

VALMIKI RAMAYANAM

ENGLISH PROSE



Prof. Y.V. CHALAPATHI

TIRUMALA TIRUPATHI DEVASTHANAMS

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English Prose.

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By

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Sri Venkatesaya Namaha

Oh! Mother and Father
I Pray you both
please give me
power and strength
To write the Sacred
Life History of Ayodhya Prince
Sree Rama and his wife Seetha
I humbly pray
Parvathi Putra Sri Ganesha
To guide me to write the story of Rama
As he has helped Veda Vyasa
In composing Mahabharatha
Touching the feet of sage Valmiki
I venture to write in a simple way
The sacred story of Sree Rama
Valmiki Ramayana the first epic of Hindus which
Travelled for and wide
Had captured the hearts
of millions of human beings all over the world.
As humble devotee of Sree Rama
I am presenting this short history
of Sree Rama and Mata Seeta Devi
I hope all celestial Gods
will give me strength to compose
This great work of Ikshvaku Prince Sree Rama
I humbly offer my Pranams to them all.

Sree Rama

Endless wings of Valmiki Ramayana

Valmiki Ramayana is the magnum opus of the first great epic of Indian literature. It is the first a great epic story of sacred couple Rama and Seeta. They are inseparable like Sun and Moon in the sky with out these two celestial bodies there is no life in the world. The story of Rama and Seeta is the life elixer to the people of Hindu society. The people living in India all men, women and children know the story of Rama and Seeta. They showed their love and respect to these epic hero and heroine by naming their children Rama and Seeta.

The torch bearers of our culture and civilization travelled the vast land both in the East and in the west crossing the peak mountains, thick forests, great rivers and seas to spread the great story of Rama and Seeta. This great epic is popular in Mongolia, China, Japan and South East Asian countries. They crossed Afghanistan, Beluchistan, Middle East and entered European continent to make this epic story popular.

Valmiki Ramayana and Homers Iliad run parallel in many ways. In both the epics we find similarities. Both Valmiki Ramayana and Homer's Iliad centered round the two beautiful ladies namely Seeta of Valmiki Ramayana and Helen

of Homer's Iliad. Ravana the king of Lanka had carried away Seeta to Lanka. Prince Paris of Troy ran away with Helen to Troy.

Rama with the help of Vanaras built the bridge across the sea and crossed it. Menelous the king of Sparta, the husband of Helen with the support of Greek heroes crossed the Black sea in their war ships. Rama with the support of Vanaras declared war on Ravana and destroyed Lanka. In the same way Menelous with the support of Greek heroes attacked Troy and destroyed it. Valmiki Ramayana is the first epic in India. Homer's Iliad is the first epic in European literature.

The people of Eastern countries adopted the main theme of Valmiki Ramayana in their literature but adopted the story to suit their social customs. In some stories we find Rama is hero. In some other stories we find Lakshmana is hero and Rama following him. Ravana's place is the same. Seeta's place is also the same. The thick friendship and brotherly love is the same between Rama and Lakshmana. We find certain Peculiar changes in some stories. For example Rama by ascending a particular tree turns into monkey for a short period. He marries a monkey and blessed with a son. He is Hanuman who helped the hero to trace his wife. They made these changes to suit their social belief and

customs. But the main theme of Valmiki Ramayana is the same.

The central Sahitya Academy gathered the information regarding Valmiki Ramayana. They gave a list. They are as follows.

1.	Valmiki Ramayana (main)	1
2.	Number of different Ramayanas	40
3.	Expert opinions of Valmiki Ramayana	73
4.	Ramayana Translations	348
5.	Ramayana in different languages and in different countries	730
6.	Ramayana story in Sahitya literature	608
7.	Dramas or plays on Ramayana in various languages	647
8.	Prayers, Songs, Bhajans and devotional songs on Ramayana	1732

With the blessings of Lord Venkateswara of Seven Hills of Tirupathi, in whose institution I worked as lecturer and professor for 35 years, I ventured to present the above information, after studying various books and articles written by great men of literature about great Valmiki as first epic

poet, flawless character of Rama, devotional attachment of Seeta to her Lord and God Rama, ever ending love and affection of Lakshmana, the motherly love and attachment of the three queens Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, implecit obedience in carrying out the orders of Rama by Bharatha and Shatrugna, unforgettable love and friendship of Sugriva and Vibhishana and lastly ever ending submission and noble service of great Hanuman.

In Heaven

All Gods in the celestial world were deep in meditation.

Indra the Lord of all Gods with his consort Sachidevi was sitting on the Jewelled throne. Suddenly Indra's hall was filled with a cry,

of Woman in distress

Every one was disturbed.

They opened their eyes

They saw Rambha the celestial dancer,
she rushed into the hall with tears rolling
down from her cheeks.

"Oh! God, you have closed your eyes and ears you did not think and observe what is happening in the celestial world.

On my way to Lord Brahma, the ten headed Ravana the Rakshasa king of Lanka attacked me. He tried to molest me.

With great difficulty I liberated myself from his clutches and came running here.

If such incidents go on every day where is the protection for women living in heaven. If such is the case in heaven, how about the women in the world.

Who will protect them and save them.

Oh! Lord of Gods, find out a way to save the people and to establish Dharma".

Saying these words, she sat down helpless.

Indra, Vayu, Varuna, Yama, Agni and other Gods, including the great rishis and others were spell bound and they stared at Ramba.

Suddenly Lord Brahma entered Heaven

He knew what happened there.

They all went to Vaikuntam.

Lord Narayana closing his eyes was in deep meditation.

He was lying on Adishesha

His consort Goddess Lakshmi was sitting by his side.

He opened his eyes and saw Lord Brahma and others.

Lord Brahma assumed the leadership of all and addressed Lord Narayana.

"Oh! Lord, the Rakshasas under the leadership of ten headed monster Ravana, the king of Lanka, created so much of trouble

by destroying Yagna Salas, killing innocent people and rishis and pouring blood and animal flesh in Yagna fire.

He conquered the three worlds.

He forced thousands of women to enter his antahpura and to share his bed.

All Gods are afraid of him.

Because of him, they stopped attending to their normal work.

We have come here to request you to put an end to the atrocities of Ravana".

Lord Narayana looked at Lakshmi and said "You see, I have taken six avatars to establish Dharma, leaving you alone in Vaikuntam.

This time why cannot you come with me to the world and help me to establish Dharma".

Lakshmi answered in a polite way "Oh! Lord I spent solitary life in Vaikuntam, during the period of six avatars.

This time I am really happy to be with you, and help you in a small way.

Now to establish Dharma in the world, royal palaces and big cities are not necessary for this purpose,

Forest life is enough.

I will take birth as daughter of Janaka the king of Mithila.

Yourself, Adishesha, Shanku and Chakra will take birth as four

illustrious sons of king Dasaratha of Kosala.

You first proceed to Ayodhya.

Then I will follow you all.

There we can plan to destroy the power of Ravana the king of Lanka and then establish Dharma in the world".

Then Lord Narayana smiled and nodded his head.

Lord Brahma and others felt immensely happy.

They prostrated before Lord Narayana and Goddess Lakshmi.

They went back to their places.

Thus the plan to destroy Ravana the king of Lanka was hatched in Vaikuntam.

The Life of Sage Valmiki

A hunter by name Valmiki committed innumerable crimes in his life.

In his routine game of hunting, he came across a group of saints.

He wanted to rob them.

They told him killing animals and robbing pilgrims on the way was a great sin.

God world punish the person severely.

Valmiki told them that he was doing all these crimes for the sake of his family members.

The saints asked him, whether his family members would also share his sins and punishments imposed by God.

The hunter went home and put the same question to his family members.

They told him that it was his business, but not theirs.

On hearing their reply, the hunter was taken a back.

He decided to give up his early hunting life.

He left his family.

He aimlessly wandered in the forest for many years.

He adopted the life of Sanyasi.

He lived on roots and fruits and spent his time in meditation.

He established an ashramam on the banks of Tamasa many saints came and settled there.

His greatness soon spread far and wide.

One day Naradamuni, the son of Lord Brahma met sage Valmiki in his ashramam.

Valmiki honoured him and extended hospitality to the great sage Narada Muni.

After normal pleasantries Valmiki asked "Oh! Narada you are the wanderer of the three worlds, please show me or tell me a human-being having the qualities of Integrity, Bravery, Righteousness, Gratitude truthfulness, Dedication to one's principles, Fearlessness, purity of mind, védic knowledge

charity, control over senses, Aiding or giving to persons without expecting any return. Meditation. Non-violence. speaking the truth. the quality of never getting angry. soft spoken attitude, humility. sacrifice, tranquility of mind quality of never accusing others, steadfastness lacking vindictive attitude and lack of ego." Narada told him "Yes there is one. He is prince Rama the eldest son of Dasaratha the king of Kosala!"

Prince Rama has taken birth to establish Dharma in the world. I shall give you a brief account of Rama. Please write the life history of Rama. King Dasaratha once gave two boons to his third wife Kaikeyi.

She demanded her son Bharatha to be crowned as king of Ayodhya and Rama to spend fourteen years in Dandaka Forest. Rama with his wife Seeta and brother Lakshmana walked into the forest.

On the request of rishis, Rama killed all Rakshasas in Janasthana and made people to live happily.

To take revenge on Rama, the ten headed monster Ravana kidnapped Seeta and imprisoned her in his palace.

In search of Seeta Rama met Sugriva and entered into an agreement.

Rama killed Vali and made Sugriva asking of Kishkinda.

In return Sugriva sent his men to trace where about of Seeta. Hanuman crossed the wide sea, entered Lanka saw Seeta in Ashoka Vana and talked to her. He assured her that Rama with Vanara army would land in Lanka soon.

He destroyed Ashoka Vana and burnt the city.

He came back and informed Rama that he had seen Seeta.

The Vanaras built the bridge and crossed the wide sea of one hundred yojanas.

Rama declared war on Ravana, defeated all Rakshasas, killed Ravana and made Vibhishana as king of Lanka.

All come back to Ayodhya.

Rama ascended the throne of Ayodhya and ruled for many years.

He performed many Asvamedha Yagas. You please write the life history of Sree Rama".

After giving this account, Narada went away.

Valmiki and Krauncha birds

One day Sage Valmiki was sitting under the shade of a tree in front of him on the branch of a tree, two Krauncha birds a male and a female were in deep love and they were in pleasant conversation. While sage Valmiki was observing them, a hunter came there and shoot an arrow at the male bird it immediately fell on the ground in a pool of blood.

The female bird fell on the dead body of the male bird and wept like a torrent.

Sage Valmiki saw the tragic end of the male bird. Having pained in heart, he cursed the hunter. "You brutal hunter, you are heartless, you are merciless, you committed a grave crime, you killed the male bird, you separated the couple, they were leading a happy life, your act is unforgivable, you will be denied the Span of life granted by God to a man you will suffer in life".

Saying this Valmiki went back to his Ashramam. While Valmiki was taking bath in the river, a Sloka came out from his mouth.

"Manishada Pratistam Twamagam Saswateesama yatkruncha Mithuna Akam Avadheem Kama Mohatam".

He wondered how it came from his mouth

He was thinking of Sloka.

Then Lord Brahma met him Valmiki honoured him and worshipped him.

Lord Brahma told him that the Sloka he just uttered would be the base for him to write the life history of Ayodhya Prince Rama.

1. Manishada :-

This described the birth of Rama his education, his service under sage Viswamitra and his marriage with Seeta. This indicates Bala Kanda.

2. Pratistam Twamagam :-

Rama respected his father's promise to Kaikeyi. He walked into the forest for fourteen years with him his wife Seeta and brother Lakshmana. This indicates Ayodhya Kanda.

3. Saswateesama :-

Rama walked into the forest met a number of rishis and received their blessings. He killed Rakshasas and established peace in the forest. This indicates Aranya Kanda.

4. Yatkruncha Mithunath :-

Rama by killing Vali, separated the couple of Kishkinda Kingdom and crowned Sugriva asking. He secured the help of Vanaras to trace Seeta. This indicates Kishkinda Kanda.

5. Akam:-

Sugriva sent his men to trace Seeta. Hanuman crossed the mighty ocean, found out Seeta, talked to her, destroyed Ashoka Vana, burnt the city Lanka, he came back and informed Rama that Seeta was safe in Ashoka Vana. This indicates Sundara Kanda.

6. Avadheem :-

Rama declared war on Rakshasas defeated and killed Ravana and his men. He made Vibhishana as king of Lanka. This indicates Uddaha Kanda.

7. Kama Mohetam :-

Seeta had a long desire to spend some time with the wives of rishis. So as pregnant she spent her time in Valmiki Ashramam. This indicates Uttara Kanda.

On the instructions of Lord Brahma Goddess - Saraswati became Valmiki's tongue.

Goddess Gayatri helped Valmiki to compose the life history of Rama. Thus Valmiki with the blessings of sage Narada and Lord Brahma began writing the life history of Sree Rama.

I

BALA KANDA



KING DASARATHA AND KOSALA KINGDOM

I. BALA KANDA

On the Northern bank of Ganga, there flourished a great kingdom Kosala with Ayodhya as its capital.

Manu the famous king of solar dynasty built Ayodhya on the banks of Sarayu river. It resembled Amaravati the beautiful city of Indra the Lord of Gods.

The city was full of flower gardens.

The fragrance of the flowers spread all over the city.

Numerous ponds all over the city were full of Lotus flowers and Swans.

The roads were broad and clean.

On either side of the road there sprang up beautiful trees which spread shade all over. The people who belonged to the royal family, able ministers, king's advisers, military commanders lived in big palaces.

Others and common people lived in ordinary houses.

The people who followed Dharma of the land were happy and contented

They never deviated from truth.

Speaking truth was their education.

The Kosala land was fertile.

The people were happy with seasonal crops. They knew their duties, one to respect state laws and second to pay the royal taxes regularly.

King Dasaratha ruled Kosala kingdom from the capital city Ayodhya.

Ayodhya means that which cannot be conquered Dasaratha in real terms did not possess ten chariots or who drove the chariot in ten directions. In true sense he was Sadhaka who controlled his mind chariot with ten horses representing the sensory organs. He was righteous king and performed many Yagas and Yagnas.

He lavishly donated cows, gold, land and new clothes to his people irrespective of their cast and creed.

He led his forces to help Devas in their war against Asuras.

His name and fame spread in all the three worlds.

The welfare of the people was his first duty.

Dasaratha had every thing in the palace.

He married three queens namely Kausalya Sumitra and Kaikeyi to give him happy company. There were pandits, musicians and dancers to give him happy company in his palace. But some thing troubled him.

He suddenly remembered the saying of a great saint that he would be blessed with sons after performing Asvamedha Yaga.

He consulted his royal Gurus namely sage Vashishtha and Vamadeva about Yaga, on the advice of Sumantra he decided to invite Rishyashringa to perform Yaga.

Rishya Shringa's Life Story

Rishya Shringa was the grandson of Kashyapa. His father was Vibhandaka.

He spent all his time in the forest with his father and his main duty was to serve him.

He did not see any other human being except his father.

He strictly followed brahmacharya.

During that period king Ramapada was ruling the kingdom of Angada.

He **was** popular as good king who followed the principles of Dharma.

Angada suddenly faced a dreadful famine. Both king and the people suffered a lot.

The king summoned Pandits and discussed with them what steps to be taken to save the people from dreadful famine.

They told him that everything could be solved by requesting Rishya Shringa to conduct Yaga.

The king on their advice sent some beautiful women to the forest where Rishya Shringa lived.

It was the first time for him to see women, with great hesitation he moved with them freely.

He soon became one of them.

They brought him to Angada.

The king honoured him with all respects.

Suddenly the sky became overcast and there was down pour the King and the people were immensely happy to receive the sudden rain. After the Yagna the king requested Rishya Shringa to marry his daughter Shanta.

He accepted for the proposal, married Shanta and remained in Angada.

Later his father came and blessed the couple on hearing the life history of Rishya-Shringa, King Dasaratha felt happy and asked Sumantra to invite both Rishya-Shringa and his wife Shanta to pay a visit to Ayodhya.

Sumantra went to Angada and extended king Dasaratha's invitation to all and requested them to attend Asvamedha Yaga.

With king's permission he took Rishya-Shringa and his wife Shanta along with him to Ayodhya, Rsihya Shringa performed both Asvamedha Yaga and putrakamesti Yaga on the banks of Sarayu.

The yaga was coming to an end and every one was watching the sacred fire.

Suddenly a celestial body rose from the Yagna vedi holding a golden vessel of Payasam. King Dasaratha and others rose from their seats and offered salutations to the celestial body. He was the messenger of Lord Brahma.

He told king Dasaratha "Oh! king, the Gods have responded to your prayers and sent me to hand over the vessel of payasam.

Please accept this and distribute the same to your three queens.

They will bear you sons, for whom you have been praying the Gods for so many years".

King Dasaratha was so happy to receive the vessel of payasam and he took it to his three queens and asked them to share it. The three queens were happy and cheerful. After making salutations in their minds, to Gods, they took the sacred payasam.

Kausalya took half of Payasam and gave rest to Sumitra. Sumitra took half of it and handed over the rest to Kaikeyi. Kaikeyi took half of it and handed over the remaining Payasam to Sumitra again.

All the three queens were happy and cheerful. After some time in the month of Chaitra on Ninth day Kausalya gave birth to a boy.

Kaikeyi gave birth to a Boy.

Sumitra gave birth to twins.

The four sons of king Dasaratha were all the avatars of Lord Narayana the supreme God under the guidance of royal guru Vasishtha.

Jata Karma and Namakarna were performed for all the four sons of king Dasaratha.

Kausalya's son was named Rama.

Kaikeyi's son was named Bharatha.

Sumitra's sons were named as Lakshmana and Shatrugna.

The people of Ayodhya were happy and cheerful.

They sang and danced in the streets of Ayodhya.

They felt it was a great festival for them.

The four brothers grew up like moon.

From childhood Lakshmana who was beautiful and gentle greatly attached to Rama.

Rama was too fond of Lakshmana.

In the same way Shatrugna was attached to Bharatha

The royal guru sage vasishtha taught them Vedas and Sastras.

They mastered the arts of fighting in swords in bow and arrows, in archery and in other arts. They became Proficient in horse riding and in elephant riding and in driving chariots

like their father.

All the four brothers loved their father. The king and his queens were (mothers) the happiest people in the world.

Sage Valmiki portrayed Rama as a prince who possessed all good qualities.

He extended mercy to all and never took offensive.

He was considerate and compassionate towards his enemies.

He was kind and generous. He respected elders.

He never wounded the sentiments of others

He always remembered the help given to him even by a small person or an animal.

He never boasted of the help he had given to others when he faced problems he maintained composure and stability of mind.

He showed reverence to wise men, to old people and to the people who followed old traditions. He never stayed away from the path of Dharma. He subordinated the two values possessions and passions to protect Dharma.

He always judged himself and his conduct by strict standards.

Sometimes Rama was so much depressed. Fate haunted him.

He was banished. He lost his father. His wife Seeta was abducted. His dear friend Jatayu lost his life in protecting his wife Seeta from the clutches of Ravana.

In his anger he tried to smash the mountains and dry up the rivers and seas.

He controlled his anger at the calm appeal of his beloved brother Lakshmana.

Such great Rama reached the age of sixteen.

King Dasaratha began thinking of celebrating his marriage.

He started consulting the royal Gurus and the important courtiers.

Suddenly sage Viswamitra walked into the court of kind Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha welcomed the sage worshipped his feet and offered hospitality. After pleasant talk sage Viswamitra told him "Oh! King, I have come here to request you one thing, I hope you will not disappoint me. For the sake of humanity, I am conducting Yagna in my Ashramam. Two Rakshasas Maricha and Subahu, the followers of ten head Ravana of Lanka, attacked Yagnasala and destroyed it by pouring blood and flesh. I want Rama's help to kill them. Please send him with me. By killing them he will be known in the three worlds. Please send Rama with me". King Dasaratha was shocked.

He could not live without Rama for a single day. He began thinking that Rakshasas were very powerful and in the war against them Rama might be killed and he could not live

without Rama. King Dasaratha in a Pathetic voice told sage Viswamitra "Oh! revered saint, Rama is so young how can he fight with powerful Rakshasas. I will come and help you with my powerful army. I will kill them and make the Yagna successful. Please excuse me. I cannot send Rama. How can I send young Rama with you to fight against mighty Rakshasas. Once again I request you to excuse me".

Sage Viswamitra become furious and his eyes became red and said "Oh! king you have promised in the beginning. Now you are going back on your word. Ikshavakus never violated the promise once they made, you are violating the traditions of the sacred and famous family".

The royal guru sage Vasistha who was keeping silent all the while came farward to tell something to king Dasaratha "Oh! king you know the power of Viswamitra. He can easily destroy the Rakshasas by his tapas shakti. He wants Rama to get the name and fame in all the three worlds. By accompanying the sage, Rama will be in a position to know more about the art of fighting and the use of weapons. Please send Rama with him". King Dasaratha accepted his advice.

The king told sage Viswamitra, that Rama would be accompanied by his brother Lakshmana. King Dasaratha told Rama "Rama follow sage Viswamitra and carry out his instructions without any hesitation. Do what ever he asked

you to do" Every one in the royal court was happy about it. Rama and Lakshmana followed the great rishi Viswamitra. Rama and Lakshmana as disciplined students followed the great master Viswamitra one behind the other.

They reached the banks of Sarayu.

Sage Viswamitra asked Rama to take water in his palms.

He taught him the two mantras Bala and Atibala once Rama knew the mantras, neither hunger nor fatigue nor thirst would trouble him in his life.

After the Initiation of this Mantra Rama looked more powerful.

Bala and Atibala were the sacred mantras of Lord Brahma. They were fit for initiation to a noble person like Rama.

The night approached, Rama and Lakshmana prepared the bed of grass for their guru. They both slept on the ground for the first time in their life. They felt happy and comfortable. They woke up in the next morning and took bath in the river Ganga. They performed Sandhya and then offered Arghya to the Sun God.

All the three entered Kamashrama.

Rama saw many rishis in deep meditation. He asked his guru to enlighten him of the greatness of Ashramam,

"Oh! Rama Lord Mahadeva's wife Sati attended yagna

performed by her father Daksha Prajapati. He insulted her and her husband Mahadeva.

He did not offer havis to Mahadeva.

By doing so he insulted her and her husband before all other Gods and Rishis.

She could not bear the insult. She entered Yagna fire and gave up her life.

In the next birth she was born as Parvati, the illustrious daughter of Himavan.

Mahadeva after having lost his wife went to Himalayas for meditation.

Without disturbing Mahadeva's meditation Parvati served him as honoured guest. Indra the Lord of Gods wanted to unite Mahadeva and Parvati once again.

He sought the help of Kama to unite them when Parvati was standing before Mahadeva with folded hands. Kama shoot his arrow of flowers which struck the heart of Mahadeva. He saw kama standing before him. He got angry and opened his third eye of fire, which burnt Kama into ashes.

Kama lost his appearance. Now he is called Ananga. So this ashramam is called Kamashram"

The rishis knew who Rama was, they honoured him and extended hospitality.

Tataki Vadha

Sage Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana crossed the river Ganga and entered thick forest. The Ayodhya princes heard a big roar, which frightened the animals and human beings. The animals were not in their original mood. The birds made hoarse cry and no soft music was emanated from their throats. There was frightening silence.

Rama asked about the place and its silence. Sage Viswamitra was happy to tell, the background of this great darkness and silence.

"Oh! Rama once there flourished two kingdoms here.

They were Malada and Karusha.

They were fertile and the people were happy.

The two kingdoms were occupied by a rakshasi by name Tataki. In her previous life she was the daughter of Suketu.

Suketu had no sons so he did tapas to get a son. But Lord Brahma granted him a daughter who had the strength of one thousand elephants.

She married a Yaksha by name Sunanda. They had one son, Maricha. After the death of Sunanda, Tataki along with her son Maricha went to Agastya's ashramam. She behaved in an unusual manner in the ashramam.

At one time she wanted Agastya to be her man. Agastya got

wild and cursed her to be Rakshasi.

Since then she occupied Malada and Karusha killing all human beings, she turned the two kingdoms into a forest.

You are the only person who can kill her.

You need not hesitate to kill a woman.

Several people killed women to establish Dharma. Mandara the daughter of Virochana wanted to destroy the world. Indra killed her. The wife of Bhrigu and the mother of Sukra wanted to destroy Indra. Lord Narayana himself killed her. You need not hesitate to kill Tatak.

Do it for the sake of humanity and to establish Dharma".

Rama replied "Oh! guru, my father asked me to do what ever you ask me to do. I will do it following your instructions. Rama killed Tatak and liberated Tatakavani from the clutches of Rakshasas.

Every one was happy about it.

In early days sage Viswamitra did tapas and acquired many astras from Lord Mahadeva. They were 1. Dharma Chakra 2. Kala Chakra 3. Vishnu Chakra 4. Indra astra 5. Vajrastra 6. Suram 7. Brahma Siro astra 8. Ihika astra. 9. Brahma astra 10. Dharma Pasam 11. Kala Pasam 12. Varuna Pasam 13. Agneya astram 14. Vayu Vastram 15. Hayasiras astram 16. Kruncha astram 17. Gandherva astram 18. Sowra astram

19. Madana astram 20. Mohana astram 21. Nanda sword.

Now sage Viswamitra wanted to pass them on to Rama for his future wars against Rakshasas. After taking bath Rama sat facing the East. Sage Viswamitra taught them all to Rama one by one. The method by which he should invoke the astras, the way to despatch them and the way to withdraw them.

All the presiding deities of the astras, came and stood before Rama.

They folded their hands and said "Oh! Rama we are your slaves. We are here to carry your instructions."

Rama replied "Please reside in my mind all the time and come to me when I want your help". The deities of astras disappeared.

Then Viswamitra asked Rama to teach the same to his brother Lakshmana.

Siddhashramam

Sage Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana approached a sacred place called Siddhashramam. Viswamitra decided to perform yaga there. He narrated the sacredness of ashramam. Lord Narayana took birth as Vamana the son of Kashyapa Prajapati and Aditi.

Aditi was sad because her sons Devas were suffering in the hands of Asuras.

To make Aditi happy Lord Narayana took the birth of Vamana. Asura king Bali conquered the three worlds. He caused so much of suffering to the Devas. Indra who lost his kingdom, approached Lord Narayana for help.

After taking avatar of Vamana, he went to Bali and asked him to grant him three paces of Land. Bali had earned a great name as king who lavishly offered danas to various people. When Vamana asked him three paces of Land he was so happy to grant his request Vamana assumed Visvarupa, with one foot he covered the entire earth, with another foot he covered heaven, with third foot he put it on Bali's head and crushed him down.

So this place had become sacred and many rishis settled here to do meditation. So sage Viswamitra decided to perform yagna in Siddhashramam.

The rishis welcomed sage Viswamitra and the Ayodhya princes. Viswamitra took Diksha and sat on Dharbhasanam. The other rishis met Rama and told him. "Oh! Rama, sage Viswamitra has taken Diksha. He will observe silence for six days and six nights.

The yaga will continue all six days. You have to protect Yagnasala". Both Rama and Lakshmana went round yagnasala watching it carefully all around.

Nothing happened in all the five days.

On the sixth day the Rakshasas started their game of attack. The sky became dark.

There were shouts and roaring. The rakshasas carried pots of blood and flesh. They were ready to pour them on Yagnakundi. Rama observed them and immediately acted on them.

He took Manava astra and aimed at Maricha. It carried him one hundred yojanas and threw him into the sea.

Rama sent Agneyastra which killed Subahu. Lakshmana killed all other rakshasas. Rama and Lakshmana thus protected Yagna. Yagna was complete and successful.

There was great joy among rishis. They blessed both Rama and Lakshmana.

Sage Viswamitra felt immensely happy and blessed the Ayodhya princes.

He decided to take them to Mithila kingdom.

The story of Kusha

On their way to Mithila kingdom, they reached Shrona river by sun set.

On the banks of Shrona river there was a beautiful forest with various flowers and fruits.

The rishis in the forest honoured sage Viswamitra and performed agnihotra.

Rama was very much impressed by the beautiful forest with flowers and fruits.

He requested sage Viswamitra to enlighten him on the sacredness of the forest.

Sage Viswamitra was very much pleased by the request of Rama and narrated the story of that place "Oh! Rama, once there lived a great rishi by name Kusa. He was a great tapasvi and never violated the path of Dharma. He always honoured good people. He married a noble lady the daughter of Vidharbha king. She gave birth to four eminent sons namely Kushamba, Kushanabha, Adurtharajasa and Vasu.

Kusa called his sons, explained the Dharma of the land and asked them to establish Dharma in four cities to be built by them. Strictly following the instructions of their father the four sons set on their work to build four cities. Kushamba built Kausambi Nagar.

Kushanabha built Mahodayapura.

Adurtha rajasa built Dharmaranyam.

Vasu built Girivraja Puram.

This is Magadha kingdom. The land is watered by river Shrona. This river flows from east to west. This area belongs to prince Vasu. The second brother Kushanabha who was noble in character had married an Apsarasa and had one hundred daughters.

These princesses were well versed in fine arts and they gained vast experience in song and dance. They moved freely in the beautiful garden like stars in the sky.

Vayu, the god of wind saw them and expressed his desire to marry them all and to grant them life without death.

The young princesses laughed at his remark and said "Oh! God you are every where. You are also in the body of human beings without you no one can live. Why do you make us fools. We all worship our father. He is our God. We will marry a person whom our father decides you please go away from here".

Vayu become angry and cursed them all to become hunch back. With tears in their eyes they went home and stood before their father. They told every thing to him. The father Kushanabha felt happy that they have protected the honour and prestige of their family. He told them "You all observed patience. Patience is Dharma. It is yagna it is Satyam. It is honour. The entire creation is resting on Dharma. You have shown it to the world".

Somada was a Gandharva. She served a great rishi by name Chule for many years. She requested him to grant her a son. Her son was Brahma Datta. He was a great scholar and acquired many powers from gods. He ruled the kingdom of Kampilya.

Kushanabha wanted to give his one hundred daughters in marriage to Brahma Datta. After the marriage Brahma Datta touched each princess with his hand and accepted them all as his wives.

To their surprise, by his touch they lost their hunch back. Their mother-in-law Somada welcomed them all".

Sage Viswamitra concluded the story of Kusa and began telling the story of his father Gadhi. Kushanabha sent his daughters to the house of Brahma Datta.

He decided to perform Putra Kamesti yaga to get a son. While yaga was in progress, his father Kusha appeared before him and told him that he would be blessed with a noble son who would bring name and fame to the entire family saying this he disappeared and reached heaven. After some time Kushanabha had a son and his name was Gadhi. "Oh! Rama Gadhi was my father because I was born in Kusa's family. I was known as Kousika. I have a sister by name Satyavati, she married Ruchakuna. She reached heaven along with her husband. Her devotion to her husband turned her into a sacred river Kausiki Mahanadi. She is flowing in the Himalayan region. My sister is so dear to me. I cannot forget her love and affection. So I keep company with her. I spend my time in Himalayan region. Her son was Jamadagni. Parasuram is her grand son. Rama you have asked me to tell the sacredness of this land and the

people. I told you everything including my birth, my father, my sister and her grandson Parasuram. It is time for us to take rest".

The Story of Gangavataranam

From Shrona river sage Viswamitra, Rama, Lakshmana and other rishis reached river Ganga. They took rest on the banks of river Ganga. Early in the morning, they all took their bath and offered arghya to Sun God.

Rama wanted to know more about the sacredness of river Ganga. He requested sage Viswamitra to narrate him the sacredness of Ganga Mata. Sage Viswamitra was pleased to tell him the story of Ganga.

"Oh! Rama there was a king by name Himavanth. His wife was Manorama. They had two daughters most beautiful on earth.

The eldest daughter was Ganga. The second daughter was Uma. The Devas approached Himavanth and requested him to give his first daughter Ganga to make Devas happy in Heaven. Himavanth desired his daughter Ganga to make the three worlds sacred by flowing in all the three regions. So he happily handed over Ganga to Devas.

She became sacred in heaven and every one there worshipped her. Himavanth gave his second daughter Uma in marriage to Lord Mahadeva. Rama I told you how Ganga reached Heaven.

Now I will relate to you how she was brought to earth and later taken to Patalaloka.

Lord Mahadeva after marriage had a great desire to have conjugal relations with his wife Uma. They were leading that life for nearly one hundred years. They were not blessed with a son. Lord Brahma and other Gods were worried about Mahadeva and Uma's child. They approached Mahadeva and requested him to shower good looks on them. Lord Mahadeva released his shakti. This shakti passed through Agni and earth. On earth it was in the form of mountains, forests and rivers. Through which Kumaraswami was born. Uma got offended by the interference of Devas in their conjugal relations. She cursed Devas not to have children by their wives. She also cursed the earth that she would become the wife of many people. Lord Mahadeva who heard this curse, felt sorry for Devas and he moved towards North west of Himalayas to do tapas.

Ganga giving birth to Kartikeya

Lord Mahadeva the commander of Devas retired to North West of Himalayas to do tapas. The Devas were badly in need of a commander. They met Lord Brahma and requested him to grant them a commander. Lord Brahma told them that Uma's curse would not go waste. No Deva would be blessed with a son. He told them that if Agni would have conjugal

relations with Ganga in Heaven, they would be blessed with a son. The Devas approached Agni and requested him to honour the desire of Devas. Agni accepted their request. He passed Mahadeva's shakti into the body of Ganga. Ganga gave birth to a son. He was Kartikeya. All Devas wives gave him milk. He thus become the Commander of Devas".

"Oh! Rama now I will tell you about Sagara and Gangavataranam.

Sagara a righteous king ruled Ayodhya. His rule was based on Dharma. He never violated Dharma of the land. The people loved and respected him. He had two wives the eldest was Keseni and the second was Sumati. Sagara with his two wives went to Himalayas and spent many years in tapas.

Brughu Maha rishi appeared before him and granted his wish. He told Sagara "Oh! King, you will have sons. Of your two wives one will give you famous son and other wife will have sixty thousand sons. Let your wives choose one son or sixty thousand sons on hearing the words of Brughu Maharishi, Keseni desired to have one son who could continue the family line and rule the kingdom justly. Sumati wanted to have sixty thousand sons. Brughu Maharishi granted them both the wives and disappeared.

After some time Kesini gave birth to a son by name Asamanjasa. Because of his cruel behaviour he was banished.

His son Amsumanth was well behaved and was kind towards people. The people loved him and respected him. King sagara decided to perform Asvamedha yaga. He gave orders to make all preparations, his ministers gathered a beautiful horse for yagna. Yagna sala was built according to vastu sastra. Invitations were sent to all kings. Great rishis and Brahmans were invited veda Pandits were asked to perform Vedic rites. Every thing was done according to sastra. Yagna was performed on the land between two mountain ranges Himalayas and Vindhya. Yagna continued. Meanwhile Devendra in the guise of Rakshasa carried away Asvamedha to an unknown place. Every one saw Rakshasa carrying Asvamedha. King Sagara ordered all his sixty thousand sons to trace out the horse. They divided themselves into a number of groups and went round the world in search of horse. They could not trace the horse. Sagara ordered them to dig the earth and trace out the horse.

The sons of Sagara dug the earth in the East. They suspected every one and began killing innocent people who were on meditation. In the East they saw a huge elephant carrying the earth on its head. They made Pradakshanam to the elephant and moved to the south. They witnessed the something. Then they moved to the west and North. They witnessed the something also in those places.

Devas, Gandharvas, Asuras and rishis met Lord Brahma and reported the crimes committed by Sagara's sons in all the four sides of the earth.

Lord Brahma told them that they need not worry about the unhappy happenings. Lord Vishnu was there to protect the earth and he is staying in the North West as Kapila Muni waiting for Sagara's sons arrival. He would kill them all. On hearing this Devas and others felt happy and went back to their places.

The Sagara's sons moved to the North West and saw a muni sitting under a tree. They also saw a horse grazing on the grass very near to the sage. They were so happy to find the horse. They got wild. They rushed towards Kapila Muni carrying weapons to kill him. The sage was disturbed by their shouting. He opened his eyes. The rays from his eyes burnt them into heaps of ashes.

King Sagara waited for a long time. His sons did not come back. He called his grand son Amsumanth to go and find the where about of his sons and also the stolen horse. Amsumanth followed the path dug by his uncles.

In the east he saw the elephant carrying the earth on its head. He made Pradakshanam. The elephant bade him good luck. The same thing happened in South, in West and in North. In the North West he saw heaps of ashes. He saw a sage sitting

under the tree in deep meditation. With folded hands he made Pranam to the sage and worshipped him. Kapila Muni told him that he could remove the sins of his uncles by Ganga water. With Kapila Muni's permission, he took the horse and came back to yagnasala. He told everything to king Sagara. King Sagara performed Asvamedha sacrifice. But he failed in his attempt to wash off the sins of his sons. During the reign of Amsumanth he tried to bring Ganga down to earth but failed. His son Bhagiratha succeeded in bringing down Ganga to earth and then took her to Patala to wash off the sins of his ancestors.

Sage Viswamitra continued to relate the Gangavatarana "Oh! Rama, Bhagiratha the son of Amsumanth continued the family tradition of doing tapas to bring Ganga to earth. He continued tapas for many years. Lord Brahma appeared before him and asked him to worship Lord Mahadeva who could help him in his endeavour. Bhagiratha set his mind on Lord Mahadeva and Ganga. His deep concentration made Ganga to grant his wish. Lord Mahadeva appeared before him and accepted to receive Ganga. So Ganga from heaven descended and Lord Mahadeva was ready to receive her in his matted hair. Later he released her on earth. She followed Bhagiratha to Patala and flowed softly on the heaps of human ashes. Thus Bhagiratha succeeded in removing the sins of his ancestors

by performing Karma and offering Pithru Tarpanam. Thus Ganga the sacred river flowed in Heaven, on earth and in Patalaloka that was the greatness of Bhagiratha Ganga. Rama and Lakshmana were thrilled by the story told by sage Viswamitra.

The story of Vishala Nagara

Sage Viswamitra continued to tell the sacredness of Vishala nagara "Oh! Rama, In Krutayuga, Devas, sages, Rakshasas and others began thinking of avoiding disease, old age and death. Some one suggested to churn the milky ocean with the help of Vasuki Serpent and Mahendra mountain. Both Devas and Rakshasas churned the milky ocean. While churing many things appeared on the surface. First Halahalam (deadly poison) came out. Lord Mahadeva swallowed it. Then Goddess Lakshmi appeared Lord Vishnu took her hand as his consort. Then sacred cow appeared at was given to sage Vasistha. Then moon appeared finally Amrutam came out in a golden vessel. Lord Vishnu appeared on the scene and carried it away. Later he distributed it to Devas. There broke out war between Devas and Rakshasas Devas killed Rakshasas. Rakshasas mother Diti having lost her sons was in great depression. She wanted a son to kill Indra the leader of Devas. She took the permission from her husband Kashyapa to do penance. She did tapas for many years. During her penance

Indra served her loyally. She become pregnant. During her pregnancy she should not commit any mistake. One day she committed a grave mistake keeping her legs on pillow where she had to keep her head. Indra was waiting for this opportunity. He entered into her body and destroyed the baby in her womb. It broke into seven parts. Deti felt sorry for the mistake. She had committed and did not blame Indra.

She requested him to give life to these seven bodies and to make them as the rulers of Avaha, Samvaha, Pravaha, Ulvaha, Vivaha, Parivaha and Varavaha. Oh! Rama this is the sacred place where Deti did tapas and Indra served her loyally. Ikshvaku king by name Vishala welcomed sage Viswamitra. Rama and Lakshmana. They stayed there for a night and then proceeded to Mithila.

They reached the out stricts of Mithila.

Rama saw a beautiful ashramam.

But no one lived there.

There prevailed deadly silence in the Ashramam.

Rama asked his guru to tell him about ashramam.

Sage Viswamitra was so happy to tell him about Gautama's ashramam "Oh! Rama Gautama was a great rishi. He performed tapas for many years. Lord Brahma created a beautiful woman by name Ahalya. Gautama married her. They had a son by

name Sadananda. One day Indra saw Ahalya and decided to spend some time with her. He changed his garb into Gautama and approached her. Ahalya the wife of great Tapasvin, knew that he was not Gautama but Indra the Lord of Gods. She satisfied his desire. At the same time Gautama entered ashramam. He came to know every thing. He cursed Indra to lose his Kidneys and they had fallen on the ground. He cursed Ahalya to become a big mould. He told her that she would regain her original form after Rama entered the ashramam. Saying this Gautama left the ashramam. Indra approached Devas and requested them to help him. They pitied him and transplanted ram's kidneys to Indra. Oh! Rama the time has come. Please enter ashramam and bring back its original glory. Rama followed his instructions and entered into the ashramam. Ahalya reganised her original form Gautama appeared on the scene and took the hand of Ahalya. Both Rama and Lakshmana touched their feet and received their blessings.

Sage Viswamitra and Ayodhya Princes at Mithila

Sage Viswamitra, Rama, Lakshmana and others proceeded to Mithila the kingdom of Janaka.

King Janaka arranged every thing to perform yagna. Thousands of Pandits gathered in pendal.

Selecting a place sage Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana settled comfortably.

King Janaka came to know the arrival of great Viswamitra and he immediately proceeded to meet him. King Janaka met Viswamitra and touched his feet. He said "Oh Revered Viswamitra, today I am really happy you have come here. The Yagna is coming to an end in twelve days. I have found the fruits of yagna by your gracious presence. I am really honoured by your presence. All my desires will be granted since you have come here to bless me. I request you to stay here till the end of yagna".

Sage Viswamitra blessed him and offered a seat by his side. Janaka turned his eyes towards Rama and Lakshmana. Oh! saint these two young men seem to be as valiant as Gods.

