord Śrī Rāma or Raghava, who is King Dasaratha's son
and Sīta Devī's husband, who is the lustrous light of the
Raghu dynasty, who has long arms and lotus petal-like eyes,
and is the remover of darkness; I bow down.

वैदेही सहितं सुरद्रुमतले हैमे महामण्डपे
मध्ये पुष्पकमासने मणिमये वीरासने सुस्थितं ।
अग्रेवाचयति प्रभन्जन सुते तत्त्वं मुनिभ्यः परं
व्याख्यान्तं भरतादिभिः परिवृतं रामं भजे श्यामलं ॥

vaidehī sahitaṁ suradrumatale haime mahāmaṇḍape
madhye puṣpakamāsane maṇimaye vīrāsane susthitaṁ
agrevācayati prabhanjana sute tattvaṁ munibhyaḥ paraṁ

vyākhyāntaṁ bharatādibhiḥ parivrutaṁ rāmaṁ bhaje
śyāmalaṁ

I sing the glories of Śrī Rāma, the dark-bodied Lord, who is sitting on a gem studded puṣpakavimāna in a golden mandapa with Sita Devī by his side, Hanumān in front of him and accompanied by sages and Bharata.

रामाय रामभद्राय रामचन्द्राय वेधसे ।

रघुनाथाय नाथाय सीतायाः पतये नमः ॥

rāmāya rāmabhadrāya rāmacandrāya vedhase
raghunāthāya nāthāya sītāyāḥ pataye namaḥ

We constantly think about and salute Śrī Rāma, as a brother (Ramabhadra), as bright as the moon (Ramacandra), as the leader of the Raghu dynasty (Raghunatha), and as the husband of Sita Devī.

श्री हनुमत् प्रार्थन

Srī Hanumat Prārthana

5. Prayer to Śrī Hanumān

अतुलितबलधामं स्वर्णशैलाभदेहं

दनुजवनकृशानुं ज्ञानिनामग्रगण्यं

सकलगुणनिधानं वानराणामधीशं

रघुपतिवरदूतं वातजातं नमामि ॥

atulitabaladhāmaṁ svarṇaśailābhadhehaṁ
danujavanakruśānuṁ jñānināmagraganyaṁ
sakalaguṇanidhānaṁ vānarāṇāmadhīśaṁ
raghupativaradūtaṁ vātajātaṁ namāmi

I bow down to Hanumān, the son of Vāyu, who is of immense strength, whose body is radiant like gold, who is to the demons like fire is to forest, best among jnanis, bearer of all noble qualities, leader of monkeys and the dearest messenger of Śri Rāma.

गोष्पदीकृतवाराशिं मशकीकृतराक्षसं ।

रामायणमहामाला रत्नं वन्दे नीलात्मजम् ॥

goṣpadīkṛtavārāśiṁ maśakīkrutarākṣasaṁ
rāmāyaṇamahāmālā ratnaṁ vande nīlātmajam

I bow down to Hanumān, the son of Vāyu, who crossed the ocean as easily as if it were a puddle made by the hoof of a cow. Hanumān killed demons as effortlessly as one kills mosquitoes, and is the precious gem in the middle of the great garland of Rāmāyaṇa.

अञ्जनानन्दनं वीरं जानकीशोकनाशनं ।

कपीशमक्षहन्तारं वन्दे लङ्काभयन्करं ॥

anjanānandanam vīram jānakīśokanāśanam
kapīśamakṣahantāraṁ vande lankābhayankaram

I bow down to that Hanumān; courageous son of Anjana Devī,
remover of Sita Devī's distress, Kapisvara, leader of the
monkeys, killer of Rāvaṇa's son Akshaya, and who created
fear in the City of Lanka.

मनोजवं मारुततुल्यवेगं

जितेन्द्रियं बुद्धिमतां वरिष्ठं ।

वातात्मजं वानरयूथमुख्यं

श्रीरामदूतं शिरसा नमामि ॥

manojavam mārutatulyavegam
jitendriyam buddhimatām varīṣṭham
vātātmajam vānarayūthamukhyam
śrīrāmadūtaṁ śirasā namāmi

I bow my head down to Hanumān, who wins the hearts of
everyone, who is as fast as the wind, who conquered his
senses, who has a strong mind, is the son of the wind God
and who is prominent among monkeys. I bow down to the
messenger of Śrī Rāma

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं
तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकांजलिं ।
भाष्पवारिपरिपूर्णलोचनं
मारुतिं नमत राक्षसान्तकं ॥

yatra yatra raghunāthakīrtanaṁ
tatra tatra krutamastakāñjaliṁ
bhāṣpavāriparipūrṇalocanaṁ
mārutim namata rākṣasāntakaṁ

Wherever Śri Rāma's stories are sung, Hanumān folds His hands and bows down with joyous tears. I bow down to Lord Hanumān who is the destroyer of demons.

Importance of Sundarakāṇḍa for Children

This is a wonderful story for children to learn as it helps build confidence. It also fosters courage, fearlessness, logic, strategic thinking, diplomacy and other such qualities required for achieving success. Many parents often mistakenly teach their children that Hanumān is a *monkey God*. Rather, we can think of Hanumān as guiding our *monkey brains*. A monkey brain is one with thoughts that swing in every direction. Hanumān's story can help us focus our thoughts and harness our mental and physical powers to reach our goals. As Hanumān mentally prepares and starts to cross the ocean, he is not daunted by the immensity of the task at hand. While on his quest, he does not take a break, nor is his attention diverted when he starts at the request of Maināka. There were obstacles in his course, such as Surasa and Simhini, but he did not turn back. Instead, he faced them head on and overcame them. He planned his entrance into Laṅkā without much disturbance. This emphasizes the importance of planning any course of action.

When Hanumān enters Laṅkā, he starts looking for Sīta Devī immediately. Although impressed by the beauty of the city, he does not get distracted. Initially, he sees Mandodari and mistakenly assumes she is Sīta Devī. Once he realizes he is on the wrong track, he checks himself and resumes his search. He is not discouraged, and this too is an important lesson for all of us: that when we make mistakes, we should learn from them and continue to work harder to achieve our goals.

Hanumān continues to search for Sīta Devī and finally locates her under the Asoka tree. After observing her, Hanumān thinks about how he should approach her and how he should identify himself. He is sensitive to the fact that she is vulnerable. He is aware that he's an unknown factor to Sīta

Devī and that she may not respond to him favorably unless he plans ahead what he is going to say. He had nobody to consult with, nor did he expect help from anyone in handling his job. He did not ignore the smallest detail, and showed us all how to manage our time and skills to the best of our ability.

Next, Hanumān wants to assess the strength of the enemy. He knows it is hard to get past the demon guards. In fact, our mental disturbances are our real enemies. He devises a strategy to see Rāvaṇa without the aid of money or force, since he had neither. He realizes that negotiations and talking of peace might work best. However, to get into the court of Rāvaṇa, he must get the attention of the guards. As a monkey, he would ordinarily never get an audience with the emperor. He attracts attention by destroying the gardens and does his best not to harm anyone. Only when challenged by the demons does he put up a fight and kill them in the encounters. His job is done most thoroughly, leaving no room for doubt.

In an age when there were no pictures, phones, internet or any form of communication other than personal, Hanumān was given the task of looking for a person he had never seen, and reporting back to Rāma about what he had found. He took with him a little known story about Śrī Rāma and Sīta Devī so that she could be convinced that he was indeed a bona fide person. To prove that he had indeed seen and met Sīta Devī, he took back her Chūdamaṇi (jewel from her hair). In the course of the exercise, he always thought of Śrī Rāma, and reminded himself that he was doing His work. Planning and the execution of any task with focus, dedication and will power in the name of 'god's work' will always bring the best results.

Hanumān proves all along that work is worship, and working towards the goal is prayer in its highest form. These

are valuable lessons children can emulate in their own lives; as essential life pointers, they are important for everyone. In Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa only Hanumān is called medhāvi Mārutātmaja the real intellect who exhibited in every step of the way to do God's work. We have lot to learn from him.

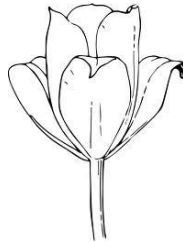
What one can achieve by mere remembrance of Hanumān is portrayed in the following sloka.

बुद्धिर्बलं यशो धैर्यं निर्भयत्वं अरोगता ।

अजाडऽयं वाक्पटुत्वं च हनुमत्स्मरणाद्भवेत् ॥

buddhirbalaṁ yaśo dhairyaṁ nirbhayatvaṁ arogatā
ajāḍa'yaṁ vākpaṭutvaṁ ca hanumatsmaraṇādbhavet

Wisdom, strength, fame, valor, fearlessness, health, determination, gift of the speech – in short, all that one can wish for can be achieved by anyone meditating on Hanumān.



Highlights of Śrīmad Valīmiki Rāmāyaṇa Introduction to the Rāmāyaṇa

Sage Vālmīki is the author of this Aadikavya. The entire world accepts the Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa as the first and foremost among poetic literary works in Sanskrit. This sacred book is called Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. It is very difficult to pinpoint the date or time in which this book was written. It is said that it was composed about 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. Since then, many have written the story of Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa in their own localized versions in different languages. All over India, Śrī Rāma's stories, temples, songs, dance dramas, arts, and paintings are very popular.

Before Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa there were a few sacred texts such as the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Upanishads, Brahmanikas, Samhitas. It is said that Śrīmad Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa is equivalent to the Vedas:

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे

वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद् रामायणात्मना

vedavedye pare puṁsi jāte daśarathātmaje
vedaḥ prācetasādāsīt sāksāḍ rāmāyaṇātmanā

Daśaratha's son, who is the Veda of Vedas, is born as Śrī Rāma. The ancient Vedas are absorbed in the form of Rāmāyaṇa. According to a popular saying, the importance of Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is equivalent to the sacred Vedas. Sage Vālmīki composed Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa in 24,000 slokas or stanzas distributed in 500 cantos and grouped into six main books or chapters. The seventh, Uttarakāṇḍa, is relatively small.

The seven books are as follows:

1. Bālakāṇḍa
2. Ayodhyakāṇḍa
3. Araṇyakāṇḍa
4. Kiṣkindha kāṇḍa
5. Sundarakāṇḍa
6. Yuddhakāṇḍa
7. Uttarakāṇḍa

To those who do pāṛāyaṇa or read the Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa daily, only the first six chapters are followed since they are considered to be the most important. Some unresolved questions are addressed in the Uttarakāṇḍa's later section.

Sage Vālmīki composed the entire Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa in 24,000 slokas or stanzas. He very precisely included the Gāyatrī Mantra to every thousand stanzas as a starting point. It is very auspicious and considered the equivalent of reading the entire Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa if one recites these twenty four stanzas, known as the Gāyatrī Rāmāyaṇa.

Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa Story (in brief)

There was once a virtuous king called Daśaratha Mahārāja who ruled the kingdom of Kosala. Its capital was Ayodhya. He had three wives, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, but was not blessed with children. On the advice of the royal priest Sage Vaśiṣṭha, King Daśaratha performed the homa-pooja called Putrakāmeṣṭi which expressed a sincere desire to beget children. The first wife, Kausalya, gave birth to Śrī Rāma. The second wife, Kaikeyi, had a son named Bharata. The youngest wife Sumitra had twins, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. The four sons were raised well, given a good education and taught the rules of royal conduct.

After some time Sage Viśvāmitra came to King Daśaratha to ask for help. The demons were disturbing Sage Viśvāmitra's prayers and homas (fire oblations). Sage Viśvāmitra requested King Daśaratha to send his son Śrī Rāma to the forest to protect the sages, so that they could continue their prayers without disruption. King Daśaratha was very reluctant at first, but Sage Vaśiṣṭha encouraged him to send Śrī Rāma. Thus King Daśaratha agreed to send Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Sage Viśvāmitra who took them to his āśrama (hermitage). Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa killed the demon Tāṭaki. Both brothers were taught and trained in the skills of archery, essentials of war, the sciences, and other branches of education. Two demons, Mārīca and Subāhu were trying to disturb the sages' prayers. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa shot arrows which killed Subāhu and sent Mārīca into the faraway seas. Sage Viśvāmitra gave all his penance powers to both princes, Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

After completing the prayers, Sage Viśvāmitra took Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the city of Mithila. On the way there Śrī Rāma stepped on a stone and relieved Ahalya of a curse, turning her back into a woman. She had been waiting for a long time to be touched by the feet of Śrī Rāma.

In the city of Mithila King Janaka invited many kings to the swayamvara of his daughter Sīta Devī. The contest involved lifting the Śivadhanuś or the bow of Shiva. It was incredibly heavy, so the task was daunting. Many kings and princes of fame and valor tried to lift it but failed. When it was his turn, Śrī Rāma lifted it with ease, strung the bow and broke it. Thus he married Sīta Devī. Her sisters Urmila, Mandavi and Kirti were married to Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna respectively. They all happily returned to Ayodhya.

Pleased at how events were proceeding, King Daśaratha decided to hand over the kingdom to Śrī Rāma and then retire to the forest. Enthusiastically, preparations were

made for the royal coronation of Śrī Rāma. However, meanwhile, trouble was brewing in the royal household. Manthara, a close personal maid to Queen Kaikeyi, spitefully suggested that Bharata should be king instead of Śrī Rāma. That would then place Kaikeyi as Queen Mother, raising her status from being a mere step mother. She raised the possibility that Kaikeyi may not have any status were Śrī Rāma to be king. Kaikeyi was sold on the idea. She went to King Daśaratha and convinced him to crown Bharata rather than Śrī Rāma. She cashed in on the promise King Daśaratha had made her many years ago when she had saved his life on the battlefield. Helpless in the situation, King Daśaratha gave in to the demands and sent Rāma into exile for fourteen years. Sīta Devī and Lakṣmaṇa would not be parted from Rāma, so they accompanied him to the forest as well.

On the way Śrī Rāma blessed the boatman Guha who helped them cross the Ganges River. They stayed for a while in sage Bharadvāja's āśrama. From there they moved to Chitrakūta. Despite the hardships they had to endure, not having the luxuries of the palace life they were accustomed to, Śrī Rāma, Sīta Devī and Lakṣmaṇa kept a positive attitude. Sīta Devī explored and delighted in the wonders of nature, while Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa kept close watch to make sure they were safe.

Meanwhile, Bharata returned to Ayodhya from his uncle's place where he had been visiting. He had no knowledge of what had transpired in his absence. When he found out how his mother's jealousy had driven his beloved brothers to the forest, and how his heartbroken father lamented this loss and died, Bharata was enraged. He outright rejected his mother's plans and resolved to bring Śrī Rāma back to make him the king. Accompanied by a troop of royal members and courtiers as well as citizens of Ayodhya, Bharata

went to the forest to seek Śrī Rāma and obtain forgiveness for his mother's actions.

In a touching meeting, Śrī Rāma gently turned down Bharata's offer, saying that his promise to Daśaratha was sacred, and following his wishes was his proper dharma. He advised Bharata to return to Ayodhya and rule righteously, just as their father had desired. Bharata requested that Śrī Rāma give him his pādukas (wooden slippers). Bearing the slippers on his head, Bharata returned to Ayodhya and placed them on the throne. Bharata took up residence in Nandigrāma, a town on the outskirts of Ayodhya and conducted royal business from there. He ruled by proxy; always conscious that Śrī Rāma was the rightful heir to the throne.

Śrī Rāma, Sīta Devī and Lakṣmaṇa proceeded to Sage Atrimahāmuni's āśrama, or hermitage. Along the way they encountered the demon Viradha and killed him. They also visited the ashramas of Sage Sarabhaṅga, Sage Sutiḥṣṇa and Sage Agastya, all of whom gave Śrī Rāma powerful weapons. They went on to Pañcavati where they befriended the great eagle, Jatāyu.

In their wanderings, Śrī Rāma attracted the attention of Rāvaṇa's sister, Sūrpaṇakha (demon with sharp nails). She approached Rāma and asked to marry her. Śrī Rāma replied that since he was already a married man, perhaps she should try Lakṣmaṇa instead! Her encounter with Lakṣmaṇa turned out poorly, as in his irritation he cut off her nose and ears and sent her packing into the forests. Injured and hurt, Sūrpaṇakha went and complained to her brother. Rāvaṇa was furious and sent two demons Khara and Dūṣaṇa who headed a troop of 14,000 demons to fight Rāma. However, Śrī Rāma defeated them single-handedly.

When Rāvaṇa heard of the death and destruction of Khara, Dūṣaṇa and their army of 14,000, he was even more

infuriated. He was hesitant to encounter Śrī Rāma directly, so devised a plan to weaken him. He sent the previously injured demon Mārīca disguised as a golden deer to entice Sīta Devī from the āśrama.

When Sīta Devī saw the golden deer, she was fascinated and begged Śrī Rāma to bring it to her. Śrī Rāma saw right away that this was a ruse, and was reluctant to leave Sīta. However, she persisted, and he had no choice but to pursue the deer. Mārīca led Śrī Rāma deep into the forest, and when Śrī Rāma's arrow pierced his heart, Mārīca imitated Rāma's voice and cried out loud to Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa to help him. When Sīta Devī heard the screams, she panicked and asked Lakṣmaṇa to go to Rāma's aid. Lakṣmaṇa suspected that the cries were a trick played by the demon, and tried to convince Sīta Devī that Śrī Rāma was not in any danger. But Sīta Devī could not be persuaded, so Lakṣmaṇa drew a line with an arrow and told Sīta Devī not to cross that line. The *Lakṣmaṇa Rekha* was intended to keep her safe in the hermitage. If she stayed within the line, no harm would come to her.

Once Lakṣmaṇa stepped out, Rāvaṇa came to the āśrama disguised as a mendicant begging for alms. Since he knew he could not cross the *Lakṣmaṇa Rekha*, he pleaded with Sīta Devī to bring the food to him. As Sīta Devī leaned over, Rāvaṇa grabbed her and revealed his true form. He whisked her away in his Puṣpaka vimāna towards Laṅkā. On the way, the eagle Jatāyu attempted to come to Sīta Devī's rescue. Rāvaṇa cut off his wings and left him to bleed to death. Sīta Devī wanted to give some clues of where she was being taken. So she dropped her ornaments in the path of the Kiṣkindha Mountains.

Śrī Rāma returned to the Parnaśāla, the house built with leaves, where he had left Sīta Devī. When he did not find her there, he suspected the worst and broke down in tears.

Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa now set out to look for Sīta Devī. They met Jatāyu whose wings were cut off and was slowly bleeding to death. Jatāyu informed the princes that Rāvaṇāsura had abducted Sīta Devī and was headed for Laṅkā.

Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa started going in the southern direction. Along the way they met and killed Kabandha, a demon who explained the story of Sugrīva. They traveled through Pampa, the path of the lake. They received the sweet fruits offered with devotion by Śabari.

Hanumān and Sugrīva found the bundle of ornaments that Sīta Devī had dropped. They took them to Śrī Rāma and showed them to him. Rāma recognized the jewelry and was convinced that Sīta Devī had indeed passed that way. Śrī Rāma helped Sugrīva defeat and kill his brother Vāli who had abducted Sugrīva's wife and usurped the kingdom. Sugrīva became the king of Kiṣkindha, the monkey kingdom. Śrī Rāma and Sugrīva became friends. Sugrīva promised Śrī Rāma that he would do everything in his power to help rescue Sīta Devī. He sent his monkeys in all directions to search for Sīta Devī. Hanumān, Jāmbavān, Aṅgadā and other monkey groups went in the southern direction to look for her. At the edge of the southern shores they met with Sampāthi, the eagle, who happened to be the brother of Jatāyu. He confirmed that he saw Rāvaṇa flying to Laṅkā with Sīta Devī in his possession. The vast ocean separated the land they were standing on from Laṅkā. The vānaras (monkeys) thought hard about who and how one could cross the waters. They concluded that only Hanumān was capable of performing this feat.

This is the starting point of Sundarakāṇḍa. Hanumān stood over the Mahendragiri Mountain and looked across the ocean. He planned and mentally prepared himself for the task at hand. With that he started his journey. He flew some distance when he came face to face with various obstacles

such as Maināka, a friendly mountain, Simhika who wanted to eat him, and Cāyāgrahi who would not allow him to proceed. He conquered all these obstacles with intelligence and might and reached Lańkā.

On landing in Lańkā, Hanumān killed the gatekeeper Lańkhiṇi and entered the great city. He looked all over the island but could not find Sīta Devī. Eventually he found her in the Aśokavana garden guarded by demons. He gave Śrī Rāma's ring to her to prove that he was a genuine emissary. In return Sīta Devī gave him the Chūdamaṇi to reassure Śrī Rāma. He advised Sīta Devī to be courageous, patient and confident in the might of Śrī Rāma who would surely come and rescue her. Rāvaṇāsura deserved to be punished for his evil deeds, and Śrī Rāma would serve out that justice.

Before leaving Lańkā Hanumān decided to see the demon emperor (Rāvaṇa) and try to get an assessment of the strength of his court and army. Knowing that as a monkey he could never gain access to the court of Rāvaṇa, he devised a plan to gain attention. He started to destroy the beautiful gardens of Aśokavana and then proceeded to vandalize the houses. Hanumān fought with a number of demons and killed them. Generally, he reeked havoc on whatever he could lay his hands on. Hanumān also killed Akṣayakumār, one of Rāvaṇa's sons. Indrajit, another son of Rāvaṇa, used his Brahmāstra to take Hanumān down, and dragged him to the court of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa, mad with rage, wanted to kill Hanumān at that very point. However, his younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa reminded him that it was against the law to kill an emissary. It made more sense to humiliate Hanumān before sending him on his way. The decision was made to tie oil-soaked rags to Hanumān's tail and set it on fire. Hanumān kept extending his tail until Lańkā ran out of cloth and oil. When his tail was lighted, he jumped over rooftops setting fire to everything around him.

Hanumān returned to Kiṣkindha and showed Śrī Rāma the Chūdamaṇi that Sīta Devī had given him. He narrated the story of his travels and delivered Sīta Devī's message. At this point, the Sundarakāṇḍa chapter concludes.

In Laṅkā, Vibhīṣaṇa fell out with his brother over the ethics of imprisoning another man's wife. Rāvaṇa sent his brother into exile, and Vibhīṣaṇa took asylum under Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma started to build a bridge across the ocean with the guidance of the engineer Nala. The vānaras and other small animals helped to build the bridge.

Aṅgadā, the son of Vāli, was sent by Śrī Rāma as a mediator, to try one last time to avoid war. Rāvaṇa was obstinate and refused to yield; there was no alternative to war. Many army commanders, generals and soldiers were killed. Rāvaṇa's son Indrajit tried to kill Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with snake arrows, but Garuda, the eagle, intercepted them. Indrajit used every unfair trick in the book to defeat Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Poisonous gases were released, causing the Ayodhya princes to faint, but the medicinal qualities of ocean spray brought them back to consciousness. All the sons of Kumbhakarna, brother of Rāvaṇa, were killed.

Rāvaṇa was so infuriated he used his most powerful weapon upon Lakṣmaṇa who fainted and was on the verge of death. Śrī Rāma got disheartened and refused to fight until Lakṣmaṇa was revived. Vibhīṣaṇa brought a priest and doctor, Suśeṇa, to attend to Lakṣmaṇa. Suśeṇa suggested that a special medicinal plant obtainable only in the Himalayas was the antidote to Lakṣmaṇa's condition. It had to be administered before the early hours of the morning to be effective. Hanumān was the only one who could fly faster than the wind. So he was sent to bring four plants, Mṛtasanjīvinī, Visalyakarani, Suvarnakarani and Sandhani. Hanumān could not recognize the shiny medicinal plants. But there was no

time to waste to consider what to do. Hanumān intelligently uprooted the mountain top with the plants and brought the entire thing back to Trikūta. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were both cured, their wounds were treated and they were ready to go back into action.

Śrī Rāma was concerned about getting injured in the battle against Rāvaṇa. Sage Agastya came and blessed Śrī Rāma and taught him the *Āaditya Hrudayam* (Sun God's prayer) which will bring success if recited every morning. Śrī Rāma killed Rāvaṇa, and all the gods, angels and celestials showered flowers and blessings on Śrī Rāma. The destruction of evil personified by Rāvaṇa brought relief to all the worlds.

Vibhīṣaṇa was crowned king of Laṅkā. When Sīta Devī was brought before Śrī Rāma, she was given the fire test to prove her purity and chastity. This was customary back then, and the public showing in which Śrī Agni personally delivered Sīta Devī to Lord Rāma was to confirm that she was not sullied by her unwilling stay in Laṅkā.

Śrī Rāma, Sīta Devī, and Lakṣmaṇa boarded the mystical magical airplane *Puṣpaka vimāna* and headed home for Ayodhya. They stopped briefly at Sage Agastya's āśrama and sought his blessings. Śrī Rāma sent Hanumān to Nandigrāma where Bharata had been staying for the last fourteen years to find out about the situation in Ayodhya. Depending on what news Hanumān brought back, Śrī Rāma would consider his next step.

Hanumān returned with the exciting news that all of Ayodhya was eagerly awaiting Śrī Rāma's entry, and that Bharata was overjoyed to hear that his beloved brother was coming back. Śrī Rāma went with his friends and followers who had stayed with him through the long fourteen year ordeal. He was crowned King of Ayodhya, and Daśaratharāma became the Emperor of Rāma Rājya, Rāma's kingdom.

This whole story of the Rāmāyaṇa was narrated by Śrī Rāma's own children during the yajñā which Śrī Rāma performed for the welfare of the people.



The story of Lava and Kuśa (in brief)

After Śrī Rāma became King, Śrī Rāma and Sīta Devī lived happily. However, one of the citizens of Ayodhya questioned Sīta Devī's character: he alleged that since she had stayed in Rāvaṇa's custody for a year, the common person had not witnessed the agni parīkṣa (fire test), there was no proof that she was pure. To calm his citizens, Śrī Rāma sent Śatrughna to escort Sīta Devī to the forest. Since she was pregnant at the time Sage Vālmīki gave her safe haven at his Āśrama.

Shortly thereafter Sīta Māta (mother) delivered twin boys, Lava and Kuśa. They grew up with the best education in the sciences, knowledge of war, techniques of archery, training and skills needed by a warrior, and whatever else befitted the upbringing of princes. Sage Vālmīki took them to Ayodhya and introduced them first as his disciples. The boys narrated the entire story of Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa, starting with the first sloka-stanza of Vālmīki, up to the Rāmapattābhiṣekam.

King Rāma was performing the Aśvamedha Yaga, and released a horse with a nameplate over the forehead. It gave information about the horse. The horse would roam freely, followed by soldiers. If the horse was not interrupted, the lands it roamed would become the property of the ruler who owned the horse. If it was stopped, the implication was that the kingdom was willing to fight the owner of the horse. Lava and Kuśa found the horse, caught it, tied and kept it. The soldiers came and asked the boys to release the horse since it belonged to the great King Rāma who had destroyed the ruler of Laṅkā. The boys refused to release it. The soldiers fought them but returned to Ayodhya, defeated.

Next King Rāma sent his brother Śatrughna and more soldiers to fight and bring back the horse. Lava and Kuśa

fought Śatrughna, and made him lose consciousness. The same thing happened with Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa and their armies. Finally King Rāma, after receiving reports about the young boys' valiant warrior skills and their obstinance in keeping the sacrificial horse as a toy, came in person to assess the situation. He saw the boys and was reluctant to fight. However, Lava and Kuśa challenged Rāma to fight and take the horse. When Hanumān saw the situation, he had a sense that they resembled what Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa might have been as young boys. He went into the āśrama and looked for their mother. He saw Sīta Mātā and explained the situation. Sage Vālmīki, Sīta Mātā and the rest came to the battlefield. King Rāma was using simple weapons to scare the boys who retaliated dexterously. Rāma wondered how such young children could be expert warriors and fighters. Sage Vālmīki brought forth Sīta Devī and narrated the story of what happened after Sīta Devī was exiled into the forest.

Thus Śrī Rāma was united with his sons. The battle between Śrī Rāma and his sons proved that Lava and Kuśa were worthy princes since they demonstrated such courage, valor and strength. Sīta Mātā departed from the scene as she asked her mother, Earth, to take her back into her folds. The Earth opened up and Sīta Mātā went back to where she had come from.

Those who had been rendered unconscious in battle were revived by Lava and Kuśa who used the methods taught to them by Sage Vālmīki. They all returned to Ayodhya and ruled the kingdom for a long time to come.

शृणोति यः इदं काव्यं पुरा

वाल्मीकिना कृतं

श्रद्धदानो जितक्रोधो

दुर्गाणि अति तरत्यसौ

śruṇoti yaḥ idaṁ kāvyam purā

vālmīkinā krutaṁ

śradhdhadāno jītakrodho

durgāṇi ati taratyasau

One who listens to this epic poem, which was written by sage Vālmīki, a long time ago with a focused mind, and one who is never angry, shall overcome all obstacles



SUNDARAKĀṆḌA

Chapter 1: Hanumān Crossing the Ocean

Thoughtful Jāmbavān enthusiastically encouraged and motivated Hanumān to realize his latent energy and strength to fulfill the task of crossing the ocean. Māruti (another name for Hanumān (the one moving at the speed of wind) started looking for the path by which divine angels travel in the sky. Hanumān alone had the impossible mission of crossing the ocean. Hanumān stood on the Mahendra Mountain, looked out at the sea, displayed his immense strength and paced the green grass. His strength was so powerful; the birds all around him were frightened. He knocked down huge trees with his chest and prepared mentally for the journey. The Mahendra Mountain contained many natural ores, which reflected all the colors of the spectrum. The angels Yakṣa, Kinnara, Gandharva and the Gods roamed freely on the mountain. There were many wild elephants on that mountain, yet Hanumān seemed like an even wilder elephant in a small pond.



Hanumān starting to cross the ocean

Hanumān wanted to take off across the ocean from the Mahendra Mountain. He bowed down to Sūrya Deva (Sun God), Indra Deva (the king of the Gods), Vāyu Deva (God of wind and Hanumān's father) and the five elements (water, air, fire, earth, space). Before take off, once again, turning towards the south, Hanumān bowed down to his father. He enlarged his body and stomped on the Mahendra Mountain. The mountain felt the jolt with such force that flowers fell from the trees and covered the mountain; the streams started flowing like water falls. The dirt and dust fell off the mines exposing silver, gold, and iron. It looked as though God Himself was doing oblations using the clouds as prayers.

Hanumān's jolt on the mountain caused even more catastrophes. The animals that lived in the caves screamed violently; the loud noises resounded in the forest. The snakes were so scared they hit their heads on the stones, which released poison and also broke the stones. Most of the medicinal plants could not stop the poisonous juices from affecting them. The sages living in that mountain thought the mountain was breaking and collapsing. Living on the mountain was a class of people called the Vidyādhara who possessed magic boons. While they were drunk with their lovers they became very scared when the mountain shook. They were so scared; the Vidyādhara took their precious belongings and their wives and fled to the sky.

Then the holy sages came out of the caves and calmed the Vidyādhara; the sages explained that the mountain moved because Hanumān's mountain-sized journey to find Sīta Devī had commenced. His aim was Rāmābhyudaya or Rāma's success and thus the evolution of fellow monkeys. Then the Vidyādhara looked in wonder at the unimaginably large Hanumān. Hanumān stretched his body and shook his tail violently. He stretched his pillar-like iron hands. Then he bent down in a diving position and collected his energy with a deep breath. He blocked his ears and kicked the mountain. Just as he was about to take off, Hanumān looked at his fellow monkeys, Jāmbavān and Sugrīva and said, "I will go as fast as Śrī Rāma's arrow to Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā. If I cannot find Sīta Mātā there, then I will go to heaven and search. If I cannot find her there, I will bring Rāvaṇa as a prisoner and if I cannot bring Rāvaṇa, I will uproot Laṅkā and bring the entire city including Rāvaṇa here."

Hanumān took off from the mountain and flew over the ocean like a bird with wings. The birds of the mountain flew with him to say farewell. The formation seemed like army

troops following a king. All the leaves, flowers, branches and twigs which were on Hanumān's body started falling down into the blue sea which seemed like stars in the sky. The sight of Hanumān's dark body flying with flowers seemed like the clouds with lightning bolts. His outstretched hands and fingers looked like five-headed snakes coming out of a mountain. His size was so enormous that when Hanumān bent his head it looked as if he was about to drink the ocean and when he lifted his head up it seemed as if he could swallow the sky. Hanumān's eyes were like the sun and the moon. With his red mouth and radiant face, he looked like the setting sun. Hanumān had his tail wrapped around his stomach. The winds were blowing like thunder beneath his arms. Hanumān seemed like a blazing meteor from north to south.

Hanumān was flying so fast that he and his shadow seemed like an enormous long ship. The waves of the ocean were so high they almost reached his stomach. The sea was throbbing with the sound of the waves and the wind. The animal kingdom of the sea was clearly visible. The snakes of the sea were scared because they believed Hanumān was a big eagle. Hanumān's shadow was thirty yojanas long and ten yojanas wide. He seemed like a mountain flying with wings. Angels showered Hanumān with flowers. Sūrya, the Sun God emitted a temperate, pleasant temperature so as not to scorch him. Vāyu, the Wind God blew gently. It seemed as though Vāyu was carrying Hanumān in his hand. All the gods and angels, seen and unseen, praised Hanumān's determination.

While Hanumān was flying, King Daśaratha, of the Ikṣvāku dynasty; King of the sea; who had helped the Ocean King to expand his waters; wanted to help Hanumān on his mission thereby indirectly helping Śrī Rāma who also hailed from the Ikṣvāku dynasty. King Sāgara thought that

Hanumān could travel the rest of the way with ease if only he rested first. In the sea there was a Mountain called Maināka. Maināka was the door for the demons of the underwater world. Maināka had the power to grow bigger in any direction. So King Sāgara explained Hanumān's mission to Maināka and requested that Hanumān be allowed to stand on him for some time.



Maināka Mountain

Maināka then came out of the ocean as the sun would come out of the clouds. The Mountain Maināka rose very high with glittering mountain peaks. Hanumān saw this mountain in his way and pushed Maināka with his chest. Then Maināka

took a human form and asked Hanumān to rest on his peak for a while in order to complete the difficult task ahead. Maināka said, "I have been sent by Sāgara, the king of the sea who is obligated to the Iskhwaku dynasty. Because you are on your way to accomplish Śrī Rāma's mission the sea king wanted to help you." Maināka said, "Oh Hanumān, you and I also have a special relationship. Your father Vāyu deva, who is like a brother to me, helped me once. Please accept our hospitality before proceeding." Maināka explained how Vāyu deva had helped him.

Hanumān told Maināka, "I have heard what you have said. I feel you have honored me as a guest. But I must leave. I should not stand in the middle of the sea. I promised before take-off that I would go as fast as Śrī Rāma's arrow and would not stop until I set foot on Laṅkā." Maināka blessed Hanumān for the success of his mission and Hanumān continued his journey. The gods and angels praised his determination; he did not even stop to rest. The gods blessed Maināka and he did not go into the ocean to hide but stood there forever. Hanumān disappeared in a second.

Reflection: To be successful, stop not until the mission is complete.

The gods and angels requested Nāgamāta Surasa also to test Hanumān. Surasa came out of the sea in a dreadful form without arms or legs. She was huge. She approached Hanumān, obstructed his way and said, "The gods told me that I can eat you. So you must enter my mouth."

Hanumān pleaded with Surasa with a smile and a humble voice, "Oh Surasa! King Daśaratha's son Śrī Rāma went to the forest with his wife Sīta Mātā and his brother Laskhmana to fulfill his father's wish. He was in Daṇḍakāraṇya and while Śrī Rāma was busy, Rāvaṇa stole

Sīta Māta. With Śrī Rāma's permission I am now going to find Sīta Māta. These waters are also Śrī Rāma's territory; therefore, you too should help Śrī Rāma. After I meet Sīta Māta and go back to inform Śrī Rāma, I will definitely enter your mouth." But Surasa did not agree and said no one could cross her. Hanumān became angry with Surasa. He made his body very large but Surasa made her mouth larger. They both competed in expanding their bodies. When Surasa was one hundred yojanas wide, Hanumān shrank down as small as the tip of a thumb, entered her mouth and quickly came out of it. Hanumān flew away telling Surasa he had entered her mouth; Surasa's boon that those who pass in front of her should enter her mouth was fulfilled. Hanumān resumed his large body and continued on his journey.

Reflection: Use your intellect to overcome challenging situations.

Surasa then assumed her real form and blessed Hanumān to be successful in bringing Sr Rāma and Sīta Devī together.



Surasa tries to eat Hanumān

Hanumān continued his journey. The path he used was the air path for the gods, Yakṣa, Kinnara, Kimpuruṣa, Nārada, Tumbura, birds and the rainbow. The stars, the moon, and the sun were all able to witness Hanumān's fearless flying.

Another obstacle for Hanumān was the demon Simhika, who had the power to change her form. She saw Hanumān's shadow and thought it was some food for her. While she was trying to catch his shadow, Hanumān felt like an anchored ship and his speed reduced. He felt someone holding him back. He looked around but did not find anyone.

Then Hanumān remembered Sugrīva's words. Sugrīva had said that there were sea demons, which were "Cāyāgrahi", or shadow catchers. They could eat objects

which caused shadows. Hanumān thought this must definitely be such a demon. Simhika opened her mouth wide to eat Hanumān. Hanumān went into her wide mouth, pulled out her heart with his fingers and came out before the demon closed her mouth. He pushed Simhika like the mountain and she fell down dead.



Cāyāgrahi trying to catch Hanumān

Siddhas, Cāraṇas and Gandharvas blessed Hanumān from the sky because he had killed the most dangerous sea

demon. They blessed him saying he would continue to be successful on his mission. They also praised him saying:

धृतिर्द्रुर्मतिर्दक्य स्व कर्मसु न सीदति

स तैः सम्भावितः पूज्यः प्रतिपन्नप्रयोजनः

dhrutirdruirmatirdkya sva karmasu na sīdati
sa taiḥ sambhāvitah pūjyah pratipannaprayojanah

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 1 – 201

Anybody who has your courage, farsightedness, intelligence, and determination will always be successful and never fail.

After slaying Simhika, Hanumān started flying again. Within one hundred yojanas he saw land. He studied the shores carefully and found a spot with many different trees. He saw a bird's eye view of the island from space. He thought he might scare the demons if he landed in his present huge form, so he shrunk down to his normal body size. When Hanumān shrunk his body size, it seemed like the mountainous brawn was shattered and a radiant body emerged. Hanumān looked like Mahāviṣṇu in his Vāmana form when he was only three feet tall and killed Bali. Hanumān climbed onto Lambā Mountain and from there saw the city of Laṅkā situated on the Trikūta Mountain. Laṅkā illuminated the sky like Amarāvathi in God's abode, Heaven.



Lañkā with bright lights

Chapter 2: Hanumān's Strategy: How to Enter Lańkā

Hanumān crossed the ocean that no one else could cross. He saw Lańkā city situated on Trikūta Mountain. He settled down for a while since he had completed one step of his mission, reaching Lańkā. Hanumān didn't feel any fatigue from the journey. He roamed around the Lambā island mountain. He could smell the sweet fragrances of flowers and gazed at all the wonderful fruit trees and flowering trees. Hanumān could see the ponds and lakes of Lańkā city. He saw swans and birds flying gracefully. He also saw amazing sports arenas and large gardens. Several military warriors protected the city of Lańkā as if in anticipation of Śrī Rāma's attack any time because Rāvaṇa stole Śrī Rāma's wife, Sīta Devī. There was a pond with lotus flowers and lilies. The city battlement wall shone like gold. The buildings in this fort seemed very large. All the houses had golden entrances and they were carved too. From his perch on Lambā Mountain, Hanumān also saw beautiful beaches that lined the city of Lańkā.

Lańkā was protected by strong demons. Hanumān looked at the city surrounded by the ocean and started thinking of the impossibilities. "Not everyone can cross the ocean. Even for those who can cross successfully, it will be useless because even gods cannot win this war against Rāvaṇa. Even Śrī Rāma cannot win this Lańkā city. Logic and reasoning will not work with demons. These are already rich people and money cannot buy them. Diplomacy will not work. So how can these demons are conquered? War is impossible. Except for the King of Monkeys, Sugrīva, Ańgadā, Nīla and myself, no one else can cross the ocean and come here. We do not even know if Sīta Māta is alive. First I will find Sīta

Māta; I will see her and then think of the rest.” He continued to ponder and reason, “This city of Lańkā is protected by many demons. They are all hot-blooded fighters. If I appear to them in this form they may catch me. So I have to trick them and look for Sīta Māta. After it gets dark, I shall become invisible and enter the city.”

The duty of a diplomat is very important indeed. Thoughtless diplomats act independently and spoil the work just as darkness goes away in the morning and working plans are all destroyed. The chief diplomat should plan with the help of ministers to determine the good and bad consequences of the work. Diplomats who think they are intelligent and do not discuss issues with their ministers spoil both sides of negotiations with their ignorance. So Hanumān continued to contemplate, “How can I perform the job in a way favorable to Śrī Rāma yet which will not agitate Rāvaṇa’s feelings. I crossed the sea successfully but if I kill Rāvaṇa then Śrī Rāma’s work will be wasted. Demons can see everything and even if I change my body they will still recognize me. So I shall enter Lańkā in the dark hours.”

After deciding his plan, Hanumān patiently waited for sunset. He made himself small and jumped from the Lambā Mountain to the fort of Lańkā city. He peeked inside from the fort entrance. Hanumān was amazed at the beauty of Lańkā. The moon had risen and the reflection of the moon in the waters seemed like swans dancing.

Reflection: Think clearly and thoughtfully plan what you are going to do before taking any major action.

Chapter 3: Hanumān Defeats Lañkhiṇī – Protector of Lañkā

The humble, intelligent, wind God's son, Hanumān jumped from Lambā Mountain to Rāvaṇa's city. He moved towards the entrance gate. The mansions in the city were shining brightly like spring clouds. The city was happy. Sounds of the people could be heard like the roar of the sea. Wild elephants were kept at the main entrance of the fort. The houses shone like clouds' lightning. Hanumān was observing the city of Lañkā. There were coliseums on top of the buildings and gold seats studded with diamonds and pearls. The building floors and stairs were made of marble and colored glass. They looked like they were flying. Hanumān heard the ornaments of ladies while they were walking. Lañkā seemed like Kubera's Alakā city and Indra's city combined. There were swans in front of all the houses.

Hanumān had only one thought; how to conquer Rāvaṇa's city. He thought, "Even though Lañkā seems impenetrable, it can be won. Aṅgadā, Suśeṇa, Mirida, Sugrīva, Kushaparva, Ruksha, Ketumālī and I can attack and conquer this city." Thus thinking of Śrī Rāma, Hanumān was happy. Lañkā city appeared to Hanumān as a beautiful pregnant lady with ornaments. The city was well lit. There was no darkness anywhere in Lañkā.

The Lañkā goddess, who was protecting Lañkā city, saw Hanumān about to enter the city. She stood in front of Hanumān screaming dreadfully, "Who are you? You are a monkey of the forest. What are you doing here? I will kill you. First tell me what you need here. Oh monkey, all around is Rāvaṇa's troops and to defeat them is impossible for you."

Hanumān replied, "All you have said is true. Your face is ugly. Your eyes are more deadly. Who are you and why

are you scaring me? Why are you standing outside the city?" These words made the demon very angry. She said, "Oh monkey, Rāvaṇa is the king of this city and I am protecting him. I am guarding this city. Nobody can enter it without my permission and you cannot defeat me. In short, I am this city's guardian demon, Laṅkhiṇi. Now you explain yourself." Hanumān replied, "I just wanted to see the city of big forts, gardens and buildings. After seeing them I will leave." Laṅkhiṇi got more irritated and restricted Hanumān's entrance. Hanumān still peacefully requested Laṅkhiṇi to let him see the city and he promised to leave soon. Laṅkhiṇi slapped Hanumān. He became furious and defended himself against the demon Laṅkhiṇi by punching her; she fell down but Hanumān stopped there since he did not want to kill a female.



Hanumān defeating Laṅkhiṇi

The ugly faced Laṅkhiṇi became a beautiful lady, got extremely happy and said, "Oh great shouldered monkey! Please forgive me. Only great warriors have a rule not to kill

ladies. Brahma gave me a boon a long time ago that I could resume my normal form if someone divine can challenge and touch me. Because of the curse of Nandi, a monkey will defeat Rāvaṇa. The whole demon dynasty will be destroyed. Oh Hanumān! You can go into Laṅkā freely, find Sīta Devī and complete your work and then return home.”

Chapter 4: Hanumān Enters Laṅkā City

Hanumān perched on the wall of the fort and jumped into Laṅkā city. He did not enter through the main gate. The main gate entrance was called Rājadvāram, the royal entrance. So he jumped from a sidewall. **He put his left foot down first as a symbolic gesture of destruction.** The courageous Hanumān roamed in the streets. There was dancing, music and laughter everywhere. The city was extremely happy. Hanumān saw unique types of houses; the special Padma (lotus) houses, the Vardhamāna expandable houses, and the special symbol houses. All of them were decorated with garlands. While observing the bustling and beautiful city, Hanumān saw spies amongst the people walking in the streets. He saw legions of military personnel. Hanumān saw a great variety of people.

After glancing at the buildings, Hanumān came to Rāvaṇa’s palace. It was in the midst of a large moat. The fort was guarded by thousands of soldiers. There were chariots, air vehicles, beautiful horses, and four ivory-toothed elephants. Hanumān quietly entered Rāvaṇa’s palace.

Chapter 5: Description of Rāvaṇa's Palace

The moonlight shone on the inner quarters of the palace in many ways. Once inside, Hanumān began his search for Sīta Devī. He saw some people drinking, some singing, and some fighting for sport. Among those inside Rāvaṇa's quarters were blissfully happy youth, those having sweet conversation, great men, famous men, those involved in intelligent conversation and some just doing their job. There were mainly demon ladies in the palace. Among those Hanumān observed none were like Sīta Māta for whom he was searching.

Chapter 6, 7: Hanumān's Description of His Findings

As Hanumān entered Rāvaṇa's inner palace, he observed many things. He saw some of the most beautiful ladies there. The beautiful palace befitted Rāvaṇa. While searching for Sīta Devī, Hanumān noticed the grandeur of the palace, the exquisite display of riches, and the wonders of the buildings. The palace floors were made of marble and had wonderful designs. The rococo decorations, which indicated very large spaces, exhibited the riches of Rāvaṇa. There was not a speck of dust anywhere. The palace was indeed a sight to see.

Hanumān looked into the air vehicle hangars. Every air vehicle was fully equipped and guarded. The chariots and air vehicles, helicopters and planes were ready to leave any moment. There were extraordinarily designed houses and wonderful fragrances but Hanumān could not find Sīta Māta anywhere. He became a little concerned.

Chapter 8: Description of the Puṣpaka Vimāna, the Special Airplane

In the great hangar of air vehicles, Hanumān saw situated in mid-air, a special air vehicle called Puṣpaka Vimāna (plane). Viśvakarma himself had designed this air vehicle. It was the best of all his creations. Viśvakarma took great care to create this vehicle. It was studded with many precious gems. Surprisingly, even temples did not have such wonders as the Puṣpaka Vimāna. It was built with many high gold pillars. The structure was very symmetric. No matter how one looked at it, it was wonderful, which was what made the Puṣpaka Vimāna unique.

मनः समाधाय तु शीघ्रगामिनं दुरावरमं मारुततुल्यगामिनम्
महात्मनां पुण्यकृतां महर्द्धिनां यशस्विनामग्रयमुदामिवालयम्

manaḥ samādhāya tu śīghragāminam durāvaram
mārutatulyagāminam
mahātmanām puṇyakṛtām maharddhinām
yaśasvināmagrayamudāmivālayam

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 8 – 5

The Puṣpaka plane could fly according to the wishes of the master. It could fly fast or slow and in any direction. Nobody could stop it and it could even fly at the speed of wind. It was like the abode of very great respectable, rich and famous people. The Puṣpaka plane was specially carved and designed with delicate intricacies. It was considered more

beautiful than a spring flower bouquet. Hanumān looked around the Puṣpaka vehicle.

Hanumān examined out closely the air vehicle – Puṣpaka Vimāna, which was made by Viśvakarma to offer to Brahma. Kubera with intense prayers had pleased Brahma and won that plane as a gift. Rāvaṇa fought for it and brought it down to earth. The whole vehicle was like a building. Hanumān went to the upper deck of the air vehicle. The pillars were sculptured in gold and silver. There were straight stairwells and in between, seating places were arranged. The plane had big windows for sunlight and small windows for fresh air. The floor was embedded with pearls and corals. The perfumes in the plane were very soothing.



Puṣpaka vimāna

Chapter 9: Hanumān Searches Rāvaṇa's Inner Palace

The best part of Laṅkā was Rāvaṇa's inner palace. There were many sections within the inner city. Hanumān started searching all the buildings in the inner palace. He found the best building which was Rāvaṇa's living quarters. The king's palace building was protected by many demons. Even though it was crowded with many elephants and protectors it appeared to be a very spacious palace. In Rāvaṇa's palace, there were many young girls and princesses whom Rāvaṇa had either won or stolen. The palace was overflowing with riches.

Hanumān went further inside. The whole palace was filled with fragrance. Hanumān felt as if Vāyu Deva had taken different forms and invited Hanumān as a relative. The sweet perfumes led the way to Rāvaṇa's bedroom. Hanumān looked around Rāvaṇa's bedroom. It had fabulous decorations made of ivory, gold and diamonds. The floor was made of shiny marble. On the floor was the most beautiful carpet. The carpet contained designs of oceans, gardens, buildings, and different continents. This palace seemed to have an abundance of wealth.