They walk like big elephants. Their gait is like lion. They are graceful like tigers and bulls. Their eyes are wide and beautiful like the petals of Lotus. They look like celestial Gods. Have they come from heaven. I am sure they have come from here only to make me happy and my family members too. They look like royal princes. How could they follow you and walked with you in the forest. I feel I have honoured by their presence".

Sage Viswamitra told him "Oh! Janaka, they are Rama and Lakshmana the illustrious sons of king Dasaratha of Kosala. They helped me in completing my yagna at Siddhashram. They

killed two Rakshasas Maricha and Subahu. They want to see the great bow of Mahadeva, which you have been guarding and worshipping for generations. They are great archers". Sadananda learnt from Viswamitra that Rama's entry into Gautama's ashramam turned every thing normal. Both husband and wife united again. Sadananda was so happy that his father and mother united again by the grace of Rama's touch.

Sadananda was a great admirer of Viswamitra. He related the greatness of Viswamitra to Rama and Lakshmana "Oh! Rama, Viswamitra known as Kausika belonged to Lunar race. He ruled his subjects well. He was known all over as good king. Once he went on tour with his army. He visited many holy places and ashramams of great rishis. Where ever he went he was well received by people and great saints once on his way he saw the ashramam of sage Vasishtha. It was well maintained. The trees were full of flowers and fruits. Deers and tamed animals moved together merrily. Siddhas, Gandhasvas and Kinnaras moved freely in the ashramam. He could hear the music of various birds. There was peace and tranquility in the ashramam. He saw some rishis doing tapas. Some were in deep meditation. He thought it was second Brahma loka. Kausika entered the ashramam.

Sage Vasishtha welcomed the king with all royal honours. He offered him fruits and water. They both discussed about general things and welfare of the people. Kausika wanted to take leave of Sage Vasishtha. Vasishtha requested him to stay back and accept his humble offering of feast. After long persuasion Kausika accepted to stay back.

Sage Vasishtha called his cow Shabala and asked her to arrange feast for king Kausika and his army. Shabala was Kamadhenu a divine cow. She rose from the milki ocean, when Devas and Asuras churned the milki ocean for Amruta. Shabala arranged grand feast to Kausika and his soldiers. Every one was happy about it Kausika requested Vasishtha to give Shabala to him. Vasishtha told Kausika that Shabala was his sister and she was part of his body and life He could not give her to him.

Kausika got angry and ordered his soldiers to take the cow by force. They took away the cow from ashramani. Shabala thought "Why Vasishtha is helpless and keeping quiet. He has lost interest in me. He is not making any attempt to liberate me from this wicked soldiers. "She skill fully liberated from the soldiers and come back to Vasishtha.

Shabala asked Vasishtha why he was helpless. He said "Oh! Shabala you are my sister. How can I live with out you. Kausika is king and he is having a big army. I am alone How can I fight with him. I am powerless before Kausika's big

army". Shabala told him "Oh! you are forgetting your Brahma power. King's power or any astra power can not stand before it. Please use it. From my body I create army and that army will drive away kausika's army. Now you observe it." Saying these words she released thousands of soldiers from her body. They defeated and drove Kausika's army. Kausika entered his palace crest fallen. He asked his one hundred sons to go and destroy Vasishtha's ashramam and bring back the cow. These hundred sons were defeated and driven out.

Kausika gave up his King ship and went into the forest to do tapas. He did tapas for many years. Lord Mahadeva appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Kausika requested him to give powerful astras to fight against his enemies. Lord Mahadeva granted him what all he wanted. Thus securing powerful astras Kausika attacked Vasishtha. Vasishtha with his Brahma Danda destroyed all the powerful astras used against him. Kausika finally came to know that Brahma power was powerful and greater than astras Like Vasishtha he decided to become Brahma rishi.

Kausika was disturbed many times.

Trisanku :-

Kausika went into the forest and spent one thousand years in deep meditation Lord Brahma appeared before him and declared him as Raja rishi. All Devas and rishis recognised

him as Raja Rishi. Kausika was unhappy over this recognition as Raja rishi. Again he went into deep meditation. This time Ikshavaku king Trisanku spoiled his chances. The king had a desire to go to heaven directly. He approached his royal guru Vasishtha to perform yagna for the same purpose. The sage refused to do it. Then the king approached one hundred sons of Vasishtha. They also refused to do. Then he approached Kausika. He accepted to do it. He performed yagna and sent Trisanku to Heaven. The Devas never allowed him and they threw him down. Kausika got angry and tried to create another heaven. The Gods with folded hands stood before him and requested him not to work against God's creation on their request he did not create another heaven but allowed Trisanku to remain as one of the stars in the sky. This was the first brake in his tapas to achieve the recognition as Brahma rishi.

Ambarisha :-

Ambarisha was the king of Ayodhya. He was performing Asvamedha Yaga. Indra stole the horse from Yagnasala. The yaga pandits advised the king to offer human sacrifice. The king met sage Ruchika and told him every thing. He offered one lakh cows besides gold. Ruchika told him that he could not part with his eldest son. After hearing this Ruchika's wife told the king. She could not part with her last son. The father supported the eldest son. The mother supported the last son.

The middle son by name Sunnasepa come forward to offer himself as human sacrifice. The king paid the parents what he had promised and took Sunnasepa along with him. They spent the night in Kausika's ashramam. Sunnasepa fell at the feet of Kausika and requested him to save his life. Kausika promised him. He advised him to utter a mantra at the time of sacrifice. He revealed that mantra in his ears. At the time of sacrifice Sunnasepa uttered the mantra. Both Indra and Agni were pleased with his prayer and saved his life. This was the second break in his tapas to achieve recognition as Brahma Rishi.

Menaka :-

Kausika as usual was going to river to take bath. He saw Menaka taking bath in the same river. Suddenly he found change in his mind and body. He looked at Menaka and asked her to give him company in his ashramam. They lived together for ten years. After ten years he realised his mistake. He felt sorry for keeping company with Menaka forgetting his aim of achieving the recognition of Brahma Rishi. He asked Menaka to leave him at once. This was the third brake.

Rambha :-

Kausika now conquered all his senses, destroyed his ego, gave up food, just lived on breathing. He began doing tapas standing on one leg for many years. Devas wanted to disturb him by sending Rambha. Kausika knew it and sent her back. His

tapas brought many changes in the nature. Devas and others were frightened. They approached Lord Brahma and requested him to grant his wish. Lord Brahma appeared before him and addressed him as Brahma rishi Viswamitra. Sage Vasishtha was also there and he recognised him as Brahma rishi. From now on Kausika would be called Viswamitra the friend of the world". Sage Viswamitra felt happy.

Thus Sadananda the great admirer of Viswamitra concluded the life history of great rishi Viswamitra. Both Rama and Lakshmana felt happy to know the glorious history of their guru.

King Janaka narrated the sacredness of Mahadeva's bow. "Daksha Prajapati performed a great yagna. He invited all Devas and great rishis except his daughter Sati Devi and son-in-law Lord Mahadeva. He offered Havis to all Devas but not to Lord Mahadeva. He insulted his daughter Sati Devi before Devas and great rishis. She could not bear the insult. She entered yagna fire and gave up her life. Every one was taken a back. Lord Mahadeva got angry. He took the bow and walked into yagnasala. The Devas never came to the rescue of Sati Devi. Mahadeva looked at them and said "Since you kept quiet, allowing the insult and injustice to be done to me regarding Havis, I cannot leave you, I will separate your heads from your bodies with this bow". They all fell at his feet and begged him

to excuse them. He excused them and handed over the bow to Devaratha who belonged to my family. That is the sacredness of Lord Mahadeva's bow".

King Janaka was childless.

He was ploughing the land to perform yagna to be get children while ploughing the land.

He saw a beautiful child in the furrow and took the child home.

He named her Seeta. To him she was Goddess Lakshmi a great Pativrata. He decided to give her in marriage to a great hero who could bend and string Lord Mahadeva's bow.

Many kings came and tried to bend it.

But they failed in their attempt.

King Janaka addressed Viswamitra.

"Oh! great rishi, you said these royal princes are good archers let them try with Mahadeva's [bow]

The king ordered his men to bring the great bow to the main hall.

Five thousand men dragged the bow and brought it to the main hall.

The great bow was worshipped with flowers and incense every day by royal princesses with the permission of his guru sage Viswamitra Rama took the bow in his hands.

Holding it with his left hand.

He bent it with his right hand to string it.

He broke the bow into two halves.

King Janaka said "Oh! sage I cannot believe it. This Rama is the greatest among men. My daughter Seeta is fortunate to be the wife of Rama. These royal princes are under your control. Please give me permission to inform the great success of Rama to his father king Dasaratha. I want to celebrate the marriage of Seeta and Rama as early as possible".

Taking permission from Viswamitra, King Janaka sent his royal messengers to convey the happiness to king Dasaratha of Kosala.

The messengers of Mithila took three days and three nights to reach Ayodhya the capital of Kosala. They addressed the king like this "Oh! king, Janaka the king of Mithila sends his regards to you. He wants to know the welfare of your people and your kingdom. He wants us to convey the message to you. " I have a daughter by name Seeta. I have announced to the world that she would be given in marriage to a great hero who could bend and string Lord Mahadeva's bow. Your illustrious and great son Rama lifted the bow, bent it and string it. He broke it into two halves. Many kings tried and failed in their attempts. Your son won the hand of my daughter. I want to celebrate the marriage of Seeta and Rama as early as possible. Please attend the marriage with all your people to

bless the couple. I am sending this information and invitation on the approval of the great rishi Viswamitra".

King Dasaratha was spell bound

He was so happy about the news.

The news soon entered Anthahpura.

The three queens and others were happy.

Dasaratha looked towards Vashistha, Vamadeva and others and sought their approval.

They were so happy about the news.

They expressed their desire to attend the marriage. All arrangements were made for the marriage.

King Dasaratha and his three queens, Vasishtha, Vamadeva, ministers and others in their respective carriages moved towards Mithila.

It seemed entire Ayodhya was moving towards Mithila.

After receiving the news of king Dasaratha coming to Mithila, king Janaka made all arrangements for their stay in the capital.

In the big royal hall the marriage function was arranged.

The people from Ayodhya sat in their respective places.

In the same way the people of Mithila sat in their respective places.

King Dasaratha, his three queens and sons entered the marriage hall from one side.

Janaka and his royal party entered the marriage hall from other side.

Vasishtha traced the royal line of Ikshvakus and asked king Janaka to give his daughter Seeta in marriage to Rama the great son of Dasaratha of Ikshvaku family.

Sadananda traced the royal line of Janaka and asked King Dasaratha to allow his son Rama to marry Seeta the daughter of Janaka. King Janaka, his wife and Seeta slowly walked towards Rama.

Janaka placed the hand of Seeta in the hands of Rama and poured the sacred water, chanting the sacred mantras of Vedic marriage.

Janaka said "Oh! Rama, this dear daughter of mine Seeta will be from now onwards your life partner. She will walk in the path of Dharma with you. Accept her and take her hand in yours. May you both be blessed by every one assembled here and the Gods above. Seeta is not an ordinary woman. She is great Pativrata. She will be like shadow to you. Please accept her as your wife". Thus Janaka placed Seeta in the hands of Rama.

In the same way Seeta's sister Urmila was given in marriage to Lakshmana.

King Janaka's brother Kusadwaja was the king of Sankhaya kingdom. He had two daughters namely Mandavi and Sutakriti.

Mandavi was given in marriage to Bharatha.

Sutakriti was given in marriage to Shatrugna.

Every one on both sides were happy.

The excitement of wedding was over.

The night went off peacefully.

The next day after the marriage sage Viswamitra blessed all the four couple.

He took leave of every body and went back to his ashramam in Himalayas.

Back to Ayodhya

King Dasaratha and his party with newly married couples took leave of King Janaka and his brother Kusadwaja and went back to Ayodhya. On the way king Dasaratha observed ill Omens.

The birds were making strange noises and they moved as they liked with out an order.

The animals also behaved in the same way.

King Dasaratha was upset and he asked royal guru sage Vasishtha the reason for these ill omens. Sage Vasishtha told him "Something fearful is going to happen. The flying of birds indicate this danger. But the animals are making

Pradakshanam. It indicates no danger. Any how we shall watch and see".

As they were talking, a sudden gale blew over them.

The sun was covered with dark cloud and suddenly there prevailed darkness.

A person wearing the garb of ascetic appeared before them holding an axe.

He was Parasurama the son of Jamadagni. Jamadagni was the son of Satyawati the sister of sage Viswamitra.

Akshatriya king Karthaviryarjuna killed sage Jamadagni.

Lord Narayana took the avatara of Parasurama killed all Kshatriyas and offered tarpanam to his father.

He heard that Rama broke Lord Mahadeva's bow.

He wanted to test him.

He met him on the way and said "Oh! Rama I know your strength you broke the bow of Lord Mahadeva. Now I have the bow of Lord Narayana which was given to my father Jamadagni. You take the bow of Narayana and break it. Then I will recognise you as a great archer. In case you fail, we shall fight with each other. Take this bow from me". While Rama and Parasurama were in deep conversation king Dasaratha lost hopes and he was in daze.

Rama took the bow from the hands of Parasurama. Parasurama felt that his power and strength ebbing away from his body.

Then he recognised Rama as Lord Narayana. He made salutations to him and went back to Mahendra Parvat.

Rama woke his father Dasaratha up. He was so happy that nothing happened between Rama and Parasurama.

So king Dasaratha and his marriage party reached Ayodhya. Every one was happy in the capital.

Rama was the ideal son of king Dasaratha and Kausalya.

Seeta and Rama were devoted couple.

Seeta was ideal wife of Rama.

She was devoted to Rama.

Rama was devoted to her.

Each dwelt in the heart of others.

They were like Lakshmi and Narayana

They lived happily in Ayodhya.

Ayodhya was happy with them.

II

AYODHYA KANDA



II. AYODHYA KANDA

Rama's Coronation Ayodhya Kanda

Rama had many good qualities.

He was handsome and had pleasing manners.

His talk was soft and affectionate.

If some one rebuked him, he never replied in the same way.

He would always remember the help given to him, whether it was big or small.

As Kshatriya he mastered archery and other arts.

He was extremely intelligent.

He knew how to talk with the people.

He knew his powers but never exhibited them.

His religion was to speak the truth.

He would never tell a lie.

He was the first person to share the troubles of others.

Every one loved him and respected him.

He was the very life of the people of Ayodhya.

He was the paragon of virtue.

He was the jewel in the family of Ikshvakus.

He was trained and taught by great rishis like sage Vasishtha and Viswamitra.

He knew how to talk and convince people.

He was a good friend to those who approached him for help.
He protected them and never abandoned them his ultimate aim was to establish Dharma.

King Dasaratha always thought of Rama.

He felt he was becoming old.

He decided to hand over the ruling power to Rama making him as Yuvaraja.

He thought that Rama would rule better than himself.

He thought that Rama was the best among men.

He was best suited to rule Ayodhya.

King Dasaratha consulted Raja guru Vasishtha and other elders of the kingdom.

He knew that something bad might happen to him.

His stars were not favourable to him.

He thought that bad days were coming nearer.

His end might happen at any time.

He sent messages to all kings and chiefs to assemble in Ayodhya to discuss important matter.

They all met in the council hall, except the kings of Kekaya and Mithila.

The two kings did not receive Dasaratha's message.

King Dasaratha addressed the gathering "Oh! great men who

assembled here. I want to bring to your kind notice an important thing to be discussed. The kingdom of Kosala was ruled by my ancestors who belonged to Ikshvaku family. I followed them in ruling the kingdom. I never deviated from the path of Dharma. I have become old. Something bad may happen to me at any time. So with the approval of all of you I want to make Rama as Yuvaraja. He has all good qualities to rule the kingdom. I think he is superior to me in ruling the kingdom. I want your approval for Rama to ascend the throne".

All the kings and chiefs rose from their seats. In one voice they gave their approval. They said "Oh! King, your son Rama is noble. He is truthful speaking, truth is his religion. All good and great qualities are found in him. He is not an ordinary man. By his talk he makes every one happy and cheerful. He has patience like mother earth.

In intelligence he is like Brihaspati.

In valour he is like Indra. He is the embodiment of Dharma. His conduct is faultless. He is happy to see the greatness in others. He never insulted any one either by his talk or by his action. He treated pleasure and pain on equal terms. He is proficient in every field. He is known in all the three worlds. He is master of Vedas and Sastras. He is jewel among Ikshvakus. Every one of us used to think of Rama every day. We pray God like this "May Rama live long. May no evil be

fall on him". We are really happy to see Rama as king of Kosala. Please crown him as king of Kosala early." King Dasaratha was thrilled by the words of Kosala people. He immediately gave orders for Rama's coronation.

Sumantra gave orders to keep the city neat and decorate all parts of the city with flowers, plantain leaves and banners.

Each house was decorated with mango leaves, flowers and various rangoli colours.

The entire kings way looked like flower carpet. Sage Vasishtha and Vamadeva gave instructions to gather all things necessary for coronation. Both men and women of Ayodhya were in happy mood and they wore beautiful clothes. The queens in the royal palace were also in happy mood.

They made their own preparations for Rama's coronation.

Bharatha and Shatrugna were in Kekaya kingdom. They went with their uncle Yudhajit.

The two brothers were not aware of Rama's coronation. Deliberately king Dasaratha wanted to keep Bharatha away from Ayodhya.

He anticipated some danger from Bharatha's side.

It was only his fear but not true.

He expressed the same before Rama.

King Dasaratha summoned Rama to him palace.

Rama went there and touched his feet.

Dasaratha embraced him again and again and said "Oh! Rama I want to talk to you personally, so I have sent for you. I am getting old. I ruled this kingdom for a long time, following the traditions of our ancestors of Ikshvaku family. I have performed many yagas and yagnas. I have helped devas in their war against asuras. I think I have done my duty in a proper way. I do not know when my end comes. Now-a-days I am getting bad dreams. My stars are working against me. Something bad may happen to me at any time. I cannot leave the kingdom and people without a king even for a day. So I have decided to make you as Yuvaraja. Tomorrow is the proper day for coronation. Please be ready to take up reigns from me. From today you must observe all the necessary rituals guided by Vasishtha".

Rama did not say any thing.

He took the dust of the feet of his father and went to his mother Kausalya.

Sumitra, Lakshmana and Seeta were already there in the palace.

After finishing her prayer Kousalya looked at all of them.

Rama approached her, touched her feet and said "Oh! Mother, Father asked me to take up the reigns of Kosala kingdom. He told me that coronation will take place tomorrow. He asked me to observe fast this night along with Seeta. I have come

here to take your blessings. Please bless me and Seeta".

Queen Kausalya was so happy. She took both Rama and Seeta in her hands and blessed them. Sumitra also blessed them.

Kausalya told Rama "Rama my child. I have been waiting for this day for a very long time. Rama my child, may you live long. May your enemies who stand in the way of your coronation perish. My prayers to Lord Narayana have been fulfilled".

On the instructions of sage Vasishtha Rama and Seeta observed diksha.

They performed puja to Lord Narayana and Goddess Lakshmi.

They slept on darbha grass.

They woke up and performed the morning oblations with sacred water.

Rama recited Gayatri mantra hundred and eight times.

He wore white silk garments.

Rama worshipped Brahmins who were in the palace.

Both men and women of Ayodhya expressed their joy in singing and dancing all through the night.

They were eagerly waiting for tomorrow's coronation of Rama.

There was joy every where in the city Ayodhya.

Manthara the servant maid of Kaikeyi observed the massive preparations for Rama's coronation and the excitement of the people.

She met the maid servant of Kausalya and asked about the excitement of the people.

The maid servant told her that Rama would be crowned as king of Kosala the next day.

She could not digest the happy news.

She immediately rushed to the palace of Kaikeyi and told her in acid language.

"This is not the time for you to lie down. The danger is approaching you. You and your son Bharatha will soon become the servants of King Rama. You think that old king loves you most. His love is false. He did not consider you and your son dear to him. He did not even inform you Rama's coronation. All preparations for coronation are being made without your knowledge. Rama will be crowned tomorrow. Wake up from your slumber. There is no time act immediately." Manthara took such liberties with Kaikeyi because Kaikeyi was brought up by her from her childhood. Kaikeyi did not take her words seriously.

"Oh! Manthara, why are you unhappy. You must feel happy now. Rama is dear to me. Both Rama and Bharatha are equal

to me. I am really happy to see Rama asking. On this happy occasion I offer you this chain. Take it and be happy".

Manthara was upset and refused to take the chain.

She could not control her anger.

She again attacked Kaikeyi.

"You stupid Kaikeyi you are closing your eyes. Your dear husband hatched a perfect plan to make Rama asking. He deliberately sent Bharatha to Kekaya kingdom. It is all pre plan to keep Bharatha away from the capital. He sent messages to all people but not to the king of Kekaya. Why? Can you not think why he kept your father in darkness. King is not your dear husband but your enemy. If Rama becomes king your son Bharatha will serve him as servant. At the same time you will be under the control of Kausalya. Kausalya will be the mother of king Rama. Then what is your position in the royal palace. You still think you are his dear wife, but you have been ignored. You still believe that Rama is righteous and loves your son Bharatha. He considered Bharatha as his rival. One day he will finish him. If you want to save your son Bharatha send him out of Kosala kingdom. Do you forget the insult you have hurled at Kausalya when the king was close to you. Do you think that Kausalya would forget all these insults. So you and your son Bharatha will surely face trouble from Rama and his mother Kausalya. Think over it again

Please wake up now. Protect the rights of your son. As mother it is your duty to protect his rights in the family. I remember once you told me that you saved your husband's life in the war between Devas and Asuras, for that he granted you two boons. Now it is time for you to request him to honour his words. He cannot go back now. You ask him to make Bharatha as king of Kosala and Rama to go to Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years. Please get up and decide".

Now Kaikeyi was speechless.

She could not find words to reply.

She began changing her mind.

Finally she came to the conclusion, what Manthara had said, was true.

She began thinking like this why king sent Bharatha to Kekaya kingdom.

Why the king did not inform her of Rama's Coronation?

Why the king kept it in secret ?

Where was the urgency to make Rama asking of Kosala?

Why the king did not send the message. To her father the king of Kekaya ?

Was it deliberate attempt to keep Bharatha away from the capital at the time of coronation.

Kaikeyi decided to act immediately.

Manthara who was keenly observing Kaikeyi was happy about the change in her out look.

She told her "My dear child Kaikeyi remove all your jewels, wear an ordinary Sari. Keep your hair dishevelled. Stay in Kopagriha keep it in dark. Spread a mat on the floor and lay on it. The king will come and request you the reason for your un happiness. Do not talk to him immediately. Take your own time. Let him come down and say, "I will promise what ever you want I will give" Then open your mouth, talk pleasantly and then demand the two boons".

Taking these instructions from Manthara, Kaikeyi entered Kopagriha and remained there till the arrival of king Dasaratha. After making all arrangements king Dasaratha hurried to the palace of Kaikeyi to inform about Rama's Coronation.

He entered the palace and looked around.

He could not find Kaikeyi.

The maid servant informed the king that Kaikeyi was in Kopagriha.

On hearing this he was taken back. He entered Kopagriha and went near her he spoke to her in affectionate voice.

"Oh, my dear Kaikeyi, I am pained to see you lying on the ground. Are you unwell, shall I send for royal Physician.

Did any one hurt your feelings. Please tell me, I will punish those people. What is in your mind please tell me. I cannot bear this suffering I can not live with out you. If you want anything from me I will give it. Please get up from the floor".

Kaikeyi opened her mouth and began talking "I am alright. No one insulted me. No one has done anything wrong to me. I want something concrete assurance from you. Will you assure me like that".

The king said "Oh! Kaikeyi, you know how much I love you. Of all the three queens you are dear to me. What ever you ask I will do it for you. I now swear in the name of Rama that I will grant you anything you want.

Rama is a part of my life. He is everything to me. Please tell me what you want".

Now Kaikeyi rose from the floor.

There was glow in her face and eyes.

She succeeded in her game of securing the throne. The king had sworn in the name of Rama.

She said "Oh! King you sware in the name of Rama let Indra and other Gods bear witness to your words. Let the Sun, moon, stars, sky and planets be my witnesses. Let the heaven and earth listen to me. This great king of Ikshvakus never swerved from the path of Dharma. He has never spoken untruth. The king had agreed to grant me two boons. I have

saved his life in the war between Devas and Asuras. Then he granted me two boons for saving his life. Oh! King, you belonged to Ikshavaku family the Ikshvaku kings were famous in fulfilling the promises they made. I feel and trust you will not go back on your promise. If you refuse to grant them I will commit Suicide" King Dasaratha put his hand on her mouth and requested her not to utter such unpleasant words. Kaikeyi continued "You made all preparations for Rama's coronation tomorrow. I am asking you to sanction the two boons now. First you make my son Bharatha as king of Kosala tomorrow. Second send Rama to Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years. I want Rama to be banished to day".

King Dasaratha was surprised and stunned. He was speechless and fell down in a faint. He recovered after a while and said, "Am I dreaming. Is this a night mare. My mind is not in my control. I feel I am sinking. Is Kaikeyi speaking those words. Is it true". He looked at Kaikeyi. She was standing there to receive his answers.

He was shivering and could not stand erect. Suddenly his love towards Kaikeyi turned into anger and hatred.

He addressed her "Oh! Kaikeyi, you have turned dangerous and wicked suddenly. You have not revealed your wickedness till now. All these years I was in darkness. I failed to understand you properly. Why you punished me like this.

What sin Rama had done to you. Why you want to banish him. Why you want to separate Rama from me. He loved you so much. He gave the same respect to you as he had given to his mother Kausalya. How can Kausalya live without Rama. What made you to separate mother and son. What sin that they have done to you. You think of your son, but you do not think of Kausalya and Rama. You want to separate them and punish them. I can give up my kingdom, my wealth and everything but I can not live without Rama. When I looked at Rama my heart is full of joy. You were telling that both Rama and Bharatha were equal to you. How suddenly this change has come over your mind. Who poisoned your mind. Because of that you are torturing me and others. You are making every one in the kingdom sad and miserable. Do you think that the people will be happy without Rama. It will never happen. Listen to me I am really happy to make Bharatha asking of Kosala. I entreat you and beg you, please change the second demand of Rama's banishment to Dandaka forest. You know Rama is noble. He has many good qualities. You yourself praised him a number of times. How is it that change has come over you suddenly. I have never used harsh language against Rama. Now how can I ask him to go to Dandaka forest. If Rama goes away what is left for me in this world. Dear Kaikeyi I am at the end of my life please have pity on me and

change your demand, I can place every thing at your feet. But please grant me that Rama should never leave me and go away".

Saying this king Dasaratha again fell unconscious. He recovered after a while and said "Please Kaikeyi I request you once again to change the second demand".

Kaikeyi replied "Oh! King you gave me two boons. Now you are feeling sorry for granting those boons. You tell your people " I gave two boons to Kaikeyi some time back. Now I am withdrawing those two boons. You say this to your people. You belonged to famous Ikshvaku family. There were great people in your family who sacrificed their lives to keep their promises. But you have become Adharmi you want to make Rama as king. You and your wife Kausalya want to remain with Rama, deserting me and my son Bharatha. You are a wicked minded king. You deliberately sent Bharatha away from the capital. In his absence you want to make Rama asking. If you refuse to grant me second boon, I will commit suicide. Then the people will come to know what type of king they have I will be satisfied only by the second boon the banishment of Rama. Nothing short of it will please me".

The king said "Kaikeyi some one poisoned your ears. By nature you were not cruel. You never be haved like this. Some evil force has entered into your mind. Why you got the sudden idea of making Bharatha as king and banishing Rama to

Dandaka forest. Please save me, my people and my kingdom. Do you think Bharatha will accept the throne. He will never accept it. He cannot go against the rules of Ikshavaku kings. The convention says the eldest son should succeed to the throne Bharatha knows it. He is devoted to Rama so much. Do you think that Bharatha will accept the banishment of Rama. Oh! Kaikeyi how can I change the entire thing now. I have informed every one. They all accepted my proposal. All arrangements are made for tomorrow's coronation. With what face can I tell them, I have changed my mind that I will make Bharatha as king of Kosala and ask Rama to go to Dandaka forest for fourteen years. How Seeta the wife of Rama will think of me. The moment Rama goes away, it is the end of my life. Then you can rule the kingdom with your son Kosala will be ruled by a widow".

King Dasaratha had sleepless night in Kaikey's palace. She pressed him to announce the two boons she compelled him to summon Bharatha from Kekaya kingdom.

The king was helpless and was bound by Oath. He told her "You need not worry about coronation in the council hall tomorrow. The funeral ceremony of Dasaratha will be performed in the hall. I have no desire to face my people whose wishes I have ruined".

Kaikeyi was adamant.

She sent Sumantra to bring Rama to her palace. Sumantra went to Rama's palace. He told him "Oh! Rama king wants to talk to you. He is in the palace of Kaikeyi. Please follow me. I will take you in the chariot." Rama turned to Seeta and said "King and my mother Kaikeyi want to consult me on some important matter. She always thinks about my welfare. She never displeased me at any time. She is always kind to me. I do not know what they want to convey to me. It must be an important one. Wait for me here. I will come back soon".

Lakshmana who was standing at the door accompanied Rama to Kaikeyi's palace. Both entered Kaikeyi's palace. Rama looked at his father Dasaratha sitting on couch and Kaikeyi was standing near by. An unnatural silence prevailed there. The king bent his head and his eyes were full of tears. He never looked at Rama and never talked to him. Rama approached him and touched his feet with his both hands.

The king just uttered "Rama" and closed his eyes. The tears were rolling down from his cheeks. Then Rama approached Kaikeyi, touched her feet and asked her "Oh! Mother, Father seemed to be angry with me. He never looked at me and never talked to me. Have I committed any mistake. He never behaved like this. He is not an ordinary man to behave like that. I am afraid of bad news. Did you receive any bad news from Kekaya. I hope Bharatha and Shatrugna are safe. Please tell me why father is like that".

Kaikeyi was harsh in her talk "Rama king is not angry with you. He is not unwell. Bharatha and Shatrugna are safe. A matter of grave importance troubled his mind. He is not able to talk to you because of that grave matter. His attachment to you is great. The four letters "RAMA" refused to leave his lips. I will tell you what is troubling his mind. Some time back he helped Devas in their war against Asuras. At that time I saved his life. For that help he gave me two boons. Now I asked him to grant those two boons. After committing himself, he is trying to go back on his word. His love for you is making him to go back on his promise. Rama you know, once a man promises he should not go back if he does the gates of heaven will be closed. He will get a bad name among the people. Your father belonged to Ikshvaku family. If he goes back on his promise, he will earn a bad name in Ikshvaku family. You save your father from this predicament you must act boldly".

Rama replied "Oh! Mother you know me very well. Father is God to me. If the king wishes me to do something, I am ready to do. Nothing will stop me from obeying him. I can enter the blazing fire. I can drink poison with out any hesitation. I can drown myself into the sea. Father in my guru I can do any thing for him. Please tell me how to protect the honour of my father".

Kaikeyi with confidence said "Oh! Rama I demanded the king to make Bharatha as king of Kosala and you goto Dandaka forest for fourteen years". After hearing this Rama was greatly relieved and he said "Oh! Mother, who is Bharatha he is my dear brother. I am really happy to see him as king. Regarding me you need not have any doubts. Today I will leave Ayodhya and go to Dandaka forest".

Kaikeyi said "Rama you have to wear tree bark and deer skin. You should not have any royal insignia on your body".

Rama took the dust of the feet of his father and mother Kaikeyi. Then he went to the palace of Kausalya to take her blessings.

Rama went to Kausalya palace

She was sitting in her Puja room

She was doing constant Vratas and Pujas for the welfare of Rama.

She offered prayers to many Gods to protect Rama from evil forces.

After finishing her Puja, Kausalya turned and saw Rama standing near by and took him in her hands. He bent down to touch her feet. She lifted him and took him in her hands with tears in her eyes.

She spoke "Oh! Rama, today you will be crowned as king.

Please follow the foot steps of your ancestors in ruling the kingdom be righteous and good to all".

She placed some sweets before him and asked him to eat.

He was in disturbed mind.

He made up his mind to goto Dandaka forest.

In firm voice he told his mother "Oh! Mother a misfortune has fallen on you. Seeta and Lakshmana. It happened just now. The jewelled throne of Kosala is not for me. It belonged to my dear brother Bharatha. Father ordered me to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. To day I am leaving for the forest. I have come here to take your blessings. From to day on words I have to live on roots and fruits. Please excuse me I can not accept the sweets. You have placed before me".

Kausalya was taken aback and fell unconscious on the ground.

Rama lifted her up and placed her on couch. She looked at Rama and said "Dear Rama if only you had not been born to me. I would never suffer like this. Before your birth I suffered as a barren woman. After your birth and after seventeen years. I am suffering now. The life of barren woman is better than the separation. Your father neglected me for a long time. He did not take any interest in me. I thought that you as son would make up that loss. Though I am the eldest queen. I have seen insulted by my sister queens. You know all that. Now how can I live in the palace in the midst of those people. All my

prayers are only for your welfare. But they have proved fruitless. I feel I am the most unfortunate woman in the world. How can I live with out you. I will also come and stay with you in Dandaka forest." Saying this she wept for a long time. Lakshmana saw Kausalya weeping like a torrent.

He could not control his anger.

He said "Oh! Mother, I do not like this. King has lost his balance of mind. He has become a slave to wicked Kaikeyi. He lost the power of discrimination of what is good and what is bad. Is there any reason for the banishment of Rama from Kosala. Rama has not committed any sin. Did Rama rebel against father or his dear wife Kaikeyi. The king has become Adharmi, because of machiavellian scheme of cruel Kaikeyi. Is it Dharma. Did he not violate the rule that eldest son should succeed to the throne. Who is he to hand over the kingdom to a woman. Did he take the approval of the people. Oh! Rama the people are on your side. Give me permission. I will kill all those who oppose your coronation. I do not mind taking the king in my custody as prisoner. Rama you are gentle and soft spoken. You have been deceived by all. Oh! Mother Kausalya I am determined to do any thing to protect the rights of Rama. I am his brother and his slave. I am ready to do anything for him. I am just waiting for his word to act against wicked Kaikeyi".

Kausalya who was in tears, listened to the tirade of Lakshmana against old king and his dear wife Kaikeyi. She told Rama "Rama if you feel Lakshmana is right, please give him orders to act. Your father asked you to go to the forest. As mother who has given birth to you, I am asking you to stay back. If you respect your father. You must also respect your mother. Both father and mother are equal to you. You should not go to Dandaka forest leaving me alone in Ayodhya to the mercy of young Queens. I do not want the palace life. I want to be with you. What ever my son takes as food I will also take the same. If he sleeps on the ground, I will also sleep on the ground. If you do not hear me to stay back, I will put an end to my life".

Rama was silent all the while.

He allowed Lakshmana to give vent to his anger. He could not bear the suffering of his mother and brother.

He wanted to pacify them.

"Oh! Mother, it is not possible for me to disobey father's orders. I request you to excuse me. You must bless me and send me. The law composed by rishis says, the son should obey the orders of the father. For example Parasurama on the orders of his father Jamadagni killed his mother Renuka and again got back his mother. My ancestors followed the orders of their fathers. The scriptures say the son who obeys his father is sure of a place in heaven. They are not false. I

believe in them. I have decided to obey the orders of the king. Mother with your blessings I will be safe in the forest. I will come back soon and be with you all happily after completing fourteen years in the forest".

Kousalya said "Oh! Rama you speak of scriptures and ancient laws. The scriptures also say both father and mother are gurus. Mother is as sacred as father. So I command you not to go. You stay back with me. Without you, Rama, life is nothing for me. I can not live with out you Rama".

Rama touched the feet of his mother and said "Oh! Mother you know how the king ruled Kosala. He has all good qualities. He performed many yagas and yagnas. I can not question him why he wants to send me to the forest. It is not my business. I can only follow his orders. He has become old now. He has promised something to Kaikeyi. It is his duty to fulfill his promise. After my exit, he may require some help. He expects that help from you. I request you to be by his side in those difficult days. I need not tell more than this. Please bless me to go ".

Again he touched her feet and made Pradakshanam to her and then turned towards Laskhmana and said "Oh! My brother you know very well my devotion to Dharma yourself and myself always respected the laws made by our elders. We never violated them. The sons should respect the orders of the

father. Father has full control over the sons. He has all powers in his hands. He may favour the sons or he may not favour them. We as sons have no right to question him. Kosala kingdom is his. He can give it as dana to any one. We have no right to question him. You please understand this and give up your anger".

Both Kausalya and Lakshmana kept quiet. Rama continued "Oh! Brother I tell you fate had played on the lives of every one of us. All these years Kaikeyi was kind to us all. Suddenly we find a change in her. She never asked the king about boons. Now she demanded them. Why ? Why this sudden change cropped up in her mind. Can you explain? No, You can not. It is all played by fate. We are all slaves in the hands of fate. Fate is nothing but the will of Providence We are mere puppets in the hands of Providence".

Lakshmana was listening with head bent down. His eyes were swimming with tears.

Rama took him in his hands and wiped the tears from his eyes. Rama made it clear to his mother and Lakshmana that he would go to forest. They could not say anything.

Kausalya took Rama in her hands and said "Oh! Rama listen to me. I can not think of my son leading the life of mendicant in the forest. As you said fate had played on me, as mother I failed to change your mind. I will give you permission to go

to the forest. I will wait till you come back. As you said I will serve your father. Go my child, come back and make me happy. The gods whom I have worshipped will protect you in the forest. May the astras given to you by Viswamitra protect you. When Indra went out to fight with Vrita he was blessed by all Gods. May such blessings shower on you. When Garuda went to heaven to fetch Amruta his mother Vinata blessed him. Such blessings may shower on you. When Vamana went to Bali to ask three paces his mother Aditi blessed him. Such blessings may shower on you. May the forest Gods protect you". With these blessings she gave permission to her son Rama to go to Dandaka forest.

Then Rama went to Seeta's palace. Seeta saw him.

There was no glow on his face.

He looked worried and sad.

He could not hide his feelings.

She noticed that Rama was upset about something.

She went near him and asked him.

"Oh! My god, what happened to you? Why are you worried? Today you will be crowned as king. But you are not happy. What happened please tell me". Rama kept for a moment and said "Oh! Seeta, Father has separated all of us. He ordered me to go to Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years.

Some time back Kaikeyi saved him in the war between Devas and Asuras. For that he gave her two boons. Now she demanded them. He agreed to grant them now. One she wanted her son Bharatha to be crowned as king of Kosala. Second she wanted me to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. So I have come here to take leave of you. Please stay here and look after my old father and mother. I will come back after fourteen years. We shall meet again and be happy. I want to tell you something more. Bharatha will assume royal powers. Never displease him. Treat him as your own brother. Do not act against his wishes. He is the monarch, he may get angry. He may cause displeasure to you. Be calm and spend your time in doing prayers and vratas. Do not interfere in his rule. You stay here and wait for me". Seeta listened to him without a word.

She looked at him, moved towards him and told him" Oh! Rama what are you telling. Do you think that the present Situation is so light. You want to be away from me for a period of fourteen years. You are asking me to stay back to serve your old parents. What have I done. After our marriage I never offended you at any time. Why do you want to punish me like this. I know the rules of Dharma. My parents and teachers taught me the rules of Dharma. Every human being is allowed to enjoy or suffer the results of papa or Punya

which she or he has committed in previous birth. The wife is the half partner of her husband. She has to share good or bad along with her husband. When you are banished, I must also follow you into the forest. For a woman the husband is the only refuge. Not a father or mother or son. You know the rules of Dharma. I do not know why you asked me to stay back. When you walk in the forest I will proceed before you and clean the path for you by removing thorns and remove your pain. I will not give any trouble I will eat roots and fruits like you. I am not enamoured of palace life. I like forest life and want to see various animals, rivers, water falls, ponds and trees with various flowers and fruits. I will not stay back. Please take me with you. When my father placed my hands into yours, that means, I should be by your side. I should not be away from you. I remember some wise men told my father that I would spend some time in the forest during my life time. That idea was lingering in my mind for a long time. Do not stop me, I will come with you".

With tears rolling down from her cheeks, she embraced Rama. He removed her tears with his hands, took her nearer and said he would take her along with him. Lakshmana who was standing at the door heard Rama taking Seeta along with him, he fell at the feet of Rama and said he would follow them.

Rama accepted Lakshmana's request to follow him into the

forest with all weapons.

He asked him to distribute his wealth and thousands of cows to Brahmain and others. He asked him to bring the weapons given to him at the time of his marriage by king Janaka. The weapons were two powerful bows, two Kavachas two quivers and two powerful swords.

Rama kept them in the house of sage Vasishtha, on the instructions of Rama. Lakshmana brought all those weapons and invited all people to Rama's palace.

Lakshmana distributed Rama's wealth and cows to the Brahmans and others living in Rama's palace. Rama invited Suyagna the son of sage Vasishtha to his palace and gave away all his jewels. Seeta also gave her jewels, to the sage asking him to give them to his wife.

Meanwhile a poor brahman by name Trijata a great tapasvi on the advice of his wife met Rama and told him "Oh! Rama I am a poor brahman. I have many children. To feed there, I go into the forest, cut the wood with this axe, sell them and feed them every day. On the request of my wife I have come here to request you to give me something to protect my family". Rama liked him of his plain talk, gave him wealth and hundreds cows.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana were so happy after distributing their entire wealth. They asked palace men and women to

look after their mothers properly and to keep the palace neat and perfect till they returned to Ayodhya after completing fourteen years of exile.