The mansion was pleasing to the eyes with many beautiful items. It had beautiful music pleasing to the ears and the fragrances inside it were intoxicating. Dishes were filled with a great variety of foods and their aromas were very pleasing to the palate. Hanumān was astonished at the beauty of the palace and wondered if he was in heaven or somewhere else. He saw Rāvaṇa's ladies lying down with all their ornaments. Ladies dressed in different ways were lying on the carpet in different poses. They looked tired and drunk. They looked peaceful while sleeping, with their mouths closed

and without snoring. They looked like lotus flowers which close at sunset. Among the ladies in the room, Rāvaṇa looked like a shining moon among stars.

Hanumān was relentless in his search for Sīta Māta. He studied the maidens' ornaments to see if he could recognize any of them based on what Śrī Rāma had described to him. But these harem ladies were with Rāvaṇa of their own choice. They seemed to love Rāvaṇa. With such a harem of ladies, Hanumān could not understand why Rāvaṇa stole Sīta Devī. Then Hanumān thought that if Sīta Māta was among these ladies, there was nothing he could do.

Chapter 10: Hanumān Mistakes Mandodari for Sīta

Suddenly Hanumān spotted the world's most beautiful special bed with precious stones and expensive leather bedding. Rāvaṇa lay on this bed displaying his body's war wounds and his many ornaments. Several wives shared his bed.

Nearby, in a special place, he saw the most beautiful lady. She was Mandodari, Rāvaṇa's favorite and loving queen. Her body shimmered like gold. She matched the description of Sīta Māta as given by Śrī Rāma. (Sīta Devī looked like Mandodari because Sīta Devī was actually said to be Mandodari's daughter; when Sīta Devī was born she was proclaimed as a bad omen for Rāvaṇa who ordered Vibhīṣaṇa to kill Sīta Devī. Vibhīṣaṇa placed Sīta Devī in a box and offered her to the sea. The box with baby Sīta Devī inside reached the shores of the Mithila Kingdom). So Hanumān assumed Mandodari was indeed Sīta Māta and jumped with joy. Like a feisty monkey, he wagged his tail, clapped his hands and climbed the pillars.



A beautiful lady sleeping amongst the riches in Rāvaṇa's palace

Chapter 11: Hanumān Realizes His Mistake

Hanumān reasoned with himself, "How could Sīta Mātā sleep without Śrī Rāma? She would not be able to sleep, eat or wear beautiful ornaments. The great pious lady Sīta Mātā would not accept anybody other than Śrī Rāma. So the lady sleeping must be someone else." With this reasoning, Ānjaneya (Hanumān) started looking for Sīta Devī again.

Hanumān looked in the kitchen to see if Sīta Devī was there. In the kitchen, several kinds of delicious, wonderful

and aromatic foods were prepared. There were many varieties of meats, sweets, fruits and drinks. There was a big list of food items. There were several kinds of wines: clear wines, sugar sweet wines, honey colored wines, grape wines, and even wines made out of flowers. The wine list was very long. Hanumān looked at every individual to see if one of them might be Sīta Devī. Wherever he looked in this palace, he saw only Rāvaṇa's ladies. Hanumān decided to search places where more common ladies might be living.

Chapter 12: Hanumān Laments His Inability to Find Sīta Devī

Hanumān continued carefully looking for Sīta Devī in the portrait houses, gardens, and all the dark rooms along the way. He could not find Sīta Devī anywhere.

He lamented that he could not find Sīta Devī. He thought, "Dreadful Rāvaṇa must have killed Sīta Māta or Sīta Māta must have committed suicide in desperation after being tortured by these demons. How can I go back to Kiṣkindha? I failed in the task of finding Sīta Māta. I looked everywhere in Rāvaṇa's palace, his buildings and his fort. Everyone will question me. What have I achieved in crossing the ocean? How can I justify my journey? Everyone will think I am useless." Then he thought again, "anybody can make mistakes. There is no use becoming desperate. I must gather my enthusiasm."

Reflection: Do not despair when you falter. Get up, brush yourself off and regain your zeal.

अनिर्वेदो हि सततं सर्वार्थेषु प्रवर्तकः

करोति सफलं जन्तोः कर्म यत् तत् करोति सः

anirvedo hi satataṁ sarvārtheṣu pravartakah
karoti saphalaṁ jantoḥ karma yat tat karoti saḥ

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 12 -11

Work done by anyone can only be successful if it is done with enthusiasm.

Hanumān was determined to look in all the previously searched places once again. He despaired once more and was full of sorrow that he could not find Sīta Devī.

Chapter 13: Hanumān's Deep Despair and Search for Sīta Continues

Hanumān could not find Sīta Devī in Rāvaṇa's palace even in his second attempt. He started contemplating what could have happened to Sīta Devī, "I have searched everywhere in Laṅkā for Sīta Māta. I searched the riverbanks, the ponds, the waterfalls, the palaces, and the forts. The king of birds Sampāathi said Sīta Māta was in Rāvaṇa's palace but I cannot find her. She was born in the country Mithila, which belonged to the most righteous and pious people. She is the daughter of King Janaka. Would such a lady surrender herself to the demon Rāvaṇa? In fear of Śrī Rāma's arrows Rāvaṇa abducted Sīta Māta at a great speed. In such haste, Sīta Māta might have fallen into the sea. Maybe Rāvaṇa held her too tightly and she died. Maybe when she was trying to protect herself, the demon killed her. Maybe one of Rāvaṇa's wives tortured her and ate her. Maybe she committed suicide thinking about Śrī Rāma. Maybe Sīta Māta lamented and must have cried, "Hey Rāma, Hey Lakṣmaṇa, Hey Ayodhya" and left her body. Maybe Rāvaṇa put her in a cage like a bird and she

is somewhere crying. This is the most likely possibility. Rāvaṇa must be hiding her somewhere. "

Hanumān couldn't help but despair after so much searching. His mind conjured up bad thoughts, doubts of his abilities and possible scenarios if he was unsuccessful in finding Sīta Devī. He thought, "If I return without seeing Sīta Māta, what good is my crossing the ocean and overcoming obstacles? Everything will be a big waste. I cannot carry back the sad news that Sīta Māta was not found. These sad strong words will kill Śrī Rāma. After Śrī Rāma dies Lakṣmaṇa will surely die. The other two brothers Bharata and Śatrughna will also die. After all four children are dead; the queen mother's Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi will also die. The Ikṣvāku dynasty will end. After Śrī Rāma's death Sugrīva will also die. Aṅgadā will die. The rest of the monkey clan will be so sad and all of them will die. The ministers will die too. If I return to Kiṣkindha without finding Sīta Māta, such catastrophes will happen. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will be waiting for my arrival. If I cannot find Sīta Māta, I will retire under a tree or I will definitely kill myself. The night had started out well. I thought I had almost found Sīta Māta. No, I should live. Then I can at least kill some demons and Rāvaṇa. Or instead maybe I will abduct Rāvaṇa and hand him over to Śrī Rāma. Nobody should suffer because of my failure. I see a great garden with tall trees. I have not searched there. I bow down to all the gods, eleven Rudras, twelve Suryas, Aswini devas and Sapta Marutas. I will bring Sīta Māta back to Śrī Rāma."

Thus determined, Hanumān finished lamenting, calmed down and steadied his resolve. Hanumān thoughtfully resolved that killing one self in despair is not the solution for unachieved success. So he prayed to GOD for courage, confidence and success.



Hanumān's determination

He prayed thus:

नमोस्तु रामाय स लक्ष्मणाय

देव्यै च तस्यै जनकात्मजायै

नमोस्तु रुद्रेन्द्रयमानिलेभ्यो

नमोस्तु चन्द्रार्कमरुद्गणेभ्यः

namostu rāmāya sa lakṣmaṇāya
devyai ca tasyai janakātmajāyai
namostu rudrendrayamānilebhyo
namostu candrārkaṁmarudgaṇebhyaḥ
Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 13-59

“I respectfully bow down to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Janaka’s daughter, Sīta. Namaskārams to Rudra, Lord Siva; Yama, the God of Death, Anila the Fire God. I bow down to Candra (Moon), Arka (Sun), the Marutas and the various sacred Gaṇas and helpers.”

After salutations to Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the other gods, Hanumān proceeded towards the Aśoka garden. Hanumān was on alert, thinking, “There will be many more demons here. I must be careful where I breathe. I shall disguise myself. I do not know when I shall see Sīta Māta. I do not know what state of mind Sīta Māta will be in, when I find her”.

Chapter 14: Hanumān Describes the Aśoka Gardens

After contemplating and lamenting, Hanumān entered the Aśoka garden. The garden was filled with flowering trees, fruit trees, delicate rare plants, rare flowers, and beautiful, very fragrant flowers.

The birds in the garden were chirping. There were small ponds and large ponds. There were pathways filled with fallen flowers, new sprouts and tender leaves. Birds had partially eaten the fruits. There were so many fruit trees. Hanumān was pleased to see the trees; he jumped, shook and swayed in the trees. There were a variety of streams, waterfalls, ponds, winding pathways and resting places. The Aśokavana was very beautiful. It was musical with the sounds of tiny bells hanging from the trees. Hanumān sat down on a Śimśupa tree branch. He thought Sīta Devī would definitely come there to give morning salutations with water to the Sun God. Thus Hanumān awaited on the Śimśupa tree for the arrival of Sīta Devī.

Chapter 15: Hanumān Finds Sīta

Hanumān hid in the branches of the Śimśupa tree and eagerly waited for Sīta Devī. The Aśokavana had huge trees. It had a wonderful morning glory with a fine fragrance. There were animals all around that slept through the night. Many varieties of birds lived in the garden. There were myriads of fountains and small houses for relaxation. There were benches with five seats. The garden had all sorts of seasonal flowers and fruits. There were many Aśoka trees full of flowers. The blossoms were so lovely and soothing; one could not feel sad looking at them.

There were many sections in the garden. It is difficult to explain the beauty of such a marvelous garden. The flowers resembled stars and the garden looked like a second sky. There were flowers that resembled pearls and made the garden seem like a fifth ocean. Sounds of many different animals were heard. These sounds were beautiful because they resounded with freedom. The Aśoka garden felt like a second Gandhamādana Mountain.

When Hanumān was hiding, he saw a Caityaprasādagṛha (a magnificent towering building). It looked like Mount Kailāśa. It was white and was very tall. It had a thousand pillars in the middle. There were corals embedded in the stairs. It had gold benches and the building seemed to touch the sky. While casually looking at a tree, its pedestal and the ground, Hanumān saw a woman with demons all around her. She wore an old soiled saree. It was clear that she had not eaten in days and was very weak. She was sighing loudly. Hanumān could not see her clearly but she seemed radiant. She had only one yellow cloth around her and she looked like a fireball engulfed in smoke. Her face was devoid of any makeup and was dusty; she looked like a lotus in the mud. This lady was in the midst of a group of demon ladies. She looked like a deer lost from her group and caught in the middle of dogs. Hanumān thought this lady must be a prisoner. Her saree matched the cloth in which she tied her ornaments and threw down from the sky. The ornaments she did not drop were still on her body and seemed similar to the ones he found. Hanumān confirmed that she was indeed Sīta Devī.

Her face was like the full moon. Her body was beautifully built. She was so fair she could drive away any darkness. With black hair, red lips, a perfect body, and lotus petal-eyes, she was the most beautiful lady in the entire world. She was so beautiful it seemed she could give

happiness to the world. She was sitting on the ground like a disciplined lady sage. She seemed like a person who had lost her property, whose hope had been shattered, one who lost success due to obstacles or fame that is spoiled because of bad propaganda. She was sunk in sorrow because Śrī Rāma was not there. She was offended because Rāvaṇa stole her. Without any adornment she seemed like the moon covered by clouds. Hanumān was not able to identify the descriptions Śrī Rāma gave of Sīta Devī because she did not wear ornaments or makeup. Finally, after careful thinking, Hanumān convinced himself that she was definitely Śrī Rāma's Sīta.

Even though Śrī Rāma could not see her, Sīta Devī was always in Śrī Rāma's thoughts. Śrī Rāma was suffering because of his helplessness in protecting Sīta Devī. He was agitated that someone had stolen his wife and was in agony that his dear wife was not with him. Hanumān thought they were meant for each other. It was a good sign that both were alive although apart. Hanumān praised Śrī Rāma as he looked at Sīta Devī.

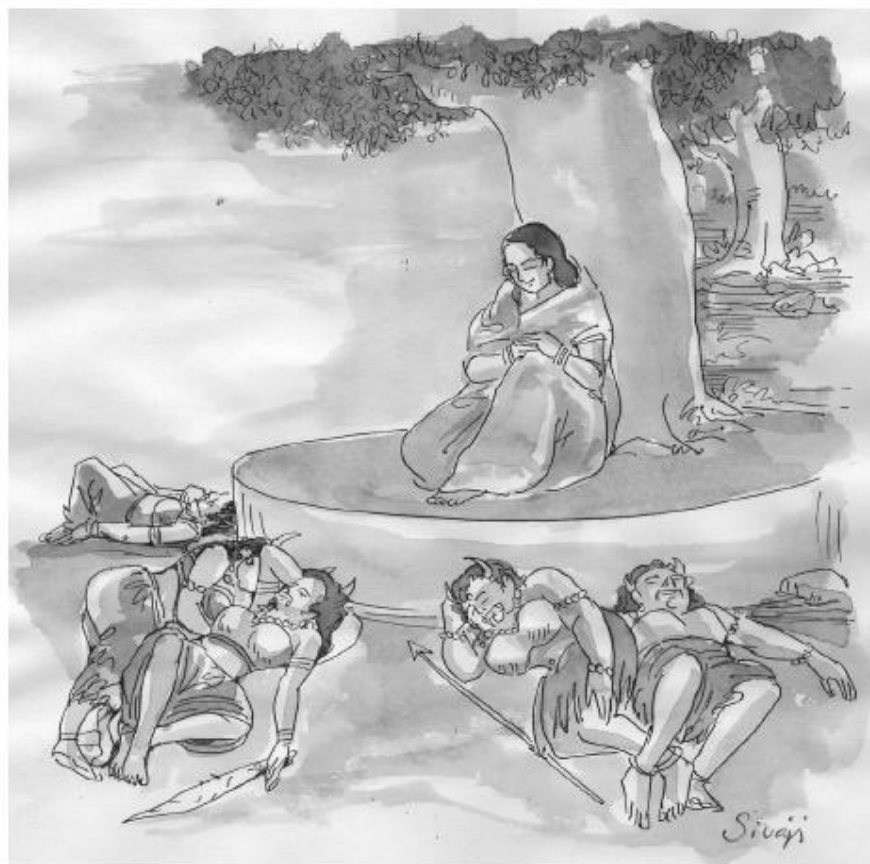
Chapter 16: Hanumān confirms she is Sīta Devī without a Mistake

Hanumān felt bad at the sad state of Sīta Devī and his eyes filled with tears. Hanumān thought, "Lakṣmaṇa bows down to her. Śrī Rāma always loves her. That blessed Sīta Devī should not be so sad". But no one can escape the hands of fate.

Hanumān looked at Sīta Devī and thought of Śrī Rāma. He thought, Śrī Rāma and Sīta Mātā are such an honest and loving couple. They are made for each other. Śrī Rāma killed Vāli for this great lady. For her alone, Śrī Rāma killed

Kabandha who was as strong as Rāvaṇa. Śrī Rāma killed Viradha in Daṇḍakāraṇya forest for this Sīta Māta. For her alone, Śrī Rāma killed fourteen thousand demons in Janasthāna. Śrī Rāma killed Khara, Dūṣaṇa and Trisura for Sīta Māta. Because of her, Sugrīva became the king of the monkeys. In search of her I crossed the ocean. For this Sīta Māta, Śrī Rāma will go to the ends of the earth. Not only the earth, Śrī Rāma would go to the ends of the seas; he could turn the whole world upside down for Sīta Māta. This great lady who was found in the ground, born with radiant ruby-like feet, daughter of Janaka, daughter-in-law of Daśaratha and dear wife of Śrī Rāma is now captivated by these demons. The loving Sīta Māta followed Śrī Rāma to the forest for love and duty. She only knew how to love her husband. If one is thirsty, he should look for a water fountain. Sīta Māta was longing to see her Śrī Rāma to quench her thirst. Śrī Rāma should see Sīta Māta now. Just like a king should win his lost kingdom, Śrī Rāma must get his Sīta Māta back. Sīta was not looking at anyone. She was not even looking at the beautiful flowers and gardens. She was only sitting with a sad face.” Thus contemplating Hanumān finally concluded she was Sīta Māta.

Reflection: Careful and focused analysis is important before jumping to conclusions.



Sīta Devī surrounded by demons in the Asoka garden

Chapter 17: The Demons Surrounding Sīta Devī in the Aśoka Garden

The demons around Sīta Devī were prison guards. They surrounded Sīta Devī. The demons were scary looking with different characteristics. One demon had one eye, one had closed ears, and one didn't have any ears and so on. The faces of the demons were ugly and their expressions were angry. They carried weapons like knives, daggers, and long

and short weapons. They loved to fight. Some of the demon ladies had elephant legs, some had cow legs, some had large feet, some had large heads and necks, some had short tongues, some had long tongues and some had long nails. These demon ladies indulged in constant eating and drinking.

The humble Sīta Devī was quietly crying. In the midst of the beautiful Aśoka garden she seemed like a flowerless vine. Hanumān observed all this while hiding behind the leaves of the Śimsūpa tree.

Chapter 18: Rāvaṇa Comes To the Aśoka Garden

Hanumān sat there watching Sīta Devī during the early hours of dawn. Hanumān heard the Vedas recited to wake up Rāvaṇa. Peaceful sweet music could be heard. Rāvaṇa awoke and dressed. He majestically exited his palace. Birds were chirping and the sunrays started dancing. Hundreds of ladies followed him. Some were carrying gold lamps; some were carrying fans, some carried seats and some carried silver vessels. All these ladies were not fully awake. Their steps were unsteady and they opened and closed their eyes. Together they looked like lightning in the clouds. Rāvaṇa's heart was for Sīta Devī. The wives who followed Rāvaṇa were in a sleepy state. Their ornaments were disorderly and they were not properly dressed. Hanumān could hear sounds of anklet bells, waist belt bells and bangles. Rāvaṇa was coming to see Sīta Devī. Hanumān saw Rāvaṇa very stylishly move his long scarf from side to side. The ladies who came with Rāvaṇa were young beautiful high-class ladies. Rāvaṇa seemed like a moon among stars.

Hanumān recognized Rāvaṇa whom he had seen sleeping in the palace. Still hiding, he moved down a few

branches to see Rāvaṇa and Sīta Devī and to hear their conversation.

Chapter 19: Rāvaṇa Approaches Sīta

Dressed in the best of his ornaments, young handsome Rāvaṇa was coming towards Sīta Devī. Sīta Devī became so scared she started shivering. Crying, she curled up like a ball and sat down on the dusty floor. Rāvaṇa saw Sīta Devī. Because of the dust and without adornment, she seemed like a lotus sullied with mud. Sīta Devī's heart was filled only with Śri Rāma. It felt like Sīta Devī's determination was traveling towards Śri Rāma like a vehicle. She was born in a truthful, righteous dynasty but here she was like a command ignored, a disturbed prayer, an army without soldiers, light covered by darkness, a dried up pond, a half extinguished fire, dull full moon nights, a lotus garden stamped by elephants or dark new moon nights. Sīta Devī was a delicate beauty that should have been in a special gem palace. She looked like a beautiful cut flower that was drooping and sad. She looked like an animal that was tied down to pillars. She looked desperate and she was obviously scared. With desperate sadness she prayed to the gods, "Rāvaṇāsura should be defeated by Rāma." Rāvaṇa seemed like he had a death wish and just stood there.

Chapter 20: Rāvaṇa Expresses His Love for Sīta

Sīta Devī, dedicated to her husband Śrī Rāma, was helpless now. She was sitting like an uninterested sage. There was not a single ray of happiness in her face. Rāvaṇa wanted to express his feelings to Sīta Devī. He started talking in a sweet voice, "Oh Sīta! You are scared of me and do not want to show me any part of your body. I love you. You are very dear to me. You attracted me long ago. You are the world's beauty. Respect me. There are no demons or human beings who can conquer me. Why are you scared of me? I desperately want you. Oh Sīta, it is okay for the demons to have somebody else's wife. Unless you like me, I will not touch you. Oh dear, love me freely. Please do not be scared of me. I do not like your sadness, messy hair, dirty clothes, sleeping on the floor, and improper eating. Oh Maithili (Sīta), please look at me. Dress up. Have all kinds of perfumes. Spend time with the best of music, entertainment and sleep on rich beds. You are a diamond amongst ladies. You should not be like this. Decorate your body beautifully. Oh Maithili, you have come to my palace and you do not have any ornaments or decorations. Your youth is getting wasted. Water that is gone with a flood will not return."

"Oh Vaidehi (Sīta), Brahma created many people but after creating you he could not create another one similar to you. There is no beauty that surpasses you. If Brahma saw your beauty he would also fall in love with you. There is no man who cannot love and want you. Oh Sīta, every part of your body is ever more beautiful. My eyes become fixed no matter where I gaze on your body. Please Maithili, be my wife. I have won many girls and brought them here and all of them became my wives. Leave your stupidity. I will make you the

first queen in my kingdom. I will give you my kingdom and all my wealth. I will give the entire earth to your father King Janaka. No one can defeat me in battle. Think about my enormous valor.”

Rāvaṇa continued, “Sīta, dress up beautifully. Love me. You can go freely anywhere you want to go; freely spend all the wealth. Order me to do anything you want. Think of how happy your relatives will be when you have so much wealth. Oh Sīta! How can you be happy with Rāma who wears tree bark? He does not have any wealth. He has no success. Rāma is roaming in the forest. He sleeps on the floor. Who knows if he is alive or not! If clouds cover the moon, you cannot see the light; in the same way Rāma cannot see you while you are here. Hiraṇyakaśipa could not bring back his stolen wife from Indra. He needed Nārada’s help. But I stole you and brought you here and there is no way I am going to return you to Rāma.”

“Oh Sīta! Your smile, your beautiful eyes, your entire beauty is tugging at my heart. Looking at you in such a poor state, I am not able to enjoy my other wives. It is bothering me. All my queens will be second to you. You can rule over them. They will all serve you. Rāma is not equivalent to me in any way. Rāma is not comparable to me spiritually, in strength, valor, wealth or radiance. Live with me happily. All your relatives will then be with you too. Stay with me in gold palaces, freely roam about the beaches and gardens and enjoy your life.”



Rāvaṇa talking to Sītā

Chapter 21: Sīta Devī's Courageous Reply to Rāvaṇa

Sīta Devī listened silently to the words of the fierce Rāvaṇa. She was only meditating on Śrī Rāma and crying. She replied to Rāvaṇa indirectly while addressing a blade of grass, "Oh demon! Change your mind. Focus your mind on your own wives. You are an evil person longing for Heaven; your requests for me are useless. I was born into a prestigious, proper, auspicious dynasty. A man from a great dynasty married me. I have only one husband. I am dedicated to my husband. I will not do anything wrong for which the world will blame me. I am not the right match for you. I am someone else's wife. Follow the path of righteousness. Oh darkness roamer, others' wives are just like your wives. Just as you protect your wives, every man protects his own wife. Go enjoy your wives and leave me alone. A person who is not satisfied with his own wife is a fickle, stupid person. Others will mock you."

She continued her reply saying, "Are there no adults who can put some sense into your brain or are you so stupid that nothing goes into your brain. It must be so. You have a crooked brain. That is why you do not listen to anyone. You pretend to love everyone but you are the cause of his or her destruction. A king who does not exhibit righteous conduct and does wrong deeds will definitely lose his wealth and kingdom. Ignoring the consequences of his actions, if the king destroys himself, the entire world will be happy. If godly forces strike you everybody will thank their stars. Oh demon, you cannot bribe me with your wealth nor can you rule me with your kingly orders. I do not wish for any of your wealth. I am the sunshine. How can I leave that? I sleep with Rāma's shoulders as a pillow; how can I sleep on your shoulders? How can knowledge leave an educated person?"

Sīta Devī tried to talk sense into Rāvaṇa by further saying, "Unite me with my Rāma. If you do not wish the great destruction of Laṅkā and you do not wish to be killed, become friends with Rāma. Make Rāma happy by returning me to him. He will definitely pardon you. That is best for you. Oh Rāvaṇa, if you do otherwise, your death is certain. Indra's Vajrāyudha may leave you but Rāma's arrow will not leave you alone. If Rāma gets angry he will not leave you. You will soon hear the sound of Rāma's speedy arrow. The five speared arrows with stamps of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will soon be all over Laṅkā like dangerous snakes. The bird-like arrowheads will soon be killing your people as an eagle would kill snakes. Just as Vāmana snatched the wealth of the demons, my husband Rāma will soon destroy you. Oh Rāvaṇa, when my husband was killing demons in Janasthāna making it a death ground, you could not do anything; later you stole me and brought me here. You came when those two great warriors were not present. You are a coward. Even if you had sensed their presence you would have run away as a dog runs away upon smelling a lion. Had there been a confrontation between you and them, you would have been dead by this time. You are one and they are two. They could have easily killed you. My Śrī Rāma will soon come with his brother and kill you. Like the sun evaporates water, Śrī Rāma will evaporate your life. No matter where you hide, heaven or hell, you cannot run away from Śrī Rāma's arrows."

Chapter 22: Rāvaṇa Threatens Sīta Devī

Rāvaṇa angrily responded to Sīta Devī's strong hurtful words, "Oh Sīta, the more a man begs, the cheaper he becomes to a woman. The more he pleads, the more he gets disgraced. I really love you. Love is very bad. The more one loves a person; greater will be his pity and friendliness. Just as a speedy horse rider pulls the horse with reins, the reins of love pulling down my anger. Oh beauty, I will not do anything now. I will be quiet. I should kill you for all the things you said. I should torture you for every harsh word. Okay! I shall grant you two more months. Before the two month time limit expires, join me in my bed or the very next day I shall have you killed, cooked in the kitchen and have you for breakfast."

When Rāvaṇa was thus threatening Sīta Devī, the ladies who followed Rāvaṇa were sad-faced and crying. Some signed in gestures not to worry and comforted her. Thus comforted, Sīta Devī had renewed strength and courage and said to Rāvaṇa, "You have no well-wisher in this entire Laṅkā. Nobody is stopping your wrong doings. Nobody should look at me with such wicked eyes. Only you could have such bad thoughts about great Rāma's wife. What happens to a small rabbit when it fights an elephant? That is exactly what will happen to you when you fight with Rāma. Are you not ashamed of yourself to steal me when Śrī Rāma was not close by? Śrī Rāma has not seen you yet. Oh demon, I wish your eyes would fall out. I am the wife of a righteous man and the daughter-in-law of King Daśaratha. Your tongue should be ripped out. Oh demon, you should become ashes. If Śrī Rāma was present, you could not have been able to bring me here ever. You have brought me here for your own death. You are boasting about your valor and courage; then why did you steal me in the absence of my husband?"

Rāvaṇa opened his eyes full of anger. He had a dark complexion, wide shoulders, and a strong body. He looked as strong as a lion and walked like a lion. He was tall and radiant; his eyes and tongue were visibly red. When he walked, the crown on his head would swing. Rāvaṇa was wearing a garland of red flowers. He had ornaments around his hands and on his body. He had a grand personality like a strong Aśoka tree. He became very angry and his sigh was like the hiss of a vicious snake, "Oh Sīta, Rāma is poor. He is very bad. You are so stubborn; you want to go to Rāma. I could kill you right now as the sun's rays kill darkness." Then Rāvaṇa called the demon ladies who were guarding Sīta Devī. Rāvaṇa said to the scary looking demon guards, "I do not care what you do to Sīta Devī but she should change her mind and be mine. You can use peaceful means, you can bribe her or you can punish her."

When Rāvaṇa was thus scaring Sīta Devī, Dhanyamālini, a demon lady and Rāvaṇa's wife quickly hugged Rāvaṇa and said, "Oh King, play with me. She is only a human being. Her body is pale and she is crying all the time. Oh great one, what fun can you have with such a crybaby? God did not create Sīta to have fun with a strong man like you. You will never be satisfied with a person who does not want anything. There is no happiness for you with her. Come and let us enjoy ourselves and have fun." Rāvaṇa's anger subsided and he laughed and left. Rāvaṇa's other wives and girls left too. Rāvaṇa left the place with Sīta Devī in his heart.

Chapters 23, 24: Demons Threaten Sīta Devī

All the demon guards listened to Rāvaṇa's orders. They all ran towards Sīta Devī. One of them in violent anger questioned Sīta Devī about why she did not want to be Rāvaṇa's wife. Then the demon named Ekajata angrily addressed Sīta Devī and explained how great Rāvaṇa was because he was Prajāpati Pulastya's grandson. One demon proclaimed Rāvaṇa was the greatest king and Sīta Devī should become his wife. She told her that Rāvaṇa was undefeatable, that his only enemy could be Rāvaṇa himself:

रावणः रावणश्शत्रुः

rāvaṇaḥ rāvaṇaśśatruḥ

Our own ego is our own biggest enemy.

Then Harijatā, a cat-eyed demon, told Sīta that Rāvaṇa had won thirty-three crores of gold and that was why Sīta Devī should become his wife. Another demon, Praghasa, praised Rāvaṇa and told Sīta Devī to marry him. One demon said, "Rāvaṇa is ready even to leave his most precious wife Mandodari and marry you. Please become his wife." Demon Vikata praised Rāvaṇa by listing all his successes and told Sīta Devī to marry him. Demon Durmukhi said, "What good is it to have large eyes if you cannot see the greatness of Rāvaṇa. Even the trees, flowers, mountains, animals and demons are all scared of him. Why can't you see that? It will be impossible to live after rejecting Rāvaṇa." The demons thus started bothering Sīta Devī. Now they started listing the differences between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa. "Rāvaṇa has beautiful beds. You can sleep on them. Rāma sleeps on dirty

sand. Rāvaṇa is full of riches while Rāma is a pauper. You cannot fulfill your wishes as a human figure with a human man."

Sīta Devī started crying listening to their harsh words. She addressed all the demon guards, "You have spoken most hateful words. Don't you feel it is wrong to speak thus? How can a human lady be the wife of a demon? I am not going to listen to your words. My husband Rāma is without a kingdom and he is a human, but Rāma is my only husband. As Suvarcala always follows the Sun, so shall I always follow Rāma with my love. Great Sacidevi followed Devendra, Arundhati Devī followed Sage Vāśiṣṭha, Rohiṇi Devī is attached to Candra, Lopāmudra Devī to Sage Agastya, Sukanyā Devī follows Cyavana, Sāvitri Devī got back her husband Satyavanta, Śrīmati Devī followed Sage Kapila, Madayanti followed Soudasa, Keśini is with Sāgara, and Damayanti followed Naiśadha; all those people quit their riches and followed their loved ones. So shall I follow my great Ikṣvāku dynasty descendant Śrī Rāma." Listening to Sīta Devī all the demons became extremely angry. They were all Rāvaṇa's servants and they had to follow Rāvaṇa's orders. They started to torture Sīta Devī with harsh words.

Hanumān was listening to all these conversations from the Śīmśupa tree. The demon lady guards thought Sīta Devī was unfit for Rāvaṇa anyway. Sīta Devī wiped her tears and tried to move away from them. So she came to sit under the same Śīmśupa tree where Hanumān was sitting. The demon guards surrounded her again. Sīta Devī was in the depths of despair. Then a demon, Vinata said, "Sīta, we have heard everything you have to say. We appreciate your love for your husband. But forget all that and marry Rāvaṇa. Rāma must be dead by now. As the ladies you talked about were with their loved ones, so you should be with Rāvaṇa. If you do not listen to us, we will kill you and eat you right now." Vikata,

another demon, said to Sīta Devī, “We have been patient so far. We listened to all you had to say. Just think. It is impossible for anyone to cross the ocean to come here and protect you. You are in the kingdom of Rāvaṇa under his protection. No one can take you away from here. So you crooked minded lady, be happy with Rāvaṇa. Your youth will not return. If you do not listen to me I shall remove your heart and eat it.” Demon Caṇḍodarī explained how Sīta’s meat and brain would be delicious. Demons Praghosa, Ajāmukhi, and Śurpaṇakha were all ready to kill Sīta Devī and eat her.

Chapters 25, 26: Sīta’s Sorrow

Sīta Devī was in despair. She started crying and said to the demons, “I am not going to listen to you. Please kill me and eat me.”

Sīta Devī lamented even more. Her sadness had no boundaries. Sīta Devī started talking to herself, “I cannot live without my husband anymore. These demon ladies will torture me. I cannot live away from my husband. Without Śrī Rāma, it is impossible to live. I do not know what kind of bad deeds I did in my previous births. I am suffering now. Uniting with Śrī Rāma seems impossible. I cannot live as I wish nor can I die as I wish. Shame on human life. Shame on being a slave.”

Sīta Devī lost herself in her sorrow. She was talking to herself and did not know what was happening around her. “Why should I live? Why do I need ornaments? Where is my Rāma? Why didn’t he come to protect me?” Sīta’s mind played tricks on her because of her sorrow and sadness. She continued to doubt and thought, “Maybe Rāma thinks it is impossible to get into Laṅkā city. Why did not Rāma protect his loving wife when Rāvaṇa was stealing her? The old bird

Jatāyu fought with Rāvaṇa. Maybe he died and could not reach Rāma. If Rāma knew I was here, he would have come to take me. The time limit Rāvaṇa gave me is coming closer. Rāvaṇa will kill me and eat me for breakfast.”

धन्याः खलु महात्मानो मुनयः त्यक्तकिल्बिषाः ।

जितात्मानो महाभागा येषां न स्तः प्रियाप्रिये ।

dhanyāḥ khalu mahātmāno munayaḥ tyaktakilbiṣāḥ
jitātmāno mahābhāgā yeṣāṃ na staḥ priyāpriye
Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 26 - 49

“Great people, mahatmas, or sages do not have likes and dislikes. For them happiness and sadness are the same. Because of love and attachment, likes and dislikes, happiness and sadness are generated. Those who leave this body attachment are sages. I bow down to them.” She gathered strength with this self prophecy and thought philosophically. “ Thus, even in her sorrow, Sīta Devī realized that death is not in our hands.

Reflection: In desperate situations we think death is the easy solution, but we should gather our strength and face the circumstances intelligently.

Chapters 27, 28: Trijaṭa's Dream

The demon guards were outrageously angry and were ready to kill and consume Sīta Devī. Just then, an old demon named Trijaṭa was sleeping nearby. She woke up and said, "Hey demon ladies, spare king Janaka's daughter and eat me instead. I had a scary dream. I dreamt of demon destruction and Rāma's success."

Trijaṭa continued to relate her dream. "Swans carried a beautiful chariot in the sky. There was a white chariot in which Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arrived in pure white clothes. Sīta was wearing a white saree and sitting on a white mountain. Then Sīta was visible. She was like the light of the sun. I saw a big white elephant with four ivory tusks, white clothes, and white garlands. It reached for Sīta. Sīta sat with Rāma on the white elephant and she was plucking the sun and the moon. The elephant, with Sīta and the two brothers, flew over Laṅkā. I also saw a white chariot pulled by eight bulls. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arrived in that chariot. They got into the Puṣpaka plane along with Sīta and flew in the eastern direction. Evil people cannot touch heaven. No one can match Rāma in battle."

"I also saw Rāvaṇa in the dream. He was wearing a garland of flowers. He was drenched in oil. He was drunk and fell down from the Puṣpaka plane. I saw no hair on his head. Rāvaṇa was wearing black clothes, a red garland and had red sandalwood paste all over his body. He was drinking oil and laughing. He seemed like a crazy person. I saw Rāvaṇa getting into a chariot. Then I saw him just sitting on the donkey and running in the southern direction. While traveling he got scared and fell down again. He smelled terrible and he was naked. Rāvaṇa was like darkness and

looked scary. He fell into quick sand and drowned. A lady who was very dark, and wearing a red saree, put a rope around Rāvaṇa's neck and dragged him into the southern direction. Kumbhakarna appeared in the same way. All of Rāvaṇāsura's sons were drenched in oil. Rāvaṇa on a pig, Indrajit on a crocodile and Kumbhakarna on a camel were dragged in the southward direction."

"Vibhīṣaṇa appeared in the dream with a white garland and white clothes. Vibhīṣaṇa was made King of Laṅkā and a white umbrella was carried for him. There was music and dancing for Vibhīṣaṇa. He sat on a four-tusked elephant along with his four ministers and roamed the skies."

"I dreamt that the demons were clothed in red, wearing red garlands and were drunk. The pyramids of this beautiful city were broken and drowned in the sea along with the elephants and horses. "

"I dreamt that a monkey came to Laṅkā. He destroyed most of the city. I saw the palace ladies falling down. I saw Kumbhakarna in cow dung. I saw lots of destruction."

Thus Trijaṭa concluded her horrible dream. She addressed the demon ladies again, "Oh demon ladies, run away from here. Otherwise all of you will be destroyed. Rāma will definitely come to rescue Sīta. Rāma could kill of you along with the other demons. If Rāma comes to know you all tortured Sīta, he will definitely kill you. So go and ask Sīta to pardon you. Make her happy and Rāma will protect you. We will soon be seeing demon destruction; we will see Rāma successfully win the battle and Sīta's desire come true. I think my dream is a clear indication of these events. You can see Sīta's left eye is throbbing. Her left shoulder shrugged with happiness. These are indications of good luck for Sīta. See, the birds are chirping, indicating their happiness." Thus Trijaṭa concluded her advice to the demon ladies guarding Sīta.



Demon Trijaṭa narrates her dream

Chapter 29: Sita Devī's Good Omen

As the servants gathered near their master Trijaṭa, at the Śimsūpa tree, Sita Devī felt many good omens. Her beautiful left eye started throbbing. Her left shoulder started throbbing as if Śri Rāma had put his hand on her. Sita Devī's left thigh throbbed as if Rāma was in front of her. Sita had previously experienced these feelings as signs of a good omen. Her agony was reduced by these good omens and a little happiness was dancing on her face.

Chapter 30: Hanumān Plans To Speak To Sīta Devī

Hanumān sitting in the Śimsūpa tree saw the demons torturing Sīta Devī. He also heard Trijaṭa's dream. Sīta Devī now looked like she was in the garden of happiness. Hanumān thought, "Thousands of monkeys have gone in all directions to look for Sīta Māta. It is my good fortune that I found her. I came here like a spy. I have seen Laṅkā, assessed the enemy's strength and saw Rāvaṇa's strength. I have seen Sīta Māta lamenting for her husband. She feels there is no end to her misery. I should console her. If I leave her without talking, it will be wrong. If I leave her in such a sad state, she may commit suicide. I have to talk to her in front of those demons. If I go without talking to her, Śrī Rāma will ask me, "What did Sīta say? Did she ask about me?" If I tell Rāma I did not talk to Sīta Māta, he will get angry with me and kill me. Maybe I can go and bring Sugrīva here but meanwhile Sīta Māta may die."

So Hanumān devised a smart plan. "I am a small monkey. I shall converse with Sīta Māta in Sanskrit. These demons cannot understand Sanskrit. But then Sīta Māta will not believe a monkey talking in Sanskrit and may mistake me for Rāvaṇa. So I shall talk to her in human language. Sīta Māta seems very scared now. She has been troubled by the demons. When she sees my shape and listens to me she will think it is Rāvaṇa and scream in fear. When she screams the demon ladies will come running. They will try to catch me and I will try to escape. These female demons will see my big body and call Rāvaṇa's male guards. They will come fully armed and will try to attack me from all directions. Then I will be defeated. I will not be able to go back. I will not be able to tell her about Śrī Rāma. I will not be able to cross the ocean again. They might even kill Sīta Māta. Then my purpose

would be lost. There is no way to reach Lańkā as it is surrounded by sea. In such a secret place, Sīta Māta is hidden. There is no one else who can cross the sea.”

“We cannot predict the victory or loss in a battle but we can think well and plan ahead. I would like to think now rather than repent later about all the possible ways this mission could go wrong. I do not like to do things if I am doubtful. How do I make Sīta Māta listen to me? How can I stop her fear? I shall tell her Śri Rāma’s story. That will convince her that I am not an enemy.” Thus decided, Hanumān started singing in a very low voice.

Reflection: One must consider the right time, place, words and actions before persuading anyone.



Hanumān talking to Sītā and singing Rāma's songs

Chapter 31: Hanumān Chants Śrī Rāma's Story

Hanumān started to chant Śrī Rāma's great story. "There used to be a king named Daśaratha who owned many chariots, horses and elephants. He was a good, famous, righteous man and a very strong warrior. King Daśaratha was equivalent in valor and wealth to Devendra. He was the best among kings. He belonged to the Ikṣvāku dynasty. King Daśaratha's eldest son is Śrī Rāma. He is a very handsome person. He is a great warrior, especially in archery. He is the protector of all people, a most loving son to his father. To fulfill his father's desire, courageous Rāma went to the forest with his wife Sīta Devī and brother Lakṣmaṇa. Śrī Rāma killed many strong, mutable demons. At Janasthānam Khara and Dūṣaṇa were both killed by Śrī Rāma. When Rāvaṇa heard of that, he devised a plan to deceive Śrī Rāma by sending the demon, Maricha, in the form of a deer. While Śrī Rāma was away, Rāvaṇa abducted his wife.

While searching for his wife Śrī Rāma became friends with Sugrīva. Śrī Rāma killed Vāli and gave the entire monkey kingdom to Sugrīva. By the orders of Sugrīva, thousands of monkeys have gone to search for Sīta Māta. I followed Sampāthi's direction. I crossed the ocean and came here. Based on Śrī Rāma's description of Sīta Māta, her skin color, characteristics and brightness, I found Sīta Māta here."

After saying all this Hanumān paused. Sīta Devī listened to the whole thing and she was surprised. She lifted her head and looked up at the Śimsūpa tree. There she saw a small monkey sitting. Sugrīva's minister Hanumān seemed like the early morning rising sun. She was very happy to hear Śrī Rāma's story.

Chapter 32: Sīta Devī's Confused State

Sīta Devī looked at Hanumān again. He was wearing white clothes and seemed like a cluster of lightning. The sweet talking monkey amidst the Aśoka flowers was shining. His eyes glittered like gold. Sīta Devī became disturbed looking at Hanumān. She was astonished. She started thinking, "This monkey is scary. I am not able to go near him nor am I able to see him." Sīta Devī collapsed, crying in an agonized voice, "Oh Rāma! Oh Lakṣmaṇa!" She saw the monkey getting down from the tree and thought maybe it was a dream.

Sīta Devī saw that Hanumān, Vāyu's son, the one who follows the order of Sugrīva, was smart and intelligent. She fainted again. After a long time she regained consciousness. She thought, "Oh, I dreamt of a monkey. The scriptures say, if you see a monkey in a dream, near and dear ones will die. I hope Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are safe. My father Janaka must be safe. This is not a dream. Because I am away from Rāma and sad amongst these demons, I am restless. How could I sleep? After being separated from my Śrī Rāma, when did I sleep? Where is peace? So this must not be a dream. Because I am always thinking of Śrī Rāma, I heard Śrī Rāma's story. Maybe that monkey I saw is just my mental thought taking this form. But no, mental thoughts do not have shape or form. This monkey is very clearly visible. So someone has really come here to tell me about Śrī Rāma. I pray to Devendra, Bruhaspathi, Agni, and Brahma that whatever I am hearing is the truth."

Chapter 33: Sīta Devī Explains What Happened

Hanumān descended from the tree. Hanumān, with a coral colored face, humbly bowed down to Sīta Devī and spoke to her in a sweet voice. "Oh great lady, who are you? Your eyes are like lotus flowers. You are wearing a wrinkled saree and standing near a tree branch. Why is it that from your white lotus-petaled eyes water is flowing constantly? You are so good looking. Are you a goddess or an asura, or a nāga (snake) lady; or are you a gandharva lady or Yakṣa girl or are you a kinnara lady? Who are you? Oh beautiful one, are you related to ekadasa rudras? Are you related to eight vasus or to seven maruthas? Who are you? You seem to be a divine lady to me. Has the moon dropped his best star Rohiṇi who has the best qualities? Are you Rohiṇi Devī? Are you Arundhati Devī who left her husband in a love quarrel? Oh lady, who is your husband? Who is your son? Who is your father? Are you so sad because you lost a loving relative? Your weeping, your breathing, your royal stature and your feet touching the ground show that you are not a goddess. According to astrological symbolism you look like a royal queen or princess. I am questioning you because I think you are Sīta Devī who was stolen from Janasthāna. Please let me know who you are? Because of your sorrow, extraordinary beauty and hermit clothing, you must be Śrī Rāma's queen. I have no doubts."

Reflection: Get all the facts and information before making a decision or coming to a conclusion.

Vaidehi heard what Hanumān said. She was happy to hear about Śrī Rāma. Sīta Devī said to Hanumān, "I am the daughter-in-law of the best King Daśaratha and the daughter

of King Videha. I am the wife of Śrī Rāma. I enjoyed worldly pleasures for twelve years in King Daśaratha's palace. All my desires were fulfilled. The thirteenth year, King Daśaratha consulted Sage Vaśiṣṭha to arrange for Śrī Rāma's coronation as king. However, Queen Kaikeyi was upset and threatened that she would not eat or drink anything and would kill herself if the coronation was not stopped. Kaikeyi wanted Śrī Rāma to live in the forest for fourteen years and Bharatha to be coronated as the king. King Daśaratha heard the cruel and unpleasant wishes of Kaikeyi, remembered that he owed Kaikeyi two boons and promptly fainted. After he regained his strength, the old king requested his eldest son Rāma not to accept the kingdom. The truthful Śrī Rāma thought his father's orders were more important than any coronation. Śrī Rāma unquestioningly followed his father's request. At any time, Śrī Rāma will not accept anything from anyone so his strength and valor do not go in vain. That great Lord left all his royal clothes. He wanted to leave me with queen Kausalya but I wanted to follow Śrī Rāma. I will not even live in heaven leaving my Rāma. Brother Lakṣmaṇa was already ahead of us. That is how the three of us followed King Daśaratha's orders and entered the forest. While we were in Dandakāraṇya, Rāvaṇa stole me. Rāvaṇa gave me a life span of only two more months." Thus Sīta Devī explained her story to Hanumān.



Chapter 34: Hanumān Reassures Sīta Devī

Hanumān listened to Sīta Devī's sad story. He consoled her by saying, "Oh Devī, I am here as a messenger with Śrī Rāma's permission and by his orders. Śrī Rāma is doing well. That great Rāma, the best archer, sent a message of his good wishes. Dear to your husband, great radiant Lakṣmaṇa is very sad and has sent his salutations." Sīta Devī heard that both her husband and brother-in-law were doing well.

Hanumān slowly moved closer to Sīta Devī. Sīta Devī became scared when she saw Hanumān getting closer thinking that he could be Rāvaṇa. She started doubting Hanumān again. She thought this monkey is definitely Rāvaṇa but in a different form. Sīta Devī became sad again. She dropped to the floor. She became too scared and started lamenting again. Hanumān noticed and bowed down to Sīta Devī, which scared her even more. She did not look at him. Hanumān offered salutations to her. With a big sigh Sīta Devī said, "You are Rāvaṇa in a different form. You should not torture me again. I have experienced your deceitful forms in Janasthāna. Oh night traveler, I am weak, tired, and exhausted. You are torturing me again. This is not right. Oh monkey, my doubting does not seem to be right. If you are really Śrī Rāma's messenger it will be good luck to you. Oh monkey, I am asking you, what are the qualities of my husband? My mind is attracted to your words."

Sīta Devī asked Hanumān these questions but she still had doubts in her mind. She thought, "Rāvaṇa stole me a long time ago and Śrī Rāma's messenger has come so late. Maybe this is a dream. Why do I not see Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the dream? This cannot be a dream because a monkey in a dream cannot bring happiness. This could be my mental sickness. Maybe I have lost my mind. But this cannot be mental sickness because I am aware of myself and my

surroundings.” Sīta Devī once again decided Hanumān was Rāvaṇa in disguise. So she did not speak to Hanumān anymore.

Hanumān observed all this. He started reassuring Sīta Devī, “Oh Māta, Śrī Rāma is like sunshine. He is like the moon that the whole world enjoys. Śrī Rāma is an emperor. He is as great as Mahāviṣṇu. Śrī Rāma always speaks the truth. He is extremely handsome. He has pleasant speech. Śrī Rāma has a great personality. He never gets angry but if he gets angry, it is not in vain. While protecting himself and the charioteer he can fight at the same time with eleven thousand warriors.”

“Rāvaṇa cheated Śrī Rāma with the false deer and stole you. Rāvaṇa will see the fruit of cheating. Śrī Rāma is very angry right now. Soon Śrī Rāma will shower arrows of fire and win the battle with Rāvaṇa. I am a messenger sent by Śrī Rāma in search of you and I have come to see you.”

Hanumān repeated the same message of Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. He told her Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva constantly think about her. “Even though you are in the midst of demons, fortunately you are still alive. Soon you will see Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva with millions of vānaras. My name is Hanumān. I crossed the ocean and came to Laṅkā. I put my left foot in this city. Please trust me. I am not a demon.” Hanumān thus pleaded with Sīta Devī.

Chapter 35: Hanumān Earns Sīta Devī's Trust

Sīta Devī listened to Hanumān then slowly and softly asked him, "Oh monkey, please tell me how you met Śrī Rāma? How do you know Lakṣmaṇa? How did a friendship develop between humans and monkeys? Tell me about Śrī Rāma once again. Describe Śrī Rāma in detail to me. My agony will disappear. How does Śrī Rāma look? How are his hands and feet?"