All the three proceeded to Kaikeyi palace to receive the blessings of king Dasaratha.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana walked the distance. They reached the palace of Kaikeyi carrying their weapons. The people observed them walking on bare foot. They talked "Look at Royal princes walking on bare foot. Rama has to ride on elephant this day. But he is walking in the street with Seeta. We have not seen Seeta all these years. Now she is walking in the street like an ordinary woman. The king had become cruel to them. We thought that he followed Dharma all these years. Now he has become a slave to a demon wife. He has lost the balance of mind. He has become Adharmi. We can not remain in this kingdom. Rama is like mother root for this tree called humanity, all the people form the leaves, flowers and fruits of the tree called Rama. Let Demon Kaikeyi rule this country with no people in it".

Rama heard the people's comment. He did not react to their talk.

He simply walked towards Kaikeyi palace followed by Seeta and brother Lakshmana.

Rama entered the room where king was sitting on his couch.

Sumantra informed the king that Rama had come to receive his blessings before going into Dandaka forest.

All royal ladies were present at that time.

They were standing there with tears in their eyes. Only two people were cheerful on that occasion and they were Queen Kaikeyi and her servant Manthara. The king moved fast to embrace Rama, but he fell down senseless.

Both Rama and Lakshmana took him in their hands and placed him on the couch.

When the king regained his consciousness Rama touched his feet and asked him to bless him to go to Dandaka forest.

The king looked at Rama and said "My dear son Rama I have been deceived by Kaikeyi. My hands are tied by giving two boons to her. You have to do one thing now. You refuse to obey my orders, ignore the two boons, with the support of the people ascend the throne".

Rama cut short his speech and said "Please do not say like this. I will not allow you to break the Oath. I will spend fourteen years easily in the forest. I will come back and be with you all. Bharatha is my dear brother. You crown him as king of Kosala. What you have given to mother Kaikeyi, you must fulfill that promise. Do not get a bad name to Ikshvaku family. I will not allow you to break the promise. Do not worry about me. I will come back and be with you all. Then

we can lead a happy life". The king blessed all the three and asked Sumantra to take them in royal chariot.

Kaikeyi asked Seeta to change the royal dress. Sumantra before going out to get the chariot, he said "Oh! Queen Kaikeyi you are forgetting the code of conduct. You have flouted vedic principles of respecting husband as Lord and God. You consider your husband as a puppet and extracted two boons. Now you are burying the code of conduct in compelling Rama, Lakshmana and Seeta to wear ordinary cotton clothes. Seeta is not an ordinary woman. She came from a royal family. In your demand you asked only Rama to go to Dandaka forest. Lakshmana and Seeta are following him on their own will. Suddenly you have become wicked. You have inherited the qualities of your mother. Your mother teased your father and lost her life. You know how your mother died. Your father knows the language of insects, birds and animals. One day he had a talk with some unseen person and was laughing. His wife suspected him and teased him to tell the reason for his laugh. He did not answer. Then she committed suicide. Why you treat Rama cruelly. He always respected you as mother. You are not fair in asking Seeta to wear cotton cloth. She must live like princess even in the forest".

Sage Vasishtha chided her by saying in her two boons there

was no mention of Seeta. Changing her royal dress and wear ordinary dress. All courtiers supported sage Vasishtha. It was painful fare well.

The people of Ayodhya followed them upto the river Tamasa it was dark.

Every one took rest on the river bank.

While the people were in deep sleep, Rama wanted to move further south. He requested Sumantra to drive the chariot as fast as possible to river Ganga.

The Ayodhya people woke up in the morning and found Rama and others left them behind. With so much of disappointment they went back to Ayodhya.

After leaving Tamasa Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana crossed the rivers Vedasruti, Gomti and Shandrika.

They reached the borders of Kosala.

Rama took the earth in his hands and worshipped it and then made salutations to the famous city Ayodhya.

He said that he would come back after completing fourteen years and would join his parents. They proceeded further and reached the banks of Ganga.

The chief of Shringiberepura by name Guha, came to know the arrival of Rama. He rushed to him and touched his feet. Rama embraced him and accepted his hospitality. Guha said

"Oh! Rama, I am pleased to see you here with your wife Seeta and brother Lakshmana. I have brought rice, milk, curd, fruits and honey for all of you. Please accept them".

Rama replied in a polite way "I am pleased by your honour. As for this feast I am not in a position to accept it. I have taken an Oath to live on roots and fruits for a period of fourteen years. I wear tree bark and deer skin. I sleep on hard ground. Please excuse me for refusing your kind honour".

Rama and Seeta slept on the hard ground. Lakshmana, Sumantra and Guha kept awake to guard Rama and Seeta.

Lakshmana told Guha "You are really a great friend of Rama. I need not worry about the safety of Rama and Seeta in your kingdom. You are the true follower of Rama. Rama taught you what Dharma is. I am pained to see Rama in this condition. He is a great warrior who can defeat Indra. Rama has no equal in all the three worlds. He has no equal either in noble qualities or in knowledge or in protecting Dharma. My father made a mistake in banishing Rama. He can not live long without seeing Rama. He will soon die but Kausalya and my mother will survive. My father miserably failed in making Rama as king of Kosala. Rama the eldest son is not fortunate to perform funeral rites of my father".

All the three shed tears of sympathy. The next morning on the request of Rama Guha made all arrangements for Rama to cross river Ganga.

Sumantra went to Rama and said "Oh! Rama it never happened in Ikshvaku family, the eldest son going into the forest for a period of fourteen years. You are noble and great such a man is put in trouble. The forest people are fortunate to have you in their midst. They see Lord Narayana in you we the people of Ayodhya are not fortunate. We have sinned in previous birth. We are suffering now because of Kaikeyi. While uttering these words he shed tears".

Rama took Sumantra near him and spoke to him in gentle voice. "Sumantra you are devoted member in the family. You have to look after my father. He is very much pained by my separation. It is my duty to protect his honour. You know my nature. I simply follow the principles of Dharma. He can not go back on his promise made to Kaikeyi. It is my Dharma to protect his honour. My father led a happy life all these years. He never suffered like this in his life. It is all fate worked on every body. You being the devoted member of the family, it is your duty to serve him in hard days. Please convey my respects to father and all the three mothers. Tell them we are happy in the forest. Tell Bharatha I love him so much. Ask him to rule Kosala on the traditional lines of Ikshvakus. Tell Bharatha I have asked him to treat Kausalya and Sumitra on equal terms like his own mother Kaikeyi. These two women are far away from their sons. It is his duty

to look after the comforts of all".

Sumantra patiently heard what Rama had said. Then he spoke "Oh! Rama, Ayodhya will be like a woman who has lost her child. I can not enter the city with out you. People will ask me about you. I have to drag the empty chariot into the city of Ayodhya. The horses seem to be unwilling to drag the chariot with out you. I will not go back to Ayodhya. Please take me with you. If you refuse to take me I will commit suicide or drown into the river Ganga".

Rama was touched by his affection.

His eyes were full of tears.

He took him nearer and spoke gently.

"I know Sumantra your love and affection to me. I am sending you back to Ayodhya, because you have to look after my aged father and aged mother. Queen Kaikeyi will be waiting for you to know whether you have left all the three in the forest or not. To clear her doubt I am sending you back. Please go back to Ayodhya".

Rama pacified both Sumantra and Guha. Guha kept the boat ready for Rama to cross the river Ganga.

Seeta worshipped Ganga and then all the three entered the boat. Guha drove the boat on the river water. Sumantra went back to Ayodhya. In the middle of the river Ganga, Seeta

with folded hands prayed Ganga "Ganga Mata please take us safe to the other side of the river. Please grant us the safe return after fourteen years of exile. I will worship you again after our return. You are worshipped in all the three worlds. Please accept my prayers".

The three crossed the river Ganga. They proceeded towards Sangam where the river Jamuna joined Ganga. They settled under a big tree to take rest that night. It was the first night that the three were spending out side Ayodhya. Rama with heavy heart talked to Lakshmana. "Oh! Brother, Father will be in sorrow. But queen Kaikeyi will be happy. She will make her son Bharatha as king. After the coronation she may leave our father. She may not take any interest in him. He is old to bear all these sufferings. Father had committed a grave mistake in surrendering to her. I feel that Kama is more powerful than other three Dharma, Artha and Moksha. For the sake of his wife which father will abandon his dear son. Even an ordinary man will not do it. Father has done it in my case. It is all our fate. I feel Kaikeyi may give trouble to my mother and also to your mother Sumitra. Under the influence of his mother, Bharatha also may turn against them. So I request you to go back and protect them. Myself and Seeta will remain here. Lakshmana you know very well my power and strength. I would have opposed Kaikeyi. But I did not do because I was worried about Dharma. I could not become

Adharmi. So I kept quiet". Lakshmana replied in a soft voice "Oh! Brother you are right. There may be some trouble in Ayodhya created by queen Kaikeyi. I have no desire to go back. I have determined to serve you and Seeta. I have no desire to see my father, your mother, my mother Sumitra and my brother Shatrugna. With out you I can not live. Both myself and Seeta must be with you. I think Bharatha will look after father and our mothers well. He is a good man. He loves you so much and is devoted to you. He will not act against your wishes".

They all slept under the tree.

The next morning they proceeded to the ashramam of sage Bharadwaja.

They entered the ashramam and prostrated before sage Bharadwaja.

Sage Bharadwaja was a great rishi. He knew the past, the present and the future. He was well versed in Vedas and sastras. He taught them to his pupils.

Sage Bharadwaja told Rama "Oh! Rama I have been waiting for you for a long time with my inner eye I have seen your banishment. It is all the work of mighty power. My ashramam is beautifully located. If you want you can stay here".

Rama thanked him and calmly said "My Lord I am greatly honoured by your invitation. If I stay here the people of

Ayodhya will come to know of my stay here and they may make frequent visits to this place. I want to be away from them. Please suggest a place for me to live peacefully without any disturbance". Sage Bharadwaja understood Rama's fear of Ayodhya people. He told Rama "Oh! Rama from here in a short distance there is a mountain by name Chitrakuta. It is surrounded by beautiful trees, waterfalls and Lakes. It is a holy place and many rishis stay there. There are plenty of monkeys. You can be happy in Chitrakuta".

Sage Bharadwaja knew who Rama was and why he had taken birth as human being on earth. He was so happy that Rama visited his ashramam. The Ayodhya princes with Seeta took leave of Bharadwaja and proceeded towards Chitrakuta. They walked along the banks of Yamuna. Both Rama and Lakshmana collected bandboos and made a raft.

They crossed the river with the help of raft. They soon reached the other bank of the river. They saw Nyagrodha tree. As sage Bharadwaja asked them, they worshipped the tree.

Seeta made three Pradakshanams and said "Oh! Holy tree please protect my husband and grant us safe return to Ayodhya". They spent the night on the banks of river Yamuna. They woke up in the morning and continued their journey.

They reached Chitrakuta mountain. Both Rama and Lakshmana

selected a place to build a hermitage.

Lakshmana gathered wood and other material to construct hermitage.

With in a short period the construction of hermitage was done. Every one was happy about it. The people who were to live in royal palace were destined to live in a hut. Fate had played its game in the life of Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana.

Sumantra took leave of Rama and Guha. He went back to Ayodhya. He found perfect silence in the city and there was no activity. Everything seemed to be dull. The people were unhappy and there was frightening silence in the streets. As soon as they saw Sumantra, the people flocked round his chariot and asked "Where is Rama ? Did you not bring him. "He said "No, I felt them on the banks of river Ganga and came back here". On hearing the people wept loudly.

Sumantra went to Kausalya's palace. He saw king Dasaratha and told every thing about Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana. He described there life in the forest. He told him that Lakshmana was not happy about Rama's banishment.

The king would have stopped it but did not do it. The king was slave in the hands of his dear wife Kaikeyi. Rama never committed a sin but he was banished.

It was all pre-planned made by Kaikeyi and the king blindly implemented the wicked plan Seeta simply kept silence.

She was devoted and worshipped her husband Rama. They crossed the river Ganga and then proceeded towards sangam where Yamuna joined Ganga. King Dasaratha shedding tears, silently heard what all Sumantra had said about Rama's life in the forest.

With tears in his eyes the king turned towards Kausalya and said "Please excuse me for treating your son like this. I request you to forgive me. You have always been good and generous to every body. You have a kind heart. But I have dishonoured you. I know I did not come to your rescue. Please excuse for all the wrongs I have done to you".

Queen Kausalya was shocked to hear such words from the king. She said "Oh! My Lord, please do not talk like that. A husband should never ask his wife for forgiveness. It is against Dharma. A wife excusing her husband never happened. I know the rules of conduct. I might have given you some pain by my uttering because of Rama's separation. It is all fate that played on every one of us".

The king closed his eyes and laid down on his couch. After some time he opened his eyes and talked to Kausalya "Oh! My dear I will tell you something now. When a man does a good act he will get Punya. When he does a bad act he will

suffer in life. The second thing happened in my life. This act made me suffer now. I will relate to you what happened when I was an young prince. I went for hunting in the night. I was perfect in Sabdhavedi. By hearing Sabdha (Sound), I used to shoot an arrow in the direction of the sound. It happened one night in the forest. I was walking on the banks of the river. I thought an elephant was drinking water. I shoot an arrow in that direction. I heard human cry "Oh! God I have been killed". I immediately rushed to the spot. I saw an young hermit lying in a pool of blood. He said "I am taking water to my blind parents. They are waiting for me. Your arrow struck me, I am dying now. Please take the water to my parents. Please remove the arrow from my body." I removed the arrow, but he soon died. I thought I have committed Brahma hatya. I carried the water to his old parents. I told them everything. As a prince of Ayodhya I have committed Brahma Hatya Dosha. I requested the old people to excuse me for the crime. Old hermit said "Oh! Prince you have not killed a Brahmana. I am a Vysya and my wife is Sudra. We are living in the forest for a long time. You have killed our son. He is not Brahmana. Please take both of us to the dead body of my son". I took them to the dead body. They lit the fire and entered it. Before entering the fire they cursed me like this 'You will also die by

the separation of your son". The old man's curse is becoming true now. I may not live longer".

Saying this he wept and wept for a long time. During the night on his couch the king breathed his last. Every body in the palace came to know that the king had died sometime during the night. The sad news reached Kausalya and Sumitra. They sat by the side of dead body and wept for a long time.

The great king, the glorious king, the just ruler, the king who helped Devas in their wars against Asuras, the king who performed Yagas and yagnas lay dead on the couch.

Rama's banishment was the cause for his death. He was a great friend of Indra the Lord of all gods. Lord Narayana chose him as his father, and had taken birth as human being on earth such a great man, the king of Kosala lay dead on the ground.

With the permission of sage Vasishtha, the courtiers sent word to Bharatha to start immediately. The royal messengers did not reveal the sad demise of the king. They told Bharatha that every thing was normal. They asked him to start immediately because his presence was essential in Ayodhya. Prince Bharatha was not happy. He had a very bad dream in the previous night about his fathers umpending death.

Still suffering from that dream Bhratha along with his brother Shatrugna bid farewell to his uncle and grand father the king

of Kekaya. They reached Ayodhya. There prevailed deadly silence in the city. Every one looked sorrowful and they were weeping. The royal music was silent.

The streets were deserted.

The city wore sorrowful garb.

The trees stopped swinging.

The flowers looked pale and lost their fragrance.

It was not happy welcome to Bharatha.

No one bothered to look at him.

Bharatha rushed towards kings palace.

But the king was not there.

Than he rushed to his mother's place to see his father.

But could not see his father on his couch.

Kaikeyi heard his coming.

She rushed to him and welcomed him.

He touched her feet and took the dust.

He asked "Oh! Mother, Where is father, he is not on his couch.

Where are my brothers Rama and Lakshmana. The royal messengers brought me here in haste. There is no one to welcome me, City Ayodhya seems to be in sorrow. I saw people weeping and standing on either side of royal marga. You are alone sitting on the couch. Where is my father. Please

tell me. I want to see him and touch his feet".

Kaikeyi replied without any emotions.

"Like all others your illustrious father righteous Dasaratha left this world and reached the feet of God".

It is a great shock to Bharatha.

He fell unconscious. After recovery, he wept and rolled on the ground. "Every thing is lost, I have lost my good and affectionate father. I have nothing in this world to live. I always see you and father sitting side by side on this couch. Now he is not there" He covered his face with his hands and wept for a long time.

Kaikeyi approached him, took him in her hands and said "My dear son, you are wise such people do not give for the death of others. It happened to every one. One can not escape the last journey in life. Your father led a glorious life and breathed his last".

While shedding tears Bharatha said "Mother I thought that father had summoned me to attend the coronation of my brother Rama. But every thing has changed. Father lost his life. Brothers Rama and Lakshmana are not to be seen. I must go and see my brother Rama. Mother tell me, how did father die? What were his last instructions to me. Please tell me every thing".

Kaikeyi told him in a calm way "Your father a lion among men spoke like this "Fortunate will be the people of Ayodhya who will see Rama the handsome son of mine with Seeta and Lakshmana returning to Ayodhya. These were the last words of your father in this palace".

Bharatha was taken aback and asked his mother "What. it is strange that Rama was not here when father died. I can think Rama and Lakshmana might have gone to forest for hunt, but why Seeta. Mother it is strange to me. I never expected it. Where is Rama now". Kaikeyi said "All of them are in Dandaka forest" Bharatha closed his ears with his hands and refused to hear the bad news. He asked his mother "Mother, Did Rama commit any crime did he rob the property of any one. Did he molest any woman. Did he utter a lie. Why King punished Rama and banished him into the forest. Please tell me every thing". "My dear son, I will tell you every thing. Rama did not commit any crime or mistake. I tell you the reason some time back your father helped Devas in their war against Āsuras. At that time I saved his life. For that he granted me two boons. At the time of Rama's coronation I demanded the two boons. One to make you as king of Kosala. Second Rama to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. As true representative of Ikshvaku family, the king granted those two boons. Rama

went to forest wearing tree bark and deer skin. Seeta and Lakshmana followed him into the forest. Now accept the crown. Obey the instructions of sage Vasishtha. Perform the funeral rites of your father. After this please assume the royal powers".

On hearing these words, Bharatha closed his eyes and ears and said "I can not understand why I am still alive. Rama is my God. He is every thing to me. I have been ruined. My name had been tarnished. The king is dead. The world had come to an end. Mother, you are evil minded woman. Tell me who gave you this idea. By your act the king is dead. Rama has become a forest dweller dressed in tree bark and deer skin. You did all this becomes you want this kingdom. I donot want this. You take it and enjoy it. I have sinned to be your son. There is no end to your wickedness. At the moment I would have killed you but I am afraid of Rama. He will not accept such acts committed by his brothers. You are unfit to be in this world. You are the killer of my father. Why did you not kill yourself by taking poison or drowning in the river".

Kaikeyi stood looking at Bharatha "My dear son why you hurled abuses on me. I have not committed any sin. Mother is your first guru. As mother I demanded the throne for you. I desired to see you as king.. Thinking that Rama might oppose your coronation, I insisted on Rama going into the forest Is it

wrong! Have I committed a sin or crime in asking the crown to be given to you. You are thinking in a different way. Your father died because of old age. You blame me for his death. After so much of trouble, I have secured the throne for you. If you have any respect or regard for your mother accept the throne".

Bharatha with so much of anger, he said "Father has gone. Rama who is like God to me has gone to the forest. Seeta and Lakshmana followed Rama. Mothers Kausalya and Sumitra are weeping for the death of their husband and for the banishment of their sons. You deceived both my father and Rama. Rama loved you so much as mother. He showed the same respect to you as he has shown to his mother Kausalya. You yourself expressed this many times. Now you have become a changed woman. How can you expect that I will accept the throne when eldest son Rama is there. It never happened in Ikshvaku family. You bent on destroying the family traditions. You, yourself belonged to a noble family. Your father and your brother are noble people. They are righteous men in their kingdom. How is it that you having cruel intensions have taken birth in that illustrious family. You can berest assured that. I will not accept the throne of Kosala. I will go into the forest and Surrender the kingdom to him".

Bharatha then walked into the council hall. He met courtiers and ministers and told them he would surrender the kingdom to Rama. He asked them to make all arrangements to go to the forest and bring Rama back to Ayodhya.

Bharatha went to the palace of Kausalya. He fell at her feet and begged her to excuse him. "Oh! Bharatha, your mother Kaikeyi won the throne for you. You can happily ascend the throne. You are really fortunate to have such mother. She brought every thing for you. She made my son Rama to dress in tree bark and deer skin and banished him into the forest. After the death of my husband why should I live in this world, for whose sake I have to live here. Myself and Sumitra will also go into the forest we have nothing here in this palace". Kausalya's words like sharp arrows pierced into the heart of Bharatha.

He could not bear it, he fell at her feet and begged her to excuse him "Oh! Mother I donot know anything of this I am innocent when I was asked to come here in haste, I thought Rama's coronation would be taking place. After coming here I came to know father's death and Rama's banishment. I will not accept this kingdom. This kingdom belonged to my God Rama. I will be happy to serve him as his servant. This is his kingdom. I will go to the forest and bring him back. He will be the king of Kosala not myself. All this happened because

of my mother, who turned wicked towards my dear father and my God Rama. You can give me any punishment you like. I will accept it". Saying these words he fell at her feet.

Kausalya was moved very much.

She took pity on Bharatha and took him in her hands. "Do not weep my child. It is not your act. I spoke harshly. Do not take it to heart. You must forgive me. It is all fate that worked on all of us.

Sage Vasishtha came to Bharatha and told him "Bharatha we have preserved the dead body of your father. It is time for you to perform the final rites to your father. Since Rama is not here, you have to perform the funeral rites of your father".

Bharatha wiped his tears and followed his guru. After seeing the dead body of his dear father, Bharatha wept again. "Oh! Father how this happened to you. Why you sent my God Rama away. How can you live in heaven peacefully after punishing Rama like this. You know Rama is the rightful heir to the throne. The great city Ayodhya is weeping because of your mistake".

Sage Vasishtha pacified Bharatha and asked him to perform the last rites to his father. Both Bharatha and Shatrugna lit the fire and worshipped with oblations poured into it. The dead body was taken to burial ground in palanquin the people

of Ayodhya expressed their anger against queen Kaikeyi. But they pitied the king and mourned for his death. Both the brothers bid last farewell to their dear father and lit the pyre. The great king who helped Devas, who performed many yagas and yagnas finally reached the celestial world.

All the people took their bath in river Sarayu and returned to their homes. The queens and the two brothers slept on bare ground all the eleven days.

On the twelfth day the brothers performed Sradha. On the thirteenth day they distributed gold, silver and new clothes to all men and women of Ayodhya.

After finishing all the rites Bharatha went again in sorrowful mood. "Oh! Father you always watched us playing, eating and sleeping. You were so dear to us all you never spent a day without us. Such a man like you, you left us all and reached the celestial world. How can I stay at Ayodhya. You sent my God into the forest. Without you and my brothers Rama and Lakshmana how can I live in Ayodhya. I prefer to die than to live in Ayodhya".

Sage Vasishtha once again pacified him. "My dear Bharatha, please give up this sorrow. Look at the people. It is your duty to take up the reigns, you can not leave the people and the kingdom without a king. I know you can not bear the loss of your father. You have to bear it. Fate had played its part

you cannot avoid it. Every human being has to face it. Please give up sorrow and take up the responsibilities of ruling the kingdom".

Shatrugna came to know that Manthara was behind of all these tragedies that happened in the palace. She encouraged queen Kaikeyi to demand the two boons. After the banishment of Rama, the king died. All these troubles were due to the cruel decisions taken by queen Kaikeyi. Shatrugna decided to kill Manthara. He dragged her before all. Bharatha stopped him and told him that killing woman was sin. Their brother Rama would not approve it. She was sent out of the palace.

Sage Vasishtha entered the council hall. He asked all important people to assemble in the council hall. He asked them to take a decision regarding Bharatha's coronation. He asked Sumantra to bring Bharatha. Bharatha and Shatrugna entered the hall. Sage Vasishtha told Bharatha "Prince Bharatha your father left Kosala for you to rule. He was a righteous king. He did not want to go back on his promise given to his wife Kaikeyi. He did not want to become Adharmi. In the same way your brother wanted to protect the promise made by your father to Kaikeyi. Both father and son protected Dharma. Father went to celestial world. Son walked into the forest. Both are great in their own way. You have to respect your father's wish. Please accept the throne and allow us to perform

the coronation ceremony".

Bharatha with folded hands replied "Oh! Revered guru. You taught us vedas and sastras. You also taught us the importance of Dharma. I need not remind you the laws of succession. I am not the eldest son of king Dasaratha. My brother Rama is the eldest son. He is the rightful owner of this kingdom. How can I go and act against the rules of Dharma. By doing so I will become Adharmi. The people may not accept me as their ruler. with your permission I will go to the forest and bring Rama here. If he does not come I will remain in the forest". Bharatha asked Sumantra to make all preparations to go to the forest.

All important courtiers proceeded to the forest. The queens also followed them in Palanquins. Both Bharatha and Shatrugna wore tree bark and deer skin. They all reached Shringibera Pura. Guha the chief of that place welcomed them. He took them all in his boats and allowed them to cross Ganga river. After receiving the blessings of sage Bharadwaja they proceeded to Chitrakuta mountain.

Bharatha and his followers were almost near Chitrakuta mountain. Rama and Lakshmana heard an unusual sound. Lakshmana ascended the tall tree and saw a huge army coming towards them. He spoke from the top of the tree "Oh! Rama, I see Bharatha coming with his army. I smell danger from

him please ready with bow and arrows. This time we should not leave him". Rama replied "Dear Brother, if Bharatha is coming we need not be afraid of him. I have promised father that I will enter Ayodhya only after completing fourteen years in Dandaka forest. By killing Bharatha I am breaking my promise given to father. Can I act against Dharma Do you want me to become Adharmi. I told you a number of times that I am not interested in ruling Kosala kingdom. Even the position of Indra is offered to me, I donot want it. I want to fulfill the orders of my father. I do not want to violate the promise I made to my father. Please shed all your fears and hatred on Bharatha. Dear Lakshmana, I know Bharatha. He is coming here to express his sorrow. I think he is very much worried about me and Seeta living in the forest. Both you and Shatrugna are dear to him. He would have blamed his mother Kaikeyi for what she has done. Lakshmana Why are you angry with him. He has not done anything wrong to you. Why do you hate him. He is not responsible of accepting the throne of Kosala. He never asked for it. His mother is responsible for all the things that happened. Please do not hate him. Have pity on him".

Lakshmana bent down his head and requested Rama to excuse him for his hotty behaviour.

Bharatha and his followers walked the distance. They reached

the ashramam of Rama. They all saw Rama sitting in meditation. He had matted hair and wore deer skin. Rama who would have ascended the jewelled throne was sitting on Dhanbha grass. Bharatha could not control himself rushed to him and fell at his feet. Shatrugna also fell at the feet of Rama. They wetted the feet of Rama with their tears. Rama raised them up and embraced them.

Rama noticed Bharatha and Shatrugna had matted hair and wore tree bark and deer skin with tears in his eyes Bharatha addressed Rama "Oh! My God Rama, I have violated Dharma, so I am wearing tree bark and deer skin. It never happened in Ikshvaku family that younger brother ascending the throne, when his elder brother is alive. The eldest should succeed to the throne, that is the law of Dharma. I place the crown at your feet. You are the ruler of Kosala please accept it and come back to Ayodhya. The people want you to be there. Royal guru sage Vasishtha and our mothers have come here to take you back to Ayodhya. In my absence and in your absence our noble father the great king breathed his last. Because you were here, I was asked to perform the last funeral rites of our great father. You are his favourite son. He was thinking of you in the last moment. He breathed his last by uttering "Rama, Rama". Rama loved his father so much. He knew that his father died because of him.

The grief was too much for him to bear.

He fell down senseless when he heard the news.

His brothers and Seeta sprinkled water on his face and tried to revive him.

Both Rama and Lakshmana walked to the bank of river Mandakini.

They took the bath in the river and offered tarpanam to their father.

They offered fruits as pindas and came back to ashramam.

By that time guru Vasishtha and the three mothers were already in the ashramam.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana prostrated before him. Rama touched the feet of his guru and received his blessings. Every one sat silently for some time.

Rama asked "My dear Brother I am eager to know, why you have come here, with tree bark and matted hair".

Bharatha with folded hands addressed Rama "Oh! Brother because of the mistake committed by my mother, I was forced to come here. Father granted her two boons. She wanted me to be the ruler of Kosala, you to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. All these changes occurred in my absence. It is against the normal procedure of Ikshvaku line of ruling. You being the eldest son, how can I ascend the throne of

Kosala. It is against the rules of Dharma. I cannot accept it. I cannot become an Adharmi. The Kosala people want you as ruler but not me. So I am placing the crown at your feet. Please accept and come back to Kosala".

Bharatha with heavy heart finished his speech with tears rolling down from his cheeks. Rama embraced Bharatha and pacified him by saying "Dear Bharatha, you are born in a noble family. You have all good qualities you are not committing any sin. Till now you have not committed any sin. Why do you think that you are unfit. Father enjoyed full powers over his sons. You should not blame our father for that act.

We as his children should fulfill his desires. He commanded you to be the ruler of Kosala. The same father commanded me to live in Dandaka forest for fourteen years. We as devoted children should carry out his orders. We have no right to oppose them. We have to protect Dharma. Man has no freedom. Fate tosses him in all directions. Nothing is permanent in this world. Man has one fear that is death. Ripe fruits have one fear that of falling down. Men too become old and lose their power of activities. Death walks with us in our long journey. The skin gets wrinkled hair grows white. Old age makes man weak and helpless. The seasons come and go man's relationship with wife, child, kinsmen, wealth and of his possessions are not permanent, we the children of great king should follow his orders. He wished you to be the ruler of Kosala. He wished me to lead a forest life. We as

devoted children should follow his instructions. You go back and rule Kosala. After completing fourteen years of exile I will come back".

Bharatha was not convinced. He tried again and again to convince Rama. The ministers, the people and others requested Rama to come back to Ayodhya. They told him all necessary articles for the coronation were brought from Ayodhya for him. Guru Vasishtha was ready to perform Rama's coronation. But Rama was adamant.

He did not want to go against Dharma. The rishis who were silent till now were convinced by Rama's words of Dharma. They asked Bharatha to go back and assume royal powers. Having failed in his attempt, Bharatha said "My Lord Rama I brought golden Sandals, please put your sacred feet on them. I will carry them to Ayodhya. Place them on the throne and rule Kosala in your name. All the fourteen years. I also wear tree bark and deer skin. I remove the matted hair only after you remove them. I will stay outside Ayodhya and live on fruits and roots. The last day of your exile you must be in Ayodhya or else I will enter fire and end my life".

Rama promised that he would come exactly on that day to Ayodhya. Guru Vasishtha, the three queen mothers courtiers ministers and others returned to Ayodhya. Bharatha stayed in Nandigama. He lived there the entire period of fourteen years.

III

ARANYA KANDA



III. ARANYA KANDA

Rama in Dandaka Forest Aranya Kanda

Bhratha came to forest, met Rama, talked to him, tried to convince him to come back to Ayodhya, failed in his attempt and went back to Ayodhya, with his Padukas.

The three mothers came there, saw Rama's life in the forest shed tears and went back to Ayodhya. There prevailed sadness in Ashramam. This parting of ways pained Rama so much. Besides this the rishis were thinking of leaving the Ashramam because of Rakshasa's attack. They destroyed their Yagna salas and carried away utensils.

The Rakshasas carried all these attacks on rishis because they did not like Rama and his presence in Dandaka forest. They knew the strength of Rama and his powers. They knew his powers very well, at the time of sage Viswamitra yagna. So they decided to destroy his powers by attacking the innocent people and rishis.

Rama noticed the strange behaviour of rishis. He approached their Kulapati and asked him "Oh! My Lord many rishis are secretly talking something. They are moving away from us. They do not like our company. Have we done anything wrong to them. Did Seeta misbehave towards them in any way. Did Lakshmana make any remark against them. Please tell me why the rishis behave like that".

Kulapati replied "You all behaved very well the rishis respect you all. They are afraid of Khara the Rakshasa ruler of Dandaka forest. He is the brother of Ravana the ten headed monster of Lanka. Khara knew that you have come here. He does not like your power and your presence in Dandaka forest. He wants to destroy your power indirectly by attacking the innocent people and rishis. He killed many people and used to take pleasure in eating human flesh. So the rishis are thinking of moving to Kanva Ashramam. You can also come. The rishis are afraid that Khara may try to kill all of you".

Rama was very much pained to hear the news. He decided to kill the Rakshasas and to keep Dandaka forest safe for rishis to live peacefully. Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana left Chitrakuta and moved into Dandaka forest.

On their way they saw an ashramam which belonged to Atri mahamuni. Atri was great rishi and he knew who Rama was. He welcomed Ayodhya princes. He considered Rama and Lakshmana as his own sons. He looked at Seeta and asked her to go inside to meet his wife Anasuya.

He told Rama about his wife Anasuya. "Dear prince Rama my wife Anasuya is a great tapasvini. She acquired many powers by her tapas once there was drought which continued for ten years. She created roots and fruits for the benefit of the people. She made Ganga to overflow so that the land could

become fertile and could be fit for cultivation. Once Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara came down to earth to test her. In the guise of rishis they requested her to give them food. She prepared food and asked them to sit. They expressed their desire to take food if she served them without garments on her body. She said 'Yes'. She took holy water, uttered vedic mantras and sprinkled the water on them. All the three turned into infants. She took them one by one by her hands and fed them with her milk. After they fully satisfied, she brought them back to their original form. All the three fell at her feet and addressed her as mother. That is Anasuya my devoted wife". Rama looked at Seeta and asked her to go inside. Seeta went inside to take the blessings of Anasuya. Anasuya was old in age and she was almost bent to the ground. She was weak and her body was shaking. She looked at Seeta and Seeta prostrated before her. Anasuya took Seeta by her side and said "Oh! Seeta you are really great. You gave up palace life and walked into the forest with your husband. You live on fruits and roots. You lay on hard ground. You have done all these because you consider Rama as your Lord and God. That should be the nature of every wife in this world. I congratulate you on this aspect. Please be seated and tell me about your marriage with Rama. I have heard about it but I want to hear from you".

Seeta felt embarrassed by her words of praise. She said "Oh! Mother I have been taught by my parents and others that husband is Lord and God for a woman. I am really fortunate to have Rama as my husband. He has all noble qualities. He is compassionate. He had conquered his senses. He treats all equally. Truth is his religion. He is favourite son of his father and mother. He treats all queen mothers equally. That is Rama my Lord and God. So as devoted wife, I must follow him wherever he goes. So I followed him into the forest. Regarding my marriage, I was born in earth. Earth is my mother. King Janaka was childless. He was ploughing the land to perform yagna to be get children. He discovered me in the farrow. He took me home and brought me up as his own daughter. He wanted to give me in marriage to a great archer. In my father's family there was sacred bow of Lord Mahadeva. My father announced Swayamvara that I will be given in marriage to a man who could lift the bow and string it. Many kings came and failed to lift the bow. One day Sage Viswamitra came to our palace with Rama and Lakshmana. Sage Viswamitra asked Rama to lift the bow. Rama easily lifted the bow with is left hand and string it. He broke the bow into two. In this way my marriage has been celebrated with Rama the great archer of the world".

Anasuya heard her story with rapt attention and felt very happy. She gave her new clothes and gold ornaments. She asked Seeta to wear them that night before meeting Rama. Rama saw Seeta in new sari and wearing gold ornaments. They spent that night in Atri's ashramam and then moved into Dandaka forest.

All the three entered Dandaka forest. Many rishis living there wore tree bark and deer skin. They gave up the power of curse, anger and they conquered their senses.

They spent their time in performing Agni Hotra. They lived on roots and fruits and spent their time in reciting vedas. They saw Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana coming towards them. They know who Rama was and why he had taken birth in this world. They welcomed them and recited verses blessing the royal princes and Seeta. They offered fruits and water to them. They spent that night with rishis in their ashramam and proceeded further the next day.

They entered the thick forest.

The atmosphere was tense and fearful.

The wild animals were moving aimlessly.

The lakes were deep and the water looked very dark.

The birds were moving without making any noise.

They saw a huge rakshasa standing in front of them.

His voice was fearful and his looks were dreadful.

He was wearing the skin of a tiger.

He had a trident in his hand.

He snatched Seeta with other hand and with loud voice he addressed Rama and Lakshmana "You are fools without knowing anything you entered Dandaka forest. You look like tapasvins but you are carrying weapons. It is strange to me to see a rishi walking with his wife in the forest. I donot think you are rishis. A rishi does not carry weapons. Who are you? Please tell me. I am rakshasa by name Viradha. I kill rishis and eat them. I will kill you both and take this woman as my wife".

Seeta was trembling in the hands of Viradha. Rama was very much pained in heart to see Seeta in the hands of Rakshasa.

Lakshmana encouraged Rama to give up sorrow and act immediately with his powerful weapons. Rama shoot an arrow which pierced Viradha's chest. Blood rushed out and Rakshasa fell on the ground. He left Seeta on the ground and rushed towards Rama and Lakshmana.

They broke his trident.

Then Viradha carried both Rama and Lakshmana and ran into the thick forest. Seeta wailed and sobbed as though her heart would break. She prayed to Gods to save Rama and Lakshmana and save her from wild animals. Both Rama and

Lakshmana killed the Rakshasa and decided to burn him in a pit. Then Viradha heard them talking and he said "I know who you are ? You are Rama the eldest son of king Dasaratha of Kosala. You are the Lord of Lords. He is your brother Lakshmana. She is your wife Seeta. Please excuse me in carrying her in my hands. I am Gandharva by name Tumburu. I have been cursed by Kubera. I requested him to recall his curse. He said Rama will defeat you and burn you in a pit. Then you can regain your original form". All these years I spent my life in killing innocent rishis. Please bury me, so that I can get back my original form. From here you go to the ashramam of Sharabhanga. He is a great person doing tapas. Please meet him and take his blessings. Please bury me now". After the burial he regained his original form. He saluted Rama and Lakshmana and then reached heaven. Then Ayodhya princes with Seeta reached Sharabhanga ashramam.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana approached the ashramam of Sharabhanga. Rama saw Indra with his followers entering Sharabhanga ashramam.

Rama wanted to meet Indra.

But Indra talked to Sharabhanga and immediately left the ashramam.

He did not want to meet Rama who had taken human birth to fulfill the celestial desire of killing ten headed monster Ravana.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana prostrated before Sharabhanga and received his blessings. The great rishi told Rama "Rama, Indra had come here to take me to heaven personally. I know you are coming. I want to meet you and talk to you. So I refused to accompany Indra to go to heaven. I have performed tapas for many years. The wealth of my tapas I am giving it to you. Please take it".

Rama replied in a polite way "My Lord I wish to earn them all by myself. I am grateful to you and request you to suggest me a safe place near by".

Sharabhanga felt happy at Rama's sweet manners and suggested the ashramam of Sutheekshana. He asked Rama to permit him to leave the world. He lit the fire and entered into it. Then he reached heaven.

The Ayodhya princes with Seeta proceeded towards the ashramam of Sutheekshana. On the way they met a group of rishis with folded hands they said "Oh! Rama, you are the embodiment of Dharma. Like your father you are also great. The people were happy under your father. Fate made you to walk into the forest with your wife and brother. Even in the forest you are king. We are your subjects and it is your duty to protect us. We are suffering a lot by the attacks of Rakshasas. They destroyed our yagnasalas, killed rishis and ate them. You look at the hill. It is full of human skulls and

bones. They were rishis and they were killed mercilessly by the Rakshasas. We request you to protect us from these Rakshasas. You are the only refuge for us".

The pathetic story of rishis moved Rama very much. He said "My father sent me here to establish peace here. I will kill the Rakshasas with the help of my brother and establish peace here. It is my duty here. You need not worry about it". The rishi's felt happy and went back to their ashramam.

The three Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana entered the ashramam of Sutheekshana. The sage welcome them and offered hospitality by giving them shelter that night and then offered fruits and water.

He wanted to transfer all his powers gained by tapas to Rama. Rama politely declined the offer made by the sage. Sage Suthekshana asked Rama to visit a number of ashramams and receive the blessings of a great rishis. Then he could meet great Agastya.

While they were walking in the forest, Seeta had many doubts in her mind. She wanted to clear them by asking Rama "Oh! Rama what is Dharma. The people say you are the embodiment of Dharma. Dharma is your religion. I know very little of Dharma. There are three attitudes towards the observance of Dharma. One should not utter a lie and uttering lie is a great sin. Second sin is to possess the wife of another man. The

third sin is hurting some one who has not offended him. The Rakshasa have not done any thing wrong to you but you want to kill them. Is it Dharma. The third sin may push you into trouble. I am worried about you. You are important to me than you waging wars on Rakshasas and killing them".

Rama smiled and said "Oh! Seeta. I am here in the forest to establish peace and order. Order and Dharma are inseparable. You see all the rishis are pious people. They spent their time in meditation. They perform yagnas and yagas for the welfare of human beings. Why they did all these things? They performed yagnas and yagas to establish peace and happy life among the human beings. They did not do any harm to the rakshasas. But the Rakshasas killed them and destroyed their yagnasalas by pouring blood and flesh. I am a Kshatriya and I am carrying weapons. It is my duty to establish order. It is my Dharma as Kshatriya to kill the wrong doers and protect innocent people. All three of us must work together to establish Dharma. In that we may lose our lives. I have to keep my promise to the rishis. I must establish peace and order in Dandaka forest. That is my work here. Do not entertain fears about me in your mind. Nothing will happen to us. Please be happy and follow us".

They walked through the forest. They crossed several peaks, coppices, river lets and sandy banks. Sarasa and Chakravaka

birds were flying in large numbers.

They passed through a number of ashramams.

The rishis welcomed them where ever they went.

They almost spent ten years in Dandaka forest. On the advice of Sage Suteekshana, Rama proceeded towards Agastya's ashramam.