Hanumān replied, "Oh lotus eyed lady, fortunately you have recognized me as Śrī Rāma's messenger. I am happy about that. Even though you know how Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa look, you are asking me again. Let me elaborate for you."

"Śrī Rāma is lotus petal eyed. Śrī Rāma is very handsome. With his pleasant disposition Śrī Rāma attracts all living creatures. He is very kind. His good qualities are by birth. Śrī Rāma is radiant like the sun. He possesses the patience equivalent to Mother Earth. He is as famous as Devendra. He always protects this world. He always protects all four castes. He is in charge of worldly rules. He takes action. He is very radiant. He is worth worshipping. He helps good people. **He is very well aware of the consequences of all deeds.** He is well versed in all the Vedas and Śāstras. He has an impeccable character. He is righteous. He brings agony to his enemies. He is well versed in the Yajurveda. He is an expert archer and war strategist."

"Oh Māta, he has broad shoulders, a conch like neck, a beautiful face and beautiful red eye corners. The long armed Rāma is a very careful man. He has a deep bass voice. His body color glitters. He has a well-proportioned body. He has a dark complexion. He has four lines on his forehead, palms and feet. Śrī Rāma is like a roaring lion. He can be ferocious

like a cheetah yet as calm as an elephant. Lakṣmaṇa is just like his brother in every respect.”

Then Hanumān narrated the story of how Śrī Rāma met Sugrīva. “These two lions Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were searching for you. Vāli kicked his brother Sugrīva out of the kingdom. Sugrīva was scared and was hiding in the Rushyamuka mountain range that has thick forests. We are his followers. These two beautiful brothers with their bows and arrows came to the Rushyamuka Mountains. Sugrīva was scared upon seeing them for the first time. I went closer and realizing their greatness took them on my shoulders to meet Sugrīva. Śrī Rāma and Sugrīva conversed and became friends. Śrī Rāma and Sugrīva have similar stories. His brother Vāli snatched Sugrīva’s wife and Rāvaṇa stole Śrī Rāma’s wife. They decided to help each other. Some monkeys found the ornaments that you had tied in a cloth and dropped. They brought them to Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma cried when he looked at the ornaments. Śrī Rāma is equally lamenting as you are.”

“First Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to Kiṣkindha to fight with Vāli. In the battle, Vāli was killed and Sugrīva became the king of Kiṣkindha. The friendship between Sugrīva and Śrī Rāma has grown. Sugrīva ordered all his monkeys to look for you. Vāli’s son Aṅgadā and I came south with the army. We lost our way and were also out of the allotted time that Sugrīva gave us. We were ready to kill ourselves. Right at that time, Jatāyu’s brother Sampāthi arrived and told us that Rāvaṇa took you to Laṅkā. Then they all decided to send me as a messenger. I crossed the ocean and came to Laṅkā. I am so lucky because the credit goes to me that I found you. I shall return and report the news of your whereabouts and how you are doing.”

Then Hanumān spoke about himself, “There is a famous mountain called Malayavanta where an ape called Kesari lived. Some time ago, he left Malayavanta Mountain

and went to Gokarna Mountain. The gods ordered Kesari to kill the demon Śambanandana. That Kesari is my father. His wife Anjanā Devī was blessed by Vāyu deva and I was born. Because of my childhood deeds, I received the name Hanumantha. Oh Māta, Śrī Rāma will come soon and take you away from here.”

Sīta Devī convinced herself that Hanumān was a messenger. Hanumān requested of Sīta Devī, “I have told you everything. Now let me know what you want me to do. I have to go back.” Hanumān once again told Sīta Devī that he is the son of Kesari whose wife was blessed by Vāyu deva. He told her that he was equal to Vāyu.

Chapter 36: Hanumān Presents Śrī Rāma’s Ring to Sīta Devī

Hanumān gave Sīta Devī the ring Śrī Rāma sent with Hanumān. He explained to Sīta Devī, “See, Śrī Rāma has sent me as a messenger. I have brought you Śrī Rāma’s ring. His name is inscribed on it. All your sorrows will end now.” Sīta Devī examined the ring and recognized it. She felt very happy. She felt Śrī Rāma’s presence in the ring. She praised Hanumān, “Oh Hanumān, only you could cross the ocean. You are so capable. Your courage needs appreciation. You did not get scared. You did not get confused. Śrī Rāma must have tested your efficiency. Because he sent you, I am talking to you.” Sīta Devī thanked Hanumān in the same way a mother appreciates her child.

Sīta Devī spoke to Hanumān about Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. “I wonder why Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa became upset. They are strong warriors. Is there no end to my sorrows? Are they making any preparations? Is Śrī Rāma sad? Did Śrī Rāma forget me because of his mental condition?

Could he make any friends? Is Śrī Rāma dependant on God's help? Will his efforts be blessed by the gods?" Sīta Devī's mind continued to be anxious and agitated hoping to reach Śrī Rāma soon.

Hanumān explained to Sīta Devī the reason for the delay. He once more convinced her that he, Hanumān, had just now found her and that Śrī Rāma did not yet know of her whereabouts. He assured her that Śrī Rāma would soon come to Lańkā, fight Rāvaṇa and take her back.

Hanumān again and again assured Sīta Devī that Śrī Rāma would come. He told her that Śrī Rāma was not eating properly and that he was constantly uttering Sīta's name. Śrī Rāma often sighed deeply and lamented for Sīta. Sīta Devī realized from what Hanumān had said that Śrī Rāma was equally sad and lamenting.



Hanumān giving Rāma's ring to Sītā

Chapter 37: Hanumān Considers Taking Sīta Devī with Him

Sīta Devī said to Hanumān, “Oh Hanumān, you have consoled me and made me happy by saying that Rāma does not think of anyone else but me. You also told me he is always sad and depressed. That has made me sad too. It is like mixing nectar and poison together.”

ऐश्वर्ये वा सुविस्तीर्णे व्यसने वा सुदारुणे

रज्ज्वेव पुरुषं बद्ध्वा कृतान्तः परिकर्षति

aiśvarye vā suvistīrṇe vyasane vā sudāruṇe
rajjveva puruṣaṁ baddhvā krutāntaḥ parikaṛṣati

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 37 - 3

Either in immense riches or in dreadful miseries, as if tied by a rope, God drags humans till the end.

“Look at us. How we are suffering! Shipwrecked in the midst of the sea, we are unable to swim through air problems. I do not know when I will reach safe shores. When will Śrī Rāma destroy Laṅkā after killing Rāvaṇa? When will he see me? Rāvaṇa gave me one-year after bringing me here before he would take action and kill me. Already ten months have gone by. Only two months are left. Tell Śrī Rāma to come before the time elapses. Till then I shall be alive.”

“Oh Hanumān, one brother of Rāvaṇa named Vibhīṣaṇa tried to send me to my Lord Rāma. But Rāvaṇa did not like that at all. Death is waiting to take Rāvaṇa away. He is waiting for the war. Vibhīṣaṇa’s eldest daughter was sent by her mother to deliver that message. I feel my husband Śrī Rāma will definitely come and take me. There is no doubt

because my conscience is very pure. My husband has all the best qualities such as enthusiasm, pride, strength, compassion, gratitude, valor, and efficiency. In Janasthāna, Śrī Rāma alone, without his brother's help, killed fourteen thousand demons. Any enemy of Śrī Rāma will not be able to live. Any number of difficulties cannot disturb Śrī Rāma. I know the strength of Śrī Rāma. Like the sun evaporates the water, Śrī Rāma's rays of arrows will evaporate the enemy." Thus saying, tears rolled down Sīta Devī's cheeks.

Hanumān then said to Sīta Devī, "Oh Māta, as soon as I inform Śrī Rāma of your condition he will attack Lańkā. Otherwise, I can relieve you of your sorrow immediately. You can sit on my back and I shall cross the ocean with you. What do you want to know about my energy? I can take the entire Lańkā on my shoulders and cross the ocean. As the Fire god takes the oblations offered in fire services to Indra, so shall I take you and give you to Śrī Rāma. You will see Śrī Rāma who is getting prepared for battle with the demons. You will see Śrī Rāma who is sitting on the Prasarāvaṇa mountain peaks."

"Oh Divine lady, do not ignore me now. Sit on my back. I shall take you to Śrī Rāma. The journey will be like talking to the moon and sun while I cross the ocean. Even if any demons see me carrying you there is no problem because no one in Lańkā can go as fast as me. The demons cannot catch me. I can take you back as easily as I came. Do not doubt me."

Sīta Devī was happy and surprised at the enthusiastic words of Hanumān. She said, "How can you take me on your back Hanumān? You are so small."

Hanumān was offended by Sīta's question. He thought to himself, "She does not have any idea of my strength. She does not know my caliber. I should show her my large body."

Then she might know.” Thus thinking Hanumān enlarged his body to the size of a mountain and stood in front of Sīta Devī. He spoke to her from up there. “I have the strength to take Lańkā along with its mountains. So get ready. Do not delay. Śrī Rāma’s sorrows will be wiped away.”

Lotus petal eyed Sīta Devī looked at fierce Hanumān and said, “Oh courageous Hanumān, with your courage, strength, fiery brightness and ability to fly like the wind, I see and understand now. Because you are so great you could cross the ocean and come here. You have the efficiency to carry me. But your job is done. Now you have to think about Śrī Rāma’s success. Oh Hanumān, it is not such a good idea for me to go with you. You will be going at the speed of wind. I may lose my disposition. I may get scared when you are going through the sky over the sea and may fall into the sea. Then the big whales and fish may eat me. You have the courage to destroy enemies but I dare not go with you. It is not safe to take someone with you over the sea. As soon as you take me and start the journey, Rāvaṇa will order his army to catch you. Fully armed, his entire army will be after you. You are disarmed and moreover you will have to protect me too. Then what will happen! While you are fighting those demons, I might slip and fall into the sea.”

“If you cannot win, then they will carry me away and kill me or torture me more. Your efforts of crossing the ocean will be wasted. Oh Hanumān, you can kill all the demons and easily cross the ocean. But then Śrī Rāma will lose his fame. Everyone who sees me over your shoulders will comment, ‘Rāvaṇa stole Sīta in disguise from Janasthāna. So Rāma sent a monkey to steal Sīta because Rāma could not kill Rāvaṇa and bring back his wife.’ If something happens to me, Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva will not survive. They are worried about my safety.”

“Moreover, I am devoted to my husband and will not touch another man. Rāvaṇa stole me and forcefully grabbed me. I was helpless and I could not do anything. Śrī Rāma coming to Laṅkā, wiping out all enemies and taking me back will be an honor befitting Śrī Rāma. Oh Hanumān, bring my husband Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the entire army of monkeys. I have been desperate for so long. Make me happy by bringing them here.”

Chapter 38: Sīta Devī Gives Hanumān the Chūdamaṇi

Hanumān was happy to hear Sīta Devī’s words. He addressed Sīta Devī, “Seeing you is a very good omen. You have given reasons for your concerns. Yes, it will be difficult to travel one thousand yojanas on my back. Your second objection, that you will not touch another man, is noble. You are Janaka’s daughter, Śrī Rāma’s wife. That befits your status. Nobody can match your nobility.”

“I saw you talking to Rāvaṇa. I even saw your suicidal attempt. I will humbly report all of this to Śrī Rāma. I will also inform him of all your reasons for not returning with me. Because of my love for Śrī Rāma and you, I was eager to unite both of you soon. Since you are not coming with me, please give me a memorable article that Śrī Rāma will recognize, so that I can convince Rāma that I saw you.”

Sīta with tears started narrating an incident, “Oh Hanumān, I will tell you one incident which, other than me, only Śrī Rāma would remember. On the Chitrakūṭa Mountain in the northeast direction on the banks of the Mandākinī River, we were living in a Siddhāśrama. Fruits and vegetables were available in abundance at those foothills. We were roaming in the flower gardens when we got tired. My Lord was resting and sleeping in my lap when a crow poked me. I tried to

scare it by throwing a pebble. I didn't move because I didn't want to disturb Rāma's sleep. It came back again and again. It poked me on my breast and I was hurt. When Śrī Rāma saw that, he was furious. The crow was Indra's son. Śrī Rāma looked at him in anger, took a blade of grass, made it into a powerful Brahmāstra and threw it at the crow. The crow flew away. The blade of grass, which was the Brahmāstra, followed him. Indra's son went to all the gods for refuge and protection but no one could protect him. So he finally came back to Śrī Rāma for protection. The actual punishment for his offence should have been death but kindhearted Śrī Rāma pardoned the crow. Śrī Rāma told the crow that he must use the weapon, since it should not be wasted. He asked the crow what he should do with the weapon. The crow suggested that Śrī Rāma poke its eyes so its life could be saved. The blade of grass thus burnt the right eye of the crow. The crow was thankful to Śrī Rāma for saving its life and flew away."

When Sīta Devī thought about Śrī Rāma, she started crying. Addressing Śrī Rāma she said, "Oh Rāma, you could not tolerate a small crow's action, how are you able to tolerate someone who stole your wife? Oh Rāma, please be kind to me. Oh Śrī Rāma, even though you are my protector, right now I have no protection. You told me compassion is your duty. Oh Rāma, you are a great warrior. You are strong. There is nobody in this entire world that can defeat you. You are dignified like the ocean. You are the ruler of this entire earth. You have the best knowledge of all the war weapons. Why are you not using your weapons on these demons?"

Sīta Devī now addressed Hanumān. "Oh Hanumān, nobody can surpass Śrī Rāma, neither nāgas, gandharvas, nor demons. Why did that great warrior not take me back in a hurry? Even Lakṣmaṇa is not hurrying. Both the brothers could have destroyed the enemy a long time ago and should

have taken me back by now. What is the delay? What are they waiting for? There is no doubt that I have done some bad deeds. Otherwise these efficient warriors would not be quiet." Sīta Devī cried with sadness.

Hanumān told Sīta Devī, "Oh Māta, because of Śrī Rāma's sorrow for you, he is disinterested in everything. If Śrī Rāma is sad, Lakṣmaṇa also becomes sad. Somehow I was able to come and see you. Very soon all your anguish will disappear. Those two are enthusiastically waiting for my return. Śrī Rāma will destroy the evil Rāvaṇa along with his entire family, and take you back. Oh Devī, what message would you like me to deliver to Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva?"

Sīta Devī replied, "Hanumān, my full respects to the son of Kausalya. Tell him I enquired about his well-being. Lakṣmaṇa, Sumitra's son, left all his wealth, pampered riches, ornaments, and servants to follow Śrī Rāma to the forest. That great man has been serving his brother with love and devotion in the wild forest. Lakṣmaṇa always respected and considered us as parents. He was quiet like my father-in-law. Because Lakṣmaṇa was always with him, Śrī Rāma did not think of his father much. Tell Lakṣmaṇa that I am ok. Tell Śrī Rāma several times that I shall live for only two more months. After that I will not live."

Sīta Devī gave Hanumān her hair ornament, the Chūdamaṇi. He was very happy to take it. Hanumān went around Sīta Devī three times and stood aside. His heart was filled with joy because he saw Sīta Māta. Physically he was standing next to her but his mind and heart were with Śrī Rāma.

Chapter 39: Hanumān Prepares To Leave Sīta Devī

After Sīta Devī gave the Chūdamaṇi to Hanumān, she said, "Rāma will recognize the Chūdamaṇi. This will remind Rāma of my mother, my father-in-law, King Daśaratha and me. When I was leaving my birth house with Śrī Rāma, I forgot the Chūdamaṇi. My mother reminded me and gave it to me in front of my father-in-law. That is why, when my husband looks at it, he will be very happy."

स भूयस्त्व समुत्साहचोदितो हरिसत्तम ।

अस्मिन् कार्यसमारम्भे प्रचिन्तय यदुत्तरम् ॥

त्वमस्मिन् कार्यनिर्योगे प्रमाणं हरिसत्तम ।

हनुमन् यत्नमास्थाय दुःखक्षयकरो भव ॥

sa bhūyastvaṁ samutsāhacodito harisattama
asmin kāryasamutsāhe pracintaya yaduttaram
tvamasmin kāryasamārambhe pramāṇaṁ harisattama
Hanumān yatnamāsthāya duḥkhakṣayakaro bhava

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 39 – 3 & 4

You must enthusiastically think about how to complete this work with success. This work is your responsibility. You must try to remove sorrows.

Even Sīta Devī trusted Hanumān to complete the task successfully. **We can also pray to Hanumān that he will reveal to us what our next best action should be.**

Hanumān replied, "Certainly." Just when Hanumān was about to start, Sīta Devī said once more in a choked voice,

"Oh Hanumān, explain my situation to everyone, Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, and the elderly monkeys. Tell them I enquired about them. It is your responsibility to ensure that Śrī Rāma lifts me up from this sea of sorrow. Narrate my message in such a way that Śrī Rāma will come immediately and take me away from here."

Hanumān bowed down his head and respectfully spoke thus, "As soon as I tell Śrī Rāma, I will make sure he marches with the army of monkeys and apes. That great warrior will conquer everyone. That great man will remove your sorrow. No one here can withstand Śrī Rāma's arrows. Śrī Rāma will take you back victoriously and rule the earth to the ends of time. Oh Janaka's daughter, because of you, Śrī Rāma will rule the entire world."

Sīta Devī was very happy upon hearing Hanumān's pleasing words. She was looking at Hanumān again and again. With love for her husband she said, "Hanumān, you are an expert. If you wish, take rest and then proceed. If you stay close for at least a short time I will forget my sorrows. Oh Hanumān, you have to return fast. So start quickly. It is doubtful if I will be alive or dead by the time you return. After you leave here my misery will increase. Please come back. Oh Hanumān, I have a big doubt. How can the apes and monkeys cross the sea with you? How will Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa cross? Only Vāyu deva, Garuda and you have the power to cross the sea. No one else has that power. How is it possible to cross the ocean? You alone are the best person to solve this. You are powerful. You will be famous. But Śrī Rāma should fight in the battle, kill Rāvaṇa and victoriously take me back. That will be honorable for me. If Śrī Rāma can destroy Laṅkā with his arrows and take me back he will be respected. So Hanumān, help Śrī Rāma with your unusual valor and ensure that this task is completed successfully."

Hanumān replied to Śīta Devī's sudden shift of thoughts, "Oh Devī, the monkeys, apes and their king Sugrīva are all fully determined to complete this task. Sugrīva will march here with millions of monkeys. They are all efficient warriors. They are very strong and fully equipped. They can all fly in the sky or dive in the sea. They can travel without any interruption. They are all enthusiastically waiting. They have traveled many times in the sky and the sea. There are more efficient warriors with Sugrīva. There is no one less than me. If I can cross the sea, they are all stronger than me and they can too. Do not worry about the monkey and ape army. They will all be here in a snap. I will carry Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on my back. You will see them as the rising sun and moon. The two brothers, with arrows will destroy Laṅkā and kill Rāvaṇa along with others. Śrī Rāma will take you back to Ayodhya. Oh Māta, patiently count the days and it will be good luck for you. Like a burning fire Śrī Rāma will arrive soon and you will see him. You will soon see Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa at the entrance of Laṅkā. You will witness the arrival of apes and monkeys, mountain sized, elephant sized, cloud sized, and in groups. Groups of warriors with lion like roars will fight like lions with their teeth and claws. Oh Māta, do not cry and feel sad. There is no one greater than Śrī Rāma and both brothers are your well-wishers. They are like fire and wind. You will not be here for long. It is only a matter of my meeting Śrī Rāma. They will be here. Be patient for just a few more days."

Chapter 40: Hanumān Leaves Sīta Devī

Sīta Devī listened to Hanumān and said, “Oh Hanumān, you have said everything makes me happy. When I look at you, it feels like rain showers on crops that are half dead in the scorching sun. I feel the work is already half complete. How could my husband who made a blade of grass into a powerful weapon be delaying to kill Rāvaṇa who stole me? All these days, I was looking at my Chūdamaṇi and remembering Śrī Rāma and feeling close to him. But now I have given it to you. In all this misery that Chūdamaṇi was a comfort to me. I have lived for my Rāma amongst all these torturing demons. I have no patience to tolerate this misery any longer. I will be alive for only one more month. I am not able to tolerate Rāvaṇa’s greedy looks. It is becoming difficult to live.” Sīta Devī continued to cry and Hanumān consoled her. Sīta Devī blessed Hanumān that there should be no obstacles in his way. Hanumān thought that he had a little more work to do in Laṅkā and left Sīta Devī to fly north.

Chapter 41: Hanumān Spoils the Aśoka Gardens

Hanumān, after leaving Sīta Devī thought, “There is a little more work to be done. I have seen Sīta Māta. That is done. Now there are four ways to approach the rest of my mission, *sāma* (a peaceful approach), *dāna* (bribery or financial assistance), or *bheda* (comparison or disparity). None of these approaches will work with the demons. Bheda, or comparing Rāvaṇa with anyone will not motivate him because Rāvaṇa is already one of the greatest Kings. *Daṇḍa*, (punishment or fighting) is the only way. Rāvaṇa is stubborn, so a peaceful approach will not work. Financial assistance will

not work because he is already very rich. The only approach Rāvaṇa will understand is fighting. To do Śrī Rāma's work, fighting is the only way here. If I fight with some demons and kill them, they will soften a little bit."

कार्ये कर्मणि निर्वृत्ते यो बहून्यपि साधयेत्

पूर्वकार्याविरोधेन स कार्यं कर्तुमर्हति

kārye karmaṇi nirvrutte yo bahūnyapi sādhayet
pūrvakāryānvirodhena sa kāryaṁ kartumarhati

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 41 – 5

One who can do other related tasks, without stopping a previously assigned job, can successfully complete any work.

न ह्येकः साधको हेतुः स्वल्पस्यापीह कर्मणः

यो ह्यर्थं बहुधा वेद स समर्थोऽर्थसाधने

na hyekaḥ sādako hetuḥ svalpasyāpīha karmaṇaḥ
yo hyartham bahudhā veda sa samartho rthasādhane

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 41 - 6

There is more than one way to do even a small task. One who knows several ways to do a task can successfully complete it.

I have to assess Rāvaṇa's strength. I have to see the distinction between the strength of the monkeys and demons.

If I can give a full report then I will have done a good job of Sugrīva's orders. If I can fiercely fight them, only then can I compare my strength with theirs. Once I can fight with Rāvaṇa's military and high-level advisors, only then will I know their strength; Rāvaṇa's plan will become clear. Then I can return."

"This Aśoka garden seems to be wonderful and beautiful with a variety of trees, fruits, flowers and plants. I shall destroy this like a forest fire. If I ruin and destroy this garden Rāvaṇa is sure to get angry and send an army of horses, and soldiers with multiple weapons and arms. I will fight with all my strength and valor, kill them all and go back to Kiṣkindha." After much thought, Mārutātmaja exploded with anger and energy and started uprooting and pushing up tall trees. The trees started falling down with great noise. The birds from the fallen nests flew away with cries and the surrounding buildings of the garden collapsed. The steps to the ponds were all gone. The once beautiful garden looked like a destroyed forest. The snakes started coming out freely. The luxurious pleasant garden was ruined. After destroying everything Hanumān waited near the Aśoka tree.



Hanumān destroying the Asoka gardens

Chapter 42: Rāvaṇa Learns Of the Destroyed Aśoka Garden

The loud sounds of falling trees and the disturbing noises of flocks of birds were heard by everyone in Laṅkā. Everyone became frightened. Flocks of animals started running in fear. There were indications of demon destruction.

The gatekeepers of the garden woke up and saw the huge mountainous Hanumān. He wanted to scare them some more. So he grew even bigger. The lady demon guards questioned Sīta Devī, “Hey Sīta! Who is he? Who sent him here? Where did he come from? Who did he come for? What

did he talk to you about? Do not be afraid. Tell us what he said to you."

Sīta Devī replied, "I do not know anything about the demons that can change their form. I do not have such powers. You all know what he is doing. A snake only knows its legs. I am also scared of him. I do not know him. I think he is another demon in this form."

The demons got scared and started running away. Some went to report to Rāvaṇa. They said, "Oh Rāvaṇa, a huge, scary strong monkey talked to Sīta and is now in the middle of the Aśoka garden. We asked Sīta about him but she did not reply. Maybe he is a messenger sent by Rāma in search of Sīta. Oh great-looking one! He ruined your garden. The sweet birds and animals ran away. He crushed everything in the gardens except the Aśoka tree where Sīta is sitting and the nearby garden. Maybe he wanted to protect Sīta. Oh great one, you have to eat that huge monkey. He ruined your Aśoka gardens and talked to Sīta whom you have situated in your heart."

Rāvaṇa became furious. He was like a homa fire. He looked like candles burning. Then Rāvaṇa appointed sharp and experienced warriors called Kinkaras. They all speedily went to Aśokavana, with spears, daggers, bows and arrows and knives. They stood in front of Hanumān. Hanumān hit the ground with this tail and enlarged his body some more.

जयत्यतिबलो रामो लक्ष्मणस्च महाबलः

राजा जयति सुग्रीवो राघवेणाभिपालितः

दासोऽहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः

हनुमान्शत्रुसैन्यानां निहन्ता मारुतात्मजः

न रावणसहस्रं मे युद्धे प्रतिबलं भवेत्

शिलाभिस्तु प्रहरतः पादपैश्च सहस्रशः

jayatyatibalo rāmo lakṣmaṇasca mahābalaḥ
rājā jayati sugrīvo rāghaveṇābhipālitaḥ
dāso haṁ kosalendrasya rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ
hanumānśatrusainyānāṁ nihantā mārutātmajaḥ
na rāvaṇasahasraṁ me yuddhe pratibalaṁ bhavet
śilābhistu praharataḥ pādapaiśca sahasraśaḥ

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 42 – 33, 34 & 35

In a loud voice Hanumān said, "Victory to Rāma! Victory to Lakṣmaṇa! Victory to Sugrīva protected by Rāma! I am the servant of the great Kosala King Rāma. I am the son of Vāyu deva. If I start fighting with large stones and tree trunks, even a thousand Rāvaṇas cannot survive. While the demons are watching, I will destroy Laṅkā."

"I will bow down to Sīta Māta, complete the task and then return." Hearing Hanumān the Kinkara demons became scared. Stunned by Hanumān's bright body that was shining like the dark red clouds of dawn, they charged at his huge body. Hanumān jumped onto an iron pole of the garden gates, swung and fell on the soldiers. They were killed in a second. Hanumān was ready for another round of fighting. Some of the demons escaped and ran to Rāvaṇa to tell him that all the Kinkaras were dead. Rāvaṇa was surprised and

sent a more powerful and strong demon called Jambumālini to fight with Hanumān.

Chapter 43: Hanumān Destroys the Caitya Prasāda

After killing the Kinkaras Hanumān started thinking, “I have destroyed the entire Aśoka gardens except Caitya Prasada. Now I shall destroy that building. He jumped on the tall building that was almost like Mountain Meru. Hanumān seemed like a sun on top of the building. While breaking the building, he looked like Sariyatra Mountain. From the building top, enlarging his body, Hanumān patted his shoulders; the sound could be heard in all of Lańkā. The demon security guards in front of the building tried to attack Hanumān. From the top of the building, they seemed like whirls in the river Ganga. Then Hanumān pulled a strong gold pillar from that building. He swung it very fast which created a fire and the building ignited. The building was in flames. With the gold pillar Hanumān killed the hundred security guards below and flew into the sky.

From the sky Hanumān announced in a loud voice so that all of Lańkā could hear, “Oh demons, King of Monkeys Sugrīva has sent thousands of vānaras like me all around the world to look for Sīta Māta. We are all searching the whole earth. You have no idea of the monkey warriors’ strength. Sugrīva will bring millions and millions of monkeys and with their sharp claws and vicious teeth as weapons; they will kill all of you. Your great King Rāvaṇa made Śrī Rāma his enemy. Now there will be no king for you and no Lańkā city. You will be destroyed.”

Chapter 44: Hanumān Fights with Jambumālīni

Jambumālīni, son of Prahasta, followed King Rāvaṇa's orders to fight Hanumān. Jambumālīni was very strong and had a huge body with large teeth. With red clothes, a red garland, a huge rainbow sized bow, arrows, and a thunderous sound, Jambumālīni came to fight Hanumān. The sound of his bow resounded. Hanumān saw Jambumālīni coming in a chariot. Jambumālīni saw Hanumān swinging on the outer gate like a night owl. He hit Hanumān's face with a half moon shaped pointed arrow and hit his hands with a round solid pointed arrow. These arrows hit Hanumān and he started bleeding, looking like a red lily with the winter season sun's rays falling on it. His bleeding face looked like a sky-sized lotus with red sandalwood drops. Hanumān was furious and picked up a large tree. When he swung the tree trunk to hit the demon, Jambumālīni broke it with some arrows.

Jambumālīni immediately hit Hanumān with five arrows on his shoulders, one on his chest and ten more all over his body. Hanumān got angry and quickly grabbed an iron pillar and hit Jambumālīni. The demon fell down. Hanumān hit his head, hands and legs with the pillar. Then he hit the chariot and the donkeys that dragged the chariot and they were also killed. When news reached Rāvaṇa that not only the Kinkaras, but Jambumālīni was also killed, he sent demons of greater strength who were sons of his ministers to fight with Hanumān.

Chapter 45: Hanumān Fights With the Minister's Seven Sons

Seven sons of the minister, who were courageous, well-trained in war games, and very strong, came to fight Hanumān. These seven sons were archers. They came on great chariots with different flags on gold posts. They marched like lightning in dark clouds. At that time their mothers, relatives and friends were sad because they were going to fight with someone who had killed Kinkaras and Jambumālini.

The minister's seven sons came with an army of thousands of soldiers, crowded with chariots came to the outer gates of the Aśoka garden. The sound of the chariots was thunderous. They started showering Hanumān with arrows. Hanumān was drowned in the rain of arrows. He was like a Himalayan peak filled with rain.



Hanumān fighting with Rāvaṇa's frontline army

Then suddenly Hanumān flew into the sky through the arrows. Their efforts were wasted. Hanumān while flying and trying to escape their arrows seemed like Vāyu deva playing with clouds in the rainbow sky. With loud noises, screams and great speed, Hanumān jumped on the army. He killed some with his fists, some with his legs, and some with his shoulders. With so many killed, the army battalion ran in all directions.

Elephants screamed. Horses fell on the ground. The

chariots, their banners and umbrellas got crushed. Blood flowed like a river. At that time, scary noises were heard. The great strong Hanumān after killing the seven sons waited for the next set of demons at the outer gates of the Aśoka gardens.

Chapter 46: Hanumān Fights with Five Commanders

When Rāvaṇa heard that Hanumān had killed the seven sons of the minister, he became a little discouraged. He thought carefully and chose five expert war commanders who were as fast as the wind. They were Virūpakṣa, Yupākṣa, Durdhara, Praghosa and Bhasakarna. He called all five of them and said, "Oh commanders, you are all very strong. Start with horses, elephants and chariots. We have to punish the Vānara Hanumān. You try to capture him. Judging by his actions, he does not seem to be an ordinary monkey. No matter how I think, it seems like Devendra has sent him to destroy everything. I conquered Nāgas, Yakshas, Asuras and Maharishis. Because of that, no doubt they are planning some evil. Use all your strength and catch him. He is dangerously strong. So capture him and bring him here. I have seen Vāli, Sugrīva, the very strong Jāmbavān, the monkey commander Neela, Durivida, and so on. But none of them have this scary speed, strength, thoughtfulness, smartness and enthusiasm. He definitely seems like a devil. Capture him with your full efforts. You are great warriors. In all three worlds, angels, demons and humans together cannot face you in war."

शस्त्रैश्च विविधैस्तीक्ष्णैः सर्वैश्चोपहिता बलैः

ततस्तु ददृशुर्वीरा दीप्यमानं महाकपिम्
रश्मिमन्तमिवोद्यन्तं स्वतेजोरश्मिमालिनम्
तोरणस्थं महावेगं महासत्त्वं महाबलम्
महामतिं महोत्साहं महाकायं महाभुजं
तं समीक्ष्यैव ते सर्वे दिक्षु सर्वास्ववस्थिताः

śastraiśca vividhaistikṣaṇaiḥ sarvaiścopahitā balaiḥ
tatastu dadruśurvīrā dīpyamānaṁ mahākapim
raśmimantamivodyantaṁ svatejoraśmimālinam
toraṇasthaṁ mahāvegaṁ mahāsattvaṁ mahābalaṁ
mahāmatiṁ mahotsāhaṁ mahākāyaṁ mahābhujam
taṁ samīkṣyaiva te sarve dikṣu sarvāsvavasthitāḥ
Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 46 – 19, 20 & 21

The warriors saw in all directions Hanumān glowing like the powerful rays of the Sun, extremely strong, very enthusiastic, and having a very large body with broad shoulders.

Reflection: In war, winning or losing cannot be decided beforehand. Those smart people who want to win will protect themselves. So be careful.

The five great warriors at Rāvaṇa's command had fast elephants, horses, and a complete army with a variety of

sharp weapons. They proceeded towards Hanumān at the front gate of the Aśoka garden and surrounded him. Hanumān was shining like the rising sun, very enthusiastic, strong, and alert. Durdhara, the demon commander shot five yellow pointed lotus petal colored arrows at Hanumān's head. Hanumān was hit by the five arrows and roared like a lion. His roar resounded in all directions. Then Durdhara flew along with the chariot into the sky and shot sharp arrows at Hanumān. Just as the wind stops the rain clouds in the rainy season, so did Hanumān stop the arrows. Hanumān increased his body size even more, flew higher and fell on Durdhara's chariot with speed like thunder on the mountains. The eight-horsed chariot along with Durdhara collapsed to the ground and died.

Virūpakṣa and Yupākṣa upon watching Durdhara being killed became ferocious and flew into the free space in the sky. They hit Hanumān with iron poles. Hanumān quickly came to the ground, uprooted a wide tree, hurled it at Virūpakṣa and Yupākṣa and killed them.

Praghasa with a strong dagger and Bhasakarna with spears together started fighting with Hanumān and injured him. Then Hanumān picked up a mountain and threw it at them. Praghasa and Bhasakarna were killed. Hanumān used the same war tactics of Indra; he created a great catastrophe in the army and they killed each other. The ground was covered with dead bodies, broken chariots, dead elephants and horses. Hanumān, after destroying all five commanders returned once again to the outer gates of the Aśoka garden.

Chapter 47: Hanumān Kills Akṣa Kumāra

Rāvaṇa heard about the death of the five commanders and their entire army. Rāvaṇa looked at his son Akṣa Kumāra. Akṣa Kumāra understood his father's command. He got up from the meeting and left.

A chariot, bright like the early morning rising sun, earned by great spiritual powers, arrived. It had lots of flags and a diamond studded chariot post. It had eight horses that could go at the speed of thoughts. Nobody could stop it as it flew in the sky. With eight swords, an arrow basket, powerful weapons, hanging bells, silver and gold chains, the chariot was fully equipped for combat. Akṣa Kumāra started on his chariot followed by horses, elephants and more chariots. The marching sounds resounded on earth and in the sky. Akṣa Kumāra saw Hanumān at the outer gates of the Aśoka gardens. He became a little disturbed inside and assessed the enemy's strength and speed.

As a gesture of provoking Hanumān, Akṣa Kumāra released three arrows. He jumped on Hanumān. Everybody was watching them fight. There was a sandstorm on the ground. The sun's rays were not hot, the air did not move, but the mountains moved giving off a loud sound. The sea was rigorous. Akṣa Kumāra was very good at focusing his arrows, releasing them and hitting on the mark. Akṣa Kumāra released three gold pointed sharp arrows at Hanumān. They hit him on his head. Blood started flowing over Hanumān's eyes. Then Hanumān readied himself to fight fiercely. Akṣa Kumāra showered arrows on Hanumān and Hanumān skillfully ducked and escaped them. Akṣa Kumāra was a small boy and Hanumān pitied the child.

Hanumān thought, in the future, Akṣa Kumāra could be dangerous. Hanumān flew into the sky and killed the horses with his fists. He broke the axle of the chariot. Then he

caught Akṣa Kumāra's feet, swung him round and round a thousand times with great speed and threw him on the ground. Akṣa Kumāra broke his legs, back, neck, hands, shoulders, and bones and finally died.

At this sight, the astrological planets, maharishis, yakshas, gods and Devendra, were all very surprised. After killing Akṣa Kumāra, Hanumān went and stood in front of the Aśoka garden gate.

Chapter 48: Hanumān Fights with Indrajit

Rāvaṇa heard about the death of his son Akṣa Kumāra. He suppressed his sorrow and replaced it with anger. He said to his son Indrajit, "Oh son, you pleased the gods with your prayers. You have pleased Brahma and earned many powerful supernatural weapons along with the most powerful Brahmāstra. You can fight with anyone and no one can face you including the gods, marutganas, and demons. Your physical strength combined with your spiritual power is protecting you. You are well read and know astronomy and geography. There is nothing impossible in the war for you. In all three worlds, everybody is aware of your physical strength and the strength of your weapons. You are equal to me in spiritual strength and courage. You will always win and I do not have any doubt or sorrow."

"Oh son, All the Kinkaras died. Jambumālini died, the seven sons of the minister and the five commanders, have all died. There is a great loss of horses, elephants, chariots and weapons. Your brother Akṣa Kumāra was also killed. Oh son, the faith I have in you, I do not have in anyone else. You are the killer of enemies. Assess Hanumān's strength and tactics and fight with him according to his speed. Vigilantly fight without allowing our army's destruction, assessing your

strength and your enemy's strength. That monkey is killing battalions of soldiers. You have to make a plan of how to kill him and proceed accordingly. Even with 'Vajrāyudha', the diamond weapon and with our entire army falling on him, nothing has happened to him. No weapon can kill him. Think and plan well. Think of your spiritual powers and proceed. I do not want to send you but I have to according to the royal duty and warrior rules. Oh son, know your strength and fight with the appropriate weapons and win."

Indrajit went around his father three times and bowed down to him. Enthusiastically he prepared for battle. Indrajit emerged like the full moon ocean to fight. A chariot pulled by four tigers with the speed of an eagle came for Indrajit. Indrajit boarded the chariot and came to where Hanumān was standing.

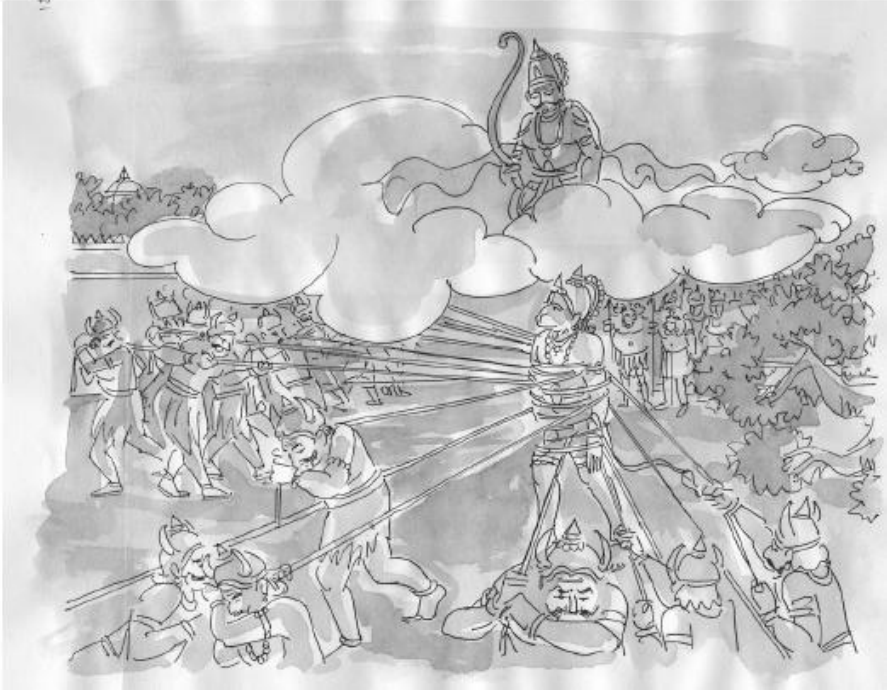
Hanumān was happy that Indrajit was coming to fight. Indrajit released sharp arrows. The earth stopped moving. All the gods, yakshas, nāgas came to witness this war. Flocks of birds were circling in the sky to watch the fight. Indrajit held a strange bow and pulled the string, which made a thunderous sound. Hanumān and Indrajit fought fiercely. Hanumān effortlessly escaped the arrows by moving in the sky like his father, the wind god. He was going up and down from sky to earth and from earth to sky. All the arrows that Indrajit was shooting were wasted. They were both experienced and fast war game players. The entire world was watching the fight. Hanumān did not know how to hit Indrajit and Indrajit did not know how to hit Hanumān. Indrajit was sad to see all his weapons being wasted. He thought he could not kill Hanumān, so he released the magical, spiritually powered arrow, Brahmāstra.

The Brahmāstra affected Hanumān. His body power and strength were reduced. He had no energy and fell to the ground. He realized it had spiritual powers and prayed to

Brahma. Long ago, Brahma had told Hanumān that Devendra, Vāyu deva and Brahma himself would always protect Hanumān. Hanumān did not fear. He knew he could reverse the Brahmāstra. In addition, Hanumān thought it would be useful if the demons caught him. He would then be able to speak directly to Rāvaṇa.

The courageous monkey Hanumān was very thoughtful. He pretended as if he had no more energy and all the demons tied him down with jute ropes and long strings made from various trees. When the demons were pulling Hanumān through the streets, he kept quiet because he was eager to see Rāvaṇa. As soon as the demons tied Hanumān, the effect of the Brahmāstra was lost because if you put a knot over the Brahmāstra, the power of the weapon is reversed. Indrajit realized that the effect of the powerful weapon was gone. He became sad that the king might doubt him for releasing Hanumān from the powerful weapon. The Brahmāstra was reversed. No other weapon would be effective on Hanumān. The demons dragged Hanumān to Rāvaṇa's palace. Indrajit showed everyone how he brought the enemy tied down. Everybody gazed upon Hanumān who was like a big elephant that has been tied down. They were questioning one another, "Who is he? Who sent him? Why did he come here? What is his mission? Whom does he report to?" Some who were very angry said that he should be killed and eaten.

Hanumān was taken to Rāvaṇa's royal palace. That royal meeting place was decorated with diamonds. Hanumān saw Rāvaṇa and his close associates and advisors. Rāvaṇa saw Hanumān being dragged into the royal gathering place.



Hanumān tied up by Indrajit

Chapter 49: The Description of Rāvaṇa's Court

The great warrior, Hanumān, was surprised to see Rāvaṇa. Hanumān thought Rāvaṇa would go to the Aśoka garden to punish him. Instead he was called into the royal meeting place in front of the others. Hanumān was eager to confront Rāvaṇa.

Rāvaṇa had the best pearls on his crown. He had jewelry with various diamonds and precious stones that reflected dancing lights. He had strong musk perfumes along with sandalwood and essence of flowers. He was noteworthy to look at with broad eyes, sharp teeth, glittering lips and ten heads swinging. This explained why he was called Daśa

Kanṭha. His complexion was as black as a shadow. He had pearl necklaces that looked like the full moon covered with cranes. He had lots of ornaments on his arms and feet. The royal seat was embedded with many precious stones. On his sides, beautifully dressed ladies were fanning him.

Four ministers were sitting around Rāvaṇa, Durdhara, Prahasta, Mahāparswa and Nikumbha. Rāvaṇa seemed like an island surrounded by the sea. There were many more cabinet ministers. He seemed like Devendra amidst all of them. Hanumān thought to himself, "Oh what a stature! What courage, strength and riches! He has all the good qualities except righteousness. His actions are very inhumane, scary and wild. If he became angry, he could immerse the entire earth into the sea. He has that much energy."

Chapter 50: Hanumān in Rāvaṇa's Royal Gathering

Rāvaṇa made everybody unhappy and he tortured many people. Rāvaṇa thought to himself, "Long back, when I moved Kailasa, Shiva's abode, Shiva's bull, Nandi, cursed me. Perhaps because I insulted him, he has a monkey face. This monkey looks like that Nandi. Bāṇasura came in this form." Rāvaṇa with immense anger questioned Hanumān through his advisor Prahasta, "Where did he come from? What is his motive? What was his aim in destroying the Aśoka gardens and scaring the demon ladies? Find out all the information from this wicked monkey. How did he enter Laṅkā, which is impossible to get into? Why did he fight? Find out everything from this bad minded monkey."

Then Prahasta looked at Hanumān and said, "Oh monkey, be calm, we will be good to you. Do not be scared. Did Devendra, Kubera, Yama or rain god Varuṇa send you as

their spy? Did Mahāviṣṇu who always wants to win send you as his messenger? Why did you come to Laṅkā city? No matter who sent you, we will not do anything to you. Without fear, tell us the truth and we will release you. Oh bright one, tell the truth, if you lie we will kill you. At least tell us why you are in Laṅkā city.”

Hanumān addressed Rāvaṇa, “Oh King of Demons! I am not Devendra’s, Yama’s or Varuṇa’s messenger. I am not Kubera’s friend. Mahāviṣṇu did not send me here. I belong to the monkey clan. I wanted to see the Demon King but it is impossible to see you. That is why I destroyed your Asoka garden. Strong demons came to fight with me. I was only fighting back to protect myself and that is why they all died. Neither Devas nor demons can tie me down with any weapons or spiritual powers because Brahma gave me a boon. Because I wanted to see you, oh Demon King, I just bowed down to the Brahmāstra. The Brahmāstra was reversed when these demons tied me down and brought me here. I come here on a king’s task. The very powerful, great Śrī Rāma has sent me as a messenger. Oh Rāvaṇa, let me tell you what is good for you.”



Hanumān lecturing Rāvaṇa

Chapter 51: Hanumān's Speech in Rāvaṇa's Royal Court

Hanumān addressed Rāvaṇa, "Oh Demon King, Sugrīva, the king of monkeys ordered me to come here to Laṅkā city. He is like a brother to you. He told me to enquire about your welfare."

"I will tell you exactly what he told me."

"King Daśaratha used to rule Ayodhya. He protected his people like his own children. His eldest beloved son is Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma is a very capable and strong person. That great man came to Daṇḍakāraṇya forest with his wife Sītā Mātā and brother Lakṣmaṇa to oblige his father's orders. Śrī

Rāma's wife, King Videha's daughter, got lost in the forest and could not be found. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa came to Rushyamuka mountain range in search of Sīta Māta. Śrī Rāma became friends with Sugrīva. Sugrīva promised Śrī Rāma to search for Sīta Māta. Śrī Rāma promised that Sugrīva would win back his kingdom. According to that promise, Śrī Rāma killed Vāli and Sugrīva became the king of monkeys. Oh King Rāvaṇa, you should know that Vāli the monkey. Śrī Rāma killed Vāli with just one arrow.

Sugrīva kept his promise by sending millions of monkeys in all directions in search of Sīta Māta. Some monkeys travel with lightning speed, some go faster than eagles and some go faster than the wind. I am that wind god's son and my name is Hanumān. Oh King Rāvaṇa, I came in search of Sīta Māta by crossing one hundred yojanas of ocean. I have no purpose except to see Sīta Māta. I have seen Laṅkā. I have seen Sīta Māta under custody."

"Oh King of Demons, you are well-versed in politics and law. You have performed penance. You are very intelligent. To steal somebody's wife is improper for you. People of your caliber do not do these types of actions. This is not only against the law but you will be in danger. Not only danger, this action will destroy everything completely. Oh King, if Rāma gets angry, Lakṣmaṇa will get angry. If the brothers release their arrows, there is no one who can withstand them. Oh king, being on the wrong side of Rāma, no one will be happy. What you did is unlawful."

"That is what king Sugrīva wanted me to tell you and he sent me here. If you release Sīta Māta, all the unlawful deeds you did will be wiped away. You can live happily with your riches."

"Oh king, you might ask me who told me you brought Sīta Māta here. I saw Sīta Māta with my own eyes. Of all the

monkeys who are looking for Sīta Māta, I am the luckiest, blessed one to see her. Śrī Rāma will take care of the rest of the work. You think Sīta Māta is in your custody but you are ignoring the fact that she is like a five-headed snake in front of you who could kill you. It is impossible for a hungry person eating poisonous food to be alive.”

“Oh king, you earned a long life with great penance. Do not waste that. That will not work. You have a boon that you will not die by gods or demons. That boon will get wasted if you do not return Sīta Māta. King Sugrīva is not a god, nor is he a demon, nor a Yakṣa, nor an nāga. Sugrīva is a monkey. How can you protect yourself from Sugrīva? Oh king, righteousness kills unlawful deeds. You have enjoyed the fruits of penance in the form of right law. You have to face the fruits of illegal deeds. Remember in Janasthāna, Śrī Rāma alone killed all the demons. Rāma had also killed Vāli with one arrow. Śrī Rāma and Sugrīva are friends; remember that too.”

“Oh King, with Śrī Rāma’s permission, I can destroy the entire Lañkā city along with your horses, elephants, chariots and buildings. But Śrī Rāma did not plan to do all that destruction. He promised to kill the one who stole Sīta Māta. Oh King, Devendra cannot stand Śrī Rāma’s anger. Your death is in the form of Sīta Māta. Know your luck. Think about what is good for you. You have already seen the effects of keeping Sīta Māta in Lañkā. The fires have started. Next, Śrī Rāma’s anger will completely destroy everything. Please do not destroy your friends, advisors, ministers, relatives, kith and kin, your well-wishers, wives and Lañkā city; return Sīta Māta to Śrī Rāma.”