Sage Agastya was a great rishi. Under his command the Vindhya mountains stopped growing. He killed the two powerful Rakshasas brothers Ilvala and Vatapi and saved many rishis from their mischievous play of offering dinner and killing them.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana entered Agastya's ashramam. Sage Agastya was so delighted and came forward to receive Ayodhya princes and Seeta.

All the three prostrated at his feet.

The great rishi asked Rama about his welfare and asked them to take their seats.

Agastya was very much happy to have Rama in his ashramam. He told Rama "Oh! Rama I have many weapons with me. They are Divine bow known as Vishnu Dhanu. It has been designed by Vishvakarma. I have two quivers which are inexhaustible. Indra gave them to me. I have a sword of Narayana. Lord Narayana used all these weapons to kill asuras I am giving

them to you now. I have been waiting for you to hand over all these weapons to you. Please use them in establishing Dharma. You will gain victory over your enemies. When you want a chariot, Indra will send it with Matali as Charioter. You have to use them at proper time".

With great humility Rama accepted them. The Ayodhya princes and Seeta spent the night happily in ashramam. The next morning they met rishi Agastya again. Rama told Agastya "Oh! Lord, all these ten years I have not been unhappy at all. I visited many ashramams. Met great rishis and received their blessings. I really fortunate of meeting you here.

You not only blessed me but gave me powerful weapons. I will use them in my future struggle with Rakshasas. I request you to suggest a place for me live in peace the rest of the period. Sage Agastya replied "Oh! Rama, you must know the history of Dandaka forest. Dandaka the brother of your ancestor Ikshvaku was the ruler of this area. Bhargava cursed him. Dandaka abandoned this place and went away. It became uninhabited. Even the animals and birds left this place. This place then turned into a thick forest with huge trees and huge creepers. No one settled here. The rains did not come. The wind did not blow and sun's rays did not enter due to thick forest. I came here from Himalayas. After my arrival everything changed. The animals and birds began to move

freely. There were frequent rains. The wind blew softly. The rishis came and established ashramams. At the same time the Rakshasas also settled here. They began giving trouble to the rishis. Oh! Rama you are great and valiant Kshatriya.

Fate made you to come over here to establish order and peace. It is your duty to establish order. Dandaka was compelled to abandon Dandaka forest. You as Ikshvaku representative have come here to establish order. Please do this small help to these rishis." Agastya looked at Seeta and continued "Oh! Rama your wife Seeta lived in luxury. She never experienced the forest life. As devoted wife she accompanied you to the forest. You should try to keep her happy. She is innocent of the weakness and faults of ordinary women. She is like Arundhati among Divine women. She is pativrata and she will be remembered by all in future. Very near to this place there is Panchavati, River Godavari flows by the side of Panchavati. There are plenty of trees full of fruits and flowers. You can find plenty of roots there. It is an ideal place to live in. Great events are awaiting to be born and it is essential, you should go and stay in Panchavati".

All the three prostrated before him and took his leave. They proceeded towards Panchavati. On their way Rama saw Nyagrodha tree. Agastya mentioned about the tree and asked them to worship the tree.

Rama saw an eagle on the tree.

He asked the bird who he was.

The bird saw Ayodhya Princes and was so happy and addressed them "My dear children. I am great friend of your father king Dasaratha. I will tell you more about me. Kashyapa Prajapati had several daughters. One of them was Shyeni. There was Vinata who had two sons. The eldest Aruna became the charioteer of sun God. The second son Garuda became the Vahana of Lord Narayana. Aruna married Shyeni. They had two sons namely Sampati and Jatayu. I am Jatayu. Myself and your father are great friends. This forest is dangerous. I am as friend of your father and it is my duty to protect you all. When you and Lakshmana go out, I will protect Seeta and guard her".

Rama was so happy and he embraced him. They found a great friend in Jatayu. All the four reached Panchavati. Rama asked Lakshmana to select a place. But Lakshmana did not want to take up the responsibility of selecting the spot. He was there only to carry out the orders of Rama. So Rama went round the area and selected a beautiful place on the banks of Godavari surrounded by beautiful trees with flowers and fruits.

Lakshmana gathered necessary material and built a beautiful ashramam. They lived happily in the ashramam for a very long time. Seeta enjoyed the nature and was happy to see the

birds singing and deers dancing. The brothers talked about the life of the people in Ayodhya especially Bharatha and the three queen mothers.

They praised Bharatha and his good qualities. They felt uneasy how Bharatha went back to Ayodhya carrying the Padukas of Rama with great disappointment.

The Ayodhya princes with Seeta led a happy life in Panchavati. One day both Rama and Seeta were sitting side by side in front of their hut. A Rakshasi by name Surphanaka saw them sitting. She looked at Rama who was so handsome. She saw his wide chest, long arms, beautiful eyes and glowing face.

She had not seen such beautiful face among men. At first sight she had fallen in love with him. He was dark like blue lotus. In her opinion he looked like Manmatha.

She approached them and asked them. "Oh! Young man you seem to be a stranger in this place. You are wearing tree bark and deer skin. But you are carrying weapons. This is dangerous place and the Rakshasas live here why have you come here. Please tell me the truth of your settling on the banks of Godavari".

Rama looked at her and said "I am Rama he is my brother Lakshmana. We are the sons of king Dasaratha of Ayodhya. My father ordered me to spend some time in Dandaka forest. So we are here. She is my wife Seeta the daughter of King

Janaka. I gave my account. Please tell me about you. Why you are wandering in the forest".

Surphanaka replied "Oh! Rama my name is Surphanaka. I am by birth a Rakshasi. My brother is Ravana the king of Lanka. Besides Ravana I have many brothers Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana, Khara, Dhushana and Trisira. After seeing you I could not control my mind, I want to marry you. Your wife Seeta is ugly. She is not fit to be the wife of a man like you. I am perfect mate for you. We both can move happily in the forest. Look at her ugly face, she is fit only to be my food. I will eat both your wife and brother. Then we will be free and both of us can live happily".

Rama did not take her words seriously. He decided to make fun of it. "You see I am a married man. I love my wife so much. I can not desert her. When my wife is there, I cannot accept you as my second wife. It is against my principle to take another woman as my second wife. My brother Lakshmana is there. He is beautiful to look at. He is alone now. You ask him. If he is willing you can marry him".

Surphanaka never suspected any foul play she approached Lakshmana and requested him to marry her.

Lakshmana in a polite way said "You see I am Rama's servant. How can you be the wife of a servant. I have no freedom. You seem to be sister of a king. You better approach Rama

once again and request him to marry you".

Now she thought both the brothers were playing at her. She got wild and attacked Seeta. Lakshmana got wild, took the sword cut her nose and ears.

Surphanaka screaming with pain ran into the forest. She reached Janasthana and reported the matter to her brother Khara the ruler of Janasthana. She asked him "Oh! Brother How is it you have not heard about Rama, his wife Seeta and his brother Lakshmana entering Dandaka forest. I saw them today. They are young, handsome and brave. They are good looking. They dressed like ascetics, but they carry weapons. It is strange an ascetic walking into the forest with his wife. The two are the sons of King Dasaratha of Kosala. They seem to be great archers. It is difficult to believe them as rishis. They have divine appearance. Rama's wife is so beautiful, I attacked her. The brother became angry and Lakshmana punished me like this. I want you to kill them all. I am eager to drink their blood. I want to take revenge on them."

Khara got wild and summoned his fourteen able commanders and told them "Two people dressed in tree bark and deer skin entered Dandaka forest. They punished my sister Surphanaka. You go and kill all the three people. My sister wants to drink their blood. She will accompany you. Oh sister you need not worry you will see their dead bodies soon".

They all reached Panchavati in no time. They carried deadly weapons howling and shouting. Rama saw them coming and he asked Lakshmana to take Seeta to a safe place for protection. Rama took the bow and arrows and shoot the arrows one after another.

The fourteen Rakshasa commanders soon fell dead on the ground. Surphanaka was amazed at the power of Rama and ran away from that place. She met Khara and stood silently weeping. Khara looked at her and said "Why are you silent and weeping. My fourteen able commanders would have killed them now. Be happy and cheerful".

She replied "Oh! Brother, Do not please me by your talk. You sent your men to kill all the three. But Rama with single handed killed them all. You go and see the dead bodies of your able fourteen commanders. I feel and think you are afraid of Ayodhya princes you must kill them or else leave Janasthana".

Khara could not take this insult and said "You say I am afraid of Rama. How dare you insult me like this. In a short period you will see their dead bodies. I will go with my army and kill them".

Khara ordered his brothers Dhushana and Trisifa to gather fourteen thousand soldiers with their deadly weapons to

march on to Panchavati. They all marched on to Panchavati in various chariots, on horses and on donkeys.

They were sure of killing Ayodhya princes and Seeta. They were howling and shouting on their march. Rama saw them coming and asked Lakshmana to take Seeta to a safe place for her protection. They entered into a cave for protection. Rama with his weapons was ready to face the Rakshasas.

Dushana with thousands of his soldiers attacked Rama. Rama with his powerful astras released thousands of arrows which struck the hearts of soldiers. They fell on the ground and lost their lives.

Dushana threw a number of weapons which struck the body of Rama.

Rama became furious and released many arrows. These arrows destroyed the horses, the chariot and the charioteer.

Dushana fell on the ground and Rama sent another astra which pierced the heart of Dushana and he died.

Only two people remained alive and they were Khara and Trisira

Trisira said "Oh! Brother do not worry . I will go and meet Rama with my Powerful weapons I will kill him. Our sister will drink his blood".

He marched on to face Rama. Rama easily killed him. Having seen the death of his two brothers Khara became furious and

attacked Rama with his Powerful weapons. Rama Sent ten arrows at the same time. Four arrows killed his four horses, one arrow killed his charioteer

Two arrows destroyed the two wheels of the chariot, one arrow destroyed his chariot, one arrow destroyed his bow and the tenth arrow destroyed his mace

Khara fell on the ground and he had nothing in his hands
He uprooted the tree and threw it at Rama.

Rama destroyed it on the way and sent a powerful astra which pierced the heart of Khara and he fell dead on the ground.

Rishis, Devas, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Charanas who filled the sky to observe the first great war between Rama and Rakshasas felt immensely happy that Janasthana had became free from the domination of Rakshasas. They rained flowers on Rama. Both Seeta and Lakshmana rushed to him. Lakshmana with so much of happiness fell at the feet of Rama.

Seeta rushed to him and embraced him again and again. All the three were happy. Surphanaka having seen the great fall of Janasthana army by the powerful arrows of Rama, left that place and went away to Lanka.

All rishis felt immensely happy. Peace and order were again established in Dandaka Forest.

Even before Surphanaka, a Rakshasa by name Akampana escaped the wrath of Rama's powerful arrows and ran away to Lanka.

He met Ravana and reported the complete destruction of Janasthana.

He told Ravana "Oh! Lord a human being by name Rama killed Khara, Dushara, Trisira and fourteen thousand soldiers. He is great in warfare. His brother Lakshmana is equally great in warfare. Both the brothers are great powerful archers. They can conquer the three worlds. No one is equal to them in all the three worlds. It is very difficult to face them and defeat them. But you can defeat them indirectly, by kidnapping his beautiful wife Seeta. There is no one equal to her in beauty in all the three worlds.

You first separate Rama from Seeta and then kidnap her. Then Rama will get dejected and he will go back to his kingdom Kosala. By this way you can take revenge on Rama who is responsible for the death of your three brothers and the complete destruction of Janasthana".

Ravana began thinking how to take revenge on Rama to implement Akampana's plan Ravana thought of his uncle Maricha.

He immediately proceeded towards the ashramam of Maricha. He told him "Dear uncle I am bit worried. I am not happy. I hope you have heard the complete destruction of Janasthana. All my brothers the Rakshasa army of fourteen thousand soldiers were killed by a human being by name Rama. I want

to punish him by kidnapping his wife Seeta. After losing Seeta with so much of disappointment he will go back to his kingdom Kosala. I have come here to seek your help please help me". Maricha began trembling by hearing the name of Rama sweat began pouring down from his face. He remembered how Rama shoot him with an arrow which carried him one hundred Yojanas and threw him into the sea.

He told Ravana "Oh! King, some one in your court wants to see your end by suggesting Seeta's kidnap. Tell me who gave you that idea. Rama is not an ordinary human being. No one is equal to him in power in all the three worlds. He is like wild elephant to crush people under his feet. He is like a roaring lion. He is like a deep sea with full of sharks and Whales. Rama is not an ordinary human being allowing you to kidnap his wife. He will destroy you and your kingdom. Leave Seeta to Rama and go back to your place and be happy with your wives".

Ravana thought that his uncle was very much concerned with his life. He had faith in his words and went back to Lanka.

It was Ravana's council hall. He was ten headed Ravana the king of Lanka with ten heads and twenty hands he looked very magnificent. He was sitting on a jewelled throne. He was great in all the three worlds. He was a great warrior and defeated many Gods Indra, Varuna, Vayu, Agni and Yama. The

sun God and moon were afraid of him. He defeated his brother Kubera and took away his Pushpakavimana and carried away all his wealth.

Kubera took refuge in Kailasa. All Devas accepted his over lordship and simply followed his orders.

He performed severe tapas and secured many boons from Lord Brahma and Lord Mahadeva. He had immunity from death at the hands of Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas and other Gods. But he ignored the danger from human beings and monkeys. He never considered them as great force. When he was deep in consultations with his courtiers and ministers, his sister Surpanaka entered the council hall.

At first no one recognised her because she lost her nose and ears with burning eyes she looked at her brother Ravana and said "Oh! King do you know what is happening in your kingdom. You are deep in pleasure with wine and wives. You think of yourself but not others. Do you know what happened in Janasthana. All your brothers and fourteen thousand soldiers have been mercilessly killed by a human being Rama you think you are safe on the throne. Today Janasthana was wiped out, tomorrow it may happen to Lanka you will be dethroned, chased and finally killed by your enemy Rama. You see my face, Rama's brother Lakshmana cut my nose and ears. I wanted to bring Seeta here. They did not kill me because

killing a woman was against their principle. They left me alone. So I am here".

Ravana had been listening the tirade by his sister Surphanaka. His eyes became red and could not control his anger, and said "Oh! Sister, Donot weep, control your anger tell me every thing. Who is Rama? How powerful he is. How he killed my brothers and fourteen thousand soldiers. What are the weapons he used. Is he really powerful. Did anyone help him. "My dear brother, Rama and Lakshmana are the sons of king Dasaratha of Kosala. The father ordered Rama to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. The brothers wore tree bark and deer skin. They possessed bows and arrows. Besides these they carried weapons. They entered Dandaka forest along with a lady by name Seeta. She is dear wife of Rama. She is the most beautiful woman in all the three worlds. She is like Lakshmi descended from heaven. No one is equal to her in beauty. She is fit to be in your palace. Please kill the two brothers and bring her here. Thus you can take revenge on them who are responsible for the complete destruction of Janasthana".

Surphanaka imprinted the beautiful figure of Seeta on Ravana's mind.

His plan of kidnapping Seeta began working in the mind of Ravana.

He worked out plan after plan how to kidnap Seeta without the knowledge of Rama.

He should separate Seeta and Rama first. Then separate Seeta and Lakshmana. Finally he should keep Seeta alone in the ashramam. How to separate them was big question.

Seeta was fond of animals and deers. Suddenly his uncle Maricha struck to his mind. He was master in adopting any shape. To separate Ayodhya princes and Seeta he should take the help of Maricha.

Immediately he closed the council meeting. He ordered a chariot to be ready to carry him to the ashramam of Maricha.

He reached the ashramam of Maricha. Maricha saw Ravana coming again. He said "Oh! King you are coming again. I hope every thing is well in Lanka. May I know the reason what made you to under take this long journey to this ashramam of this humble slave of yours".

Ravana with fallen face said "Dear uncle, I am pained very much. I think you know what happened in Janasthana. All my brothers were killed including fourteen thousand soldiers. We lost power in Janasthana. My sister Surphanaka was disfigured, her nose and ears were cut. All this had been done by one human being Rama I can not bear this insult. You know my power. The entire celestial world is afraid of me. This human being Rama had ruined my name and fame. I

cannot bear this. I want to take revenge on him not by declaring war but by kidnapping his dear wife Seeta. He cannot cross the wide sea and declare war on me with great disappointment he will go back to Ayodhya.

I want your help to carry out this plan with your assistance. I hope I can succeed in my plan. What do you say?"

Maricha was upset and terribly worried. He was sure to die once he accepted Ravana's plan Separating Rama from Seeta was a death blow to him. Rama would kill him.

If he refused Ravana's orders, he would kill him. The result of this plan was Maricha's death. He thought it was better for him to die in the hands of Rama. Maricha said "My child Ravana I want some one to console you in this dreadful hour. As your uncle I am here. I am your well wisher. Please hear my words. You are surrounded by selfish people. They are not worried about your welfare. They shower pleasing words on you. They do not speak the real truth before you. Your own spies have not done their duty properly. What your brothers have done you do not know. They committed so many crimes in killing innocent. People in Dandaka forest. The trouble in Janasthana is created by your dear sister Surphanaka. She might have taunted the brothers and they have punished her. Do not think that Rama is an ordinary human being. As a young man he protected the yagna performed by great rishi Viswamitra. He killed all Rakshasas.

Maricha changed himself into a golden deer. with silver spots on its body and gems set on its horns.

The golden deer jumped and walked on the grass lands near Rama's ashramam.

Seeta come out of the hut to gather flowers and fruits.

She saw the golden deer jumping near Rama's ashramam.

She called out Rama and Lakshmana to see the deer.

Lakshmana looked at the deer and said "Oh brother this is not real deer. Have you ever heard or seen a golden deer with silver spots on its body. You see the horns, they are studded with gems. A rakshasa by name Maricha is expert in changing his body in any shape. He has come here with some purpose. Please kill him" Seeta smiled and said "Oh! Rama donot believe Lakshmana's words. This deer has stolen my heart. Please bring it to me. I will play with it. I will take it along with me to Ayodhya when we go back. People will be happy to see it. Please do not disappoint me, bring the deer to me. Hither to I never asked anything, can you not do this little favour for me to make me happy. When both of you go out, I will be alone in the ashramam, this deer will surely give good company by playing with me".

Rama saw her excitement and smiled at her He said "Oh! Brother Seeta wants the deer. She never asked me anything till now. We cannot find such deers either in chitra garden or

in Nandana vana. If you say it is not real deer, but a rakshasa. I will kill it and save other lives in the forest. Be careful about Seeta. Protect her well. Do not leave her alone. You and Jatayu will guard her. I expect some trouble in this game of hunting. I will come back soon with the deer dead or alive. Guard Seeta and do not leave her alone".

After giving instructions to Lakshmana, Rama chased the deer. The deer some times stopped and then began to run. It was a tantalising game between Rama and the golden deer.

They covered a long distance. Rama was getting angry and he decided to kill the deer. He took the arrow invoked Brahmastra and shoot at the deer.

The astra entered the body of the deer and split it into two parts. As instructed by Ravana, Maricha shouted "Oh! Seeta, Oh Lakshmana in the voice of Rama and died. Rama was stunned to hear the shout of Maricha. He thought it was Rakshasa maya. He felt sorry for setting aside Lakshmana's warning. He was far away from ashramam.

He thought that Maricha had deliberately shouted asking Lakshmana to come to the rescue of Rama in the clear voice of Rama.

This might be the plan of Maricha to isolate Seeta. Both Lakshmana and Seeta heard the voice of Rama. Seeta turned towards Lakshmana and said "Oh! Lakshmana did you hear the

voice of Rama. I think he is in danger. He wants your help. Why cannot you go and help him. You are still standing there. I am bit worried about Rama. Please go and help him. Please Lakshmana he needs your help please go do not delay".

She was trembling and weeping. But Lakshmana did not make any attempt to move. He was still standing there.

Seeta got wild and said "Oh! Lakshmana I cannot understand why you are not moving to help your brother who is in danger. He wants your help. Even after his shouting you are still standing there. I fail to understand why you are keeping silent and not moving to help your brother. You know he is my husband. I can not live without him. When he is in danger, when he is calling for help you are still silent. You are not making any attempt to move".

Lakshmana replied "Oh! Seeta, Rama is a great warrior. No one can defeat him in all the three worlds you have seen how he killed Khara, Dushana, Trisira and fourteen thousand soldiers in Janasthana. You yourself congratulated him. It is not Rama's cry. It is Maricha's cry. Do not worry Rama will come back safe".

Seeta was not convinced by his words. She lost control over her and hurled harsh words on Lakshmana. "Oh! Lakshmana, I understand your plan. You joined hands with Bharatha. You

accompanied Rama not to help him in the forest but to see his end. It is the plan of both of you. You both will not succeed in your plan. After the death of Rama you want to take me as your wife. It will never happen. If that is your plan I will commit suicide".

Lakshmana closed his ears, shedding tears in his eyes he said "Oh! Seeta, you are like my mother. Rama is my God and father. How can you talk like that, I worshipped both of you. Rama ordered me to protect you. I cannot disobey his orders. I can not go leaving you alone."

Seeta with so much of anger said "If you do not go I will commit suicide or I will throw myself into blazing fire or drown in Godavari water or I will make a noose and hang by myself from the tree. I will not allow you to have your plans successful".

Having no other way shedding tears, Lakshmana drew a line and asked her not to cross it at any cost. He put his two hands together and made pranam to her and left the ashramam.

Ravana was hiding behind a bush.

Soon after Lakshmana left the ashramam, Ravana in the guise of a ascetic walked into Rama's ashramam. He had staff in one hand and Kamandalam in another hand.

He saw Seeta standing at the door.

He was paralysed by looking at her beauty.

Her face was like moon

She had gleaming white teeth between her lips.

She had wide and large eyes like the petals of lotus.

She dressed in yellow sari.

He thought she was the most beautiful lady in all the three worlds. He thought her to be Lakshmi who had come down to earth. He recited vedic verse and asked her to offer something to eat.

He addressed her "Oh! Great lady, who are you? Are you alone? Why are you living in the forest. This is dangerous place. You looked beautiful. Are you Lakshmi or Parvati or Sachidevi. Every part of your body is beautiful. You are not a human being. You must be a woman from heaven. I have not seen such beautiful woman in my life. Please tell who are you. Why you are living alone in the forest please tell me every thing".

His plain talk was embarrassing to Seeta. She thought he was passing Sanyasi who lost his way in the forest. She offered darbha seat for him to sit.

She looked towards the door way expecting Rama and Lakshmana to come.

But they did not come.

It was her duty to honour the Sanyasi.

She told him "Oh! Great man, I am the daughter of Janaka the king of Mithila. I am the wife of Rama, the eldest son of

King Dasaratha of Kosala. On the orders of his father Rama came to Dandaka forest. So as devoted wife I followed him into the forest. His brother Lakshmana also came with us. We all are living in the forest. I will introduce you to my husband Rama and his brother Lakshmana. Both brothers are great warriors. Please let me know your name and gotra"

Ravana replied "Oh! Great lady you must have heard a **Rakashasa** king by name Ravana. He is ten headed Rakshasa. I am that Ravana the son of Vishravas and I am the brother of Kubera. I have come here only for you. Your beauty attracted me it dragged me here. Though I have many wives your beauty dragged me here. I want to marry you. Rama is not equal to me either in power or in wealth. As Sanyasi he is wandering in the forest. He is a coward. He has no courage to oppose his father and step mother. So he is living in the forest. So you leave him and come with me. I will make you as the chief queen in my kingdom".

Seeta was upset by the words of Ravana. First she was afraid and then became bold and said "Oh! Ravana I love my husband. He is every thing to me. He is Lord and God to me. Do not call him a sanyasi. Fate worked against him so he is in the forest. He is great and firm like Himavan. He is calm and deep like ocean. All good qualities are found in him. Do not think of me. I am like a lioness. Do not behave like a jackal. If you touch me, you will see your end. I am like fire. Go

back to your kingdom and enjoy with your wives. Give up this sinful thought. Go back and be happy with your people".

Ravana did not give up his idea of luring Seeta "Oh! Great lady my Lanka is beautiful with so many flower gardens and fruit gardens. It is like Amaravati the city of Indra. I will make all my wives to attend on you. I surrender every thing to you. Why do you think of Rama. He lost his kingdom. Without anything he is wandering in the forest. Why do you think of him. I came here only to rescue you from Rama's hard life in the forest. Believe me, I will provide luxurious and happy life in Lanka."

Seeta was not aware of the danger that was coming to her and she could not bare the insult hurt on her husband Rama. She said "Oh Ravana you say you are the son of Vishrvas and brother of Kubera. They are righteous. You are born in that family. How could you behave like this. You are walking in a dangerous path. You say you want to marry me. Are you not ashamed of asking the wife of another man to be your wife. Do not court trouble. I am warning you that Rama's arrows will split your chest and you will die soon. If he sees you here, you cannot escape death in his hands".

Ravana got angry and he gave up his Sanyasi garb and assumed his original form. The time was running out and he could not wait for a long time. His soft and appealing words did not act on her she was adamant in her attitude.

He approached her, dragged her to the chariot, pushed her into the chariot and drove the chariot fast. The Vanadevatas trembled at the sight of Ravana. Seeta cried out "Rama, Rama". She appealed the Vanadevatas to come to her rescue on the way Seeta hurled abuses on Ravana "When Rama and Lakshmana were not there, you entered the ashramam like thief and stole me you say you are the great warrior, defeated Indra, Vayu, Varuna and Yama. You say you made Gandharvas, Kinnaras and others as your slaves. Both sun god and Moon are afraid of you.

You say you have conquered the three worlds if such is your valour and strength, why did you enter Rama's ashramam in the guise of a Sanyasi. Like a thief you planned, separated me and Rama by creating Maya deer and you are carrying me now. You have no courage to face Rama and Lakshmana. In their absence you kidnapped me you are not the king of Lanka but a great thief of Lanka. Fate separated me from Rama. The same fate will turn against you and you will be killed and your kingdom will be destroyed". She cried out "Oh Vanadevata you see Ravana is carrying me. You please tell this to my Rama".

Ravana felt happy that he had succeeded in his plan of abducting Seeta. He was moving fast on his way to Lanka. Seeta was shouting on the way "Please help me. Inform Rama

that Ravana is carrying me". Jatayu heard her cry and saw them. He stood on the way and stopped Ravana. He said "Ravana, I am Jatayu and I am friend of Rama. I am extremely powerful. I have been helping people who are in great trouble. You are doing a wrong act now. When Rama and Lakshmana are not in ashramam, you are kidnapping Seeta. You being a king should not do such things. As king it is your duty to protect Dharma. You are violating the principles of Dharma. Rama has not committed any wrong in your kingdom. Your sister Surphanaka attacked them. They punished her she encouraged her brothers to attack Rama. In the fight Rama killed them all. Is it Rama's fault. I will not allow you to take Seeta. I challenge you for a fight".

Ravana never expected the unforeseen obstacle. Ravana accepted the challenge and both fought gallantly.

Jatayu destroyed his chariot, killed his donkeys and broke his bow and arrows.

Ravana had sword in his hand and he cut the two wings of Jatayu.

Jatayu fell on the ground and could not move. Ravana proceeded to Lanka.

Nature stood sorrowful when this out rage had happened. The sun lost his glow. The wind did not blow. River Godavari

kept silent. The deers shed tears. The birds stopped singing. Everything stood still. The nature wept for Seeta's plight. Seeta saw five monkeys sitting on a top of a mountain. She tore her upper garment, quickly removed her jewels, put them in the cloth, tied up the jewels and threw them at the monkeys. She cried out "Rama, Rama, Lakshmana". The monkeys saw a Rakshasa carrying a woman who cried out "Rama, Rama, Lakshmana".

Ravana reached Lanka and kept Seeta in his palace. He exhibited all his wealth to Seeta. He told her how he defeated his brother Kubera and took away all his wealth including his Pushpakavimana.

He assured her that all his wives would attend on her. He asked her to forget about Rama.

He asked her to marry him and be happy in the palace. Seeta bent down her head setting her looks on the ground and placed Dharbha and addressed Ravana "You do not know about Rama. He is a great force. His arrows are very powerful. They carry agni to burn anything. Single man killed your three brothers and fourteen thousand soldiers. You forgot about it. When both Rama and Lakshmana are not in the ashramam with a cunning plan, You entered ashramam and kidnapped me here you say you are a great warrior, but had no courage to face Rama and Lakshmana. If they were there at the time, they

would have killed and cut your body into pieces. You are a great thief. Do not stand before me. You go away from me".

Ravana got angry and his eyes became red. He told her "I am giving you twelve months time to change your mind. If you do not marry me I will kill you".

He ordered Rakshasa women to take her to Ashoka vana and guard her carefully. They took her to Ashoka Vana.

After killing Maricha Rama rushed towards ashramam. He suspected some Rakshasa's plan to kidnap Seeta or to kill her.

While dying Maricha called out Seeta and Lakshmana in Rama's voice. Why to separate Sita and Lakshmana. Lakshmana would leave Seeta and would rush to help Rama. On the way Rama began thinking like this "It must be a Rakshasa plan, either to kidnap Seeta or kill her. While dying why Maricha called out Seeta and Lakshmana in my voice probably to separate Seeta and Lakshmana. I am sure Lakshmana will leave Seeta alone and will rush to meet me. Probably the Rakshasas want to take revenge on me because I destroyed the entire Janasthana".

Rama saw Lakshmana coming towards him. He asked "Oh! Brother why are you coming leaving Seeta alone in the ashramam. It is Rakshasa maya. Either to kidnap Seeta or kill her. You have disobeyed my orders. Lakshmana I did not

hear your advice when you said it was not real deer but Rakshasa maya. Is Seeta safe. I had some bad omen. My left eye is throbbing. The birds are flying in many direction. I am not sure that Seeta will be in the ashramam. Either she is dead or kidnapped by Rakshasas. Seeta gave up the palace life and walked with me into the forest. She cannot live without me. Like Sanyasi I moved into the forest without second thoughts she followed me. I cannot live without her. She cannot live without me ~~she~~ she is more precious to me then the three worlds. Without **Seeta** how can I complete the exile period in the forest. If **Seeta** dies, I will also die. You go back to Ayodhya and inform Kaikeyi the sad end of myself and Seeta. She will be happy then". Rama and Lakshmana reached the ashramam. They both searched for Seeta. They called out "Seeta, Seeta". There was no response Seeta had gone and Rama was sunk in sorrow and sat on the ground.

Tears began rolling down from his cheeks. He looked at Lakshmana and said "I thought you would protect Seeta on that assurance I left the ashramam and chased the deer. I ordered you to stay back and guard Seeta. You disobeyed my orders. Why you disobeyed my orders. Please tell me. Seeta has gone. How can I live without Seeta".

Lakshmana could not talk. He was also weeping. He bent down his head and said "Oh! Brother I did not abandon her

willingly. She spoke harsh words I cannot repeat them. After hearing the cry of Maricha, Seeta compelled me to rush to help you, or else She threatend to commit suicide. I tried my best to console her. But she did not hear my words. Finally she said "You want to see the end of Rama and then try to marry me. That is your idea. You will not succeed in your plan. I will commit suicide if you do not go." So I left her and came over here".

Rama replied "Dear brother women in distress or in angry will talk like that. Seeta does not know what she is saying and does not know what the result will be. She is worried about my life and she talked like that. You should not have paid any heed to her words. You disobeyed me. You see what happened now. You gave way to your emotions and forgot to follow my orders". Both saw a seat made of Darbha and deer skin thrown on the ground.

Rama thought either Seeta had been carried away or eaten by Rakshasas.

Rama searched the entire spot and could not find any trace of Seeta.

It became difficult for Lakshmana to control him. He said "Oh! Brother control yourself. Do not give way to grief like this. Dandaka forest is big there are may caves and hiding

places. Seeta might have gone to gather flowers or fruits. We can search the entire forest".

Rama requested Godavari river, forest trees the birds and the deers to tell or show him where Seeta had gone.

They did not respond to his Pathetic appeal. They simply saw his sorrowful face.

Godavari river remained stand still. The trees stopped winging. The birds flew with out songs. The deers stopped jumping and walked slowly. Rama observed the nature and told Lakshmana "You see the nature is in sorrow. Every thing seem to be unhappy. Who will comfort me now we have searched the entire forest. There is no trace of Seeta. Who will tell us where Seeta is. I am a sinner. How can I live without Seeta". While walking in the forest, Lakshmana observed some food prints of a lady and a man. They were in the form of chasing not by walking side by side. They followed the foot prints. Rama saw a broken bow and quivers full of arrows. They also saw a broken chariot and dead donkeys.

They saw Seeta's jewels scattered on the ground and also flower petals. They saw the signs of blood having split here and there. They come to the conclusion that there was fight among some body.

Rama became dejected and said "Dear, Lakshmana my

devotion to Dharma has been misunderstood. My kindness and affection towards others became my weakness. I accepted the role of Sanyasi and walked into the forest. From today onwards I have become a changed man. I will kill all Rakshasas. I will burn all the three worlds. I will destroy the entire universe with my bow and arrows".

That was the first time Lakshmana seeing Rama in terrible angry.

He was frightened. He fell at his feet and requested him to be calm. "Oh! Rama, you should not get angry. You have always held you senses under your control. You were kind towards all. Now you should not destroy the entire universe. You will win in the war against Rakshasas. You will meet Seeta definitely. Give up the idea of destroying the entire universe. By these foot prints, it is clear that there has been a fight in this place. If we continue our search we can find out a clue. Donot lose faith in yourself.

Fate played on you. It is natural for human beings to face such troubles in life. Nahusha had been raised to the status of Indra and he was thrown to earth and lived as Pythan for so many years. Yayati was thrown out of heaven. Vasishta lost his sons in a single day. He never lost his balance of mind. Mother earth suffered from earthquakes. The sun and moon are eclipsed by Rahu and Ketu. If such is the fate of celestial

bodies What are we as human beings. Take it easy. Give up your anger and emotions. You are not an ordinary human being. You have all good qualities. Wake up and display your valour and strength. Wipe out the entire Rakshasa clan".

Rama felt happy at Lakshmana's words "My dear brother, you are really great you have shown me the way to take revenge on Rakshasas. I will follow your advice in search of Seeta."

Both Rama and Lakshmana found Jatayu lying on the ground with blood on his body. Jatayu looked at Rama and said "Rama, I saw Ravana carrying Seeta. I tried my best to protect, I fought with Ravana, destroyed his chariot and killed his donkeys. I destroyed his bow and arrows. But he cut my two wings with his sword. So I could not fight further. He carried Seeta away. I am here on the ground to inform you this kidnapping of Seeta".

Rama with tears in his eyes. Sat by the side of Jatayu. Jatayu was sorry to see Rama in tears. He wanted to tell something but could not do so, because he was finding it hard to breath. In the hands of Rama he breathed his last. Rama was heart broken. He said "We met Jatayu in the forest. He was a great friend of our father. We four walked into Panchavati. He promised us to protect and guard Seeta. He kept his promise. But in the fight against Ravana he lost his life. We are really unfortunate in losing a good friend Jatayu. Please arrange for his funeral".

Both Rama and Lakshmana lit the fire and cremated Jatayu.

After taking bath in the river, they offered tarpanam to great Jatayu who reached heaven later.

Jatayu's cremation was another sad event in the life of Rama. He lost his dear friend. Rama was now clear who had kidnapped Seeta. Now he made up his mind to find out the place where Seeta was imprisoned.

Jatayu told Rama that Ravana carried Seeta in the direction of South. They reached a cave. Suddenly a Rakshasi by name Ayomukhi approached Lakshmana and asked him "Oh! Young man, I am Rakshasi by name Ayomukhi. At first sight I had fallen in love with you. You are really fortunate to be loved by me come with me. We will hunt the animals and men together in the forest".

Lakshmana could not control his anger. He felt that he was responsible for Seeta's Kidnap. In protecting Seeta Jatayu lost his life.

All these things have happened because of Rakshasas. This Rakshasi was trying to taunt him. He got wild took the sword and cut her nose, ears and breasts with a huge cry the rakshasi ran away into deep forest. Then both the brothers moved on and heard big noise. They saw a Rakshasa with wide chest but no head. His stomach was his mouth and he had one eye with huge arms a yojana in length.

The name of Rakshasa was Kadamba. He caught the brothers with his two hands and was about to swallow them.

Rama and Lakshmana thought for a while and decided to cut the two hands of Kadamba. They cut his two hands. Kadamba fell on the ground and asked them who they are.

Lakshmana told him the entire story. Kadamba told then "I am not Rakshasa. I am a Gandharva. As a result of a curse I have become Rakshasa. I used to take pleasure in making fun of rishis. They got wild and cursed me. I also offended Indra. He also cursed me. So I became a Rakshasa. I begged Indra to recall his curse. He said Rama the son of King of Kosala will cut your arms and bury you. Till that period you have to remain like this. Oh! Rama you have cut my arms, please bury me, so that I can get back my original form".

Rama told him "Please tell me where Ravana lives. What is his nature. How we can reach his place. You have been here for a very long time. You know everything about Rakshasas. Please tell us where we can find out Seeta.

Kadamba said "In this Rakshasa form, I cannot remember anything. Please bury me, then only I can regain my original power.

Rama and Lakshmana dug a pit and buried Kadamba and burnt it. He regained his Gandharva form. Now he was known as Dhanu.

Dhanu told Rama "A monkey king Sugriva is living with his four friends on Rishymuka Parvat. He is brave, powerful and a good friend. He is afraid of his brother Vali. Vali occupied his kingdom imprisoned his wife and his ministers and is trying to kill him. So he is taking shelter in Rishyamuka Parvat. It is a forbidden place for Vali. You help him. He will be your good friend and help you in finding your wife Seeta. Do not ignore him. He wants some help from others. You give that help to him. He will respond to you. His father was Riksharaja. Actually he was the son of Surya, the sun God. He knew the tricks of Rakshasas. He knows everything in the world. You can easily find Seeta with his help. Rama I want to tell you one thing more. There is one ascetic by name Shabari. She served many rishis and received their blessings. She is waiting for you. You please meet her and satisfy her desire". He took leave of Rama and reached heaven in his chariot.

Both Rama and Lakshmana walked through the path indicated by Kabanda.

They found out an ashramam of Shabari.

They entered the ashramam which was surrounded by trees of all kinds of fruits and flowers.

Shabari saw them coming and she was so excited.

She prostrated before them. Rama looked at her and spoke in sweet pleasant voice "Oh! Mother you are great Tapasvin.

You have conquered desires and anger. You are living on roots and fruits. Rishis helped a lot you served them in a great way".

Shabari replied "Oh! Rama today my tapas had been fulfilled. I have served great rishis. I have been waiting for you to see you and talk to you. Today I am really happy. Now I have seen you I have been purified since your eyes have rested on me and I will certainly reach the lotus feet of God. The rishis whom I have **served** have gone to heaven. They asked me to stay back to receive you and serve you. To entertain you I have gathered various fruits. Please accept them and satisfy me and also the desires of great rishis".

Rama said "Shabari, you are great you need not tell me in so many ways. I know about you. Dhanu requested me to visit your ashramam and meet you. So to bless you I have come here. I want to stay here for some more days.

Shabari answered with pleasure you can stay here. This place is famed by the name Matanga vana the great rishis sanctified this vana. The rishis were old. They almost bent to the ground they were shivering with shaking hands they worshipped Agni. They could not walk to the river. They requested water to come to them. They took bath in the river water and then worshipped Agni every day that is the sacredness of the

ashramam. The yagna vedi which is called Pratyakshati glows like sunlight and illuminate the entire ashramam."

Shabari touched the feet of Rama, lit the fire and entered the fire. Then she reached heaven. Shabari was Brahma gnani. Rama felt immensely happy after meeting Shabari.

Rama told Lakshmana "Brother look at the ashramam how peaceful it is. The fragrance of the flowers spread all over ashramam. You see how the tigers and deers are playing. I wonder the great rishis summoning the river water to come to them. After seeing this my mind is rid of agitation which had been troubling me for a long time. I feel I am happy and I can find out Seeta. Something tells me that he can succeed in finding out Seeta. So let us go quickly to meet Sugriva on Rishyamuka parvat".

They reached river pampa and took bath in the river. They prayed the sun god by offering Anghya. They crossed the river and reached the other bank. They could find various flower trees and creepers. It was so pleasant.

Rama began thinking of happy days. He had spent many happy days with Seeta in beautiful gardens. His mind stayed there for a long time. He could not come out of that happy atmosphere. He did not want to proceed further and he sat under a shade of a tree and said "Oh! Brother this spot is so

nice. My mind does not want to leave it. It is so pleasant and pleasing atmosphere. This is pushing me back to the old days. I have spent happily with Seeta. We both were happy in the flower gardens and beautiful ponds around. I cannot move you yourself go and meet Sugriva".

Lakshmana was looking at Rama and listening to him. He said "Oh! Brother, I know how unhappy you are. Seeta is jewel among women. I think she is safe. No one can touch her. I am sure we can find her you know Dharma. I need not tell you about that. You must give up grief you must punish the sinner. You have promised Bharatha and mother Kausalya that you would come back. We need not give up hope we continue our search. We shall meet Sugriva. Let us see what he says. Please rise up and shed your grief. Be brave and act as a great worrier. You are not an ordinary human being. You have killed so many Rakshasas in Janasthana. Dharma is on your side. You will surely get victory over the enemies. Please give up sorrow, wake up from you sorrow. We shall meet Sugriva."

Rama was Happy to hear Lakshmana's words. They moved together to meet Sugriva.

IV

KISHKINDA KANDA



KISHKINDA KANDA

Rama meets Sugriva Kishkinda Kanda IV

Sugriva and his four friends were sitting on the vantage point of Rishyamuka parvat. Sugriva's eyes were searching all the four sides of the Parvat. He was terribly afraid of Vali and his men.