“Oh King, I am Śrī Rāma’s servant. I know his powers. I came as a messenger. I am neither a demon nor a human. I am in between, so I can speak objectively and speak the truth. Śrī Rāma can destroy the whole universe and recreate the universe just as easily. There is no one who can defeat Śrī

Rāma, including the Asuras, the Yakshas, the Vidyādhara, the Gandharvas, the Siddhas, the Kinnaras, the Nāgas and other categories. No one has ever fought with Śrī Rāma. It is impossible for you to live. Even Brahma, the three-eyed one who killed Tripura and the king of Gods and Devendra cannot protect you from Śrī Rāma.”

Upon hearing Hanumān’s fearlessly spoken unpleasant words, Rāvaṇa ordered Hanumān to be killed.

Chapter 52: Vibhīṣaṇa’s Advice to Rāvaṇa

Vibhīṣaṇa heard Rāvaṇa’s order to kill Hanumān. Vibhīṣaṇa did not like the idea of killing the messenger, as it was not ethical. Since Rāvaṇa ordered Hanumān to be killed, out of anger, Vibhīṣaṇa spoke to Rāvaṇa in a humble voice saying, “Oh King, excuse me. Do not get angry, as you should be pleasant. Listen to me. The knowledge of elders says that you should not kill the messenger. Oh great warrior, it is against the political law to kill the monkey, the messenger. You must think and act carefully and give the monkey the proper punishment.”

Rāvaṇa listened to Vibhīṣaṇa carefully and became even angrier. Rāvaṇa said, “Vibhīṣaṇa, it is not sinful to kill evil beings, so his punishment is death.” Vibhīṣaṇa was very smart and obedient. He realized Rāvaṇa was acting out of anger and making very rash, unlawful decisions. Vibhīṣaṇa reiterated to Rāvaṇa, “Killing the messenger will not be appreciated by the elders. Do not spoil righteousness under any circumstance. One should not destroy a diplomatic messenger. But make no mistake; this monkey is definitely a great enemy. He killed the demon warriors, the commanders, the minister’s sons, Jambumālini, and our Akṣa Kumāra. He is definitely

unpardonable but he is the messenger and should not be killed.

In this case, our elders prescribe other punishments. Choose one of those punishments over death. Messengers can be punished in different ways. You can disfigure the messenger, whip him, skin his head or brand him. Oh King of Lańkā, you are worldly wise. You are intelligent, Oh brave one, but I don't see any use in killing the monkey. We must kill those who sent this monkey. Whether the monkey is good or bad, he is subordinate to someone else. He is not at fault for giving us the message. Oh dear King, if you kill this monkey, how will Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa know? Release him. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa cannot come here and kill you anyway. There is no one in this world that can kill you. You have very capable commanders who can kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with very little effort." Rāvaṇa, the enemy of the gods and a strong King, thought about Vibhīṣaṇa's praises and confident words.

Chapter 53: Demons Burn Hanumān's Tail

After Rāvaṇa listened to Vibhīṣaṇa's words, he said, "Vibhīṣaṇa, you are right, it is wrong to kill the messenger. But we must punish him in another way. Monkeys are very fond of their tails, so burn the messenger's tail. He will leave Lańkā with a burnt tail, a deformed body part, as per one of the prescribed punishments. All his relatives, near and dear should see him feeling sad and missing his tail." Rāvaṇa ordered his demons to burn Hanumān's tail.

The demons followed Rāvaṇa's order. They brought several small rags and wrapped them around Hanumān's tail. They soaked Hanumān's tail in oil and set it on fire. Hanumān became irritated with the demons for putting his tail on fire and pushed the demons away. Everyone in Lańkā came to

know about Hanumān and his fiery tail and came to see the sight. The demons reacted to Hanumān's aggression and tied him down.

Hanumān thought, "These demons tied me down. Can they be serious and do they think they can tolerate me? I can break all these ties and jump up and kill them all. I am here for Śrī Rāma's work and they can take revenge on me. I alone can kill all these people but Śrī Rāma promised he was going to kill Rāvaṇa. Sri Rāma should keep his promise and be happy. That is why I should keep quiet, tolerate the pain and return to Śrī Rāma. These demons are going to parade the streets with me. I will have a chance to see Lańkā in the daylight. Although I saw Lańkā at night, during the daytime, I can check the security of the city. It is important that I see Lańkā during the daylight hours so that I can report back to Śrī Rāma the details of the city security."

After tying Hanumān down, there was happiness everywhere. The demons were ready to parade through the city with him. They started the parade with great sounds of the conch, drums, loud voices, and lion roars. The demons followed behind Hanumān. In spite of his burning tail, Hanumān was walking comfortably through the streets of Lańkā. Hanumān observed many things like, large hangers, underground houses, beautifully decorated common places, crowded houses, small streets, big roads and secret paths. People including ladies, children and elders, came out of their houses to see Hanumān with his burning tail.

The demon ladies told Sīta Devī that the monkey who was talking to her was being paraded through the streets of Lańkā with his tail on fire. Upon hearing the awful news, Sīta Devī felt very bad and began to pray to the God of Fire. She prayed, "Oh God of Fire, if I have served my husband dutifully, if I have done any penance, please do not burn

Hanumān's tail. Oh God of Fire, if Śrī Rāma has compassion and if I have any little bit of luck, please do not burn Hanumān's tail. Oh God of Fire, if the righteous Śrī Rāma's wish is to come and meet me, please do not burn Hanumān's tail. Oh Fire God, if truthful Sugrīva is going to take me away from this sorrow, please do not burn Hanumān's tail." Thus Sīta Devī prayed to the God of Fire. But even before Sīta Devī prayed to the Fire God, the Fire God went around Hanumān with fire but did not touch him. Therefore, Hanumān did not feel the heat.

Hanumān was surprised and thought, "What is this? Even though my tail is burning, I do not feel the heat. It is not painful at all. Even with fire blazes, my tail still feels cool. The reason is very clear to me. It is Śrī Rāma's blessings that have saved my tail. While I was crossing the sea, Maināka wanted to help Śrī Rāma. In the same way, the Fire God is helping Śrī Rāma by keeping my tail cool. As a result of Sīta Mātā's blessings, Śrī Rāma's compassion and the fact that my father, the Wind God and the Fire God are friends, I am being protected."



Hanumān's tail aflame as he burns Lañkā

Hanumān thought about what he should do next. Hanumān jumped onto the big gate of Lañkā. Then he made himself small causing the ropes, which had tied him down, to become loose and fall off. Then again, he enlarged himself, pulled an iron piece off the gate and killed the guards.

Chapter 54: Hanumān Burns Lañkā

The work that needed to be done by Hanumān was complete. However, Hanumān thought, "I have to create problems for the demons. There is still one more task for me to do. I must ruin the Aśoka gardens, kill more enemies, and make a feast for the God of Fire. I will burn some buildings and create havoc in Lañkā. I can rely on my burning tail to do

that. This will be my last task and all my efforts of crossing the ocean will have paid off.”

Hanumān jumped onto the buildings of Lańkā like a lightening cloud. He jumped from house to house. He flew to Prahasta’s house and set fire to it. Next he set fire to Mahāparsva’s house, and after that Indrajit’s house. His burning tail set fire to Śuku’s, Saruni’s, Jambumāli’s and Sumāli’s houses. Hanumān skipped Vibhīṣaṇa’s house but continued to burn the houses of Raṣmi Ketu, Sūrya Śaru, Hraswakarna, Drauśtra, Jivha, Hastamukhi, Śonitaksha, Kumbhakarna and Makarakṣa. All their houses burned down to nothing but ashes. Hanumān even burned down Rāvaṇa’s palace. With the winds blowing swiftly, the fire spread all over Lańkā. All the rich palaces and possessions were lost.

After burning Lańkā, Hanumān thought about Śri Rāma and calmed down.

Chapter 55: Hanumān realizes his wrongdoing

After burning down the city of Lańkā, Hanumān dipped his tail in the sea and extinguished the fire. Hanumān then became worried, “Why did I burn down Lańkā city? I have done a bad deed.”

धन्यास्ते पुरुषस्त्रेष्ठ ये बुद्ध्या कोपमुत्थितम

निरुन्धन्ति महात्मानो दीप्तमग्निमिवाम्भसा

क्रुद्धः पापं न कुर्यात् कः क्रुद्धो हन्याद् गुरूनपि

क्रुद्धः परुषया वाचा नरः साधूनधिक्षिपेत्

वाच्यावाच्यं प्रकुपितो न विजानाति कर्हिचित्
नाकार्यमस्ति क्रुद्धस्य नावाच्यं विद्यते क्वचित्
यः समुत्पतितं क्रोधं क्षमयैव निरस्यति
यथोरगस्त्वचं जीर्णां स वै पुरुष उच्यते

dhanyāste puruṣasreṣṭha ye buddhyā kopamutthitama
nirundhanti mahātmāno dīptamagnimivāmbhasā
kruddhaḥ pāpaṁ na kuryāt kaḥ kruddho hanyād gurūnapi
kruddhaḥ paruṣayā vācā naraḥ sādḥūnadhikṣipet
vācyāvācyaṁ prakupito na vijānāti karhicit
nākāryamasti kruddhasya nāvācyaṁ vidyate kvacit
yaḥ samutpatitaṁ krodhaṁ kṣamayaiva nirasyati
yathoragastvacaṁ jīrṇāṁ sa vai puruṣa ucyate

Sundarakāṇḍa Sargah 55 – 3,4,5, & 6

As you wash away fire with water, so should you intelligently control and subdue anger. Those who can control their anger are blessed ones. Ordinary persons in anger do sinful deeds. One could even kill their teacher out of anger. The angered one will deject good people with harsh words and there will be no discrimination of speech and actions. Just as a snake partially removes its skin, likewise good person should shed his anger.

Hanumān blamed himself some more for what he did. "Oh, I did not even think of Sīta Māta and how she might get burnt with the Laṅkā City. I am ungrateful to my Master. My intelligence did not work. I am ashamed of my actions. I am

a sinful person who burnt all of Lańkā. I ruined the whole purpose of Śri Rāma's work. Sīta Māta could also be burnt in the flames. Before burning Lańkā I did not think of protecting Sīta Māta. Oh, I was blinded by my anger. Now I do not see even a single place that did not burn. Everything in Lańkā is in ashes. Maybe Sīta Māta has also been destroyed. If that is so, it is better that I also die here. This is how I spoiled the whole thing out of my anger. Maybe I should jump into the fire and then jump into the sea and be food for the animal kingdom. How will I face Sugrīva alive? Because of my monkey anger, I will be famous for burning Lańkā with outrageous monkey anger. I am a monkey and even though I had the ability to protect Sīta Māta, I did not protect her."

"There is no rationale in a Rājasa attitude; that kind of Rajasa attitude overcame me. I am very bad luck. I did not know what I was doing in anger. The whole world will be destroyed because of me. I used to feel good omens before. What about them? They should come true. Those good omens will come true. Sīta Māta is a divine lady. She must be safe. Her own aura must have protected her. She herself is fire. How can fire burn her? She is very loyal to her husband. She is the wife of righteous Rāma; fire cannot touch her. The Fire God did not even burn me, how could she be burned?"



Hanumān in the Sea extinguishing his tail

As Hanumān was thinking, he heard voices in the sky. "What a surprise!! Hanumān burned down all the buildings and palaces. He did something no one else could do. The demon ladies, children and elderly people, are all running in fear and confusion. They are crying to Rāvaṇa. The palace gates and fort outskirts all burned down. Surprisingly, Sīta Devī, under the Aśoka tree is safe. This is simply amazing!" After hearing those words Hanumān was happy. He wanted to go and see Sīta Māta one more time and get her blessings before returning.

Reflection: Anger totally blinds clarity of thinking and intelligent decision-making. Don't attempt to do any work in anger.

Chapter 56: Hanumān's Return Journey

Hanumān went to Sīta Māta and bowed down to her near the Śimśupa tree. He said, "Oh divine lady, you are safe. I just came to see you before returning." Sīta Devī looked at Hanumān who was about to leave. Full of love and affection for her husband, she told Hanumān one more time, "Oh Hanumān, you are a courageous Narasimha. You alone are enough to conquer these demons and take me to Śrī Rāma. I want my Rāma, who is the remover of enemies, to come here with a rain of arrows, win the battle with Rāvaṇa, and take me from here. This is befitting of Śrī Rāma's valor. You are his closest resemblance in fighting so it is your responsibility to bring Śrī Rāma here."

Hanumān heard Sīta Māta's words and assured her one more time that Śrī Rāma would come with a complete battalion and take her back. He bowed down to her with thoughts of going back to see Rāma.

Hanumān went to the Arista Mountain. This mountain had lots of forests including fruit and flowering trees. Some trees had white bark, which made them look like they were wrapped in a saree. The clouds near the middle of the trees looked like the top wrap of the upper body. The sun's rays seemed like loving hands wrapped around the mountain. The sparkling mineral ores seemed as they were opening and closing their eyes. The waterfalls sounded like the Vedas being recited. The flow of the streams sounded like sweet music with a light rhythmic beat. The tall trees looked like they were doing penance with their hands raised high. The black rain forest seemed like an old man shaking and the wind sounded like a flute. The fog-filled mountain seemed like it was meditating. The small mountain peaks filled with clouds

seemed to be walking with many caves. The many mountain peaks looked extraordinarily beautiful.

Hanumān increased his body size to cross the ocean again from this mountain peak. Hanumān's feet applied pressure to the mountain peaks and crushed it into pieces. Hanumān looked at the ocean and just as his Father turned to move from the southern to northern direction, Hanumān started his travel through the sky.

Chapter 57: Hanumān Returns to the Mahendra Mountain

During Hanumān's successful return, the sky in which Hanumān was traveling looked very distinct. The moon seemed like a white lily. The sun seemed like a red fighting cock. The Puṣya and Śrāvaṇa stars looked like swans. The clouds seemed like seaweed on a beach. The Punarvasa star looked like a big whale. Angāraka looked like a big light and Airāvata like a big island. The star Swati resembled a swan and the moon's rays were like water waves. Yakṣa Gandharvas looked like white lotus flowers. Hanumān flew through the sky and above the sea without any fear and with the speed of the wind. He flew with so much energy; he looked like a ship sailing in the sky. Hanumān seemed like he could swallow the sky, as if he was touching the moon, dragging the sky behind him. Hanumān traveled fast through the sky and the clouds. Sometimes Hanumān looked like he was playing between the moon and the clouds. With a lion's roar, Hanumān traveled like an eagle bird through the sky.

That great Hanumān destroyed Laṅkā, killed the demons, made Rāvaṇa angry, and destroyed Rāvaṇa's strong army. Vaidehi's blessings were with him during the crossing of the ocean. Along the way he touched the Maināka

Mountain. From there he traveled as fast as an arrow. When he saw the Mahendra Mountain approach, he was full of joy and roared like a lion. Going towards the direction where Aṅgadā and others awaited, Hanumān roared one more time. This time his roar was so loud, a cluster of solar systems could have fallen.

On the shore of the ocean, the army of monkeys were anxiously awaiting for Hanumān's arrival. They all heard Hanumān's roaring sound and were scared of what might be the result. When they heard Hanumān again, they all became very happy. Then Jāmbavān said, "Oh Vānaras, Hanumān was successful, otherwise his voice would not be so confident." The monkeys were all happy to hear Hanumān's roar. Some were eager to see him in the sky. Some climbed trees and others climbed mountain peaks. All the monkeys started to shake the trees as a welcoming gesture upon Hanumān's arrival.

Hanumān landed on the part of the mountain where there was a very thick forest. The other monkeys brought him gifts of flowers and fruits and showed their happiness. Hanumān saluted his teachers, elders and Jāmbavān. He saluted Prince Aṅgadā. Without wasting any time, Hanumān proclaimed in precise, pleasing, appropriate words, "I saw Sīta" "दृष्टा सीता" druṣṭā Sītā.

Hanumān held Aṅgadā's hand and took him to a spacious spot and sat next to him. Hanumān said, "Oh mighty friends, I saw Sīta Māta in Laṅkā waiting for Śrī Rāma to come. She has become very thin from fasting. The great lady's hair is tangled and in a single plait. Her body is all dusty and her clothes disheveled. Demon ladies who guard her vigilantly surround her. I saw Janaka's daughter Sīta Māta."

Upon hearing these words, all the monkeys were extremely happy. Some roared like lions, and some shouted, "Bravo! Bravo!" The monkeys expressed themselves in various ways. Some made monkey sounds; some jumped like bulls, some lifted their tails and hit the ground. Others jumped up and down on the mountain and some came close to Hanumān and touched him.

Aṅgadā said to Hanumān, "Oh, Vānara, you flew one hundred Yojanas over the ocean and you returned back. You have valor, strength and unparalleled courage. No one has your devotional commitment. It is our luck that you saw the divine Rāma's wife. Now, Śrī Rāma will soon have peace since he will be reunited with Sīta Devī. We are all so lucky."

All the monkeys happily surrounded Hanumān. They waited to hear about the ocean crossing, more about Sīta Devī and about Rāvaṇa. Then Aṅgadā sitting with Hanumān and Jāmbavān seemed like Devendra.



Hanumān standing on a mountain before thousands of small monkeys

Chapter 58: Hanumān Narrates His Journey

Jāmbavān was very happy. His body was full of joy. Jāmbavān questioned Hanumān, "Oh Hanumān, how did you find Sīta Devī? How is she? How are the vicious demons behaving towards her? After listening to you, we will decide the next plan. You decide what you want to tell us. **All secrets should not be revealed in public.** What is important, you must tell Rāma. Please relate the entire course of events." Hanumān was tickled with happiness. With his heart he bowed down to Sīta Māta and started recalling his eventful journey.

"Oh Vānaras! You all saw me take off from the Mahendra Mountain to cross the ocean. Through the sky there was a mountain in my way that I thought was an obstacle. I felt like breaking it and passing by. I even hit it with my tail and cracked the mountain in one hundred places. Then the mountain addressed me and said, 'I am your father's friend and I am like a father to you. My name is Maināka. Please rest for a while and go.' I told him that I was going to look for Sīta Māta and on my way back I would rest. I proceeded to fly and was then stopped by Surasa Nagamata. She wanted to eat me. So when her mouth opened to the size of one hundred yojanas, I became the size of the tip of a thumb and entered her mouth. But I quickly came out again. This was just a test. I continued to fly when I came upon Simhika who is Cāya Grāhi. She also wanted to eat me. I went into her mouth and in a second, pulled her heart out and killed her. I continued my journey and landed in Lańkā."

"I entered Lańkā at night in search of Sīta Māta. I saw the palaces, various decorations and the beauty of the city. Then I went into the Aśoka gardens. There I saw Sīta Māta. She was very sad and was about to kill herself. But somehow

I presented myself to her and told her Śrī Rāma's story. I gave her Śrī Rāma's signature ring and brought back her Chūdamaṇi. I wanted to bring her back with me but she refused. I bid her farewell and started to fight with Rāvaṇa's army.

Rāvaṇa sent army after army to fight with me. Finally I destroyed the Aśoka garden and killed the Kinnaras, Prahasta, Jambumālini, the seven sons of the minister, the five commanders and Rāvaṇa's son Akṣa Kumāra, without harming Sīta Māta. Finally Rāvaṇa sent his son Indrajit and captured me using the Brahmāstra. I was dragged into the royal court of Rāvaṇa. There I told them who I was, why I was in Laṅkā and my purpose is to find Sīta Māta. I also told Rāvaṇa to return Sīta Māta to Śrī Rāma and avoid a war. Rāvaṇa wanted to kill me but Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhīṣaṇa objected to killing a messenger. In keeping with Vibhīṣaṇa's request, Rāvaṇa gave me a different punishment. Rāvaṇa ordered my tail to be to burned. I burnt all of Laṅkā with my tail's flame. I went and checked to confirm that Sīta Māta was safe. Now I am in front of you."

Chapter 59: Hanumān Is Still Excited

Hanumān continued to explain, "Sīta Māta is very loyal to her husband Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma's wishes and Sugrīva's promise are fulfilled. I am devoted to Sīta Māta. Rāvaṇa is spiritually powerful too. Because of his penance and spiritual power, even though he touched Sīta Māta he was not destroyed. I have retold all that has happened so far."

"Oh Vānaras! If Jāmbavān and you agree, let us all go to Laṅkā, bring Sīta Māta then take her to Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. This is a good way. I can kill all the demons and even Rāvaṇa. If you come with me, I can win them. I alone can kill Rāvaṇa, his army and his sons. If Indrajit uses

Brahmāstra or *Indrāstra* or *Vayuvyāstra* or *Varunāstra*, I can reverse them. With your permission I can kill Indrajit too. Even the gods can't stand my continuous shower of stones, never mind the demons. The sea may overflow, Mandara Mountain may move. No enemy can defeat Jāmbavān. Aṅgadā alone can handle the entire demon army. Even Mandara Mountain lacks the strength of Panasa, Neela, Uruva and their speed. They can cut all the demons into pieces. There is no one among the gods, asuras, yakshas, gandharvas, urugus or even sategulas who can fight with Myainda and Dwindā. They are the children of Aswini devas. No one can fight with them. They are blessed by Brahma and they both drank nectar. Myainda and Dwindā will not die in any battle with anyone. They both can kill all the horses and elephants and destroy all the chariots of Laṅkā. I already became famous by burning Laṅkā city. I declared that Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and King Sugrīva would kill the demons. "

"Oh Vānaras! The great Sīta Mātā is spending her time under the Śimśupa tree in the Aśoka gardens in Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā. Demon ladies are guarding Sīta Mātā. Her face is like a moon covered with clouds. She is not at all vibrant. She does not care about Rāvaṇa even in her dreams. She constantly thinks of Śrī Rāma. I feel sad when I think of her.

No matter how Rāvaṇa forces her, Sīta Mātā thinks only about Śrī Rāma with her heart and soul; she is like Sachi Devī who, without any other thoughts prayed to Purandara. Sīta Mātā is wearing the same saree she wore on the day she was abducted. She is worried and with a dusty body is looking forward to Rāma's arrival. Sīta Mātā did not destroy Rāvaṇa, because she wanted Śrī Rāma to come and kill him. Because Rāvaṇa imprisoned Sīta Mātā, he lost all his spiritual powers. Her devotion towards her husband will kill Rāvaṇa. She is already a thin, fragile lady and being away from Śrī Rāma she

has become even thinner. The lady of good fortune is sad and distressed. We have to determine our plan of attack”

Chapter 60: Jāmbavān’s Advice

Aṅgadā listened to Hanumān and said, “Oh Vānaras! If we all go, see Śīta Mātā and return without bringing her back, it is not appropriate. There is no one who can defeat us. No one can fly like us. Hanumān already proved that he could kill the demons. So let us go to Laṅkā, bring back Śīta Mātā and go to Śrī Rāma”.

Jāmbavān was happy to see Aṅgadā’s enthusiasm. Jāmbavān thought critically and said, “Oh Prince Aṅgadā, whatever you said sounds good. But we have to respect Śrī Rāma’s wishes. We can only follow what He orders. **We should not do everything we wish to do but act appropriately and accordingly. We should not act in haste and make drastic decisions.**”

Chapter 61: Monkeys in Madhuvan

Everyone including Aṅgadā and Hanumān agreed with Jāmbavān. The monkeys were extremely happy and followed Hanumān from the Mahendra Mountain. With their huge bodies, they were like Meru and Mandara mountains. Some were big like elephants. It looked as though they were carrying Hanumān with their eyes. They felt like a part of Śrī Rāma’s work. They wanted to complete Śrī Rāma’s work successfully and get some recognition. They were happy and felt superior to the other monkeys who were still searching in all directions. Everybody was waiting for the battle. They wanted to help Śrī Rāma and repay him because he helped Sugrīva.

They were returning to inform Sugrīva and Śrī Rāma of the good news that Hanumān saw Śīta Devī. As they were

flying in the sky they saw a beautiful garden with many beautiful trees, small plants and flower trees. That was the Madhuvana, the garden of honey or the wine garden. The garden is so precious; no one can even look at it. It belongs to Sugrīva and is protected by Sugrīva's uncle Dadhimukha. When the monkeys saw the Madhuvana garden, they wanted to drink the wine of the garden. They begged Aṅgadā for permission to have a drink. They convinced Aṅgadā and Jāmbavān and got permission. They started dancing in happiness. Some started singing and some were laughing loudly. They played with each other.

The monkeys were fully drunk and started acting silly. They destroyed the garden plucking flowers and killing the plants. Dadhimukha tried to stop them, but in their drunkenness, scratched him with their nails.

Chapter 62: Drunken Vānaras

Hanumān said to the monkeys, "Do not be scared. Drink the honey (wine). No one can stop you from drinking. If anybody stops you, I will stop them." Aṅgadā supported Hanumān's proposition, saying that Hanumān was successful in finding Sīta Devī and everybody was happy, so they should celebrate. Sage Vālmīki describes in detail the garden and how the drunken monkeys acted.

Dadhimukha tried to stop the monkeys from causing destruction in the drinking gardens. He went to Sugrīva to report how Aṅgadā and the other monkeys had destroyed Madhuvana.