He saw two young men ascending the Parvat. He was afraid of them and did not know what to do. He thought of running away from that place, with trembling voice he said "I am afraid of these men. I think they are from Vali. This time I am sure, I will not escape death. They look like Sanyasis, but they are carrying weapons. I am sure they will kill me. It is better for us to leave this place and goto some other place".

Among his four friends Hanuman was brave and intelligent. He told his master not to be afraid of the two men. Vali and his men were afraid of ascending this forbidden Parvat.

"Oh! Hanuman you are dear to me. You are brave and intelligent. You go and talk to them. Ascertain the information from them. If they are not Vali's men, win them to our side. Do as you please".

Hanuman was not an ordinary Vanara. He was the son of Anjana Devi and Vayu the God of wind. When Vali chased

Sugriva, as trusted minister he followed his master and finally suggested Rishyamuka mountain was the safe place for him because the mountain was a forbidden place for Vali and his men.

He could lead a peaceful life in the mountain area. Hanuman in the guise of Brahmachari approached Rama and Lakshmana.

He put his two hands together and made salutations to them.

In polite and sweet voice. "You are welcome to Rishyamuka Parvat. Oh! Great men I observed you both ascending the Parvat. On the way you are looking this side and that side.

Are you searching for anything. You look like Sanyasis. But you are carrying weapons. It is strange. You look like brave warriors. You have wide chest and powerful arms. You have the gait of a lion your bows look like the bows of Indra. You both have beautiful face. I think you both belonged to a royal family. your entry here enhanced the glow of the Parvat, the forest and the river Pampa. By your appearance you look like brothers. You have radiance on your face. You look like Sun and Moon. Your arms are bare, but there are traces of wearing gold ornaments. You are searching for something. I think there is something in your mind. May I know the reason. Let me tell you who I am. My name is Hanuman. I am the minister of Sugriva the chief of Monkeys. His brother Vali drove him out of his kingdom. He not only occupied his kingdom but

imprisoned his wife Ruma and his supporters. He tried many times to kill Sugriva. Sugriva is afraid of Vali and is taking Shelter on this Parvat, which has been forbidden for Vali to step in. Please tell me everything about you and why you have come here".

Rama was so happy by the words of Hanuman. He turned to Lakshmana and said "Oh! Brother the luck is coming to the successful end and we have come here all the way to meet Sugriva. Sugriva is really fortunate to have Hanuman as minister and good adviser. Hanuman seems to be intelligent. He spoke like a great diplomat. He is master of Vedas. There is no mistake in his talk. His way of polite talking, behaviour and manner in approaching strangers, impressed me so much. I like him. Please tell him why we have come here".

Lakshmana turned towards Hanuman and said "Dear friend, we are the sons of King Dasaratha of Kosala. My father ordered Rama to spend fourteen years in Dandaka Forest. My brother Rama obeyed his orders and walked into the forest. As devoted wife Seeta followed Rama and walked into the forest. I accompanied them. When Rama and myself were not in ashramam with perfect plan the ten headed Ravana of Lanka had carried away Seeta. We searched for her in the entire Dandaka forest. Dhanu a Gandharva gave us assurance

and asked us to meet Sugriva. Sugriva is a great power. He will help you in tracing Seeta. Please meet him on Rsihyamuka parvat, so we are here".

Hanuman was so happy to hear his words. He said "My master is facing the same trouble. You are also in the same position. If both of you join together they can achieve their goal. My master wants his wife and kingdom. Rama wants his wife from the clutches of Ravana. Vali is the enemy of Sugriva. Ravana is the enemy of Rama. If both join together Vali and Ravana could be easily eliminated. Peace will be restored. You both sit on my shoulders, I will take you both to Sugriva".

Both Rama and Lakshmana felt happy. In short period Hanuman carried them on his shoulders and introduced them to Sugriva.

Sugriva was immensely happy that Rama and Lakshmana were not the agents of Vali. It was a great relief to him.

He welcomed Rama and said "My able and intelligent minister Hanuman told me, you are a great warrior and a terror to the enemies. You are the embodiment of Dharma. You have honoured me great in courting friendship with me. I consider it a great honour and a good fortune. I will be with you for ever. Our friendship will remain permanent. No one can break it. Here is my hand, hold it".

Rama was so happy he shook his hand. Meanwhile Hanuman kindled the fire, worshipped it and brought it before them.

Both Rama and Sugriva worshipped the God of fire made three pradakshanams and took the oath that they would remain friendly for ever. The others who were present there felt very happy. Sugriva made sala branch of a tree as a seat for Rama to sit. Hanuman made sandal wood branch as a seat for Lakshmana to sit.

Sugriva said "Oh! Rama our friendship will remain for every. From now onwards every thing will be shared by us whether it is happiness or sorrow I suffered a lot in the hands of my brother Vali. He occupied my kingdom and drove me out. He imprisoned my wife Ruma and all my supporters. He chased me from place to place. He tried many times to kill me. Finally Hanuman suggested this place. It is a forbidden place for Vali, so I am safe here. I will send my people all over the world to trace Seeta. It is my duty as your trusted friend. You need not worry about it. Have peace of mind".

Rama replied "My friend Sugriva give up your fear of Vali. I have powerful arrows. They will kill him. You need not worry about Vali".

"Oh! Rama after a very long time I am having peace of mind. I found a great friend in you. Killing Vali is not my job, it is

yours. From now on words I will have peace of mind. Rama. I tell you one thing some days back we five were sitting on the top of this mountain. A Rakshasa was carrying a beautiful woman. She was shouting Rama, Rama and Lakshmana. She must be your wife. I saw them going in the direction of South. After seeing us she dropped a bundle. It is full of jewels. Please see them whether they belonged to Seeta or not. I have preserved it. I will get them now".

He placed the bundle before Rama. Rama knew the piece of upper cloth of yellow sari. Seeta wore on that day with trembling hands, tears rolling down from the cheeks Rama untied the bundle.

They were Seeta's jewels "Oh! Lakshmana these are Seeta's jewels. Please tell me which jewel she wore on her body". Lakshmana with tears in his eyes, "Oh! Brother sorry I cannot tell. I never looked at her face and hands. I looked only at her feet. I can recognise her anklets, since I used to touch her feet every morning to receive her blessings.

Rama then turned towards Sugriva and asked him to tell more about Ravana carrying Seeta. Sugriva said "Rama I know nothing about him. He is Rakshasa. I do not know his kingdom or country. I do not know his ancestry. The lady was calling out Rama, Rama and Lakshmana. We saw her throwing down

this bundle. I will surely help you in tracing out Seeta. We will go round the world and find out the place of that Rakshasa. Do not weep. I need not tell anything about life and Fate. Sorrows and difficulties come and go. They are not permanent. Give up this grief. Be brave and hopeful you are not an ordinary man. You are a great warrior".

Rama then replied "Sugriva you are really great friend of me. Till now I have Lakshmana. You are the second person to control my grief. I am grateful to you your sweet words pacified my grief".

Both Rama and Sugriva shook hands and once again promised each other to remain as permanent friends.

After seeing Seeta's jewels Rama was unhappy for sometime. Later he regained his old composure. He was ready to hear the struggle between Vali and Sugriva. Sugriva began telling the story.

Vali is my elder brother. He was my father's favourite son. We were very happy. I always respected him. His word was law to me. He succeeded my father as king of Kishkinda. I as subject obeyed his orders. Coming of Mayavi on the scene created troubles between us. I will tell you in detail about it. Mayavi an Asura was the eldest son of Dundubhi. There was some conflict between Vali and Mayavi over a woman. When

every one was in deep sleep. There was a roar out side the gates of Kishkinda. He called Vali for aduel fight. Vali took up the challenge and was ready to go. Myself and his wives requested him not to go and fight with Mayavi. He did not hear our appeal Vali stood at the gates. After seeing Vali, Mayavi ran away. Vali chased him. Mayavi entered the cave. I followed my brother Vali. He asked me to stay at the mouth of the cave and guard it till he returned. I touched his feet and promised him to stay till he returned. I was waiting for him at the mouth of the cave for nearly one year. I did not know what was going on inside the cave. I simply followed his orders and stayed there. After some time I saw blood flowing from inside the cave. I was horrified to look at it. Then I heard a big roar. I thought it was Mayavi's roar. I am terribly afraid of Mayavi. Thinking that he would kill me, I closed the mouth of the cave with big boulder. I came back to Kishkinda and informed every thing to all people. The ministers and elders met, discussed and decided to make me as king of Kishkinda.

One day when I was in Darbar hall with all ministers and courtiers around me, suddenly Vali appeared in the hall. By looking at him every one was stunned. His eyes became red. By looking at me, Vali roared like a lion "you sinner occupied my throne and assumed the powers of a king. How dare you

do it. When I am still alive you have occupied my place. You are enjoying the fruits of kingship". I immediately got down from the throne and offered the throne for him and told like this "Dear brother as per your instructions, I guarded the mouth of the cave. I waited for one year. Suddenly I saw the blood coming out of the cave. Then I heard a big roar. I thought Mayavi had killed you and would attack me soon. So I was afraid of Mayavi and closed the mouth of the cave with a big mould. I came here and told everything to these people. I never asked these people to declare me asking. It is not my fault. Please excuse me. You be the king and allow me as your humble subject" saying these words I fell at his feet. He said with so much of anger 'What this sinner said is half truth. I killed Mayavi and wanted to come out. But the mouth of the cave was closed. I called out "Sugriva, Sugriva" many times. There was no response, with my fist I broke the mould and come out. I looked around, but there was no trace of Sugriva, So I rushed here. I see this sinner is sitting on the throne. I do not want **this** sinner in my kingdom. He threw me out of Kishkinda, imprisoned my wife Ruma and my supporters who stood by me. After that he chased me from place to place. On the sound advice of Hanuman we settled here because this is the forbidden place for Vali and his men. This is the brief account of the conflict between me and my brother Vali".

Saying this Sugriva began weeping Rama pacified him and assured him that he would kill Vali.

Sugriva told Rama "Oh! Rama I came to know you are a great warrior and a great archer. It is my duty to bring to your kind notice of the strength of Vali. He is brave, firm and valiant. He can go round the world in a short time. With single leap he can move from south pole to North pole. He can pull the trees from the earth. He can smash the mountain. An Asura by name Dundubhi assumed the form of buffalo challenged Varuna for a duel fight. Varuna politely told him to approach Himavan. Then Dundubhi approached Himavan and challenged him for a duel. He said he was not equal to him to fight. He was pious man. He encouraged people to have peaceful life and to have meditation. It was the birth place for many rivers. So he was not willing to disturb the peace in the region. He advised Dundubhi to go to the south and challenge Vali for a duel, Vali the king of Kishkinda would give him equal fight. Dundubhi went to Kishkinda and challenged Vali for a duel fight with a war cry. Vali at that time was in the palace with his wives. He came out and saw Dundubhi. Vali said "I know who you are ? You go away from this place".

Dundubhi did not go. He said " Vali I have come all the way to fight with you. If you want to spend the night with your

women. I can wait till the morning and then face you in the duel fight".

Vali felt uneasy and asked the women to go into the palace. He started fighting with Dundubhi. There was a fierce fight between the two. Dundubhi was losing strength. Vali lifted him, turned him round and round and threw him in the air. It fell on the ground one hundred yojanas from the gates of Kishkinda. Dundubhi lost his life. At that time he had the strength of one thousand elephants. Dundubhi's body while travelling in the air dropped some drops of blood in Matanga ashramam. The rishi became angry because his ashramam had been polluted by the blood of asura. He came to know that this act was done by Vali. He cursed him that he would die in case he entered the ashramam. So this Parvat had become a forbidden place for Vali so we settled here".

"Oh! Rama I told you every thing about my brother. Vali and his power I do not know how you could kill him with single handed. I am worried about the fight between you and my brother".

Lakshmana interfered and said "Sugriva you want to test Rama's powers. Tell me what Rama should do. He will do the act and prove his strength. How can Rama convince you that he can kill your brother Vali. Please tell us with out any hesitation". Sugriva felt uneasy. He bent down his head with

shame. He never expected Lakshmana would take his words seriously. He said "Dear Lakshmana do not misunderstand me. Do not think I have no faith in Rama. I have full faith and confidence in Rama. The only fear I have in my mind is Vali. How to Vanquish him is my problem. That fear of Vali made me to talk like that. That is all".

Then Rama said "My dear friend, it is but natural for you to be doubtful about me and my strength. I will convince you. Please tell me, what do you want me to do".

Saying this Rama approached the Skeleton of Dundubhi lifted it with his toe and then threw it at a distance of ten yojanas. Sugriva felt happy but not fully satisfied. He said "Rama when Vali defeated and killed Dundubhi, he had the strength of one thousand elephants, if only you can pierce one of these seven salatrees. I will be satisfied and I am sure you will defeat Vali".

On hearing his words, Rama took the bow, strung it and then fixed the arrow. He pulled it for and then released it. The arrow travelled at great speed pierced all the seven sala trees, entered the earth and came back to the quiver of Rama and rested there. All the five Vanaras were stunned. They were so happy and began jumping with so much of excitement.

Sugriva was jubilant and was sure of Vali's death. All his doubts

vanished and praised Rama to the skies. "Rama I am so happy now. We should not waste our time. We shall now go to Kishkinda and challenge for a duel".

Rama embraced Sugriva and they all decided to proceed to Kishkinda.

Sugriva dressed himself for a duel fight and approached the gates of Kishkinda and summoned Vali for a duel fight.

Vali heard the roar and he knew it was Sugriva's roar. He never expected Sugriva would dare to come to his door and would challenge him for a duel. He laughed at it and went out to meet him. He saw Sugriva and could not control his anger. He rushed to him and fought with him. The fight was severe and was fearful.

It was like two planets fighting with each other. Their fist fight was severe. They used their fists like Vajrayudha of Indra. Rama could not distinguish between the two. Both looked alike. Both dressed in the same way. Even in fighting there was no change. Sugriva was losing his strength. He expected Rama would use his weapon. He was bleeding. Sugriva found it difficult for him to continue the fight. He ran away from the place. Vali shouted "Sugriya you have managed to escape alive. Do not come back and challenge me again".

Sugriva went back to Rishyamukha parvat.

Rama, Lakshmana and Hanuman met him.

Sugriva having lost all hopes in sorrowful voice. He said "You displayed your power to me. On your instructions. I summoned Vali for a duel fight. When we were fighting I thought that you would use your weapon. But you did not do. If you had told me that you had no wish to kill Vali. I would not have gone there. I have been disappointed look at me now. I am bleeding all over the body".

Rama said "Dear Sugriva do not find fault with me. You both look like twins. You both dressed in the same way. Your duel fight was also on the same lines. I could not recognise who Vali is, and who Sugriva is. So I did not act by using my weapons. Lakshmana bring Gajapushpi creeper and put it around his neck. Now I can recognise who is who. You go and challenge Vali now". Sugriva regained his courage now and rushed to Kishkinda. He roared like a lion and challenged Vali for a duel fight.

Vali heard the roar and he rushed to the gates. His dear wife Tara stopped him and said "Oh! My Lord do not go now. I saw bad omens. I heard strange stories. Your dear son Angada told me all about it. Your brother Sugriva entered into an alliance with Ayodhya princes before Agni the God of fire.

Rama promised Sugriva to make him as king of Kishkinda by killing you. Sugriva in return promised Rama to trace Seeta the wife of Rama why do you fight with your brother. give up the hatred treat him with love and affection. Release his wife and his supporters. I want you to stop the duel fight and killing of your brother. I want peace in Kishkinda. Please stop the duel and make friendship with your brother".

Vali laughed at her and said "You know the power and strength of Vali. When he challenged me for a duel, it never happened that Vali is going back. How can you expect me, you being the wife of a great warrior and the mother of great son to give up the fight. I know Rama he is the embodiment of Dharma. He will not Violate the rules of Dharma. I am not afraid of it. Please do not stop me".

Vali met Sugriva in the duel fight. It was fierce fight they both fought galantly. Sugriva was losing grip. Rama hiding behind the tree saw Sugriva's weakness and shoot an arrow. It went straight and pierced the heart of Vali. Immediately Vali fell on the ground in a pool of blood. Sugriva was happy and thought he had conquered heaven.

Great Vali fell on the ground.

He never felt the end of his life.

His splend our had not gone.

The golden garland which he had from his father Indra was still shining.

The glory he had earned earlier did not disappear. Rama and Lakshmana walked towards Vali.

Vali the son of Indra saw Rama coming to him. He said "You are Rama the son of great king Dasaratha of Kosala. The people say you are the embodiment of Dharma. When I was fighting and deeply absorbed in fight, you hiding behind the tree sent an arrow which pierced into my heart and now I am dying. I did not know you. I did not have connections with you. I never stepped into your kingdom. I never rebelled against you. Why you killed me. Sugriva promised something to you. You decided to help him by killing me. If you had told me that Ravana had kidnapped your wife, I would have easily killed Ravana and brought Seeta to you. For this small thing you helped Sugriva and killed me. You respect Dharma. You follow Dharma. Dharma is your religion. Are you following Dharma in killing me who has not done any thing wrong to your life. You are Adharmi. You are like a well covered with grass more dangerous than the real well. You are like a fire covered by ashes. A Kshatriya should follow the rules of Dharma. You being a Kshatriya prince violated these rules. I am told who killed a Brahman, a cow, who steal the property of others, who does not believe in God, who

marries when the eldest brother is still unmarried, who reveals the secret to the society, who betrays a friend. Who enjoys with the wife of another man all these are sinners and they suffer in hell. You can say I have killed because you are an animal. I am not like other animals. I am a monkey. My bones and flesh are not useful for any body. If I had followed the advice of my wife, I would not have come and die in your hands. You are not fit to be called as a son of righteous king Dasaratha. You earned a bad name to your father and to your family. Your killing me is treacherous. It is not proper. Please Rama why you killed me. Justify your act. So that I can have peaceful end".

Rama listened patiently to the accusation of Vali. He did not get angry. He knew Vali spoke certain truths regarding Dharma. He was right to certain extent. He calmly addressed Vali "Oh! Great warrior Vali you know the word Dharma. You do not know Dharma, Artha and Kama. You have not consulted the men who have expert knowledge of Dharma. You did not hear the views of experts of Dharma. Yet you say you know Dharma and you accuse me as Adharmi. This part of the country with mountains, rivers, lakes and fields are ruled by Surya Vamsa kings. The king of this area is king Bharatha. He is my brother. We follow the path of Dharma. As royal princes we wandered in the forest to protect Dharma. When

Adharma raises its head. It is our duty to put it down. Here in this part of the kingdom Adharma raised its head. According to Dharma father, teacher and brother are to be considered as his own and treat them with respect. The younger brother should be treated as son. You should treat Sugriva your younger brother as your son. But you violated the principle of Dharma. For such person the punishment is death So I killed you. Sugriva is my good friend. It is the duty of a friend to help his friend who is in trouble. Sugriva is in trouble. You treated him as your enemy. You imprisoned his wife and his supporters. We both took an oath before Agni the God of fire. How can I violate the promise which I have given to Sugriva. If I violate I will be going against Dharma. I cannot do that. So I helped him in regaining his kingdom, his wife and his men. I am not Adharmi in this respect. You are an animal and I am a Kshatriya. It is the duty of Kshatriya to hunt the animal in the forest. If the animals are wild the king will hunt and kill them. You being an animal have become wild and committing so many wrongs by occupying your brothers kingdom imprisoning his wife and men, and chasing Sugriva from place to place to kill him. So we the kings adopt many methods to kill the animals. Sometimes we trap them by digging pits shoot them with arrows from the tops of the trees and hiding behind the trees. I did not commit an Adharma

act in killing you by hiding behind the tree. I simply followed Dharma in helping my good friend Sugriva".

Vali looked at Rama and shed tears.

With folded hands he made salutations to Rama and said "Oh! Great Rama you are not an ordinary Kshatriya. Please excuse me In my ignorance of Dharma, I hurled abuses on you. What you said is true. All these years I did not behave properly. I have committed so many mistakes. You have opened my eyes to know my mistakes. You are the Lord of Lords. You have come down to establish order. I made a mistake in considering you as an ordinary human being. You are not I am ready to leave this world. Please give me permission to leave this world. But I am worried about my son Angada but not Tara. He is my only son. He did not have any experience in life. I keep him in your hands. Please treat him as you treat Sugriva. I hope he will be safe in your protection. Please bestow that little favour on me. That is my final request to you". Rama promised Vali that he would look after Angada and he need not worry about him.

Vali was always victorious in the war or fight against his enemies. He defeated many Asuras. Indra failed to defeat him. His power was known in all the three worlds. Such a great warrior was lying on the ground. Tara the chief queen rushed to the dead body of her husband. She saw Rama,

Lakshmana and Sugriva. Tara took Vali's head and kept it on her lap. She was weeping and could not control her grief.

She looked at the arrow pierced in the heart of Vali pain and sorrow rushed from her heart.

"Oh! My dear one. I am Tara your dear wife. When I am calling, you do not like to answer. Rise up and come with me. We shall go to the palace. This is not the place for you to lie down. Your place is Kishkinda. When I am calling you, you still observe silence. When I requested you not to fight with Sugriva, you did not hear my words. You ignored my advice. Now you know the result of that fate is against you. The same fate favoured your brother Sugriva. What about your son Angada. He has to face hardship in life. Who will look after him. See his face. He is weeping who will console him. He had to depend on Sugriva. Where is the guarantee that Sugriva will treat him well. My dear child Angada look at you father. You can not see him again and again. Your great father was killed by perfect plan hatched by your uncle Sugriva. Rama did not kill him, but Sugriva killed him : She looked at Sugriva and continued to talk "Sugriva are you satisfied now. You have captured Kishkinda kingdom with the help of Rama. All your desires are fulfilled now. You are free now. There is no enemy to you now. You can be happy now. Oh! My dear, are you hearing me why cannot you answer.

Without you Kishkinda will be hell to me. I will also come with you I will undertake fast on to death".

Every one was stunned to hear her announcement Hanuman with folded hands approached Tara and said "Oh! Tara, you are the wife of a great warrior Vali and the mother of another great warrior Angada. Becalm shed your grief. A person reaps the fruits of his actions he has performed these actions may be good or bad, the death will decide the results No one need mourn for the death of another. It comes to one and all. Birth is followed by death. During this interval one reaps the fruits of his actions. If his actions are good and beneficial to humanity he will reach heaven. If they are not good he will reach the gates of Hell. You feel Vali is unfortunate. But he is not. He is a valiant fighter. He never faced any defeat. You think of his greatness but not his death. In the fight one gets victory and another gets defeat. Vali ruled Kishkinda with great determination and faith. He knew the code of behaviour. He was sweet spoken generous and kind to all. He attained a place in heaven meant for good and great people. Please give up the grief. Look at your son. It is your duty as mother to look after him. Do not desert him. Do not make him as orphan with out father and mother. By looking at him give up grief and give up fasting. Please look at the people, they want your help and guidance. You are great in state craft.

Your guidance is essential to the state and to the people. Please give up the idea of fasting".

Vali had recovered from his faint. He looked at Sugriva and asked him to come near "My dear brother I am sorry. I gave you so much of trouble because of my pride and anger. Please forget the past. Excuse me for wrongs. I have done to you. You be the king of Kishkinda. Take the golden garland from my neck and wear it as the symbol of royalty. I wish you all success. Look at my son Angada. He is standing there, weeping for the separation from me. He is my dear son. please look after him as your own son. My wife Tara is a wise woman. She knows the state craft. Her advice is very essential in administration.

You promised to help Rama in tracing out Seeta. Do it as early as possible or else what happened to me will happen to you. If Rama gets angry, No one can stop him. Be careful".

Vali called Angada to sit by his side "My dear son, understand the present situation. Face the problems calmly. Do not get agitated. Accept happiness and sorrow as they come. You must please Sugriva in every way. He may love you or may not love you. Do not worry. Do not join hands with his enemies. Keep away from them. It is safe for you. Follow the middle path. Try to be happy in the leadership of Sugriva".

Vali's end was coming fast.

Neela approached him and pulled out the arrow from his heart. Vali breathed his last. Both Tara and Angada prostrated before the dead body. Sugriva also felt sorry and wept. He told Rama "You kept your promise by killing Vali. His parting words made me to think that he never hated me nor he had the idea of killing me. I mis took him. After seeing the death of Vali and the sorrow of Tara and Angada I do not want this kingdom and the power of ruling. I will go back to Rishyamuka Parvat".

Rama pacified him and asked him to attend the funeral rites of Vali.

Tara looked at Rama, went to him and said "Rama I have heard about you. You are great and good natured. You should take pity on me. I can not live without Vali, I know how you are suffering without Seeta. You can not live without Seeta. It is the same case with me, I can not live without Vali. Vali needs me. Please kill me too. The sin of killing a woman will not cling to you. Please do this favour of sending me along with Vali".

Rama was sorry to hear such words from Tara. "Oh! Great lady. you are the wife of great warrior and a great fighter. You should not give for his death. Fate rules the world. We can not change it. Lord Brahma ordained certain things. We

cannot act against them. All the three worlds should obey his orders. Your son Angada will be Yuvaraja, you have to look after him. You are really fortunate to have a hero husband and a hero son. Give up grief and allow your son to attend the final rites of his father".

Vali's dead body was taken in procession and finally he was cremated by his son Angada by lighting the fire.

Under the instructions of Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman and others decided to take Sugriva to the council hall to crown him as king. Rama told Sugriva "Dear friend go and assume the powers of ruling Kishkinda. Then declare Angada as Yuvaraja. He is very image of his father. He will bring fame and glory like his father. This is the month of Shravana, from now onwards rainy seasons starts and will continue up to month of Kartika. After that period you can send your men to trace Seeta. Till that period myself and Lakshmana will stay at Prasravana".

Sugriva assumed kings powers. Rama and Lakshmana went to Prasravana. The brothers spent rainy months in Prasravana. Rama was always thinking of Seeta. He had sleepless nights. Some times he did not take food. The pleasing nature did not make Rama happy. He was in sorrowful mood.

Lakshmana tried his best to make him happy but failed to

pacify Rama. Rama was thinking of Seeta and Lakshmana pacifying him. This continued all these four months of rainy season in Prasaravana.

The rainy season was over. The skies were clean of dark rainy clouds. Hanuman observed the clear sky. King Sugriva should start his work now. The search for Seeta should begin now. King Sugriva was swimming in pleasure with wine and women.

Hanuman who knew the importance of Dharma, decided to meet Sugriva and remind him of his promise to Rama. He approached him and said "Oh! Lord the sky is clear. The rainy season has gone long back. I have come here to remind you of your promise to Rama regarding the search for Seeta. If you delay Rama will get angry and you know the result of that anger. Please wake up from your complacency. I am sure you will follow my advice with the help of Rama you have regained your kingdom, your dear wife Ruma and your supporters. It was really a great help. Rama is waiting for your response. He waited all these four months. The rainy season has gone, the sky is clear. Rama also observed these changes he cannot wait for a long period. He is just waiting for your response. Please act on your promise or else some thing strange will happen".

Sugriva on the advice of Hanuman summoned Neela and asked him to summon all Vanaras all over the world to assemble in Kishkinda within fifteen days. If they failed to return they should face death punishment. Orders were issued to all. The Vanaras near and far started arriving Kishkinda.

Rama observed the skies. The rainy season was over. The time set for the search of Seeta had expired long ago. The nature pushed him to such situation that Rama found it difficult to spend time without thinking of Seeta. All through the day he was thinking of Seeta. He became impatient and began thinking why Sugriva was keeping quiet. Did he forget the promise he made to him. He looked at Lakshmana and said "Dear brother, I am terribly worried about Seeta and her safety. The time is running out. I have waited for a long time. The rainy season was over. These four months have been like hundred years to me. Myself and Seeta walked and lived together in the forest for 12 years. The period of Seeta's absence is torturing me. I can not control myself. I am unhappy without Seeta. She must be unhappy too. How long can I suffer this torture. Sugriva has become silent. He is not taking any interest in my affair. Fate is haunting me like anything. At every stage I am suffering I lost my kingdom, I lost my father, I lost a good friend Jatayu. I walked

into the forest. Seeta followed me. Ravana with perfect plan carried her away. We both searched for her. We met Sugriva. I helped him to regain his kingdom, his wife and his followers. What is the result now. He is silent. Oh! Brother I can not bear this suffering for a long time. You go to Sugriva and remind him like this 'The lowest man in the world is one who forgets the help he has received from a friend who promised to help in return, but does not keep his promise. The best man is one who keeps his promise to the successful end. Remind him the death of Vali and the promise he made to me. If he does not keep his promise he has to follow the path of his brother Vali. I have waited for a long time. It is enough. Please go and remind him of his promise.

Lakshmana was furious and said "Brother I think Sugriva violated his promise. He is keeping quiet. I am sure he will not enjoy the fruits of his success. I will not allow him to enjoy the life in royal palace. He must follow the path of his brother Vali. Let Angada be the ruler of Kishkinda. He will send his followers to search for Seeta".

Rama observed Lakshmana and said "Oh! Brother control yourself. I never asked you to kill Sugriva. I asked you only to remind him of his promise to me. There may be some reason for him to delay. Give him a chance to prove his word of promise. You should not forget one thing, myself and

Sugriva are friends. We have taken an oath before Agni the God of fire and promised each other to share happiness or sorrow equally. Do not forget it. Please go and meet Sugriva". Lakshmana took the bow and arrow and approached the gates of Kishkinda.

The Vanaras saw him and they took tree branches and boulders to attack him. Lakshmana aimed the arrow at them.

They got frightened and ran away to report the matter to Angada.

On hearing the news Angada began shivering and ran to report the arrival of Lakshmana to his uncle Sugriva. He told Sugriva that Lakshmana with angry face was standing at the gates of Kishkinda.

Angada met Lakshmana and stood before him with folded hands.

He observed that Lakshmana was angry and stood before him silently. Lakshmana told him "Dear Angada go and inform you uncle Sugriva. that I have come here to remind him of his promise to Rama. The rainy season was over. He has not taken any action till now. I have come here to remind him of his duties. Please go and inform the same to your uncle. Come back soon and inform me of his reply".

Angada went back and stood before his uncle. Sugriva was. so

much of intoxication could not open his eyes and was not in a position to hear anything.

There was so much of fear and commotion among the Vanaras in the palace.

Suddenly Sugriva woke up from his stupor.

His ministers arrived there and reported to Sugriva the arrival of Lakshmana at the gates.

Hanuman told Sugriva "Oh! Lord, Rama and Lakshmana are truthful and righteous. Your friendship must continue with them. With their help you regained your kingdom, your wife and your supporters Lakshmana is waiting at the gates. He sent word through Angada to remind you of your promise. Please meet him and pacify him".

Sugriva said "I never offended them. I do not know why Lakshmana is angry. He is finding fault with me. I am not afraid of Lakshmana or Rama. But I am worried about friendship. To maintain friendship is not easy. I agree there is some delay. I donot want this friendship to be spoiled. It should continue. I owe everything to Rama".

Hanuman said "Oh! Lord you are right, there is some delay. But Rama is worried about Seeta.

He wants to hear her safety. He waited all these four months.

The rainy season has gone. Everything is clear. Probably Rama wants to remind you of your promise. So he sent Lakshmana here. You please go and meet him. Pacify him and bring him with great honour".

Angada, Hanuman and other ministers welcomed Lakshmana and took him inside the palace. Sugriva turned towards Tara and said "Lakshmana is very angry. It is not proper for me to meet him at this moment. Please you go, meet him and pacify him. Then I will meet him".

Tara slowly walked towards Lakshmana and said "Oh! Prince you are welcome here. Please tell me the cause of your anger. Who displeased you and who misbehaved towards you".

Lakshmana heard her pleasing words "Oh! Great lady you have come here to plead on behalf of your husband Sugriva. Your husband is swimming in pleasures with wine and women. He completely forgot the promise he made to Rama before Agni the God of fire.

After assuming powers of Royalty he completely forgot about Rama. Sugriva is happy with his wife. But Rama is thinking of Seeta all these months. My brother is reasonable in keeping quiet during the rainy season. The rainy season was over. But Sugriva is still keeping quiet, not making any

attempt to trace Seeta. Is it Dharma. Friendship means one should not forget the help taken and at the same time help the friend who is in distress. We have been betrayed by Sugriva whom we consider as a great friend."

Tara listened him patiently and replied in soft voice.

"Prince Lakshmana this is not the time to get angry. Sugriva is dear to you as well as Rama. Do not get angry. You must forgive him for his lapses. He is your friend and slave. He will implicitly carry your orders. Sugriva is inferior to both of you. I know the suffering and feeling of Rama about Seeta. Sugriva has undertaken a great task of tracing out Seeta. I tell you, the power of Kama is great and it is not possible to control. Sugriva spent solitary life for many years. After becoming king he has become a slave to Kama. During this period it is natural to forget certain important things. The same thing happened in the case of Sugriva. He has been guilty because of this weakness. Even the great people like rishis and others become slaves to Kama. I tell you he sent orders to all Vanara leaders all over the world to assemble in Kishkinda within fifteen days. If they disobey his orders, they will be put to death. We have seen Vanara groups are coming one after another. If you do not mind entering Antahpura. I will take you to Sugriva. Please come with me".

Tara took Lakshmana inside Antahpura. Sugriva who was

sitting on couch, saw Lakshmana coming to him. He got down and met him with folded hands.

After seeing Sugriva, Lakshmana continued his tirade "Oh! Sugriva the king earns a good name when he has good qualities. He must be compassionate to others. He must be grateful to others. He should not violate the promise he made to others. These qualities are not found in you. You proved to be Adharmi. You forget the promise you made before Agni the God of the fire. You are not worthy of respect. Rama kept his word but you did not. Rama's arrows are waiting to take you to the abode of death where you can join your brother. The gates through which Vali entered are still open. Still there is time. Think over it and act accordingly".

Tara once again tried to pacify Lakshmana. "You are mistaken. Sugriva is not ungrateful. He always remembers Rama's help. He is not Adharmi. I already told you about his weakness. Because of that there is delay. For the sake of Rama, he is prepared to give up anything. He will not take rest until Rama is united with Seeta. I told you that he had already made arrangements for the Vanaras to reach Kishkinda".

Lakshmana now was pacified by the words of Tara he believed her words.

King Sugriva approached Lakshmana and said "Dear

Lakshmana. Can I forget the help received from Rama. Can I repay the debt.

Today I am here because of Rama how can I forget his help. He is not an ordinary man. He is a great warrior who killed many Rakshasas and shoot an arrow which pierced the seven sala trees. I am really fortunate to have Rama as my friend. He is not only my friend but my God. I request both of you to excuse me for my delay.

Lakshmana was pleased with the words of Sugriva and said "Oh! King, my brother has found a great friend in you. Your devotion to Dharma your sincerity and your humility have impressed Rama a great deal. With your help Rama can destroy the enemy. We shall go and meet Rama on Prasavana".

While they were talking Vanaras from all the mountains like Vindhya, Himalayas, Mahendra Kailasa and other places started arriving at Kishkinda.

Sugriva met Rama and requested him to excuse him for the delay. He told Rama that Vanaras have arrived from all parts of the world and he would instruct them to trace Seeta. Rama told Sugriva "I am happy you have come here. The king should devote equal attention to Dharma. Artha and Kama. Neglecting Dharma and Artha and absorbed in Kama, he is

like a man who sleeps on a branch of a tree and who falls in his sleep. I am just reminding you the rules of Dharma. Only for that I sent Lakshmana to Kishkinda. I hope you are making plans to send your Vanaras to trace Seeta".

Sugriva replied "Oh! Rama you are like God to me. How can I forget the promise I have given to you by violating the promise I cannot become a sinner. All Vanaras have assembled here. Please give them instructions.

Rama said "Let them find out where Ravana lived. Let them find out if Seeta is alive. If Seeta is alive we can think of our plan later. You being the king should give instructions to your Vanaras. Please do it".

Sugriva ordered all Vanara chiefs to assemble there. He asked Vinata to lead his group in east. He asked Angada, Jambavan, Hanuman and Neela to lead the Vanaras in south. He asked Sushena the most capable chief to lead his group to the west. He asked Shathabali to lead his group in the North. He gave them the descriptions of mountains, rivers, seas and various countries. He asked them to come back within a month.

Sugriva addressed Hanuman "Oh, my dear Hanuman you are intelligent and capable. I am sure you will succeed in finding out Seeta. You know all the places in the world. Nothing will stop you in your search for Seeta. You know every thing about

the people and the places. you have great speed like your father Vayu. You are the ablest of my men. we have seen Ravana carrying Seeta in the direction of South. Because of that I asked you all to lead the group in the South. I am sure Seeta is imprisoned in the South".

Rama heard Sugriva's instructions to Hanuman. He was sure that Hanuman would succeed in his search for Seeta. He called Hanuman and said "Hanuman I agree with your king, **you will succeed** in your mission. Please take this ring. If you find Seeta give this ring to Seeta. Then she will know that you **have been** sent by me". Hanuman took the ring and prostrated before Rama. All the Vanaras moved towards their respective directions.

Rama looked at Sugriva and asked him "Dear Friend, I am surprised to see you giving geographical description of various countries of the world. How is it possible". Sugriva replied "Oh! Rama it is a long story. I already told you that Vali threw me out of Kishkinda. Then he chased me from place to place. I with four of my friends crossed many mountains forest, rivers, seas and various countries. We did not find any place for peaceful settlement.

Hanuman reminded me of Rishyamuka paryat. It is a forbidden place for Vali. We are happy in this place. That is how I was able to know the geographical position of all the

countries in the world".

Rama and others were waiting for the results of Vanara tour. Vinata from East came back without success. Sushena from west came back without any success. Shatabali from the North came back without any success. The Vanaras who went to south did not return.

The Vanaras who went to the south searched each and every forest and almost all the caves. on the way they met a Rakshasa. He was the son of Maricha. Angada fought with him and killed him. They could not find Seeta. They lost all hopes. They were not sure of tracing Seeta.

One month stipulated time almost came to an end. Desperately they tried once again. They began searching all the caves once again. They became thirsty and searched for water. They saw some water birds coming out of one cave. They thought that there was water in the cave. But it was dark. They made up their mind to enter the cave. Each monkey holding on to the arm of another monkey and thus forming a chain of arms. They entered the cave. They went deep in the cave. Suddenly they saw light, a beautiful garden and a beautiful palace. They saw a woman. She was ascetic, she dressed in tree bark and deer skin. she was in deep meditation. Hanuman approached her with folded hands and said "We are Vanaras. In search of water we entered this cave. We are

hungry and thirsty. Please help us. Why are you doing tapas here. Please tell us about you".

The ascetic said "An Asura by name Maya created this place. He had divine powers. He was the architect of Asuras. Lord Brahma favoured him with this knowledge of architecture. There arose a conflict between Maya and Indra over the question of a woman by name Hema. Indra killed Maya. Later Lord Brahma gave this area as a gift to Hema. I am Hema's friend. My name is Swayam prabha.

I am incharge of this garden. Now tell me about you. Why you entered this cave.

Hanuman told her everything of Rama and his misfortune. They were in search of Seeta, In search of water they entered the cave. He asked her to give them food and water to drink. She gave them what they wanted. She asked them to close their eyes. By the time they opened their eyes, they were on the sea shore every one thanked her for the great help she has rendered to them.

The vanaras did not know the period they spent in Swayam Prabha cave. The one month stipulated time had passed and they did not know what to do.

Angada said "The time fixed to trace Seeta had passed. If we go back without result we have to face death. We have

searched each and every place but it was not fruitful. I know the nature of my uncle. He will not forgive us. when we go back. I feel that there is only one way to avoid his punishment. That is death. We shall give up our lives by fasting on to death. I tell you one more thing, Sugriva did not make me Yuvaraja. He did not respect Rama's advice. By nature he does not like me. Now this is a chance for him to kill me. So I do not want to go back to Kishkinda. If any one wants to go back he can go back. Saying these words he spread darbha seat and sat there.

All the Vanaras saw truth in Angada's words and decided to support him to under take fast on to death. One of the Vanara leaders by name Thara said like this "Why should we die. We can go back to Swayamprabha's cave and live there for ever. No one can enter the cave and kill us because it is a magic city".

Some Vanaras supported Thara's suggestion. Hanuman came forward to tell something. He knew about Angada and his greatness. He was extremely brave and intelligent like his father Vali.

Such a great man should not think of ending his life by observing fast. He told him ""Oh! Prince your are valiant and great like your father. Swayam Prabha cave is not safe for us.

How long can Vanaras live there leaving their wives and children. Lakshmana's arrows are enough to destroy us all. Please give up both the ideas of fasting and taking refuge in Swayam Prabha's cave. We shall go back and tell everything to Sugriva in detail of our search in the South. Your mother Tara will protect you. Rama will not allow Sugriva to kill you. He will protect you. Please give up the fast on to death."

Angada laughed and said "Oh! Hanuman you are a great trusted friend of my uncle. It is natural for you to support him. But I can not believe him. He betrayed my father Vali and closed the mouth of the cave. Then he ascended the throne. Then he entered into friendship with Rama, killed my father and assumed the royal power again. He did not keep his promise to Rama and spent his time with women and wine. He forced my mother to accept his words and she agreed to be his wife. Can you believe that man. When Lakshmana threatened him with death. He opened his eyes and sent Vanaras in all the directions to find out Seeta. You may have faith and belief in him. But I can not trust him. He is just waiting for an opportunity to kill me. I have made up my mind not to go to Kishkinda. I will under take fast onto death". Saying this he sat down on the sea shore. All the Vanaras did the same thing and simply followed their leader.

Sampati an old eagle was living in a cave near the sea shore.

He saw Vanaras sitting there. He said "Today I am lucky and happy. I need not go any where for food. I can take these monkeys as my food".

Angada saw him and heard his last words. He said "Hanuman, you see that eagle is watching us. He spoke loudly in happy mood, that he would eat all the monkeys. Fate is against us. All animals and birds loved Rama and sacrificed their lives also. You know Jatayu an old eagle sacrificed his life for the sake of Seeta. He fought against Ravana to protect her. He destroyed Ravana's Chariot and killed all his donkeys. But Ravana with his sword cut the two wings of Jatayu. Jatayu remained till he met Rama. He breathed his last in the hands of Rama. That was the greatness of Jatayu. It shows even the animals and birds loved Rama so much. Shortly we are going to be eaten away by that old eagle."

Sampati was listening all this and began shedding tears. He called Angada and requested him to tell every thing about Jatayu because Jatayu was his brother. Angada narrated Rama's story Rama the son of king Dasaratha of Kosala, was asked by his father to spend some time in the forest. So he walked into the forest. His wife Seeta and his brother Lakshmana followed him into the forest. Rama protected the rishis by killing all the Rakshasas. During that period Rama met Jatayu who was a great friend of his father king Dasaratha. All the

four Rama, Seeta, Lakshmana and Jatayu lived together. When Rama and Lakshmana were not in ashramam, the ten headed monster Ravana the king of Lanka carried away Seeta. Jatayu stopped him. Fought with him. Destroyed his chariot, his bow and arrows. He killed all the donkeys and broke his armour. Ravana took his sword and cut the two wings of Jatayu. Jatayu remained motionless, till Rama approached him. He told everything to Rama and died in his hands. Rama performed the last funeral rites for Jatayu and offered tarpanam to this great friend. We are in search of Seeta".

Sampati told Angada "Oh! Prince Angada, I am Sampati the brother of Jatayu. I am sorry to hear the death of my brother. I will tell you How I lost my wings. Myself and my brother Jatayu wanted to find out which of us could fly higher. My brother Jatayu became tired in the middle. I gave him protection by covering him with my wings. Due to heat of the sun my wings scorched and broken. I fell on this mountain peak. What happened to Jatayu I did not know. I am now hearing from you that Ravana killed my brother. All these years I am living on this mountain. My son Suparshva used to bring me food every day. One day he did not bring me food and came very late. He told me that delay was due to some incident. Ravana was carrying a beautiful lady. My son wanted to stop him. But Ravana was not our enemy. So he allowed

them to go she was weeping and calling out the name Rama, Rama and Lakshmana. He told me this incident. I also saw Ravana carrying the lady. She wore yellow sari and was calling out Rama and Lakshmana. This is the story related to me by my son Suparshva. If I had been younger I would have rushed to Lanka, killed Ravana and brought Seeta here. I lost my wings. I can not fly. You have come all the way from Kishkinda to help Rama. As brother of Jatayu a great friend of Rama, I too want to help Rama. I have a distant vision. I can see things in long distance". By saying this, he set his eyes on Lanka and said "Seeta is imprisoned in Ravana's palace. She is safe. She is in deep sorrow. Lanka is one hundred yojanas in distance and is surrounded by water. You have great men among you. You can easily cross the sea." By saying these words, he was surprised to see his wings and he regained his old strength. He bid fare well to them and flew away.

The Vanaras were jubilant and happy.

They thought that they have found out Seeta.

They were jumping, crying with joy and began dancing. They now looked at sea and fear kept in their minds.

How to cross sea and who would under take this great task was a big question to them.

Their happiness gradually melted by looking at sea. Angada summoned all monkeys to assemble and addressed them "Sampati the brother of Jatayu helped us a lot. Now we know where Seeta is imprisoned. To cross one hundred yojana sea is not an easy task. I want to know who can cross the sea. Please come forward and inform us".

The monkeys came forward to inform him.

Gaja said he could leap ten yojanas.

Gavaska said he could leap twenty yojanas. So it went on thirty, forty, fifty and sixty yojanas.

Divivida said he could leap seventy or eighty yojanas. Jambvan who was aged stood up and said "We can not ignore the situation now. We know the place of Seeta's imprisonment. Our king Sugriva promised Rama to find out Seeta. Now we know her imprisonment. I am old, I can leap Ninety yojanas, but I am not sure of coming back". After hearing all these statements Angada was worried. He said "I can leap one hundred yojanas, but I am not sure of coming back".

Jambavan said "Oh! Prince Angada you are the leader of this Vanara group. You have to command us to do this or to do that. Being leader you should not under take such task. We have to take refuge in you because you are our master. You have to stay here and guard us. You are our prince and leader.

You are valiant, intelligent and brave. We shall find out some other way. We are here because of you. You should not risk your life".

Angadā was embarrassed by the affectionate words of Jambavan. He was thinking how to cross the sea. Jambavan approached Hanuman who was sitting alone at a long distance. "Oh! Hanuman why are you sitting alone. You are silent and dejected. In valour you are equal to Sugriva, Rama and Lakshmana you do not know your power and strength you are the son of Anjanadevi and Vayu the God of wind. You have the strength of Garuda and Vayu. Like them you can fly in the air and you can cross the sea easily. When you were born, you leaped in the air of three hundred yojanas to touch the sun God. The heat of the sun did not harm you. Lord Brahma granted you the boon that you will never meet your end by any weapon. Indra also granted you the boon that you can call the death to you as and when you desire. Oh! Hanuman we are in danger. If we cannot trace Seeta and go back without any result, we have to face death by the orders of king Sugriva. You are the only person who can save us. Please give up this silence and weakness. Please rise up and save us all. Please fly in the air like Garuda, cross the wide sea and find out Seeta. We all depend on you. Please help us".

Hanuman heard Jambvan's words.

He shed his lethargy and he grew larger and larger in size.

The vanara army looked at him.

He had grown to immense proportions.

He roared like a lion and saluted to all leaders and said "As son of Vayu, I will cross the sea. I will enter Lanka. I will see Seeta. If I cannot find her there I will go to heaven. If I can not find her there, I will come back to Lanka, uproot the island and drag Ravana here."

The Vanaras were happy. They bade him farewell. Hanuman ascended Mahendra Parvat and decided to take a leap from the mountain top.

V

SUNDARA KANDA



V. SUNDARAKANDA

Hanuman's Successful mission to Lanka ***Sundarakanda***

Mahendra Parvat was the home for many wild animals. It was also the home for many rishis, Gandharvas Yakshas and Kinnaras.

Hanuman decided to take a leap from that Parvat. He looked like a wild bull and increased his body enormously. He looked like a big mountain. The big Parvat under his feet began to shudder. The snakes and wild animals rushed out of their abodes and moved hither and thither.

The elephants also began running here and there. The rishis, Gandharvas, Yakshas and Kinnaras flew in the air to see the departure of Hanuman. Hanuman made salutations to Lord Brahma, Surya, Indra and Vayu.

He made salutations to Vayu his father. Anjana Devi his mother. He then turned towards Kishkinda and made salutations to Rama, Lakshmana and King Sugriva.

He had under taken a big task of finding out Seeta who had been carried away by ten headed monster Ravana of Lanka. The monkeys wished him all success.

He pressed hard on the mountain with his feet to take a leap. The big rocks broke into pieces. The trees shed flowers and

covered the entire Parvat. It looked like Mahendra Parvat wore the robe of flowers.

He took the leap with a big roar.

He stretched his hands wide and began to swim in the air.

He looked like a big Garuda moving the air.

Because of his speed the flowers flew in the air and accompanied him to certain distance and finally fell on sea water.

These flowers looked like well wishers who went along with him a short distance.

His shadow fell on the sea water and it was like a big cloud. It was ten yojanas in breadth and thirty yojanas in length.

He looked like moon in the clouded sky.

The Devas wanted him to succeed in his mission, so they rained flowers on him.

The Sun God also helped him in reducing the heat.

The wind God Vayu blew soft and pleasant breeze.

Besides these he was carrying Rama's ring to hand it over to Seeta. This ring gave him strength and support.

Sagara the king of ocean saw Hanuman going on Rama's mission to trace Seeta.

He received great help from Ikshvaku family.

He wanted to contribute something to this great Rama's mission of finding out Seeta.

He called for the mountain.

Mainaka which was submerged in the sea and said "Mainaka you have the ability to grow large or small. Hanuman the messenger of Rama is flying in the air to find out the place of Seeta. You and I are indebted to Ikshvaku family. You rise in water and allow Hanuman to take rest on top of your mountain.

Hanuman to take rest on the top of your mountain. After taking rest he can proceed further easily with out any strain. Please provide that little help to him".

Mainaka rose and stood on the path way of Hanuman. Hanuman observed the mountain and he decided to push it aside. Mainaka addressed Hanuman "Oh! Vayu Putra I am not your enemy. I am not standing in your way. Your father Vayu saved me some time back. I will tell you how he saved me. In the beginning all mountains had wings. They were proud of their wings.

They flew from one place to another. The Devas and others were afraid of them. They expressed their fear before Indra. Indra with his Indrayudha broke the wings of the mountains. Your father Vayu came to my rescue. He carried me for away

and kept me in the bottom of the ocean. So I did not lose my wings. As I have received help from your father, it is my duty to provide you resting place for a short period. You can take rest and then proceed on your mission".

Hanuman felt happy and said "Mainaka, I am happy to know you are my fathers friend, I accept your kind hospitality. But I can not take rest now. I am going on an urgent mission. So please excuse me and permit me to go?".

Mainaka felt happy, blessed him and allowed him to go. Hanuman continued his air journey. Now the Devas wanted to test Hanuman courage and strength.

They asked Surasa to test him. She was the mother of serpents. She rose from the sea water, increased her body, stood on the path way of Hanuman wide opening her mouth.

Hanuman thought that it was another obstacle. Surasa said "Oh traveller in the air, today I am lucky. All these days I suffered without food. Gods pitied me and sent you here as my food. Please enter my mouth and satisfy my hunger".

Hanuman replied with folded hands "You see I am going on an important mission. After coming back and after handing over the important information, to Rama I will come back, enter your mouth and offer myself as food for you. Please believe me and allow me to proceed".

Surasa said "I have no belief in your words. The Gods gave me this boon 'who ever comes across your mouth, swallow that person as your food. So I cannot go against the boon. You must enter my mouth now; and be my food".

Hanuman lost his patience and asked her "You open your mouth as large as you can I will enter. Surasa increased her mouth to ten yojanas. Hanuman increased his body to twenty yojanas.

The challenge between the two went upto Ninety yojanas. Surasa increased her mouth upto one hundred yojanas.

Hanuman thought for a while, then reduced his body to the size of a thumb, quickly entered her mouth and come out.

Hanuman said "Surasa I have fulfilled your desire. I entered **your** mouth and came out". Surasa was pleased with him and said "May you succeed in your mission and it will be fruitful".

Hanuman continued his journey. On the way he was thinking of Lanka and the imprisonment of Seeta. He did not observe, some force was pulling him down. Suddenly he remembered Sugriva's warning that a Rakshasi in the sea water tried to pull down the flying person or animal and swallow them. Her name was Simhika.

Hanuman increased his body. She also increased her mouth. Hanuman contracted his body, entered her mouth, destroyed

all her organs, killed her and come out. The foes of Simhika praised Hanuman. Then he assumed his original body and continued his journey towards Lanka.

He thought for a while "Lanka is ruled by Rakshasas. If I move with this huge body, they may attack me. The purpose for which I have come here would be a failure. So I must reduce my body to a small kitten with this small body I must enter Lanka". Thus Hanuman the great son of Vayu and Anjana Devi crossed the wide sea of one hundred yojanas, and reached Lanka. He reduced his body to a small kitten and was ready to find out Seeta in Lanka.

From Malaya Parvat Hanuman could see Lanka. It was built on Trikuta hill and the city was surrounded by water.

Lanka was a beautiful Island with so many trees of various flowers. The fragrance of the various flowers spread all over the city.

He could see big palaces and small buildings. The roads were broad and clean. Beautiful plants were planted on either side of the road. These trees not only gave shade but also spread fragrance all over the city. Rakshasa soldiers guarded the city. No one could enter the city.

The city looked like Amaravat the city of Indra. Hanuman slowly walked to the gates of Lanka. On all sides the city was

well guarded by Rakshasas. He thought it was not easy for Vanaras to break the fort and enter Lanka. Rama's arrows were enough to break the fort.

Hanuman was in deep thought. How to enter the fort. How to find out Seeta. How to talk with her. How to convince her that he was the messenger of Rama. With these thoughts in mind, he approached the main gates. He thought of searching Seeta only in the night but not in the day light. He waited for the night to crept in with small body Hanuman approached the main gates. The main gates were being guarded by a guardian Lankini. She stopped him and asked "Oh! Vanara who are you? Why have you come here ? This Lanka is ruled by Ravana. Even Gods cannot enter the city without Ravana's permission. How could you come here".

Hanuman replied in a polite way "I will tell you about myself. Before that you tell me who you are ? Your looks and your voice frightened me. Why, you are standing here. I have come here to see the beautiful city. After visiting important places and after seeing the beautiful gardens I will go back immediately. I have come all the way to see the beautiful city."

Lankini in rough voice replied "My name is Lankini. I am here to guard the city. You can not ignore me and enter the city. If you disobey my orders you will be put to death. You

leave the place immediately."

Hanuman was about to tell some thing.

She got wild and hit him with her fist.

Hanuman got wild and hit her with heavy force. She fell down the moment she was hit. She got up and said "You defeated me. Lord Brahma once told me that I would be invincible. But when a monkey defeats you, you must realise that bad days have started for Rakshasas and it is the end of Ravana. So it has become true. You can enter Lanka now and you can search for Seeta. I will not stand in your way. I wish you all success" saying these words Lankini left the city for ever.

Hanuman followed the convention of putting his left foot while entering the house of an enemy or his country.

He entered Lanka and walked through the streets. He could see big palaces and big towers. He heard the music of drums and bugles. He jumped from one house to another. He heard the sounds of anklets, rustle of silk garments and little rustle of gold ornaments worn by women.

In some houses he could hear recitation of Vedas. Before entering Ravana's palace, Hanuman saw Pushpakavimana which belonged to Kuber. Kubera was Ravana's brother.

Ravana had a desire to take away all Kubera's wealth.

He waged war on him, defeated him and carried away all his

wealth and also Pushpakavimana. Having lost everything Kubera took refuge in Kailasa. Hanuman slowly moved into the palace of Ravana. Ravana dark in colour was sleeping on couch. He wore many jewels on his body. He had powerful arms and broad chest.

He was surrounded by many beautiful women. They were under the influence of wine and other drinks. They were also in deep sleep. They slept on either side of his arms. Some were sleeping at his feet.

All around him the women were sleeping and they were in deep sleep. Hanuman looked into the face of each and every woman.

Their garments were not in proper place.

But Hanuman could not find Seeta among them.

He could see so much of wealth in Ravana's palace. He got this wealth by Vanquishing Kubera. The entire Kubera's wealth could be found in Ravana's palace.

Hanuman was feeling sorry for Ravana who brought so many women by force could have been happy with them but he kidnapped Seeta.

Probably he wanted to be killed by Rama. On his search in Ravana's palace, Hanuman saw a woman sleeping on a separate couch. She was wearing jewels made of pearls and gems.

She wore silk garments and had perfumes. By looking at her, he thought he had found out Seeta. He was so happy and began jumping and dancing. He kissed his tail and climbed the pillars. Suddenly he felt sad and began thinking. How could Seeta sleep on decorated couch. How could she wear jewels studded with Pearls and gems.

When we saw she wore yellow sari but now she wore rich silk garment.

How could she sleep like that forgetting her dear Rama. He suddenly came to the conclusion that the woman sleeping on decorated couch was not Seeta. She might be the chief queen of Ravana.

He thought for a while and talked with in himself "I have looked into the faces all women in the royal palace. I have seen them in different postures but my mind did not change. I think I have not committed any sin by looking at them. I have seen so many women but Seeta was not here. Is Seeta alive? If I go back the Vanaras will ask me about Seeta. If I say I have not seen. The Vanaras and their leaders will not respect me. I do not know why I am thinking like this. Is it due to depression of mind. Why should I think like this. Sampati in clear terms told that Seeta had been imprisoned and she was safe in Ravana's palace. I am sure Seeta is alive. I must search once again. If I go back without any success

many tragedies will occur. At Kishkinda king Sugriva, his wives and Angada will give up their lives. Along with them many Vanaras and their chiefs will follow the king's way. In Ayodhya Rama and his three brothers including their mothers will give up their lives. So I should not go without finding out Seeta. I have searched all places except Ashoka Vana I will go and search for Seeta".

Hanuman entered Ashokavana. It was a beautiful garden. It was full of various flower plants. There were trees of various kinds. These were full of various kinds of fruits. The ponds had clear water with full of lotus flowers. The four pillard mantapas were covered with flower creepers. The deers and the tamed animals were moving and playing merrily. This beautiful garden was designed by Vishva Karma, the architect of Devas. He saw Shimshupa tree under it there was a small platform around the tree. He climbed the tree and covered himself with leaves. He sat on a branch and was waiting for sunrise. He expected Seeta to come there. She always liked beautiful nature, with clean ponds full of lotus flowers and small animals playing around. She liked the music of birds and cool breeze.

Hanuman was thinking of Seeta with in himself "Seeta all through the day and night is thinking of Rama and weeping for the fateful separation. Like Rama, I think Seeta is not

taking fruits and water. Probably she might have spent many sleepless nights. This Ashokavana is very beautiful. She spent her days with Rama in the midst of beautiful trees and ponds. I think she likes this spot and I am sure she will come here to forget her sorrow and suffering. I will wait for some time here".

While he was thinking of Seeta night quickly passed giving place to sun light.

He could see a woman in sorrowful mood sitting under Shimshupa tree.

She had been surrounded by many Rakshasa women. The woman sitting in the centre was wearing yellow sari. She was weeping. She had dishevelled hair. She looked lean because of fasting.

Hanuman looked at her and came to the conclusion that woman sitting there was Rama's wife Seeta. At last Hanuman saw Seeta. He turned towards Kishkinda prostrated to Rama in mind and said "Oh! Rama, I saw Seeta".

Seeta was beautiful but her beauty was dimmed by sorrow and by separation of Rama. She did not take any care to keep her body clean. So the dust invaded her body and comfortably settled there. She removed all her jewels. Her yellow sari looked dirty. Her eyes were swimming with tears. The tears were rolling down from her cheeks. Consistent sorrow

played havoc in her life and physical body. She had been separated from her near and dear people. She was not sure of meeting them in future. She never experienced sorrow or suffering in her life. Now she was compelled to face them. In that sorrowful position she was sitting surrounded by Rakshasis. Hanuman was thinking with in himself". "I am sure she is Seeta. She lived in luxury. She never faced any suffering. Because of Ravana she is suffering now. He separated her from her dear husband Rama. She lived in royal palace. Now she is living under a tree. Many servants attended on her. Now the deadly Rakshasis are attending on her and giving her trouble. Where is Ayodhya and where is Lanka. By the description given by Rama about Seeta, I think the woman sitting under the tree must be Seeta. No power on earth could change her mind. Seeta is for Rama and Rama is for Seeta. No one can separate them. They are inseparable. Ravana is a fool. He kidnapped Seeta without knowing the consequences. Fate played havoc in their lives. It separated them. For the sake of Seeta Rama killed many Rakshasas. Surphanaka attacked Seeta, Lakshmana punished her. Rama killed all Rakshasas in Janasthana. Then Ravana kidnapped her. Rama searched the entire forest. He met Sugriva, entered into an agreement killed Vali and made Sugriva as king of Kishkinda. Rama did all these things for the sake of Seeta.

Thinking of Seeta Rama gave up many things. He gave up eating, drinking water and sleeping. He did all these because he was in great love with Seeta. She is also in the same position. The great Seeta who had been guarded and protected by Rama and Lakshmana is now guarded by wicked Rakshasis, with these thoughts in mind Hanuman was overcome with sorrow and pity for Seeta and shed tears. He covered himself with leaves and sat silently on a branch.

Night came to an end giving place to sun to appear Hanuman was watching and heard the recital of Vedas. Ravana woke up, dressed in white silk garments, wore jewels studded with pearls and gems and was very eager to see Seeta in Ashokavana.

Some women in royal palace followed Ravana carrying chamaras, license and wine silver pots. Hanuman heard the commotion caused by Ravana's arrival. He could see many people following Ravana. Men carried light torches and big chamaras. Hanuman had seen Ravana while he was sleeping. Now he could see him in the day light. There was power, glory and greatness emanating from his face and he was fit to be called Ten headed Ravana.

Ravana approached Seeta.

Seeta saw him approaching her and she began to tremble in fear.

She covered her thighs and breasts with her two hands. She could not bear his piercing looks. She did not look at him. She bowed down her head. She was sitting on the ground.

Ravana looked at her and said "By looking at me you cover your body. Why. I see your beautiful face. By closing my eyes I see your beauty. By opening my eyes I see your beauty. There is no one like you in all the three worlds. Do not hate me because I brought you by force. According to the code of Rakshasas kidnapping the wife of another man is not a sin. It is allowed in Rakshasa society. I have not committed any sin. I simply followed the rules of our social custom. My love is genuine. I will make you as chief queen of my kingdom. I will make my other wives to attend on you. Why do you spend the precious time in sorrow. Your sari looked dirty. Wear silk garments, wear jewels studded with pearls and gems. Comb your hair properly. Have perfumes. Why do you sit and sleep on the ground. There are beautiful couches for you in the palace. You sit and sleep on them. You are young, youth will never come again. Give up sorrow and be happy with me in my antahpura. We can move freely in the beautiful garden. Do not think I am a small man. I am a great warrior. I defeated Devas and Asuras many times. They are afraid of me. They obey my orders. Why do you think of Rama. As an ascetic he is wandering in the forest. When his father ordered

him to go into the forest. he simply walked into Dandaka forest. Can you compare Rama with me in wealth power and fame. He is a nomad walking aimlessly in the forest. Forget about him. Think of me. All my beautiful wives will attend on you. My kingdom and my wealth all is yours. Give up your sorrow. Accept me as your life partner, we both can lead a happy life in my antahpura".

Seeta was unhappy by the unhappy words of Ravana. She was listening silently with tears in her eyes. She picked up a straw, dropped it between her and Ravana and addressed the straw with a shaking voice. By dropping the straw she considered Ravana unimportant." "Please give up this sinful thought leave me alone. Go back to your antahpura and enjoy with your wives. Do not think of me. I was born in a noble family. I married a great warrior Rama. Donot call him a nomad. I am the wife of another man. Separating me from my husband is a great sin. You say you are great king. It is the duty of the king to uphold Dharma. Do not adopt this type of life. Your ancestors led a righteous life. Follow them in upholding Dharma. Do not walk in the path of Adharma. By Committing this sin do not make your people and people of your kingdom suffer. I am part of Rama, nothing can keep us apart. Think again, It is not too late. Take me back to Rama. He is such a great man. he can excuse you.

By doing this noble act you can save your self. Your people and your kingdom. You do not know about Rama and his power. He can burn the entire universe. If he gets angry, no power on earth could stop him. Do not think I am an ordinary woman. I am five headed serpent. You cannot touch me. If you touch me, you will be burnt to death. When Rama and Lakshmana were not in ashramam, you entered in Sanyasi garb and carried me away. It is the act of cowardice. You say you are a great warrior. Rama is a lion, before him you are mere jackal. If they had been present at that time, you would have reached the gates of Lord Yama. I am warning you, you can not escape the wrath of Rama".

Ravana became furious. He replied "I love you so much. This love made me powerless. Other wise I would have killed you. Still I Love you. I give you two months time. Change your mind and make me happy by entering into my antahpura". Seeta gave up her fear and she became bold. She became angry and said "Oh! Ravana I have warned you three times. First when you carried me forcibly from ashramam. Second time when you forced me to follow you to your palace. Now for the third time I am warning you again you are not in a mood to take my warning. How dare you ask me to be your wife. I am wife of another man. If Rama comes to know of this he will kill you. His arrows are very powerful, you can

not escape them. Wherever you go they will haunt you. I could burn you up myself because of my powers of pativratya. I can not do it because I have no sanction from Rama. You carried me away from him. It is all fate the same fate will destroy you." Ravana grew wild and drew the sword to kill Seeta but he could not do.

He instructed the Rakshasis to adopt any method to make her to change her mind regarding him. Dhanyamalini one of the wives of Ravana pacified him and took him back to antahpura. Ravana gave up his anger and went back to palace. Hanuman sitting on the branch observed all these from the tree.

The Rakshasis began their work of harassing Seeta. They spoke the greatness and glory of Ravana. They described his wealth and military achievement. They praised her to give her hand in marriage to Ravana. Seeta was firm in her determination.

The Rakshasis threatened to kill her and cut her body into pieces and eat her to their satisfaction.

Hanuman was listening all these from the top of the tree. Seeta could not bare their harassment.

She made up her mind to commit suicide.

She wanted to make her hair as noose and then commit suicide.

Before committing suicide she thought for a while of Rama, his brothers his mothers and Ayodhya people. She started talking with in herself. "I Loved Rama so much I am ready to die now.

But death does not come when we want it. I do not know where Rama is and what he is doing now. I did not hear the good words of Lakshmana when we heard Oh! Seeta, Oh Lakshmana in Rama's voice. I unnecessarily hurled abusive words on him. It is wonder I am still living. I must have committed some crimes in my previous birth. Now I am reaping the consequences of that."

Hanuman watched her from the top of the tree. When **Rakshasis** were discussing whether to kill Seeta or not, an old **Rakshasi** by name Trijata woke up from her sleep and said "Do not kill Seeta. If you are hungry you kill me. Seeta is not an ordinary woman. She is divine. No one can touch her. I had a dream. I will tell you about it. I saw Rama entering Lanka having a white garland round his neck. He was riding on elephant. His brother Lakshmana joined him. Both dressed in white clothes. Later Seeta joined them. All the three rode on the elephant in the streets of Lanka. They defeated the Rakshasas.

I saw Ravana with oil smeared all over his body, wearing red clothes was riding on donkeys. He was riding fast in the

direction of South. Ravana's brothers and sons were killed by Ayodhya princes.

I saw a monkey setting fire to entire Lanka. This is the danger that is going to happen in Lanka. If you want to save your lives approach Seeta and she will protect you all. I had this dream early in the morning. The early morning dreams will come True. So give up the idea of killing Seeta."

Hanuman heard Trijata's narration of her dream. Seeta also heard her narration of her dream. Hanuman felt happy. Seeta also felt happy. Her left eye, left shoulder and left thigh throbbed and then she gave up the idea of suicide.

Hanuman began thinking how to talk with Seeta. I have crossed the wide sea. I have entered Lanka. Searched the entire city. Now I have seen Seeta. I have heard the conversation that took place between Ravana and Seeta. I have heard the dream of story of Trijata. What is next now. What should I do now. If I go directly and meet Seeta. She may think it is rakshasa trick. If I do not meet her, she may commit suicide. She is ready to do it. I must tell to her and convey Rama's message to her. I must think of another method to convey Rama's message. It must be indirect one".

So Hanuman started telling the story of Rama in simple speaking language "There was a king by name Dasaratha of Kosala. He had four sons the eldest is Rama. He has

conquered his senses. He is a great terror to the enemies. He is the protector of Dharma. Speaking truth is his religion. His father ordered him to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. He respected his father's orders. So he simply walked into the forest. His dear wife Seeta followed him into the forest. To serve the both husband and wife, Rama's brother Lakshmana followed them into the forest. They led a happy life in the forest. Coming of Surphanaka a Rakshasi woman destroyed their happy family life. When she attacked Seeta, Lakshmana punished her by cutting her nose and ears. She ran and reported the matter to her brothers. They with their army attacked Rama. Single handed Rama fought with them and killed them all. Thus he liberated Janasthana from the domination of Rakshasas. To take revenge on Rama, with perfect plan, Ravana carried away Seeta. In search of Seeta, Rama and Lakshmana met Vanara king Sugriva and entered into an agreement before Agni the god of fire. As per agreement Rama killed Vali and made Sugriva as king of Kishkinda. To repay the debt Sugriva sent his men to find out Seeta. They went round the world. With the help of Sampati the brother of Jatayu we came to know that Seeta is imprisoned in Ravana's palace. So I came here and found out Seeta".

Seeta was wonder struck. She began thinking like this "I have just heard Rama's true story. Is it true. Am I dreaming. I did not sleep at all. How can the dream come to me. I think it is not dream. It must be true. I am thinking of Rama, nothing else, the story of Rama I have just heard must be true". Thinking like this she looked around on Shimshupa tree she observed a monkey jumping from one branch to another. Seeing a monkey in dreams was not a good omen. But Seeta was not sleeping or dreaming. Seeta never slept all these days. So she came to the final conclusion that what she heard about Rama was true.

Observing the situation Hanuman came down from the tree and slowly approached Seeta. She saw him and immediately thought that Ravana came once again in the form of monkey. She got frightened and closed her eyes.

Hanuman with folded hands prostrated before her. He did not get up for a long time. After a while Seeta opened her eyes and could see Hanuman was still lying on the ground. Then she came to the conclusion that she mistook him as Rakshasa and asked him to get up. Hanuman got up and said "Oh! Great lady you are wearing dirty yellow sari. It is torn at one end. You have removed your jewels. You did not comb your hair properly. You are weeping. It seems you are fasting because of that you have become lean. Are you Gandharva,

or Naga or Asura or Kinnara woman. You are so beautiful why are you weeping. Are you away from your people. Why are you alone here. Since you are weeping and resting your feet on the ground, I think you are not divine person. You must be a human being. I am searching for a woman. Are you in any way Seeta the beloved wife of Rama. Please tell me, I am searching for her".

Seeta was spell bound and she spoke with the feeling of great joy "I am Seeta the daughter of Janaka and the daughter-in-law of king Dasaratha. I am the dear wife of Rama. We were happy in the royal palace at Ayodhya. King Dasaratha wanted to make Rama as king of Kosala. But his dear third wife Kaikeyi stood in the way of Rama's coronation. She demanded king Dasaratha to respect and grant the two boons he had given to her some time back. King Dasaratha agreed. She demanded her son Bharatha to be crowned as king of Kosala and Rama to spend fourteen years in Dandaka forest. So we all three Rama, myself and Lakshmana walked into the forest and lived there happily. When Rama and Lakshmana were not in the ashramam, Ravana with perfect plan carried me away and imprisoned me here. I am really happy to hear about Rama."

Hanuman replied "Oh! Mata, I am Hanuman. I am the minister of Sugriva. I am the humble servant of Rama. Rama asked

me to hand over this ring to you. Please accept this".

He handed over the ring to Seeta. She was so happy to receive it. The ring brought Seeta and Rama nearer. Now the distance between them disappeared. Hanuman continued to say "Oh! Mata. Rama wants me to convey the news to you. Rama is keeping well and asked me to find out how you are living. Lakshmana and king Sugriva want me to convey their Pranams to you."

Seeta was so happy to hear the happy news of Rama Lakshmana and king Sugriva. She said "Oh! Hanuman an individual must live in hope. One day or other happiness will come to him or her. I am living on hope. You gave me happy news. Ravana gave me two months time. I want Rama to kill Ravana and take me to Ayodhya as soon as possible. You say you are the messenger of Rama. Please tell me about Rama."

Hanuman wanted to assure her that he was sent by Rama. He was so happy to tell about Rama. He began telling about Rama "Oh! Mata I am telling the truth. I am the messenger of Rama. He is glorious like sun God and pleasing like the moon. He is the Lord of the world. He has the power of Narayana. Truth is his religion. In beauty he is Manmatha. He is noble in character. He will surely kill Ravana. Rama with Vanara army will soon land in Lanka you believe me. I am speaking the truth. I have been sent by Rama".

Now Seeta drove all her doubts away.

She came to the conclusion that Hanuman had come from Rama.

She asked him "Hanuman when did you meet Rama and Lakshmana. In my absence what happened. How Rama and King Sugriva entered into friendship. Please tell me everything."

Hanuman was so happy to tell the entire story.

"Oh! Mata after your kidnap Rama and Lakshmana searched the entire forest. They could not find you any where. They met Sugriva on Rishyamuka Parvat. Sugriva lost his kingdom and his wife was imprisoned by his brother Vali. Rama was in search of you. Sugriva wanted some help to get back his kingdom and wife. So the problems of both were the same and they were sailing in the same boat. So both entered into an agreement to help each other. Rama killed Vali and made Sugriva as king of Kishkinda. In turn king Sugriva sent his men to trace you. We came to the South. Sampati the brother of Jatayu gave the information that your are imprisoned in Ravana's palace. I crossed the wide sea of one hundred yojanas and entered Lanka. I found you in this Ashokavana. Please accept my words as truth and recognise me as messenger of Rama. Rama will be here soon with Vanara army. Rama asked me to hand over the ring to you."

Seeta told him "The ring you gave me, brought Rama nearer to me. The distance between Rama and me disappeared. Hanuman you are really great. You are brave and noble person. With great courage you crossed the wide sea. You boldly entered the city. You are fearless. You speak the truth. You gained confidence in Rama. I am happy about it. But I can not understand why Rama is keeping quiet with out taking any action. I am happy to hear that his love for me has not diminished. I am sure he will come here and destroy the power of Ravana. Just to protect me he waged war against Rakshasas. Thinking of him I am still living in this world".

Hanuman then replied "Rama did not know where you have been imprisoned. I will go and tell him about this place with in a short period he with Vanara army will be here. Rama is always thinking of you. He gave up all comforts. His mind is full of your thoughts. Be happy he will come here soon. He will destroy Ravana and take you back to Ayodhya".

Seeta informed Hanuman that Ravana's brother Vibhishana advised him to surrender Seeta to Rama. But he did not follow his advice. This information was conveyed to Seeta by Vibhishana's daughter Anala. Then Hanuman said "If you want to meet Rama now, I will carry you on my shoulders. Please allow me to carry you".

Seeta laughed at his words "Oh! Hanuman you are silly. You

are so small. How is it possible for you to carry me that too the distance of one hundred yojanas".

Hanuman thought that Seeta was not aware of his strength and power. He said "Oh! Devi I can assume any size I want. Please see me now". He stood at a distance and increased his size. He was as large as Meru Parvat. She was wonder struck. She said "Now I am seeing your power you have the power of your father Vayu. Your radiance is equal to that of Agni. You can carry me easily and leave me in presence of Rama. The speed with which you travel may not be suitable for me. In the great speed I may fall into the sea. Suppose you are attacked by Rakshasas how can you fight with them and at the same time protect me. In that process we may both lose our lives. Apart from this it will not be a credit to Rama if you carry me. Secondly I will not allow other person to touch me. Regarding Ravana I was helpless. No one was there to protect me. So I kept quiet. You better go and inform Rama. Bring them here as early as possible".

Hanuman felt happy "Oh! Mata you spoke the truth your argument against being touched by other person other than your husband is commendable.

I salute you for this decision. Rama with Vanara army will come soon and you will be liberated from the clutches of Ravana".

He asked her message to be carried to Rama. Seeta with tears in her eyes spoke to Hanuman. "Hanuman I want you to repeat what I have to say now to Rama. "Oh! Rama we spent happy time in Chitrakuta. It is pleasant place. We were on the banks of Mandakini. There were beautiful flowers of various kinds and plenty of fruits. One day you were taking rest keeping your head on my lap. I crow came there and began piercing into my breasts. I drove it. Again he came back and began giving trouble to me. I did not want to disturb you. Drops of blood from my breast fell on your face. You opened your eyes and saw the crow. You got wild. You took Dharbha and invoked Brahmastra. Dharbha became a ball of fire and chased the crow. The crow flew from place to place Lord Brahma. Lord Maheswara and Indra could not help the crow. No one came to his rescue.

Finally he came back and fell at your feet. You pitied him and said "Brahmastra can not go waste what do you want me to do". Then the crow said let Brahmastra pierce my right eye". After losing the right eye, the crow made pradakshnam to you and flew away. The crow was the son of Indra. Oh! Rama for killing a crow you invoked Brahmastra. Why are you keeping quiet regarding your dear wife, who had been kidnapped and imprisoned by ten headed monster Ravana. You are a great warrior why can not you kill him.

Why are you keeping quiet. Have I committed any mistake in my life. Hanuman tell me why Rama is keeping silent in my affair. Why are the brothers so indifferent in my case. Both are terror to the enemies. Why they are silent in my affair. Probably I have committed a great sin in my previous birth". By saying these words she continued to shed tears. She was weeping loudly and openly.

Hanuman pacified her and said "Oh! Mata, Rama is not indifferent. Fate is playing havoc between you both. The brothers are worried about you. We are all lucky, I have found out you. Good days are ahead of you. I am sure you will meet Rama. Fate is favourable I am able to locate you. I will go and tell everything to Rama. With in a short period Rama with Vanara army will land in Lanka. You will see the destruction of entire Lanka. Please give up this sorrow and unhappiness".

Seeta told Hanuman "Please convey my blessings to Lakshmana. He is noble person. He gave up comforts and walked along with us into the forest. He consider Rama as father and me as his mother. He served both of us as dear son. He is very powerful. No one can stand before him. He served and looked after Rama better than me. Unfortunately Lakshmana was not in the ashramam, when Ravana kidnapped me. With so much of anger, I sent him out to help Rama. It

was my mistake. Ask him to excuse me. Please convey my blessings to him and Pranams to Rama. You must bring them soon and I want to see the end of wicked Ravana soon".

She stopped weeping and wiped out the tears. She took out her Chudamani and handed it to Hanuman. "Please give this Chudamani to Rama. He knows about the jewel. By looking at it, he will remember three people me, my father and my mother. His father king Dasaratha was at that time when my father gave it to me. My life is depending on you. You convince Rama and bring him soon. You want to go back today. Why can not you extend your stay for one more day. Your presence gave me comfort you spoke about Rama. Lakshmana, your king Sugriva and Vanaras. I am really happy about it. I know you go back and come back soon. During the interval I will be alone and I feel unhappy. I have to spend an easy life among dreadful Rakshasis. I have some doubts about Vanaras crossing the wide sea. You and other leaders might cross. How about other Vanaras. I am worried about that".

Hanuman replied "Oh! Mata, you need not have doubts about Vanaras. There are bigger and stronger people than me. They can go round the world within a short period. They can lift mountains and big trees. They can easily cross the wide seas. They are far superior to me. You need not entertain any doubts

of Vanara army. Rama with Vanara army will land soon in Lanka and you can see the complete destruction of Lanka. Please permit me to go and meet Rama".

Seeta said "Before you leaving me, I want you to remind Rama about this incident. When I was taking bath my tilaka had become obliterated. Rama in a playful mood took Manasilila dust and put it on my forehead. Remind him of this".

Hanuman made pradakshanam to Seeta, took leave of her and turned towards North to go.

Hanuman took leave of Seeta and was ready to go. Now he was thinking with in himself. "I have seen Seeta. I have spoken to her. I gave Rama's ring. She gave me Chudamani to be given to Rama. I assured her that Rama with vanara army would land in Lanka soon. Now I have to do something to attract the attention of Ravana. Ashokavana is a pet garden of Ravana, So I must destroy it. He will get angry and send some people against me. I must fight with them and show my strength."

So Hanuman started destroying the pet garden Ashokavana of Ravana. He pulled down all the trees. He broke the Pillars of various mantapas. All flower creepers were pulled out. Ponds were stirred up and made the water dirty. The path ways were destroyed. The benches intended for sitting were broken. The beautiful garden was in ruins. He went round the garden. There was nothing left for him to destroy.

There was great commotion among Rakshasis. The birds and beasts were making terrible noise and struck terror into the hearts of the citizens of Lanka. The Rakshasis who were sleeping suddenly woke up and rushed to Seeta. They were vaguely remember that they had seen Seeta talking to a monkey. With so much of anger they questioned Seeta. "Who is that monkey. Where has he come from why he has come. We have seen you talking with him. What was it about. Tell us the truth. Do not be afraid of telling us. We will not harm you. We want to know who he is and why he has come here and destroy Ashokavana".

Seeta replied "I do not know him. I have nothing to do with him. He may be a Rakshasa who assumed the shape of a monkey. You are all Rakshasas. You know the tricks of Rakshasas. I do not know anything about him. You are afraid of him. I am also in the same position as you are".

The Rakshasis were not convinced of Seeta's reply. They rushed to Ravana and reported the complete destruction of Ashoka Vana by a monkey and his long talk with Seeta. But Seeta denied it.

Ravana began thinking like this Seeta denied it to protect him. Is he a messenger of Kubera or Indra or any other celestial body. So the person who destroyed Ashokavana must be punished".

Ravana became furious and wild. He ordered eight thousand strong soldiers to fight against monkey.

Hanuman who was waiting for that occasion, saw a big army coming towards him.

He increased his body and stood on the arch of a big mantapam and shouted "Victory to Rama who is very powerful. His brother Lakshmana is also powerful. Their friend king Sugriva is great. Victory to them all. I am the servant of Rama the prince of Kosala. I am the destroyer of enemies, great victory to Hanuman".

His war cry was fearful and dangerous. He pulled the rock pillars and began beating them with in a short period the entire army had been destroyed the news reached Ravana but he could not believe it. He sent Jambumali with a big army. He was young handsome and powerful. He shoot arrows which struck the body of Hanuman. A great fight took place between the two. Hanuman took big boulders and threw them on the army. The entire army was destroyed. This was second disaster.

Ravana sent five of his army chiefs with a big army. Hanuman attacked them with uprooted trees and with broken rock pillars. He killed the entire army including the five army chiefs. This was third disaster.

On hearing the third defeat Ravana was upset. He could not believe it. He decided to send his dear son. Akshaya kumar. The prince dressed himself up for a great battle. He touched the feet of his father. He took the bow and arrows and proceeded towards Hanuman in his chariot. He looked at Hanuman. A terrible encounter took place between the two. Hanuman destroyed his chariot and killed all his horses. Akshaya kumar rose in the sky and started shooting arrows. Hanuman also rose in the sky and caught hold of him. He turned him round and round and dashed him to the ground. Akshaya Kumar was killed. His body broke into a number of pieces and spread all over the field.