Drunken monkeys lying down

Chapter 63: Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Learn of Hanumān's Return

Dadhimukha explained to Sugrīva the destruction of Madhuvana by Aṅgadā and Jāmbavān. He said that the guards tried to stop them from destroying the garden, but the vānaras got angry and hit them. Dadhimukha complained, "Oh Sugrīva, you are the king here. Aṅgadā and the other monkeys killed the guards." Lakṣmaṇa questioned Sugrīva, "What are the Madhuvana guards and Dadhimuka saying? Why are they crying? Why did the Vānaras go to the gardens?"

Sugrīva replied, "Oh Lakṣmaṇa, those who went in the southern direction in search of Sīta Devī; Aṅgadā and the other vānaras came to Madhuvana. They destroyed the

Madhuvana gardens. If they caused a raucous because they were celebrating then Hanumān must have seen Sīta Devī.”

सह्यन्यस्साधने हेतुः कर्मणोस्य हनूमतः

कार्यसिद्धिर्मतिश्चैव तस्मिन् वानरपुंगवे

sahyanyassādhane hetuḥ karmaṇosya hanūmataḥ
kāryasiddhirmatiścaiva tasmin vānarapuṅgave

Hanumān has skill, intelligence, enthusiasm, strength and education. Hanumān embodies these five qualities, so he can achieve any task.

“So Aṅgadā and the other vānaras got carried away in celebration, hit the guards and destroyed the gardens. Unless Hanumān had seen Sīta Devī, the vānaras would not have had cause for celebration. Therefore, Hanumān must have seen Sīta Devī.”

These words pleased Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. They were happy. Sugrīva comforted Dadhimuka and asked him to bring Hanumān immediately.

Chapter 64: The Vānaras Return to Sugrīva

Dadhimuka understood the behavior of the vānaras and set off to the Madhuvana gardens. By the time Dadhimukha arrived at the gardens, the vānaras had settled down and were calm once again. So Dadhimuka addressed Aṅgadā thus, “Oh Prince Aṅgadā, the guards tried to stop the complete destruction of Madhuvana and the vānaras hit them. So I went and reported this to your Uncle Sugrīva that you were here with the vānaras and had a party in the gardens. While I

was telling Sugrīva, Lakṣmaṇa overheard. Sugrīva extrapolated from the story that the vānaras must have been excited in celebration and said the only reason for the celebration could have been that Hanumān saw Sīta Devī. Sugrīva asked me to bring you back with me.”

Then Aṅgadā rounded up the vānaras. Hanumān agreed with Dadhimuka and Aṅgadā and said, “Let us go.”

Before Aṅgadā and the other Vānaras arrived, Sugrīva was consoling Śrī Rāma, “Oh Rāma, please listen to me; the vānaras have assuredly seen Sīta Devī, otherwise they would not have celebrated nor would they have returned to me without completing the task. Oh Rāma, only Hanumān must have seen Sīta Devī. He is the only Vānara capable of completing such a challenging task. While Sugrīva was talking to Śrī Rāma, he saw the great Vānara armies arriving. Sugrīva was very pleased to see the vānaras. Hanumān first stopped to bow down to Śrī Rāma and stated, “Śrī Rāma, Sīta Māta is shining with your love.” Sugrīva, Śrī Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa were elated upon hearing this news.

Chapter 65: Hanumān Tells Śrī Rāma about Sīta Devī

As soon as Śrī Rāma heard that Sīta Devī was safe, he questioned, “Oh Vānaras, where is Sīta? What is she thinking about me? Please let me know the details.”

The vānaras encouraged Hanumān who was the only one to have seen Sīta Devī to elaborate. Hanumān turned and faced south to bow down to Sīta Māta, who was located in the southern hemisphere. “Śrī Rāma, I crossed the 100-yojana ocean in search of Sīta Māta. In the southern ocean waters, Rāvaṇa lives in Laṅkā city. There, in Laṅkā city, I saw the most beautiful Sīta Māta held captive by Rāvaṇa. She has

been living with her heart's desires on you. She is in Lańkā city in the Aśoka gardens. The demon ladies surrounding her are the guards. They repeatedly threatened Sīta Devī while I was there. She has no other thoughts except about you. She sleeps on the floor and constantly thinks of you. She appeared as a lotus flower in bitter winter. Her mind is so resolutely fixed on you; she does not even spare a thought to Rāvaṇa. Moreover, she was ready to die without you."

"With great difficulty, I spoke to Sīta Māta. I sang a song in praise of the Ikṣvāku dynasty; it was only then that she listened to me. I explained everything to her in detail. She was pleased to hear of your friendship with Sugrīva. There are no words to explain her unwavering devotion for you. Oh great one, she is doing penance because her love for you is so great. Oh Śrī Rāma, she told me the story of the crow that occurred while you were at the Chitrakūta mountain range. "

"She sent a message to you through me, 'Oh Vayuputra, tell the greatest of all men, Rāma, everything you have seen here while Sugrīva is present. I have carefully preserved my Chūdamaṇi. Please give it to Rāma. Hanumān, remind Rāma of how he put the dot on my forehead. Whenever, I felt sad, I gazed at the Chūdamaṇi and longed for Rāma. That is the Chūdamaṇi I want you to give him. I only have the will to live for one more month. I refuse to spend my time in a demon's custody.' Oh Śrī Rāma, she has not forsaken her righteousness or her marital vows to you. She is losing weight daily. She is a prisoner of Rāvaṇa. Oh Śrī Rāma, I have told you everything she requested me to relay. Now you need to devise a plan to cross the ocean."

At this point, Hanumān handed Śrī Rāma the Chūdamaṇi which he brought from Sīta Māta.

Chapter 66: Rāma Receives the Chūdamaṇi

Śri Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa heard Hanumān's tale. Śri Rāma clutched the Chūdamaṇi to his heart and wept. As soon as Śri Rāma's eyes saw the Chūdamaṇi, his heart swelled with immense love and sorrow so deep, he could not stand it. Śri Rāma was beside himself with grief.

Śri Rāma said, "The protective, instinctive, consuming, gentle love that causes the milk let down of a cow when it sees its darling calf approach to suckle for milk; that sort of deep love was stimulated in my soul when I saw Sīta's Chūdamaṇi and caused my tears to fall. This Chūdamaṇi was given to Sīta by my father-in-law Janaka Mahārāja during our wedding. Oh Sugrīva, Devendra was so pleased by Janaka Mahārāja's ceremony that he presented King Janaka with the Chūdamaṇi. The jewels in the ornament are from the deep seas; all great people appreciate this. When I see this Chūdamaṇi, it is as if I am seeing my father Daśaratha and my father-in-law Janaka Mahārāja. This Chūdamaṇi was always nestled on the back of my love's head. Oh Hanumān, as a thirsty person quenches his thirst by drinking several times, please quench my thirst and tell me again what Sīta said. Sīta was always timid. How can she be living amongst the scary demons?"

Śri Rāma continued to weep and pleaded with Hanumān to repeat the details over and over and over again.



Hanumān giving Rāma the Chūdamaṇi

Chapter 67: Hanumān Relates the Personal Story of Śrī Rāma and Sīta Devī

Hanumān says, "Oh Rāmaprabhu, she told me the Chitrakūta mountain story." Here Hanumān re-tells the story of how the crow hurt Sīta Devī's breast and how Śrī Rāma punished the crow with a blade of grass in the eye. At the end of the crow story, Hanumān related Sīta Devī's agony. 'If Rāma could punish a mere crow with a blade of grass, why is Rāma quiet for this monumental offense? I must have sinned in the past; perhaps that is why though Rāma and Lakshmana are together, they have not been able to save me.' I assured Sīta Māta, 'Oh Māta, Śrī Rāma will come, he will destroy Rāvaṇa and his followers. Śrī Rāma will surely rescue you.' With her eyes full of tears, Sīta Māta enquired about your welfare. She also wanted me to relay to you the atrocities in

Lańkā and about her unrelenting grief. Oh Rāma, amongst the kings, you are like a lion. I have relayed all the information from Sīta Māta.” You can trust that Sīta Māta is completely safe.

Chapter 68: Hanumān Concludes the Task

Hanumān continued, “Oh Naraśārdula, best of men, Sīta Māta noticed the love and affection you have for me. Sīta Māta begged me to bring you to Lańkā to rescue her and vanquish Rāvaṇa. I thought of bringing Sīta Māta back with me by whisking her away on my shoulders, but she refused to come with me. She said she would only leave if you came for her. I assured her that her imprisonment was almost over and that you, Śri Rāma, would rescue her soon.”

I told Sīta Māta that she would see the vibrant face of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, like the sun and the moon. I told her they would kill the enemies and she would see legions of the Vānara armies along with Śri Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. I told her, “Oh Māta, your fourteen year exile is also almost over. Śri Rāma will take you to Ayodhya and be coronated King with you as his Queen. This will happen soon.”

This completes Hanumān’s task to find Sīta Devī and reporting back to Śri Rāma described in the Sundarakāṇḍa chapter of Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

Śrī Rāma Pattābhiṣekam

The Coronation of Śrī Rāma

Śrī Rāma, along with others, took rest at Sage Bharadvāja's āśrama. Śrī Rāma sent Hanumān to check on the situation in the kingdom of Ayodhya. He wanted to find out if his brother, Bharata, was keen on continuing to rule the kingdom by himself, or if he wished Śrī Rāma to return and become king. If Bharata wished to be the king, Śrī Rāma intended to return to some other place, leaving Ayodhya in his brother's hands. He did not want conflict of any kind. Śrī Rāma also requested Hanumān to enquire after everybody's welfare.

Hanumān flew to Nandigrāma with enthusiasm and happiness. He went into the kingdom of Daśaratha. Bharata, brother of Śrī Rāma, was taking care of the kingdom in Śrī Rāma's absence. He was living in the city of Nandigram which was on the outskirts of Ayodhya, the capital. He had righteously performed all the kingly duties in the absence of Śrī Rāma. Hanumān met with Bharata and gave the good news of Śrī Rāma's victory and his impending arrival. Hanumān narrated the main incidents of the past fourteen years of Śrī Rāma's exile with Sīta Devī and Lakṣmaṇa.

"Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were in Janasthāna, and killed fourteen thousand demons. In Daṇḍakāraṇya Sīta Devī was stolen. Śrī Rāma killed Vāli who stole Sugrīva's wife; thus Sugrīva and Śrī Rāma became friends. Sugrīva promised to help Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa recover Sīta Devī. He sent all the members of his kingdom in various directions to search for Sīta Devī. We were fortunate that our group found Sampāthi, the brother of Jatāyu who informed us that Rāvaṇa had taken Sīta Devī in the southern direction. So we went southward to look for Sīta Devī."

"From the Mahendragiri mountain, I crossed the ocean and flew to Lańkā and found Sīta Māta. I came back to Kiṣkindha, informed Śri Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva the whereabouts of Sīta Māta. Then the plans, strategies and preparations for war were initiated."

Reflection: For any task, planning, strategy, and preparation are essential to be successful.

"A bridge was built across the ocean to Lańkā. Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa and other demons were killed. Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of Rāvaṇa, was enthroned as king of Lańkā. Śri Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sīta Māta, Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Jāmbavān and the others are coming very soon to Ayodhya in the Puṣpaka Vimāna."

Bharata was extremely delighted at the news. He could finally hand over the reins of the kingdom to Śri Rāma. He informed Śatrughna and all the ministers, as well as the royal mothers about the good news of Śri Rāma's arrival. The whole city of Ayodhya was eagerly awaiting the return of Śri Rāma. Śri Rāma, Sīta Devī, Lakṣmaṇa and all the others arrived in the Puṣpaka Vimāna. After landing, the magic airplane was sent back to its owner, Kubera.

The streets of Ayodhya were fully decorated. All the people lined the streets, straining to catch a glimpse of their beloved, respected Śri Rāma. Music played and people danced with joy. It seemed as if the gods above were showering flowers on Śri Rāma and Ayodhya. Flags were hoisted in every house. Śri Rāma, along with the others entered the Ikṣvāku kings' palace. Pattābhiṣekam or the coronation ceremony of Śri Rāma, was planned and scheduled to be performed immediately. Śri Rāma and Sīta Devī were seated on the auspicious throne. Sages Vaśiṣṭha, Vamadeva, Jabali, Kaśyapa, Kātyayana and Gautama blessed them with the

sacred waters collected from many rivers and oceans. Śrī Rāma Pattābhiṣekam continued for many days. Many dignitaries and ministers from other countries offered Śrī Rāma many expensive and exclusive gifts. Śrī Rāma honored sages, invitees, friends, helpers, well wishers and everyone present there with appropriate gifts. Sīta Devī also offered gifts to the ladies who helped her during the fourteen years of exile. She gave the special pearl necklace which Śrī Rāma presented her, to Hanumān.

Śrī Rāma happily ruled the kingdom for a long time. He had the help of his brothers Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. Everybody in the kingdom was content and happy. There was no fear of crime. Everyone was truthful and honest, and the kingdom was free of war or other calamities. There was no hunger, and the citizens, including women and children, were safe. Gardens, flowers and grain harvests were bountiful. There was sumptuous wealth all over the kingdom. People in the kingdom only talked about Śrī Rāma.

रामो रामो राम प्रजानामभवन् कथाः

रामभुतमं जगदभूद् रामे राज्यं प्रशासति

rāmo rāmo rāma prajānāmabhavan kathāḥ
rāmabhutam jagadabhūd rāme rājyaṁ praśāsati
Yuddhakandam Sargah 128 -102

While Śrī Rāma was ruling the kingdom, people constantly thought of Him.

Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa, the Ādikāvyaṁ is the first original poetic work written by Sage Vālmīki. Whoever reads the Sundarakāṇḍa will be righteous, famous, happy and successful.

One who is able to read Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa without anger will be able to overcome the most difficult challenges.

मंगळं कोसलेन्द्राय महनीय गुणात्मने

चक्रवर्ति तनूजाय सार्वभौमाय मंगळम्

maṅgaḷam kosalendrāya mahanīya guṇātmane
cakravarti tanūjāya sārvaḥmaūmāya maṅgaḷam

ॐ स्वस्ति प्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्ताम्

न्यायेन मार्गेण महीं महीशाः

गो ब्राह्मणेभ्यः शुभमस्तु नित्यं

लोका समस्ताः सुरिवनो भवन्तु

om svasti prajābhyah paripālayantām
nyāyena mārgeṇa mahīm mahīśāḥ
go brāhmaṇebhyaḥ śubhamastu nityam
lokā samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu

ॐ पूर्णामदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate
om śantiḥ śantiḥ śantiḥ



Rāma Pattābhiṣekam

Glossary

A

Agni:	god of fire
Ajāmukhi:	female demon
Alakā City:	it is said to be the city Kubera ruled and lived in
Amarāvati:	ever flourishing divine city which belongs to Indra
Arundhati:	one of the daughters of Kardama and Devahūti. She was the wife of Vaśiṣṭha. She is near the Saptarṣimaṇḍala, the great constellation of stars
Aśokavana:	the exquisite gardens in Laṅkā, in the kingdom of Rāvaṇa

B

Bali:	the grandson of Prahlaḍa and son of Virochana. He was a king of immense wealth who was always very proud.
Bṛhaspati:	planet Jupiter. Also, the teacher and preceptor of the gods

C

Chaṇḍodarī:	a female demon
Candra:	the moon
Cāraṇas:	those who roam in the air and witness individuals anywhere, anytime
Caityaprasāda:	a place of religious worship. A sacrificial shed

Cyavana: a celebrated sage of the Bhārgava dynasty, descending from Brahma. From a very young age he practiced austerities, meditated without food and sleep

D

Damayantī: princess of Vidarbha, she is the most noble of all Indian heroines. Wife of the king Nala

Daṇḍakāraṇya: an Ikṣvāku king called Daṇḍaka once violated the rules of Sage Bhārgava who cursed his kingdom and turned it into a forest. Hence it is known as Daṇḍakāraṇya

Daśaratha: King Daśaratha was from the Ikṣvāku Dynasty. He had three wives: Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, and four sons: Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna

Dhanyamālini: one of the wives of Rāvaṇa. She had a son named Atikāya which means large body

Durmukhi: a bad-mouthed female demon who guarded Sīta in Aśokavana

Dūṣaṇa: brother of Khara. Both brothers harassed the sages and their penance. He too was killed by Rāma

E

Ekjata: a single-braided demon guarding Sīta in Aśokavana

G

- Gandhamādana: a mystical mountain on the eastern side of Meru; it has fine fragrant forests
- Gandharva: the gandharvas are sons born to the famous Kaśyapa prajāpati of his wife Ariṣṭha. They belonged to the race of the Devas and special celestial beings famous for their singing

H

- Hanumān: son of Anjanā Devī, and King Kesari; the wind god Vāyu was the godfather
- Harijatā: a female demon who guarded Sīta at Aśokavana
- Hiraṇyakaśīpa: a demon king of undetermined age/era. He was the father of Prahlaḍa, a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu

I

- Ikṣvāku: the solar dynasty, those who followed the timings of the sun, those who worshipped the sun
- Indra: symbolically the king of gods. The ruler of divine forces
- Indrajīt: eldest and most beloved son of Rāvaṇa and Mandodari

J

- Janaka: the king of Videha Desha. Father of Sīta Devī and her three sisters
- Janasthāna: when in exile, Rāma, Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa lived in Janasthāna. They were fairly

content until Rāvaṇa's sister, Sūrpaṇakha, interfered with their lives and compelled Lakṣmaṇa to mutilate her. The subsequent incidents brought demons Khara and Dūṣaṇa along with an army of 14,000, all of whom were killed by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa

Jatāyu: the son of Aruṇa and Śyeṇi, and brother of Sampāthi. He was a large, divine eagle who tried to protect Sīta while Rāvaṇāsura was stealing her. Śri Rāma performed his last rites

K

Kabandha: denu, a celestial being who was cursed to be a headless demon. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa relieved him from the demon form by killing him

Kapila: a powerful sage, son of Kardama prajāpati who in turn was the son of Brahma

Keśini: a celestial woman, one of twelve maids. They included Alambusa, Miśrakesi, Vidyutparṇa, Tilottama, Aruṇa, Rakṣita, Rambha, Manorama, Keśini, Surata, Suraja and Supriya. They were born to Sage Kaśyapa and his wife Pradhā

Khara: a demon who was sent by Rāvaṇa to kill Rāma but who was instead killed by Rāma

Kinnara: a sect of devas who hold vīṇās in their hands

Kiṣkindha: the kingdom of monkeys. Vāli ruled first, later his brother Sugrīva became king

Kosala:	the kingdom of Kausalya Devī which merged with King Daśaratha's kingdom of Ayodhya
Kubera:	one of the guardians of the north and in controller of wealth. He was also the half-brother of Rāvaṇa
Kumbhakarna:	younger brother of Rāvaṇa. Brave and strong, he had a reputation of sleeping most of the time

L

Lakṣmaṇa:	son of King Daśaratha of Ikṣvāku Dynasty. His mother was Sumitra. He was a step-brother of Rāma who followed him to the forest in exile, and fought devotedly in the battle against Rāvaṇa
Lambā:	Hanumān landed on Lambā Mountain from where he saw the city of Laṅkā
Laṅkhiṇi:	the goddess protecting Laṅkā who became a demon because of a curse
Lopāmudra:	wife of Sage Agastya

M

Madayanti:	she was the wife of King Kalmaṣapāda who was born of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, but because of a curse, was turned into a rakshasa (demon) and wandered the forests for twelve years
Mahāviṣṇu:	one of three main gods, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara
Mandākini:	a river flowing near the mountain of Chitrakūta. It is said that bathing in that

	river brings the benefit of many sacrifices or yajñās. It also brings wealth
Mandodari:	Queen of Rāvaṇa. She was considered to be very beautiful and dutiful; daughter of Maya, mother of Indrajit
Marutah:	the forty nine helpers of Indra, sons of Diti
Mārutātmaja:	another name of Hanumān
Mithila:	capital of the country of Videha. The ruler was King Janaka
Maithili:	another name for Sīta; princess of Mithila city

N

Nārada:	a divine celestial sage who roamed all the worlds and gave useful advice that led to success
Narasimha:	incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu in the form of half-man half-lion. He emerged to protect His devotee Prahlāda from the wrath of his father.

P

Praghasa:	female demon who guarded Sīta in Aśokavana
Pulastya:	one of the six prajāpatis who were the creators of life as shapes and forms. The six prajāpatis are: Marīci, Atri, Angīrasa, Pulastya, Pulahu and Kratuvu. Pulastya is the grandfather of Rāvaṇa

Puṣpaka vimāna: the special magical mystical thought-propelled aircraft. Rāvaṇa got it from Kubera

R

Riśyamūka: a mountain range
Rohiṇi: one of the twenty seven stars, and wife of Candra, the moon

S

Sacīdevī: divine, celestial lady; wife of Indra
Sāgara: a king of the solar dynasty who ruled Ayodhya. The 60,000 sons of King Sāgara scooped out the entire water of the oceans to look for the horse of their father's Aśvamedha yāga. The ocean later killed the sons. The Ganges river filled it in and relieved the sons to heaven
Sampāthi: elder brother of Jatāyu. Son of Aruṇa and Śyeṇi (a kind of very large vulture)
Saudasam: King of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. Also known as Kalmaṣapāda (see above)
Sāvitri: the wife of King Satyavan of Salva. She is highly respected because she followed Lord Yama, god of Death to the nether regions to get back the life of her husband. She epitomizes the devoted wife
Śimśupa: a flowering tree located in Rāvaṇa's Asoka vana in Laṅkā
Siddhacāraṇas: the mystical power of intellectual beings
Siddhas: people who have miraculous powers. Magically they can make themselves tiny

or large, visible or invisible. There are eight such specific powers called Siddhis. Those who possess them are called Siddhas.

Siddhāśrama:	a hermitage where Sage Viśvāmitra took Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa when the sages needed protection while performing yajñā
Simhika:	a demon who used to kill people traveling by sea. She is also called Cāyāgrahi or the shadow catcher.
Śrīmati:	a gandharva maid, who was a fine musician, sang praises to Lakṣmi Devī.
Sugrīva:	the brother of Vāli who unlawfully stole the wife of Sugrīva. Rāma and Sugrīva became friends and Rāma killed Vāli. In turn Sugrīva helped Rāma in search of Sītā and in the war with Rāvaṇa.
Sukanyā:	the wife of hermit Cyavana. She too is a role model for the ideal, devoted wife
Sūrya:	the sun god
Suvarcala:	wife of the sun god, who illuminates the world. Light is always with the sun.

T

Trijaṭa:	an old female demon who was also a prison guard of Sītā. She was considerate of Sītā and said she dreamt of Rāma rescuing and taking Sītā back
Trikūṭa:	city of Laṅkā is situated on this mountain
Triśira:	the three headed demon who was also killed by Rāma



Vaidehi:	another name for Sīta, princess of Videha Desa
Vajrāyudha:	the thunderbolt weapon
Vāli:	the king of monkeys who lived and ruled Kīśkindha Mountains
Vāmana:	Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as a short person who released asuras from Bali. He was also called Upendra
Vaśiṣṭha:	Brahmaṛṣi, the greatest sage Vaśiṣṭha, was the royal priest and chief advisor to King Dasarahta. He was the preceptor to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna
Vasu:	one of eight attendant deities of Indra and Viṣṇu
Vāyudeva:	the wind god
Vedas:	the sacred scriptures envisioned by the sages. They are unwritten texts that have been passed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth. They encompass all the sciences and knowledge of the universe captured by visionary sages. This was learned by listening (Śṛti) and understood by meditating upon the content (Smṛti). They are said to have been composed about twenty thousand years ago.
Vibhīṣaṇa:	youngest brother of Rāvaṇa. Even though he was born in a demon family he was righteous. He won Rāma's affection
Vikaṭa:	female demon guarding Sīta in Aśokavana. She could scare people by her loud laugh

Virādha:	a powerful demon who obstructed Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa while they were in Daṇḍakāraṇya
Virāṭa:	a female demon prison guard in Aśokavana
Viśvakarma:	the chief architect of God's divine abode

Y

Yakṣa:	a class of demi-gods
Yojana:	is the oldest measurement of distance calculated; the exact measurement is unknown; a way of saying very far

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SUNDARAKĀṆḌA

A Beautiful Story of Hanumān's Success

Translated by: **Krishna Kota**

- This book is intended mainly for children to familiarize them with the true significance of the devotee of Lord Śrī Rāma, Hanumān.
- The mission of Hanumān is search for Sīta Devī with determination and enthusiasm, provide information about Sīta Devī's condition to Śrī Rāma. During this process, he destroys the evil. People are not evil but the harmful actions make them malicious.
- *Why should one read Sundarakāṇḍa?*

Sundarakāṇḍa, an important chapter of Sṛmad Rāmāyaṇa consists of several valuable aspects. Reading Hanumān's story and meditating on him, "One can achieve valor, wisdom, strength, fame, fearlessness, health, determination, intellect and gift of speech". Children will grow with focused mind and enables everyone who reads Sundarakāṇḍa make thoughtful decisions.