This was fourth disaster.

It was great shock to Ravana his dear son was killed. He thought of his eldest son Indrajit. Indrajit was a great warrior. He acquired many astras from Devas. He once defeated Indra. He secured many astras from Lord Brahma. He was brave and intelligent. Ravana sent him against Hanuman.

Indrajit in his chariot rushed towards Hanuman. A big army followed him. Both were big fighters and great warriors. Indrajit shoot arrows like rain on Hanuman. All his attempts proved failure. Hanuman tactically avoided all arrows. Indrajit found it difficult to defeat Hanuman. So he invoked Brahmastra and sent it towards Hanuman to bind him with

astra. Hanuman knew it was Brahmastra. Out of respect to Lord Brahma, he allowed himself to be bound by astra and fell on the ground. After a while he regained his senses and thought to himself "Lord Brahma granted me the boon that I will be bound by astra only for a short period. This rakshasa commander tied me with Brahmastra. I must remain like this and my father Vayu and his friend Agni will protect me from any danger. This gives me an opportunity to meet Ravana in his council hall".

The Rakshasas approached Hanuman with ropes and chains to bind him. The moment ropes touched Hanuman's body Brahmastra lost its power. Indrajit was upset and he knew that Brahmastra had become ineffective. He thought that Hanuman would attack him but simply followed the Rakshasas who dragged him to Ravana's court. Indrajit approached his father, touched his feet and with a smile on his face told him that he had captured Hanuman. Ravana felt immensely happy.

Hanuman saw Ravana in his council hall. He was sitting on the jewelled throne studded with pearls and gems. He wore ornaments all over the body. He had a crown on his head. His eyes were large and beautiful.

His brothers and important countries were sitting in their respective places. The rakshasas were jubilant because they have captured Hanuman and it was a great victory to them.

Hanuman looked at Ravana and thought with in himself "What a glorious person Ravana is. His eyes are large and beautiful. There is radiance in his face. Having a great name why should Ravana kidnap the wife of another man. He proved himself Adharmi, He is cruel and heartless because of his cruelty the Devas and others are afraid of him. He has the power of destroying the entire world".

Ravana looked at Hanuman and began thinking with in himself. Is he real monkey. Is he Nandi the devotee of Lord Mahadeva. Some time back I insulted Nandi. Has he come here to take revenge on me. Is he Brahmasura who has come here to destroy me". In heart of hearts Ravana was afraid of Hanuman and ordered Prahastha to enquire about Hanuman. Prahastha turned towards Hanuman and asked him "Oh! Vanara do not have any fear to answer my questions. We will not do any harm to you. You speak the truth. If you suppress the truth you will be put to death. Are you an agent of Yama or Kubera or Narayana. Your valour is not that of a monkey why have you come here. You destroyed Ashokavana and killed many thousands of soldiers and chiefs. It is not the act of a monkey. Monkey will not be so powerful. You are some thing else. Speak the truth. Why you entered Lanka".

Hanuman ignored Prahastha and did not reply. He looked at Ravana and began to speak. "I am not the agent of Yama or

Kubera or Narayana. I am mere monkey by birth. I did not assume any form. I wanted to meet you and talk to you. These rakshasas did not allow me to meet you. By destroying Ashokavana and by fighting the rakshasas. I thought that I could attract your attention. But your people captured me and dragged me here. My main intention is to see you and talk to you. So my purpose of seeing had been fulfilled.

Now I will talk I am Hanuman the son of Vayu and Anjana Devi. I am the minister of Sugriva the king of Kishkinda. I am the servant of Rama. In search of Seeta I entered Lanka. I searched the entire city. Finally I could see Seeta in Ashokavana. I am here to convey the message of my king Sugriva to you" King Dasaratha of Kosala was a noble king of Ikshvaku family. His eldest son Rama is a great warrior. He is a terror to the enemies. He respected the orders of his father and walked into Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years. His wife Seeta and brother Lakshmana accompanied him into the forest. Seeta is the daughter of king Janaka. She was carried away by some one. Rama and Lakshmana came to me for help. Myself and Rama entered into an agreement before Agni the God of Fire. Rama killed Vali and made me as king of Kishkinda. To help him I sent my men to trace Seeta. Seeta is found in your palace. You are wise king. You follow Dharma. It is not fair on your part to keep another

man's wife as captive. To avoid conflict with Rama I request you to surrender Seeta to Rama or else be ready for the declaration of war. It is not safe for you. Rama's arrows are very powerful. You can not escape them. They will hunt you where ever you go. Make up your mind to surrender Seeta to Rama. Seeta is five headed serpent. She is dangerous. You have kept her in your palace. You may think that there is no danger for you because you have immunity from death by Devas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Asuras and other celestial bodies. I am Sugriva a monkey. I am not asura or Deva. Rama is a human being. So you have no immunity from death by human beings and Vanaras. You know my army is full of monkeys and bears Seeta is not an ordinary woman. She is like dark night which will swallow the lusture and glory of Lanka. She is like a noose of death which you have placed on your neck unknowingly. She is like a fire which can burn the entire city. Please protect yourself. Your family members and the people of your kingdom. Rama's anger is deadly. He can destroy the universe and create the universe again. Follow my advice and surrender Seeta to Rama as early as possible". Ravana became furious and his eyes grew red. He ordered Hanuman to be put to death.

Vibhishana the third brother of Ravana felt uneasy. He rose from his seat and said "Your majesty previously I requested

you to surrender Seeta to Rama and establish Dharma in the land. You rejected my appeal. Now you ordered Hanuman to be put to death. Be calm Do not give way to anger. Listen to my words. It is the convention among kings that no messenger should be put to death. your order to kill monkey is against all code of Dharma, which a king should observe. You have a name and fame all over the world. If you kill a messenger you get a bad name. You know all the rules and regulations. You know pretty well that messenger should not be put to death. You give any other punishment except death".

Ravana who was furious replied "What you say is not correct. This monkey is wicked. He destroyed Ashokavana. He killed thousands of people including my dear son Akshaya kumar. Death is the only punishment for him".

Vibhishana continued to say "No my Lord you should not go or act against Dharma. If you kill the messenger, how can your enemy know about you. How can you know about your enemy. Give him as opportunity to go back and inform his master about you and your strength. A messenger for his wrongs can be punished by any other method like whipping, maiming, shaving off his head and making scars on his body. Except death punishment you can give any other punishment mentioned above".

Ravana began thinking with in himself "I have to accept

Vibhishana's suggestion . It is good suggestion this monkey is not an ordinary monkey. It is real Narayana or Lord Brahma. They came down to kill me I am sure of that.

Ravana looked at all the courtiers and said "I accept Vibhishana's suggestion. Monkeys like their tails. You set fire to his tail by rolling cloth and pouring oil on it. Then take him round the city through all the streets. Let every one see him and laugh at him".

The rakshasas were too happy to carry out Ravana's orders. They brought cotton cloth and placed it round the tail. They poured oil on it and then set fire to it. They paraded him in all the streets. Men women and children came out of their houses to see the fun.

Hanuman was furious and decided to punish them. On his way through out the city he observed and gathered the information of military secrets. His tail was burning. But he did not feel heat. Some raskhasas rushed to Seeta and told her "Seeta the monkey with whom you were talking this morning is being taken in the streets. His tail has been burnt. The tail is burning".

Seeta was horrified at the fate of Hanuman. She began shedding tears. She invoked Vayu and Agni to protect him. She said "If it is true that I have served Rama. If I have considered Rama as my Lord and God, if it is true that I have

observed all Vratas and meditation with pure mind. let not Hanuman feel your heat. If Rama loves me truly, let Hanuman be unaffected by you". Agni the God of fire received her prayers and responded favourably to her prayers. Hanuman never felt the heat of the tail. Hanuman was thinking with in himself "Though my tail is burning so bright, I did not feel the heat at all and the burning remained at the same end and did not spread. Rama's ring protected me on my way to Lanka. Seeta's chudamani is protecting me now from this danger. It is all due to the blessings of Rama and Seeta."

Hanuman observed all important places. Now it was time for him to act. He roared and began hitting the Rakshasas with his burning tail. He freed himself from their clutches. He jumped from one palace to another. He took the iron pillar and began hitting the rakshasas. Many died in the fight. Many palaces and houses were in flames. Both Agni and vayu helped each other to spread the flames. The fire rose to the skies. The houses of courtiers and commanders were in flames. All the precious articles in their houses were reduced to ashes. Hanuman entered Ravana's palace and spread the flames. The people were panic-stricken. They ran hither and thither. The people began crying. Many people lost their lives by jumping down from the terrace of burning houses. The entire city Lanka was in flames. The people could not believe that mere

monkey could do this.

Hanuman completed his work. He dipped his tail in sea water and put out the flame. He looked at burning Lanka. Fear crept in his mind. Ashokavana was also in flames.

Hanuman was thinking like this "When I set fire to the city. I forgot about Seeta. I became senseless and foolish. I have betrayed my master Rama. I have ruined his life. I met Seeta, talked with her, gave Rama's ring and now I am responsible for her death. What all I have achieved now became fruitless, because of my stupidity. I have brought ruin on every body. The only course open to me is to give up my life. I should drown myself in sea water or enter the burning flames". He stopped for a while and began thinking again. "Seeta is not an ordinary woman, she is divine I hope and feel the fire did not touch her. She is herself a heap of fire. It is Rama's glory and her prayers prevented the fire from hurting me. When I am spreading the fire, how can she be burnt".

Hanuman convinced himself that she was safe. He heard the words of charanas who were passing in the air near by "It was indeed a miracle which happened in Lanka. The entire Lanka is in flames except Shimshupa tree. Seeta is safe under the tree".

Hanuman was so happy and he prostrated before Rama in mind and was eager to see Seeta before leaving Lanka.

He went to Ashokavana and saw Seeta she was overjoyed to see him and said "I am sure you alone can destroy the entire rakshasa clan. There is no limit to your power. Go back to Rama and bring him here as early as possible".

Hanuman promised once again that Rama with Vanara army would be in Lanka soon.

Hanuman took leave of Seeta and was eager to go back to report the events that happened in Lanka. With great speed he moved in the air. On the way he met Mainaka and conveyed the happy news of Seeta. With a big roar Hanuman landed on the top of Mahendra mountain. The Vanaras heard his victory cry. Jambavan called all Vanaras and said "It seems Hanuman has succeeded in finding out Seeta or else he would not have roared like that". All Vanaras were so happy and they began dancing on the sea shore.

Hanuman landed on the mountain of Mahendra. All vanaras stood with folded hands to welcome the great leader Hanuman. They rushed to him and stood round him. He was the saviour of Vanara clan. They served him with roots and fruits and asked him to refresh himself. Hanuman was eager to tell them the result of his Lanka Trip. He said "I saw Seeta in Ashokavana the pet garden of ten headed Ravana. She was surrounded by dreadful rakshasis. She was thinking of only her dear husband Rama. Nothing else. She was in great

sorrow. I pacified her and told her that Rama with Vanara army would land in Lanka soon. After taking leave of her. I came here".

The entire Vanara group felt immensely happy. Angada patted Hanuman and said "My dear Hanuman you are really great. There is no one equal to you in the entire world. You saved the entire Vanara group. You are really great. Your achievement is really marvelous. You have seen Seeta. Rama will soon be rid of his sorrow".

All Vanaras with their leaders stood silently to hear in detail of Hanuman's trip to Lanka. Jambavan the senior leader asked all Vanaras to sit down and asked Hanuman to tell them in detail of his trip to Lanka.

Hanuman turned towards South, made salutations to Seeta and began narrating his travel towards Lanka" After taking leave of you all, I flew in the air with great speed. On the way a mountain stood in my path way. I wanted to push it aside. But mountain Mainaka told me he was the great friend of my father Vayu. Once my father saved him from wrath of Indra. He requested me to take rest for a while on his peak. He too wanted to help me a little in my mission of finding out of Seeta. I told him the time was short and I should go. He allowed me to proceed again on my way. I met Surasa the mother of snakes opening her wide mouth and asked me to

enter her mouth. I told her on my return journey, I would definitely enter her mouth. she refused my request. So I got wild and asked her to open her mouth as large as she could. She began widening her mouth and I went on increasing my body. She opened her mouth one hundred yojanas. I reduced my body to the size of a thumb, quickly entered her mouth and came out. She felt happy and bade me good luck. Again I faced third obstacle. A rakshasi under sea water pulled me down she opened her mouth to swallow me. I contracted my body, entered her mouth and killed her. Then I proceeded my journey and landed in Lanka. It is a beautiful city with so many palaces and big houses. I searched each and every palace. I entered Ravana's palace too I could not find Seeta there. Then I entered Ashoka vana. There under Shimshupa tree I saw Seeta surrounded by deadly Rakshasis. She was in great sorrow. She wore yellow dirty sari. She did not comb her hair. She looked lean because of fasting. She became frustrated. Then Ravana came, courted her love and finally threatened her to kill her. He gave two months time to change her mind. After Ravana left Ashokavana she thought of committing suicide.

Then an old Rakshasi by name Trijata revealed her early morning dream. Rama and Lakshmana entered Lanka and defeated Ravana and his men. All brothers and sons of Ravana

were killed in the war. Ravana ran away to the south. Seeta joined them. All the three rode on the elephant in the streets of Lanka. After hearing the dream story, Seeta gave up her idea of suicide.

Later I talked to Seeta and told every thing of the agreement reached between Rama and Sugriva. I gave Rama's ring to her and she gave me chudamani to be given to Rama. She felt happy.

After taking leave of her, I destroyed Ashokavana to attract the attention of Ravana. Ravana sent a big army against me. I killed them all. He sent his eldest son Indrajit to capture me or kill me. Indrajit came and invoked Brahmastra against me. It bounded me Lord Brahma gave me a boon that any astra touched my body, its power would remain only for a short duration. They dragged me to Ravana's court. First I asked him to surrender Seeta to Rama. I told him of Rama's power I warned him of his death in the hands of Rama. He got wild and ordered me to put to death. His brother Vibhishana who followed Dharma and pious life enlightened Ravana about the code of Dharma to be followed towards messengers. Ravana changed his mind and ordered my tail to be set on fire. The rakshasas brought cotton cloth, put it round my tail, poured oil on it and set fire to it. They paraded me in the streets of Lanka. I got wild and burnt the entire city. Then I dipped my

tail in sea water. Once again I saw Seeta and came back here. It is for you to take decision, what to do next".

After hearing the long story Angada said "Hanuman saw Seeta in Lanka. He knew the path. We all go there declare war on Ravana, defeat him and bring Seeta back. Single handed Hanuman killed thousands of Rakshasas and burnt the city. We can easily defeat Ravana and his army. If we meet Rama and king Sugriva with Seeta, they will be happy".

Jambavan intervened and said "Prince Angada, please allow me to tell you one thing. King Sugriva ordered us to find out where about of Seeta, If she is alive we think of acting on it, Hanuman succeeded in his mission. He saw Seeta. We have succeeded in our mission. The next step or action should be decided by Rama. We are not competent to take any decision. We shall now go to Parasravana and inform them that Hanuman had seen Seeta in Lanka. That is our work now".

All said yes and they proceeded to Parasravana. On the way they saw Madhuvana. The Vanaras requested Angada to allow them to take Madhu in Madhuvana. After consulting Jambavana and Hanuman, Angada allowed them to enter Madhuvana to drink Madhu. The Vanaras were very happy now and they thought that they have seen Seeta.

They entered the garden and drank madhu juice fully. They were in hilarious mood and they began singing and dancing.

They were highly in intoxication mood and they did not know what they were doing.

Dadhimukha the chief of the garden tried his best to prevent them from destroying Madhuvana. It was king's garden and no one should enter it. He requested them, frightened some of them, threatened some Vanaras and thrashed some of them. There broke out a clash between Vanaras and the followers of Dadhimukha. The Vanaras captured Dadhimukha and thrashed him mercilessly."

Both Angada and Hanuman encouraged the Vanaras to enjoy to their heart content.

Dadhimukha told king Sugriva about the havoc played by Angada and his Vanara army. Lakshmana was by the side of king Sugriva. Sugriva turned towards Lakshmana and said "Angada and his Vanara army entered Madhuvana my favourite garden, drank Madhu and destroyed the garden. I will not punish them. I sent them in the direction of South. I think they have succeeded in their search for Seeta. I am sure Hanuman must have seen her. Angada, Jambavan and Hanumans combined together is a successful team. In their happy mood they entered Madhuvana. Dadhimukha you go immediately and ask them to come here soon". Dadhimukha went back and stood before Angada and told him "You all have been excused by the king. He wants to meet you immediately.

Please go without making any delay."

On hearing this all Vanaras felt happy and they flew to Parasravana. They arrived with a great tumultuous noise. Each one of the Vanaras walked straight as if he had achieved a great task.

King Sugriva heard the noise and was happy to receive. Their faces were beaming with joy and they prostrated before Rama, Lakshmana and king Sugriva. Hanuman prostrated before Rama and said "I saw Seeta in Ashokavana in Lanka." She is safe there. She is not happy because of sēparation. She is thinking of you always".

King Sugriva was very happy that he could help Rama in tracing out Seeta.

The Vanaras vied with each other to tell Rama about the imprisonment of Seeta and her hard life. They gave a graphic description of Seeta's life in Lanka as though it was these Vanaras and not Hanuman had seen Seeta.

Rama looked at them and asked them "Please tell me about Seeta".

The Vanaras bent down their heads in shame and approached Hanuman to tell the entire story to Rama. Hanuman approached Rama, touched his feet and made Pranam in the direction where Seeta was imprisoned and said "My Lord

Rama I have undertaken a great task in crossing the wide sea to see Seeta mata. I reached Lanka. It is surrounded by water. In Ashokavana I saw Seeta the purest of women in the world. Her thoughts and hopes centered on you. She is managing to keep alive. She is imprisoned in Ashokavana the pet garden of Ravana. When I saw her, she was surrounded by Rakshasa women. They were harassing her to marry Ravana. She did not succumb to their demands. She gave up wearing jewels, combing her hair, taking bath. She is observing fast, she was sitting on the hard ground thinking of you all time. There was no way for her to escape Ravana's attempts to win her to his side. She tried to commit suicide. Then I met her. Before meeting I gave a brief account of your life, your search for her and your friendship with king Sugriva. First she could not believe me as your messenger. Then I gave her your ring. She felt happy. She asked me to remind you about the incident of crow and of manasila tilak. She gave me this chudamani to be given to you. Please take it".

After taking this chudamani, Rama remembered Seeta, her mother, her father Janaka and his father king Dasaratha. By looking at Chudamani Rama felt that Seeta was sitting by his side. Hanuman spoke humbly and narrated all the events that happened in his long journey to find out the place of Seeta. He also told Rama the personal appeal made by Seeta". When

petty crow attacked me, you got wild and invoked Brahmastra to kill it. Now my Lord why are you keeping quiet. Your wife had been kidnapped by Ravana. Ravana is more dangerous than crow. You please act immediately and kill Ravana. I want to meet you as early as possible."

Hanuman requested Rama to make all arrangements to meet Ravana in the battle field. Hanuman concluded "My Lord Rama I have assured her that you will soon be in Lanka with Vanara army. Her grief is slightly reduced by my words of encouragement and assurance. She is counting days. She is waiting for the day when Rama would land in Lanka and kill Ravana and give her freedom to join you". Please make all arrangements to declare war on Ravana and kill him as soon as possible.

VI

YUDDHA KANDA



VI. YUDDHA KANDA

Rama declared war on Ravana

Rama turned towards Hanuman and said "Oh! Yayuputra Hanuman you are really great. You have achieved a great task which can not be accomplished by any one. You have crossed the wide sea. Only Garuda and Vayu can cross the sea you crossed the sea. The city Lanka is inaccessible to any one but you have entered. You have fulfilled the promise you had given to me. It is really great. You have helped me and my brother Lakshmana you brought a great relief to me. I can not reward anything now. I can only embrace you with open hands and with open mind. Please come nearer to me".

Rama took him in his hand and embraced him with tears in his eyes. Rama continued to say "We have found out Seeta. How to cross the wide sea. Is the question now only few people can cross the sea. What about others. Please tell me the way to cross the sea".

Sugriva replied "Dear friend Rama why do you worry about it. You are a great warrior. You can make and unmake things. Do not worry about it. We will certainly cross the sea. My Vanara army is strong. It can cross the sea without any difficulty. You please command us what to do. We will kill the Rakshasas and bring Seeta here. You should think of

building a bridge across the sea. If once the bridge is built, it is the end of Ravana. You think of the bridge. Please drive away the weakness and worry in you. You must show your valour now. You must think of a plan. So that we can cross the sea. I am sure we will cross the sea and we will see the death of Ravana. We have good omens now. I am sure you will have victory over Ravana".

Rama was so happy to hear the words of Sugriva. These words gave him peace and he turned towards Hanuman and asked him to give in detail an account of military position of Lanka city. About the fort, the important main gates on all four sides and how the fort being guarded by Ravana soldiers. Hanuman was so happy to give the strategic position of the fort and how it was guarded by Ravana soldiers.

"Oh! Rama the fort is big and strong. It is built on an Island. Round the fort they dug the earth deep and wide and filled it with water. They left whales and big fish in the water. They are trained to swallow anything that fell in the water. It is a dangerous pit dug round the fort. On four sides there are four big gates. To enter the fort one has to cross the bridge built on the wide and deep pit. These bridges could be easily lifted not allowing the enemy to cross the big pit. At every gate they stored powerful weapons to attack the enemy. After crossing the gates there are big stables filled with thousands

of horses. Besides these there are thousands of elephants. There are many rows of chariots. At the eastern gate there are nearly ten thousand Rakshasas guarding the area. At the south gate there are one lakh soldiers guarding the city. At the west gate ten lakh soldiers guarded the city. At the north gate nearly one crore soldiers guarded the city. It is the most important centre of the city. All these soldiers carried deadly weapons. It is very difficult to enter the city. By burning the entire city, I made it easy for our Vanaras to enter the fort. I destroyed all the four bridges and burnt the stables. That is the military position of Lanka. The Vanara army is mightier than rakshasa army. Angada, Dvividha Mainda, Jambavan and Neela are great commanders and great fighters."

Hanuman requested Rama to give them orders to move. Rama said "Dear friend Sugriva today is auspicious day. To get the victory over the enemy today is Vijaya day. Sun is in the middle of the sky. I will definitely kill Ravana and save Seeta. Today is Uttara Phalgun Nakshatra and is very important to start. Sugriva keep the army ready. Divide the army into two divisions. Gaja and Gavya should lead one section. Gavaska and Rishaba should lead another section. Hanuman will carry me on his shoulders. Angada will carry Lakshmana on his shoulders. Each section will be further divided into divisions. Each division should be placed under able commander. You

be the chief commander of the army. You all march on to the sea shore".

King Sugriva was so happy to obey Rama's commands. The entire Vanara army left Prasaravana to the sea shore and every one was happy.

Some Vanaras moved in advance to clear the way for the soldiers to move. Some vanaras collected fruits and roots for the soldiers to eat. Some Vanaras stored water for drinking purpose. The Vanaras were jubilant and were happy. They were sure of killing Rakshasas and their king Ravana.

Lakshmana told Rama "Oh! Brother I see good omens. I could see important stars in the sky. The sun is bright. We have good breeze. The sky is clear. I could see saptarishis and also Dhruva tara. I think the celestial bodies are happy now. By these good omens I am sure you will defeat Ravana and save Seeta. Yourself and Seeta will join together again".

They all reached the foot of Mahendra mountain". The Vanara soldiers were asked to take rest on the sea shore and every one saw the wide sea.

How to cross the sea was a big question which troubled every one.

Rama again in sorrowful mood. He could not wait for a long time. Seeta sent word through Hanuman that she determined

to live only for a month. That worried Rama so much. He was always thinking of Seeta in Ashokavana. All Vanaras spent their time in thinking how to cross the sea. The sun disappeared in the west. The night crept in.

Ravana was bit worried about recent happenings in Lanka.

Hanuman a mere monkey had caused so much of damage to his kingdom. He destroyed his pet garden Ashokavana. He killed able commanders and thousands of soldiers. He killed his dear son Akshaya kumar finally he burnt the city.

Ravana decided to consult his ministers and courtiers and summoned them all to meet in the council hall. Ravana addressed them all "I want to consult you and take your opinion regarding the present situation. My spies told me that Rama with Vanara army camped on the sea shore. Rama's messenger Hanuman gave us so much trouble. Rama is making plans to cross the sea and to land in Lanka. He is capable of doing so. I want you all to come to an agreement about the course of action, we have to adopt regarding Rama. I am sure he will cross the sea and declare war on me.

He continued "Among the kings there were three types of people. The first category of kings would take the advice of well wishers. The second category of kings would act on Dharma and would depend on God for their acts of good or bad. The third category of kings would not agree with the

views of others and would act on their own. So I invite your suggestion. Ravana unknowingly adopted the third course of taking the advice of his ministers and courtiers and finally acted on his own.

All Rakshasa commanders stood up and told him with folded hands "You majesty you are great and powerful. No one can defeat you in the battle. Why do you worry about Rama. You have defeated the king of Asura by name Madhu the husband of your sister Kumbhinasini. You have defeated Nagas and made Vasuki. Takshasa, Shanka and Jati as your subordinates and compelled them to accept your over Lordship. You have defeated the most powerful sons of Varuna and occupied their capital Bhogavati. You have defeated your brother Kubera and captured his wealth including Pushpaka Vimana. The king of asuras wanted an alliance with you and he gave his daughter Mandodari in marriage to you. The people of Patala were afraid of you. From them you learnt Maya war. You have defeated Indra, Varuna, Vayu and Yama. The sun and Moon are afraid of you. The mountains rivers, various birds and animals were afraid of you. Having such magnificent military achievements, why do you think of Rama who is an ordinary human being. He is depending on Vanaras. What is their strength. Are they equal to our powerful army fully equipped with powerful and deadly weapons. Oh! King your son Indrajit

is a great warrior. By worshipping Lord Mahadeva he acquired many astras. He has gone to Indraloka. He brought Indra as captive. You pitied Indra and allowed him to go back. He can defeat the entire Vanara army including Ayodhya princes. You need not worry about Rama".

With folded hands the rakshasa commanders namely Prahasta, Dumukha, Vigradhrasta, Nikumba and Vajrahanuvu spoke in the same way and praised the glory of Ravana to the skies.

Some Rakshasa chiefs rose from their seats with folded hands said "You Majesty you need not worry. We go there in the guise of Ayodhya people, mix with Vanaras and tell Rama and Lakshmana that Bharatha is making plans to attack them with a big army to kill them. In their worry and confusion, we attack them, kill all Vanaras including Rama and Lakshmana".

Indrajit and other rakshasa commanders stood up with their weapons in hands and asked Ravana to give them permission to attack Vanaras and kill them including Rama and Lakshmana. Prahasta the commander-in-chief and favourite of Ravana stood up and said "Your majesty why are you worried about Rama. You have defeated Devas, Asuras, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and others. Why do you think of Rama. He is mere human being. If you are serious of monkey which caused so much of damage, it is because we were all caught unaware and were

deceived. Allow me to go I will destroy the entire Vanara army".

Ravana was happy about their talk. They succeeded in making Ravana happy. Vibhishana the third brother of Ravana stood up and said "Oh, Brother, to make the task successful one should adopt the three methods namely Sama, Dana and Bedha. If we fail in all the three we have to adopt Danda (war). I have heard about Rama. He is the embodiment of Dharma. Truth is his religion. He has conquered his senses. No one can face him in the battle. If such is the case how can you face him in the battle. Please think of Hanuman the messenger of Rama. All the rivers that flow from East to West and the rivers that flow from West to East join their husband great Sagara. Hanuman was able to cross that wide sea. We failed to notice, like Hanuman there may be thousands of Hanumans in Vanara army. You remember that. Do not take any hasty decision. Consider the present situation Rama did not offend you. Surphanaka attacked Seeta. So Lakshmana punished her. Then our people in Janasthana waged war on Rama. Rama killed them all. To take revenge on Rama you kidnapped Seeta. Kidnapping the wife of another man is Adharma. It is a sin. You know it. I say this act of yours has not done us any good. Because of Seeta you are in danger and you are putting the entire kingdom in dangerous position.

We can not escape the wrath of Rama. Please surrender Seeta to Rama and save the people and the kingdom. As your brother I take this privilege and once again request you to surrender Seeta to Rama. Please avoid his agner and his powerful arrows. Please save the people and the kingdom". Vibhishana's appeal did not please Ravana. He dissolved the council and went back to his palace.

The next day early in the morning Vibhishana went to Ravana's palace. Vedic Pandits were reciting the Vedas. Some were performing yagna. The vedic pandits welcomed Vibhishana. Every one liked and honoured Vibhishana. Vibhishana was righteous. He always followed Dharma. He was valiant and powerful. He controlled his senses. In every respect he was superior to Ravana. He went to his brother Ravana and prostrated before him. Ravana offered him a seat to sit. Then Vibhishana on the instruction of his mother wanted to say something to his brother Ravana. "Oh, Brother, please listen to me. Soon after Seeta entered Lanka bad omens appeared in the city. The people were afraid of those bad omens.

The fire which has been kindled by the vedic mantras does not burn without smoke. Snakes are found in kitchen houses. The havis which is meant for worship is often polluted by ants. Cows are giving very little milk. Horses do not eat green grass. Donkeys and Camels are losing the hair on their bodies.

The elephants are weak and are taking little food.

Animals are shedding tears for no reason at all. Crows are making terrible noise by sitting on Vimanas.

Eagles and other birds of pray are wheeling about in the sky.

Jackals are making mournful noise through out the night.

Wild animals are gathering near the gates and are making dreadful sounds.

Every one in the city knew about these evil omens. But they did not inform you. It was their duty to inform you. But they kept quiet. Please save the people and the kingdom. You are the king. You have to take the decision now and save the people and kingdom. Please surrender Seeta to Rama."

Ravana got wild. He did not take Vibhishanas words seriously. He was in great love with Seeta. He could not think of any other thing except Seeta". You see, I do not expect any danger from the enemy. Rama can not cross the wide sea. Even if he comes here, I will not surrender Seeta to Rāma. I am sure of that let Rama take the help of Devas and others, he cannot defeat me. I donot want your advice. You can go now".

Vibhishana with so much of disappointment left Ravana and went back to his palace.

Ravana was bit worried and he summoned the second council meeting.

His brothers namely Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana, his son Indrajit and important officials attended the meeting. Ravana was sitting on the jewelled throne. He looked around and addressed the members. "I have summoned the second council meeting to discuss certain important matters. Rama destroyed our power in Janasthana. He killed my brothers and fourteen thousand soldiers. Rama and his brother Lakshmana disfigured my sister Surphanaka by cutting her nose and ears. To take revenge on Rama I have kidnapped his wife Seeta. After seeing her I had fallen in love with her. I want to marry her. I gave her twelve months time to take a decision on the marriage. Her husband Rama with Vanara army is making plans to invade Lanka. You all know my power. I have defeated Devas, Asuras, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and others. You all helped me in my wars against my enemies. I am not afraid of Ayodhya princes and Vanara army. They found out the place of Seeta. Please tell me whether to keep Seeta here or kill the Ayodhya princes. I am not afraid of them. I want to kill them as early as possible".

Kumbhakarna did not like his brother falling in love with Seeta. He was angry and said "You should have anticipated this trouble before separating Seeta from Rama. You never consulted us then. Now you are telling about this. You have violated the conduct rules prescribed for a king. Your acts

are not righteous. You brought miseries to the people. You have to reap the consequences of your acts. Kidnapping of Seeta is like a poisonous food. You are asking us to share the poisonous food. It is really a wonder that Rama had not killed you yet. Without taking the approval of the council, you started the act of kidnapping. We as your subjects follow your orders and protect you and the kingdom. If Rama is killed Seeta will be yours. You need not worry about it".

Ravana was not happy with the frank manner in which his brother Kumbhakarna had expressed his opinion. Then Mahaparshva rose from his seat and said "My Lord you kidnapped Seeta and brought her here. Previously you brought many women and married them. In the same way you would have married Seeta. Why you appeal to her and take her consent."

Ravana cleared the doubts of Mahaparshva "I will tell you the reason, why I have not married Seeta forcibly. It happened long ago. An apsara by name Panchikasthala was going to Lord Brahma. I saw her and become enamoured of her and sexually molested her. She went and reported the matter to Lord Brahma. He soon became angry and cursed me "If you take any woman by force your head will break into thousand pieces'. So I am unable to take Seeta by force. Rama does not know this. He does not know my power and the power of

my arrows. They will burn him up. This human being Rama with the help of Vanaras is thinking of waging war on me. How foolish it is".

All courtiers simply kept quiet. They did not say anything. Vibhishana the third brother of Ravana listened patiently the speeches of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Mahaparshva. He slowly rose from his seat and said "Your majesty Seeta is not an ordinary woman. She is divine. She is like a poisonous snake. Her sorrow is poison. Her five fingers are five heads of a serpent. Do not think of marrying Seeta. Restore Seeta to Rama before the Vanaras enter the city. Save the people and the kingdom. Do not think Rama is a fool. His arrows are more powerful than your arrows. If he gets angry he can burn the entire universe. Your army when compared to Vanara army is not strong. You do not know the power of Rama. Even the Gods can not face Rama. You can see the power of arrows of Rama. You can face him in the battle and taste the power of his arrows. Oh! You are cruel by birth and by nature. You have committed so many sins. The people who praised your valour and strength are not your well wishers. I appeal to all people who assembled here. Please do not encourage him to walk in the path of destruction and ruin. By your talk you are pushing him towards death. It is your duty to save him from this danger. You should stop him from taking action

on Vanaras. War is dangerous. It will destroy the entire kingdom. You all appeal to my brother and request him to surrender Seeta to Rama. It is safe to him, to his kith and Kin and the people of this kingdom".

Indrajit got wild and said "Father, I am surprised to hear the words of your younger brother. He spoke like coward. We are really unfortunate to have him in our family. He is alien to our principles and our life. Oh Vibhishana you are a coward. You praise Rama and his valour. Can Ayodhya princes stand before my father Ravana and his powerful Rakshasa army. You know my strength. I worshipped Lord Mahadeva and secured many astras. I defeated Indra and brought him here as captive. My father pitied him and sent him back. Have you forgotten my victories over the enemies. What is Rama. He is an ordinary human being wandering in the forest. He has no army of his own. He is depending on Vanaras. What is the strength of Vanaras can they stand before Ravana army. Why do you under estimate our valour".

Vibhishana calmly replied "My dear boy Meganath you think you are powerful. You do not know what is right and what is wrong. You talk without reason. Do you think that you are helping your father. No you are paving the way for his ruin. Your father made a mistake in inviting you to this council meeting because you are in experienced in the art of war.

You are not aware of the path of Dharma. Kidnapping the wife of Rama, is it Dharma. Rama never stepped into your kingdom. He killed all Rakshasas in Janasthana because our people misbehaved towards his wife and Rama. It is not their fault. They never trespassed their limits. We have committed mistake in kidnapping Seeta. Oh, Brother I once again request you to surrender Seeta in the interest of you, your relatives and the people of Lanka".

Ravana got wild and replied "Vibhishana I think you have joined the enemy. You are supporting the enemy. You are staying with us and you are supporting the enemy. It is strange. Only Gnati does it. He is dangerous in the family. It has been said good fortune is to be found in the cows, control of senses in Brahmans, fickleness in women but danger is found in Ganti. You are dangerous in the family. You do not like my power and wealth. You do not like to support our stand. But you are supporting the enemy you praise Rama to the skies. If any one talked like you I would have kicked him and thrown him out of my kingdom. You are a traitor. You are a disgrace to the family. Before I throw you out you better leave this kingdom".

Vibhishana and four of his friends rose in the air and again warned Ravana not to declare war on Rama and requested him to surrender Seeta to save the people and the entire kingdom.

He wanted to take refuge in the company of Rama.

The Vanaras saw Vibhishana and his four men. They pulled out trees and were ready to attack them. Vibhishana saw them and appealed to them that he had come there not to fight with Rama but to take refuge in his protection. He requested the Vanaras to convey this message to Rama. Sugriva heard him and he went to Rama and said "Dear friend Rama, he is rakshasa and is the brother of Ravana. His name is Vibhishana. He has come here for protection. Please consider his request carefully. He belonged to Rakshasa clan. They have many tricks. They can wander in the sky without being seen. They can assume any form. Probably he had come here as Ravana's agent, to move freely and to know our plans. I do not like him to be with us. Think it carefully and take correct decision". Rama listened to the words of Sugriva and then turned towards other Vanara chiefs and asked their opinion.

They all spoke with respect and humility.

"Oh! Lord, you know everything. It is your noble nature which prompts you to ask our opinion. You know what is right and what is wrong. Truth is your religion. You are righteous and brave. No one can stand before you when you are angry. You are kind towards those who are dear to you. You decide for your self"

Angada came forward to speak "Oh! Lord. If you allow Vibhishana in our group, we have to watch him carefully. For the time being they move with us freely and take advantage of it to know more details of our army secrets. Then they pass on the secrets to our enemy. If he is good and noble we can take him as member of our group".

All most all Vanaras were against taking Vibhishana into their group.

Hanuman who was keeping silent all the time came forward to tell something about Vibhishana. "Oh! Lord you are great and wise. I will tell you what I feel. Do not think I am opposing the opinion of others. I do not think I am wiser than others. I simply express my opinion. Vibhishana is not a spy. On number of occasions he advised his brother Ravana to surrender Seeta to Rama. Ravana did not hear his words. He appealed to his brother not to follow the path of Adharma. He also pointed out that carrying away the wife of antohter man is sin. It is the act of wicked man. When Ravana ordered me to put to death, he pointed out the code of Dharma, normally the kings adopted to wards kings messengers and requested Ravana to withdraw the death punishment imposed on me. He requested his brother to give any other punishment other than death. He openly opposed his brother and came here for protection. He is telling the truth. I gave my opinion. It is for

you to decide".

Rama had full confidence in Hanuman. He accepted Hanuman's opinion and decided to take Vibhishana as friend. Rama addressed all Vanaras "It is my policy who ever approached me for help I must help them. I can not reject them. So invite Vibhishana and his friends".

Sugriva intervened and said "Rama we do not know whether Vibhishana is good natured or evil minded. After the death of Ravana he may demand the throne. How can we trust him. Think over it again". Rama simply laughed at Sugriva's words and said "Oh my good friend, what you said about Vibhishana's intentions of becoming king of Lanka after the death of his brother may be true or may not be true. I think Vibhishana has no mind to become the king. Even among Rakshasas there are righteous people. He may be one among them. We must have faith in his words. I have no doubts about him. My Dharma is to give him shelter. Please Sugriva invite him to come down safely".

Sugriva told Vibhishana that Rama had accepted his request. Vibhishana was so happy about the good news. He and his friends descended to the earth. He prostrated before Rama and hold his feet in his two hands. He got up and said "Oh! Rama I am your slave. I am the brother of Ravana. He kicked me, insulted me and drove me out of the kingdom. So I have

left Lanka and my family members to take protection from you. You are everything to me. My life is in your hands. Please protect me and my friends".

Rama lifted Vibhishana up and consoled him. Then he asked him to tell about Ravana's military strength. Vibhishana told everything about his brother. "My brother Ravana did tapas and secured many boons from Lord Brahma and Lord Mahadeva. These boons made him invincible from Devas, Asuras, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and other celestial bodies. He is a great warrior and defeated Indra, Varuna, Vayu and Yama. The Sun and moon are afraid of him. The three worlds are under his firm control".

His brother Kumbhakarna is another great warrior. His eldest son Indrajit worshipped Lord Brahma and Lord Mahadeva and secured many astras. He is famous in adopting Maya warfare in the battle field. He once defeated Indra and brought him ascaptive. Ravana pitied him and released him. The commander Prahastha is close to Ravana and he is the commander-in-chief."

Rama said "I am familiar with Ravana's powers. I will not leave him. I will destroy him that is my determination. I will not enter Ayodhya without achieving my aim of destroying his power. I will kill him and make you as king of Lanka.

Lakshmana 'bring sea water. I want to anoint him as king of Lanka".

Lakshmana brought sea water and performed Vibhishana's coronation in the presence of Vanaras. All were happy. Vibhishana and his four friends were extremely happy.

King Sugriva and Hanuman approached Vibhishana and asked him the way to cross the sea.

Vibhishana replied "The Lord of the sea Sagar received a great help from Ikshvaku king Sagara and his sixty thousand sons. They dug the earth to go to patala. All the rivers that flow from East to West and the rivers that flow from West to East join their husband Sagara. Rama belonged to Ikshvaku family. If Rama makes a request, he will definitely show the way to cross the wide sea. He will help Rama."

King Sugriva approached Rama and told him every thing of Vibhishana's idea of approaching Sagara. Rama accepted Vibhishana's suggestion. He sat on Dārbha mat in contemplation. Three days and three nights have passed without any result. Rama's patience was sinking and he got wild. He decided to dry up the sea. He took the bow and arrow. He dispatched arrows one after another. The water animals floated on water with fear and moved towards the sea shore. There was storm in the sea. The waves rose higher

and higher. The Devas from heaven requested Rama "Oh! Rama be calm, please do not dry up the sea." Rama did not respect their request. He invoked Brahmastra and decided to dry up the sea. Suddenly Sagara rose from the sea water followed by his consorts of Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari and others. He stood before Rama with folded hands and said "Rama you are the embodiment of peace and tranquility. You know everything. The earth, the wind, the sky, the water and the fire are all ruled by laws of nature and they should not be disturbed. By nature I am deep and wide and is not possible to cross. But you can build a bridge on it. I will protect the bridge from whales, Sharks and other water animals. There is one in your Vanara army by name Nala. He is the son of Vishvakarma the great architect of Devas. He can build the bridge you start building it."

Rama said "Oh! Sagara I have invoked this Brahmastra it can not go waste. What do you want me to do". Sagara replied "Rama I have a sacred place in the North. It is known as Drumakulya. The Asuras occupied it and committed so many sins there. I request you to protect it from Asuras".

Rama despatched Brahmastra towards Drumakulya. It destroyed all Asuras and restored the place to Sagara. Sagara felt happy and disappeared in sea water along with his consorts. Nala was happy that his name had been suggested by Sagara

to build the bridge. He had acquired the engineering knowledge from his father Vishvakarma the great architect of Devas. He requested Rama to give orders to all Vanaras to assist him in building the bridge across the wide sea. Hanuman stood in front of the Vanaras and ordered them to bring trees by uprooting them. He asked others to carry big boulders and bring them. Every Vanara big or small was busy in bringing uprooted trees and big boulders. The work on the bridge proceeded with great speed. The first day they built fourteen yojanas. The second day they built twenty yojanas. On Third day they built twenty one yojanas. On fourth day they built twenty two yojanas. On fifth day they built twenty three yojanas and thus they completed the work in just five days. The squirrel in order to show her love, devotion and service to Sree Rama put on Rama's bridge his little quota of sand dust. Even the small animals show their respect and love to Sree Rama.

The bridge was one hundred yojanas in length and ten yojanas in width. The bridge built by Nala was beautiful. The celestial bodies came down to see the bridge. The Vanaras were in great joy and they were proud of their work. Rama, Lakshmana, King Sugriva and others approached the bridge. They named the bridge as "Nalasetu". Rama first set foot on the bridge then Lakshmana and then king Sugriva.

The Vanaras were jubilant and they cried a loud with joy. Some danced on the bridge. Some jumped on it. Some dived in sea water and began swimming. Hanuman carried Rama on his shoulders. Angada carried Lakshmana on his shoulders. King Sugriva and Vibhishana led the Vanara army. They reached Lanka with in a short time.

Rama observed some bad omens. The wind blew with dust. The earth trembled. The dark clouds covered the sun. Animals were making sorrowful noise. Crows and eagles were flying around as they liked.

Rama was happy by looking at his friends and Vanara army. They came there to help him. He saw the excitement in their faces. They were eager to declare war on Ravana. He was touched by their devotion and love.

Rama saw the beautiful city Lanka built by Vishvakarma. He could see the massive buildings and beautiful gardens with ponds full of lotus flowers. The roads were broad and clean. He just thought of Seeta as prisoner in Ashokavana. He suddenly changed his mind and turned towards immediate task of declaring war on Ravana.

While they were on the southern sea shore, Ravana's spy Suka approached Sugriva conveyed the message of his king Ravana. "Oh! Great king of Vanaras. You are brave and noble. I know

your valour and strength. Why you joined hands with Rama. He is a coward. He could not oppose his father. He gave up his claim over the throne and wandered in the forest. You are not my enemy. We are friends. You leave the Ayodhya princes and go back to your kingdom. I can easily tackle them and kill them. I extend my hand of friendship to you. Please accept it".

The Vanaras got angry, gave him blows and caught hold of him. Sugriva replied with so much anger in his eyes "Oh! Ravana I am not your friend. I am your enemy. You will soon die in the battle field. Your city will be destroyed soon."

On the instructions of Rama, Suka was imprisoned. Rama asked Angada and Neela to take charge of the middle of the army. Rishiba to be incharge of right wing. Gandha Madhava to be incharge of left wing. Lakshmana and Rama (himself) would be at the head of the army. Sugriva, Vibhishana, Hanuman and Jambavan would be incharge of the entire army. Then he asked Suka to be released. He asked Suka to inform his king Ravana that Rama with Vanara army had come and would declare war on him the next day morning.

Suka went back to Ravana and told him "Oh! Lord I told Sugriva every thing of your message. The Vanaras got wild and they beat me up and tortured me. Rama is a great warrior. He

killed all our people in Janasthana. He built a great bridge across the sea. He has entered Lanka with his powerful army. Now you have to decide for yourself either to surrender Seeta or face him in the battle".

Ravana was not happy Suka praising Rama and ordered him to go away from his presence.

Ravana thought of sending his trusted spies namely Suka and Saranu to find out the Vanara strength, their secrets and their commanders. These two spies changed themselves into Vanara garb and moved among Vanaras, Vibhishana found them as Ravana's spies and dragged them before Rama. Rama did not punish them and sent them back.

Suka and Saranu went back and reported the matter of Ravana. Ravana expressed his cagerness to know personally the strength of Vanara army. Both Ravana and Saranu went up the terrace of the palace to see Vanara army. Ravana saw Vanara army. It looked like a huge ocean. He could see a section of tall and huge Vanaras like big elephants. The army consisted of twenty crores of Vanara soldiers. They came from the different places of the world. Besides monkeys there were lakhs of bears. Monkey and bears were the two main groups of Vanara army. Saranu gave detailed account of Vanaras and the strength of various Vanara chiefs.

"Oh! Lord, king Sugriva is the commander-in-chief of the army under his supervision there are so many sections. These sections are headed by various chiefs namely Jambavanth, Sushena, Kumuda, Angada, Neela, Nala, Gaja, Gavaska, Sabhara, Maida, Dividha, Gandhamadhava and Hanuman. Again each section was divided into divisions. Each division was headed by a chief. The important chiefs were Sweta, Ramba, Pasanu, Vinata, Kratha, Gavaya, Kesari, Satabali, Gavayu, Harudu, Dhumna, Dhambudu, Samnatha, Kratha and Pramadhi. Each chief is very powerful. Their weapons are uprooted trees, tree branches and small and big boulders. You can not find chariots, horses, camels and elephants. They walk, run and jump in the battle field. Their way of fighting is different. Only Rama and Lakshmana use bows, arrows and swords".

Ravana did not like Saranu describing the power of Vanaras. He asked him to go away. He did not kill him because he served him for a very long time.

Ravana was in desperate mood. He summoned Vidyudjihva and asked him to prepare Rama's maya head and his bow and arrow. He took them with him to Ashoka vana. He saw Seeta sitting on the ground. He addressed her "Oh! Seeta why do you think of Rama. He killed all my brothers in Janasthana. My rakshasa army killed him. You forget about Rama. Come and be happy with me. I have killed your husband in the battle.

We have captured Vibhishana as prisoner. My soldiers killed Sugriva and Hanuman. Lakshmana ran away from the battle field. I brought Rama's head here, you see your dear husband's head and his great bow and arrow", saying these words he threw the head and bow and arrow.

Seeta saw the head of Rama covered with so much of blood. She saw the great bow and arrow. She took the head in her hands and wept like torrent, with heavy heart she spoke "Oh! Kaikeyi are you happy now. Your aims have been fulfilled. The great hero of Ikshvaku family has gone. The entire Dasaratha family had been ruined. My husband Rama never offended you. He always respected you like his mother, I have led a life of true wife. I have observed Vratas and never walked in the path of Adharma. Oh! Rama you have gone, who will look after your mother Kausalya you are a great warrior. How is it you were caught unawares and killed by Ravana. Fate worked against you. You lost your life in the hands of wicked Ravana. I will also die. Lakshmana will go to Ayodhya and tell the sad end of you and myself in the hands of Rakshasa's.

Ravana who was standing near by Seeta who was heart broken and there was no one to comfort her. Meanwhile a messenger suddenly entered Ashokavana and told something to Ravana. Ravana immediately left Ashokavana to his council hall. When

Ravana left the garden the head of Rama vanished from there. The bow and the arrows also disappeared. Sarama a Rakshasi approached Seeta and told her that it was all Rakshasa maya. Rama was safe. He had landed on the sea shore with Vanara army and was ready to declare war on Ravana. She also informed her that Ravana's well wishers advised Ravana to surrender Seeta to Rama and avoid war. He did not hear their advice. He was adamant. He was sure to die in the hands of Rama. Sarama told Seeta that it was all Rakshasa Maya. She secretly gathered information of Rama. Rama was safe on the sea shore. What all Ravana said was false. Ayodhya princes and all Vanaras were safe. They were ready to declare war on Ravana. She told Seeta "I will go and meet Rama and convey the good news of you and bring happy news from him".

Seeta replied "You need not go to Rama. You just get the information of Ravana's activities regarding war preparations against Rama. That is enough for me".

Surama secretly entered Ravana's palace and heard the conversation that took place between Ravana and his mother Kaikasi and other ministers.

Kaikasi requested Ravana to avoid war and save the people and kingdom by surrendering Seeta to Rama. The ministers told him "Oh! Lord you just think of incidents that took place in Janasthana, kidnapping of Seeta. Sugriva's help to Rama,

Rama building the bridge across the wide sea, you driving away Vibhishana who joined the enemy. Now they landed on Lanka. Please avoid the war and save the kingdom and people". Surama reported the entire thing to Seeta.

Rama's army reached Lanka and was ready to declare war on Ravana. The Vanaras blew conchs and drums. Ravana and his council members heard them. They were afraid of Vanaras. Ravana looked at them and said "Are you afraid of Vanaras.

Have you forgotten my victories over Devas and others. Have you forgotten my valour and strength you are also great. You helped me in my wars. You are also responsible for my victories. Do not think Rama is invincible. We are sure of getting victory over Vanara".

Malyavan one of the aged counsellors stood up and said "Oh! Ravana, my child, please hear my words. When a king is righteous and learned, he will rule the kingdom for a long time. He will bring all his enemies under his control. The king must keep the welfare of the people in mind and he must work for it. If he thinks he is powerful and strong, he can wage war and defeat the enemy. If he thinks he is weak he must make peace with him to avoid war. So I advise you to make peace with Rama. The cause for this war is Seeta. I want you to Surrender her back to Rama. You have been assured by Lord Brahma. That you will not be killed by

celestial bodies. But you may have death in the hands of human beings and vanaras. We have seen bad omens. Do not think Rama is mere human being. He is lord Narayana. He has taken birth as human being to kill you. You think of the bridge on the sea. Can a human being build such bridge. What happened in Janasthana, single Rama killed your cousins and fourteen thousand soldiers. Is it possible for a human being. Think once again. Avoid war save your people and kingdom. Seeta will bring ruin to you. Forget her and give her back to Rama. Please allow us to live in peace".

Ravana got angry and said "How dare you praise the enemy before me. You know how much trouble I have taken to bring Seeta here. I can not give her back to that Sanyasi. You can see my valour in the battle field. My powerful arrows will kill Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva. What are Vanaras. Do you think that they are stronger than my Rakshasa army. By chance they have built the bridge. On that you consider Rama is a great warrior. I can give up my life than to surrender to Rama. Believe me no Vanara will go back safe. They will be killed by me". Malyan failed to change Ravana's mind and he went back home.

Ravana arranged his army divisions in the following way. He asked Prahasta to guard Eastern gate. Mahaparshva to guard the southern gate, Indrajit to guard the western gate. Ravana

with the assistance of Suka and Sarana would look after Northern gate. Virupaksha would guard the entire city.

Vibhishana through his men gathered the information of Ravana's arrangement of his army divisions in all the four quarters of the city Lanka.

After hearing the military arrangement of Ravana Rama said "Neela will meet Prashasta in the East. Angada will meet Mahaparshva in the South, Hanuman will meet Indrajit in the West, myself and Lakshmana will face Ravana in the North. Sugriva, Vibhishana and Jambavan will guard the entire army. No Vanara should assume the guise of human being during the war. Myself, Lakshmana, Vibhishana and his four friends will be the only seven human beings. Let us follow this till the end of the war. We shall spend the night on the top of Suvela hill. The very thought of Ravana and Rakshasas makes me furious. Ravana kidnapped Seeta my dear wife. His action is wicked and uncivilized. For that barbarious act the entire Rakshasa clan is to be destroyed."

Rama's anger against Ravana was mounting. They all spent that night on Suvela hill.

Sugriva saw Ravana standing on the terrace of his palace. He flew in the air and met Ravana. He pulled his crown down. Ravana grasped Sugriva and threw him down. Sugriva caught

hold of Ravana and threw him on the ground. Both entered into duel fight. The fist fight went on for a while Ravana found it difficult to kill Sugriva. He thought of adopting Maya fight. Sugriva knew his limitations, jumped in the air and flew back to Suvela hill. Rama and others saw the duel fight of Sugriva and Ravana. Rama embraced Sugriva and said "Why did you not inform me before attacking Ravana. The king should not act like this. You are important in the army. We were all worried about you. If you had been killed, what would be my position. When my dear friend is gone there is nothing left for me in this world. Seeta, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrugna are not important to me when my dear friend is lost. Please promise that you will not do like this any more".

Sugriva felt sorry for what he had done and said "Rama please excuse me. I saw Ravana on the terrace. My blood boiled. He carried away Seeta. He is responsible for all these troubles. So I got wild, flew in the air and attacked him".

After this incident the entire Vanara army was ready to attack the Rakshasas. They were in their respective positions. They were just waiting for the final orders to strike the enemy.

Rama decided to follow the procedure of sending a messenger to try for peace and to avoid war if possible. He sent Angada to Ravana in his council hall. He gave the message of Rama "Oh! Ravana your greatness and power will disappear

soon. You lose your kingdom soon. You are a thief. When myself and my brother were not in ashramam, you kidnapped my wife Seeta. You killed many pious rishis. You defeated celestial bodies and made them as your subordinates. You have committed so many sins. You have to reap the consequences for those cruel deeds. For kidnapping my wife I have come here to kill you. If you want to save your life, your people and your kingdom surrender Seeta to me or else face the death in my hands. Your brother Vibhishana is with me after killing you, I will crown him as king of Lanka. If you die in my hands all your sins will be cleared and you will find a place in heaven".

Ravana grew wild and ordered his men to capture Angada and kill him. Four able bodied Rakshasas captured Angada. Angada flew with them in the air and threw them down. He then flew back to Rama and told him everything. Rama ordered his Vanara army to begin their attack on Rakshasas. The war broke out.

The Vanaras attacked Lanka from all the four sides. Ravana gave orders to attack the Vanaras. The deadly battle began between Vanaras and Rakshasas.

The Vanaras carried big trees and big boulders. The rakshasas with deadly weapons attacked the Vanaras. The Vanaras jumped in the air and attacked the rakshasas who were fighting

riding on horses and on elephants. Both sides received severe wounds and many died in the battle. The Vanaras destroyed many palaces and public buildings. They destroyed drinking wells and ponds. All the four gates were under the control of Vanaras. The great war fought between Vanaras and Rakshasas resembled the great war fought between Devas and Danavas. The Vanaras shouted "Victory to Rama" to reply to Vanara war cry the rakshasas shouted 'Jayam, Jayam to Maharaja Ravana'. Angada met Indrajit, He destroyed his chariot and killed his horses. Having lost every thing Indrajit went back defeated by Angada.

Vanara chief Sampati defeated and killed rakshasa chief Prajyanghu.

Hanuman met Jambumali defeated him in the battle Vibhishana fought gallantly with another rakshasa chief Shatrugna and killed him.

Gaja fought and defeated rakshasa chief Tapana Neela defeated and killed another rakshasa chief Nikumba.

Sugriva defeated and killed the rakshasa chief Praghasu.

Lakshmana defeated and killed Virupaksha. Rama defeated and killed four rakshasa chiefs namely Agniketu, Rasni Ketu, Mitragna and Yagna Kopa. Maidava defeated and killed another rakshasa chief Vagramusti.

Dvida defeated and killed another rakshasa chief Asani Prabhu.

Nala met Pratapa a rakshasa chief defeated him and killed him.

Sushena met Vidyunmali a rakshasa chief defeated him and drove him from the battle field.

While they were still fighting the sun had set in the west and the moon appeared in the sky. They did not stop the war in the night. It continued. The arrows of Rama and Lakshmana were very powerful and they killed many rakshasas. The others could not with stand the powerful arrows and they ran away from the battle field. Indrajit flew in the air and started Maya war. He sent Nagapasa against Rama and Lakshmana. The brothers were tied up by Nagapasa. The brothers fell on the ground in faint. There was panic among Vanaras. All Vanara leaders were helpless. Vibhishana was also helpless. He told Sugriva "The brothers have fainted. They are not dead. It takes some time for them to regain their senses. Truth and righteousness will triumph at the end. You need not worry about it. We have to guard these two bodies very carefully. They will regain consciousness and they will bring joy to all of us. Do not worry".

Indrajit went to his father Ravana and told him that he had bound Rama and Lakshmana with Nagapasa and they lost their lives. Ravana was so happy to hear the news. He sent

instructions to rakshasis at Ashokavana to inform the death of Ayodhya princes to Seeta and asked them to take her in Pushpaka Vimana to see the dead bodies of Ayodhya princes. They followed the orders of Ravana and carried Seeta in Pushpakavimana to see the dead bodies. Seeta on the way saw many Vanaras lying on the ground with arrows all over the bodies. She saw the bodies of Rama and Lakshmana covered with arrows all over their bodies. She wept like torrent and said "The wise men and great pandits predicted that Rama would live for a long period and would perform Asvamedha yagas. Their predictions that I would be a sumangali have been proved false. I have padmarekha in my feet. It assures me that I will not lose my husband. All this had been predicted by great Vashishta. How could it be false. Rama had many astras. He would have used one against Indrajit. His maya tactics have deceived my Lord. Fate is more powerful than astras". Trijata consoled her by saying "Devi your Lord is alive. The brothers nearly fainted. If your Lord is dead the Pushpakavimana would not have carried you here. You are Sumangali. So Vimana carried you here. Do not weep. Several chiefs are guarding the two bodies. They are waiting for them to recover. They are just sleeping. They are not dead". Pushpaka Vimana took Seeta back to Ashokavana.

All Vanara chiefs stood around the bodies of Rama and Lakshmana. Rama gained his consciousness. He looked at Lakshmana and thought he was dead. He wept for a while and said "My dear brother has gone. Why should I live. How can I show my face to my mother and Sumitra. How can I console them. What do Bharatha and Shatrugna think of me. Oh! Sugriva, please go back to Kishkinda with your Vanara army. I will also die. Ravana will not keep quiet and he will give you maximum trouble. Please leave Lanka as early as possible. "By saying these words Rama once again fainted. The Vanaras stood there weeping. Sushena the physician examined them and said "Rama and Lakshmana fainted only. They are not dead. Please bring the two herbs namely Sanjivi Karani and Vishalya Karani. Let Hanuman go and bring them soon. While they were talking a strong breeze blew from the sea. A great eagle Garuda approached the Ayodhya princes. Suddenly the serpents left the two bodies and disappeared. Then the Garuda stroked the faces of Rama and Lakshmana with his two hands and their wounds disappeared. They wake up from their stupor. Garuda embraced them Rama said "You have saved us. We feel strong now. Our weakness has gone. When you touched my hands I felt that my father was touching my hands. You look handsome. You are wearing the garlands which are used by celestial bodies. You have beautiful

ornaments on your body. May I know who you are. Garuda replied "Oh! Rama I am Garuda. Your constant companion. I am the only person who can remove the Nagapasa. Nagas are afraid of me. I am their enemy. Rama you are a great warrior. You and your brother are here to destroy all your enemies. Your Dharma is your strength. Destroy the power of rakshasas, kill Ravana and save the innocent people. Seeta will come back to you. Please allow me to go. I am your great friend. I will come back whenever you want me" Garuda left the place and flew away.

The Vanaras were jubilant and they blew bugles and drums. They filled the air with shouting. They marched and attacked the gates. They were ready to attack the rakshasas.

Ravana come to know from his spies that Ayodhya princes recovered from Nagapasa and were moving like big elephants. Ravana was bit worried. He sent Dhurmukha with a big army to attack the Vanaras. Hanuman met him, destroyed his chariot and horses. There was fierce battle between the two. Finally Hanuman killed him. Then Ravana sent Vajradratha. He was proficient in Maya war. In a severe battle Angada killed him. Then Ravana sent Akampana. Hanuman easily killed him in the duel fight.

Ravana lost three great commanders. He noticed the morale

of Rakshasa army had gone down. He summoned commander-in-chief Prahastha and said "Prahastha the morale of our army has gone down because of so many deaths of our able commanders. You have to inspire them and bring them back to the original position of bravery. I am sure you can do that, the Ayodhya princes are sure to be defeated by you. You are capable of that. I have full confidence and faith in you."

Prahastha was touched by the affection of the king and his faith in him. So he in his chariot marched on to the battle field followed by thousands of soldiers. Rama saw him and asked Vibhishana about him. Vibhishana told him "Prahastha is commander-in-chief of Ravana army. He accompanied Ravana in wars against Devas and others. He is Ravana's confident commander."

The battle between Vanaras and Rakshasas soon began and there was terrible killing on both sides. Neela faced Prahastha and both engaged in duel fight. Neela destroyed his chariot and killed his horses. Neela took a big boulder and hurled at Prahastha. Prahastha fell on the ground in a pool of blood and died. The Vanaras chased the Rakshasas. They ran into the city. There was a great joy in Vanara camp. Ravana was shocked to hear the bad news. He decided to face Rama in the battle.

Ravana in his chariot moved into the battle field. He was

followed by Akampana, Atikoaya, Mahodara, Kumbha, Nikumbha and Narantaka. Rama looked at him for the first time. He thought he was brave and great warrior. He thought of Seeta who had been carried away by Ravana. He grew wild, he took the bow and arrow and was ready to fight with Ravana. Sugriva first attacked him. He threw big rocks at Ravana. But Ravana with his powerful arrows broke them into pieces. He sent an arrow which hurt Sugriva and he fell on the ground. Ravana sent a number of arrows which hurt many Vanaras.

Hanuman met Ravana. There was duel fight between the two. Both were equal in fist fighting. Ravana with double force hit Hanuman. Hanuman was staggering under the blow. Meanwhile Ravana turned towards Neela. Neela gave him a tough fight. Ravana sent Agneastra towards Neela. Neela fell on the ground, but did not die because he was the son of Agni. Then Ravana turned towards Lakshmana. After exchange of harsh words between the two they entered into a severe battle. Ravana sent Shakti astra which struck the chest of Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell on the ground. Ravana tried to lift him. But he could not lift him. Shakti astra could not kill Lakshmana. Hanuman immediately carried Lakshmana to Rama. The Shakti astra left Lakshmana chest and went back to Ravana. Lakshmana regained his strength.

Now Rama faced Ravana. Ravana was on his chariot. Hanuman

carried Rama on his shoulders. Both fought gallantly. Rama destroyed his chariot and killed his horses. He broke his bow. He struck his crown which fell on the ground. Ravana was reeling. Rama saw him and said "You lost everything now. Go back take rest for sometime and come back with full preparations. You have exhausted now. If you come again I will show you what I am. You go back now and come again."

Ravana's pride had been humbled. His enthusiasm had all gone. He returned crest fallen to his palace. The Gods welcomed Rama's Victory over Ravana.

Ravana was unhappy. In his life he never faced such an insult. His body was burning with anger and hatred. He wanted some one to come to help him. He turned towards his ministers and told them "You see what happened to me this day. All my tapas and obtaining astras proved futile. I never experienced, this type of humiliation in my carrier. I never thought nor imagined that a mere human being would humiliate me like this in the battle field. I remember now Ikshvaku king by name. Anaranya warned me that I have to face death in the hands of a human being. Is this Rama the human being mentioned by Anaranya. You please go, wake Kumbakarna and bring him here. He is the only person who can come to my rescue and save me from this dreadful humiliation. Go and bring him here."

The rakshasas went to Kumbhakarna's palace to wake him up. They carried various perfumes large quantities of meat and barrels of wine. Kumbhakarna with huge body was sleeping on his couch. They tried their best to wake him up. They blew on conchs, trumpets and bugles. They prodded him with sticks and iron rods. They shouted at high pitched voice finally he woke up. He looked at Rakshasas and became angry for waking him up. His eyes became red, the rakshasas without a word, silently placed meat plates and barrels of wine before him. By looking at them his anger vanished. He slowly consumed all that was placed before him. He then shouted "Why you woke me up. Is there any danger to the kingdom. Is my brother Ravana safe. Who is the enemy who attacked our kingdom. I wish to smash him into pieces. My brother would never disturb me in my sleep. Probably he is in danger. I must go and fight with the enemy."

Yopaksha a minister told him "Oh! Lord, there is no danger from celestial bodies. But the danger is coming from the human being and Vanaras. Rama declared war on Ravana because Ravana kidnapped his wife Seeta. The Vanaras attacked our city, destroyed Ashokavana, burnt the city and killed thousands of rakshasas and able commanders. Hitherto it never happened in our kingdom. Ravana was humiliated and driven out of the battle field by Rama. Ravana wants your

help now. Before going to the battle field, please meet your brother Ravana and then attack the enemy in the battle field" Mahodara the military commander supported Yapaksha.

Kumbha Karna approached his brother Ravana. He could not see the glow in Ravana's face. He was worried. Ravana saw him, got down from his throne, walked towards him and embraced him. Kumbha Karna asked him "My dear brother, why you woke me up. Are you in danger. Who attacked your kingdom, Indra or Yama. Do not worry about them. They can not stand before me and they can not escape from me. Please tell me every thing. I will destroy the enemy".

Ravana patted him and said "My dear brother while you were in sleep many things happened in Lanka. Rama with Vanara army built the bridge across the wide sea and entered Lanka. He declared war on me. He killed thousands of our soldiers and able commanders. The entire city Lanka is in ruins. Many young brave warriors were killed in the battle. The city Lanka is peopled by old men, women and children. Both treasury and granary are empty, the drinking wells and ponds were destroyed. There is terrible devastation all over the city. Please save the city and honour".

Kumbhakarna simply laughed at the words of Ravana and said "Oh! Brother in the first council meeting we all warned you about this danger you did not take our advice. You have

committed a grave sin. A person who commits a sin must reap the consequences. Then you were proud of your valour and wealth. You were arrogant then. You did not follow the good advice given by my brother Vibhishana and you drove him out of the kingdom. Because of the mistake you have committed we are facing all these troubles. I need not tell you what is Dharma and what is Adharma. You neglected your well wishers and dishonoured them. You acted on your own will. When you kidnapped Seeta you never consulted any one. Now you are in trouble and you want every one to come to your rescue. Seeta is poison. You mixed that poison with our food and now you want us to share that food. Alright as subjects of this kingdom it is our duty to protect the king and his kingdom. I think I have crossed my limits. It is my duty as brother to tell you, what you have done. Please excuse me. I will meet the enemy and destroy Vanara army. I will kill Ayodhya princes and place their heads at your feet. Permit me to go to the battle field".

Ravana was happy with Kumbhakarna words. He told him "Destroy Vanara army, kill Ayodhya princes and come back with victory". Saying this he took out his Necklace and placed it on the neck of Kumbhakarna and blessed him with success. Kumbhakarna touched the feet of Ravana and proceeded to the battle field.

Kumbhakarna marched towards the battle field. Thousands of rakshasa soldiers followed him. Evil omens were seen when he stepped into the battle field. He simply ignored them. The Vanaras saw him and they were frightened. They ran away in all directions. Rama saw the frightened Vanaras. He asked Vibhishana about Kumbhakarna. Vibhishana told about Kumbhakarna. He was the son of Vishravas and brother of Ravana. He once defeated Yama and Indra. The Devas were afraid of him. Soon after his birth he was oppressed by a dreadful hunger and began eating every thing that came across him. Indra once tried to punish him with his Vajrayudha. Kumbhakarna got angry pulled out the tusk of Airavata and hit Indra. Indra went to Lord Brahma and sought his help. Lord Brahma cursed him to go in deep sleep. Ravana then requested Lord Brahma to modify his curse. Lord Brahma responded to his request made Kumbhakarna to sleep for six months, then wake up for a day, eat as he liked and would go to sleep again for six months. After hearing Kumbhakarna's life sketch, Rama sent Neela, Gavaska, Sharabha, Hanuman and Angada. Kumbhakarna defeated them all. He crushed the Vanaras under his feet. He ate many Vanaras and crushed them between his teeth. The Vanara army was beaten up by him. They fell down in faint or hurt. Then Sugriva attacked him. There was fierce battle between the two. Kumbhakarna

captured Sugriva and carried him into the city. On the way Sugriva bit his ear and nose. Kumbhakarna dropped him because of pain. Sugriva jumped in the air and come back to Rama. Then Lakshmana tried his best to defeat Kumbhakarna. He failed in his attempt.

Then Rama entered the field. He sent arrows and they entered the body of Kumbhakarna. He invoked Vayu astra and shoot the arrow which cut off his arm. Again Rama invoked Indra astra and shoot the arrow which cut off another arm of Kumbhakarna. Again Rama sent Vijra astra which cut off Kumbhakarna's head. Kumbhakarna fell dead on the ground. The Devas who witnessed the war praised Rama by saying "Well done, well done".

The messengers of Ravana rushed to him and gave a very good account of Kumbhakarna war. How he defeated all Vanara leaders including Lakshmana. Finally with so much of courage told him that Rama killed Kumbhakarna in the battle. Ravana felt sorry for the death of great hero and fell down in a faint. He wept for the death of his great brother. He determined to take revenge on Rama. He felt sorry for not taking the good advice given by his younger brother Vibhishana. Ravana lost two great heroes Kumbhakarna and Prahastha.

When Ravana was in great sorrow his sons Trishiras, Devantaka, Narantaka and Atikaya approached him and took his permission

to face Vanara army. They marched towards the battle field on elephants and chariots. Thousands of Rakshasas followed them. The vanaras were ready to face them holding big tree branches and big rocks.

Angada challenged Narataka and in the fierce battle Angada killed him.

Hanuman fought with Devantaka and killed him. He then attacked Trishiras and killed him. Atikaya looked like Kumbhakarna. The Vanaras were afraid of him. He had acquired many divine astras from Lord Brahma. Lakshmana challenged him for fight. Both used Divine astras. Finally Lakshmana sent Brahmastra which cut off the head of Atikaya. The four sons of Ravana were killed by Vanara chiefs and Lakshmana.

The death of four sons of Ravana reached Ravana. He was terribly angry with Rama and his Vanara army. His right hand men, able leaders, his sons and thousands of rakshasa soldiers died in the hands of Rama and his commanders. The people who died were great heroes of no mean order. Indrajit bound the Ayodhya princes with Nagapasa. It also failed. He began thinking that Rama was not an ordinary human being. The fear of Rama crept in his mind. He sent for Indrajit to take revenge on Ayodhya princes. Indrajit approached his father Ravana, touched his feet and marched towards battle field. Thousands

of Rakshasa soldiers followed him. He lit fire and worshipped Agni and received his blessings.

Indrajit vanished in the air and sent many astras against Vanaras. He sent Brahmastra and all Vanaras including their chiefs fell on the ground. Rama and Lakshmana knew it was Brahmastra and they simply laid down on the ground. Hanuman was not affected by Brahmastra. Vibhishana went round and saw all Vanaras were in faint. He saw Jambavan in half faint. Jambavana recognised the voice of Vibhishana and asked him whether Hanuman was safe. Vibhishana was stunned at his enquiry of Hanuman. He did not ask about Ayodhya princes nor his king Sugriva but only Hanuman. He asked him why he was worried about Hanuman. Jambavan replied if Hanuman was alive, he would save all Vanaras and Vanara chiefs.

Hanuman approached him and took his feet in his hands. Jambavan asked Hanuman to go the Himalaya mountain and to bring four Oshadies namely 1. Mrita Sanjivini which would bring back the dead back to life.

2. Vishalya Karani which would heal all wounds.

The two other Oshadies were Savarnya kani and Santana Karani. Hanuman grew in big size, flew in the air and reached Himalayas. He did not waste time. He uprooted the hill and

brought it to Lanka. He placed the hill in the middle of the battle field. The air was filled with scent of Oshadies. Every one woke up and they did not find any wounds on their bodies. Hanuman took back the hill and placed it in its original place. The Vanaras continued the war and killed many rakshasas.

Ravana was unhappy and he heard the victory cry of Vanaras. He sent Kumbha and Nikumbha the son of Kumbhakarna against the Vanaras. The Vanaras attacked the rakshasas with big rocks and trees. Sugriva was amazed at the great strength of Kumbha. He possessed the valour of his father Kumbhakarna and his uncle Ravana. Both Sugriva and Kumbha fought gallantly. Sugriva hit Kumbha with his powerful fist and made him to fall on the ground and he died. Nikumbha saw the death of his brother Kumbha and attacked the Vanaras. Hanuman attacked and killed him.

The rakshasas saw the death of Kumbha and Nikumbha. They thought that they were nothing before the Vanara army. They simply wondered that Vanaras used only rocks and trees. Rama, Lakshmana and Vanara chiefs mercilessly killed Ravana's brother sons and able commanders. Ravana was very much worried. He looked at Indrajit and asked him to give him, some comfort. Now he depended on him only. Indrajit took his divine astras and marched into battle field. He shoot arrows like rain. The vanaras could see his arrows but not

Indrajit. Indrajit adopted Maya war. He rose in the sky and began sending arrows one after another. Lakshmana saw this Maya war. To destroy it he decided to send Brahmastra. Rama stopped him by saying that Brahmastra would kill thousands of people. Rama decided to kill Indrajit by sending his dangerous astras. Indrajit sensed the danger from Rama, simply left the battle field and went back to his palace.

Indrajit soon appeared before Vanaras carrying Seeta in his chariot. He saw Hanuman and said "This woman Seeta is responsible for all these troubles. So I have decided to kill her before you all Vanaras go and tell your leader Rama that I have killed his dear wife Seeta "He took the sword to cut off her head. Hanuman became wild and asked him to give up the idea of killing Seeta. Indrajit laughed at him, took the sword to cut off the head of Seeta. The Vanaras wept and ran away in all directions. Hanuman tried to stop them. Having seen the Vanaras running away from the battle field, Indrajit with great joy went back to his palace.

Indrajit had a plan to perform important yaga at Nikumbhila to kill the enemy. So he wanted to divert the attention of vanaras from the battle field and at the same time to frighten them by cutting the head of Seeta. She was not real Seeta but Maya Seeta. No one knew about it only Vibhishana knew it. He went to Rama and told him that Indrajit killing Seeta was

not real Seeta but Maya Seeta. The real Seeta was safe in Ashoka vana, Indrajit adopted this maya plan to divert the attention of Vanaras to complete his yaga at Nikumbhila. Vibhishana told Rama "If he succeeds in finishing yaga, it will be difficult to defeat him. So I request you to send Lakshmana with an army to destroy Indrajit yaga". Lakshmana with the help of Vibhishana marched on to Nikumbhila to destroy Indrajit yaga. The Vanaras attacked Indrajit. Indrajit in the middle of yaga came out from Nikumbhila and fought with Lakshmana. Both used divine astras. Lakshmana destroyed Indrajit chariot and killed all his horses. Indrajit went back and came again with new chariot and horses. Lakshmana took Indra astra and sent it direct towards Indrajit which severed his head. Indrajit fell on the ground. The sad news reached Ravana. Rama felt happy and embraced Lakshmana for his great victory.

Ravana could not bear the loss of his dear son Indrajit. He rushed to Ashokavana to punish Seeta. Seeta saw him coming with so much of anger holding the sword in his hands. Hither to he was telling her to forget Rama. Now he looked different. She knew that he lost his brother, his sons able commanders and thousand of soldiers. His wives and some courtiers tried their best to pacify his anger, but they failed in their attempt. He bent on killing Seeta. He was blind with

his anger. He did not care to hear any body's advice. A wise minister by name Suparshva approached him and pacified him by saying "Oh! Lord you know and well versed in Dharma. You never deviated from Dharma. Killing a woman is Adharma. You wait for some time. You first defeat and kill Rama. Then she will change her mind and will accept you as her Lord. You wait till that period". On hearing his advice, Ravana gave up the idea of killing Seeta.

From Ashokavana Ravana went back to his palace and ordered his Moolabala to march towards battle field to face Vanara army. Moola Bala was famous in all the three worlds. It was very powerful and strong. They faced the Vanaras and destroyed the Vanaras in thousands. The Vanaras approached Rama. Rama sent arrows like rain. The rakshasas could not see Rama, but they could see the chain of arrows coming from all sides. Rama destroyed the elephant force and killed many thousands of horses. Rama sent Gandharva astra. The rakshasas could see several Ramas on all sides sending arrows like rain. The entire Moola Bala was destroyed.

The news of the complete destruction of Moola Bala reached Lanka. The wives of these rakshasa soldiers wept like torrent. They expressed their feelings in harsh words. Surphanaka the sister of Ravana was souly responsible for this great war. She encouraged Ravana to kidnap Seeta because Rama refused

to marry her. There upon Surphanaka attacked Seeta. Lakshmana got angry and cut the nose and ears of Surphanaka. To take revenge on Rama she encouraged her brothers at Janasthana to kill Ayodhya princes. Rama killed her brothers and also fourteen thousand soldiers. To take revenge on Rama, Ravana kidnapped Seeta. Because of Surphanaka they lost their husbands and sons. Ravana through his spies heard the remarks of women of Lanka. He felt sorry and decided to face Rama directly.

Ravana was ready to face Rama. He ordered Mahodara and Virupaksha to keep the army ready for march to the battle field. He was terribly angry and marched fast towards the battle field. The birds were not singing but crying. The clouds were raining drops of blood. The horses could not run fast. The eagles flew round the Ravana's chariot. Ravana's left eye and left hand throbbed. He lost his normal glow on his face. His voice became hoarse. Ravana ignored the evil omens. He bent on facing Rama.

The Vanaras saw the rakshasa army. They fought with them under the leadership of Sugriva and Sushena. Sugriva met Virupaksha. There was fierce battle between the two. Finally Sugriva killed Virupaksha. Ravana's army was gradually diminishing in number. He realised that fate was on the side of Rama and Gods also favoured him. Mahodara also lost his

life in the hands of Sugriva. Angada and Jambavan met Mahaparshwa and killed him. Ravana heard the victory cry of Vanaras. He could not bear the defeat of his commanders and his soldiers. Then he decided to face Rama.

The fight between Rama and Ravana was terrible. Both used astras. Ravana was fighting from his chariot. Indra the chief of Gods sent his chariot to Rama with Matali as charioteer. Both used powerful astras. The war continued for some time. Lakshmana came forward to face Ravana. Ravana saw him who was responsible for the death of his dear and great warrior son Indrajit. He got wild and decide to kill Lakshmana. Meanwhile Vibhishana came forward to help Lakshmana. Seeing his brother Vibhishana on the side of Rama, his anger mounted up.

He sent powerful shakti astra. Lakshmana in order to protect Vibhishana came and stood before him. The Shakti astra struck his chest and blood began to rush from the wound. Lakshmana fell on the ground. Rama could not bear the fall of Lakshmana. Sushena examined Lakshmana and said that he was badly hurt and was out of danger. Sushena asked Hanuman to bring back Oshadhis again. Hanuman did not was time, he flew to Himalayas and brought back the Oshadhi hill. Sushena took Oshadhi herb and put it near his nestrils. The fragrance of the herbs made Lakshmana rise up from the

ground and his weakness disappeared. He became normal. Lakshmana requested Rama to kill Ravana the same day before the sunset.

Rama continued the war. Lakshmana's words were ringing in his ears. He decided to kill Ravana that day itself. Both used divine astras. Ravana sent Rakshasa astra which soon turned into poisonous serpents and hissed at Rama. Rama sent Garuda astra which killed all the serpents. Ravana sent several sharp arrows at Rama and his charioteer Matali. Both were hurt severely. Indra, other Gods and rishis felt unhappy at the turn of events. Rama soon recovered. He was furious at the sudden set back. He became wild and his eyes became red. He glared at Ravana as though he would burn him with his eyes. The world trembled at the sight of Rama's anger. The mountain began to shake. The wild animals ran hither and thither. Ravana decided to use his trident. It was very powerful. He threw the trident at Rama. Rama with his shakti arrow broke it into pieces. Rama then broke his chariot and killed his horses. Rama continued sending arrows towards Ravana. Ravana fell unconscious. His charioteer steered the chariot away from the presence of Rama. After some time he recovered and came back to the battle field to fight with Rama. During this interval sage Agastya met Rama and requested him to recite "Aditya Hrudayam" which would give him power to kill Ravana.

The great encounter between Rama and Ravana began. Both the armies stopped fighting and began watching the great fight between Rama and Ravana. Rama sent a sharp arrow which severed the head of Ravana. While Rama was watching there arose on the neck of Ravana another head. Rama severed that head too only to be replaced by another head. So it went on for some time. One hundred heads were replaced. Matali reminded Rama of Brahmastra. It was given to him by sage Agastya. Rama recited 'Aditya Hrudayam' and released Brahmastra which pierced the heart of Ravana. Blood rushed out of his chest. Ravana fell dead on the ground. The war between the two continued for seven days without break. The powerful Ravana who ruled the three worlds. Who had been blessed by Lord Brahma. Who had pleased Lord Mahadeva by Samaveda who had terrified the Devas and others, lay dead on the ground, killed by a human being Rama. Ravana the son of Vishrava, the grandson of Pulastya and great grandson of Lord Brahma fell dead on the ground. A Kshatriya prince of Ayodhya a mere human being Rama killed Ravana the ten headed ruler of Lanka. Soon after the death of Ravana, the rakshasa soldiers ran away from the battle field. They wept for the loss of their dear leader and mighty king of Lanka. The Vanaras were jubilant. The celestial bodies made music, blew trumpets and bugles. They showered flowers on Rama.

The Vanara leaders were very happy. Vibhishana suddenly over come with sorrow. He never hated his brother Ravana. He worshipped him as father. He advised him only when he committed grave mistakes like kidnapping the wives of other men. When he kidnapped Seeta, he requested him a number of times to surrender Seeta to Rama. He considered both Rama and Seeta as divine persons. Vibhishana knew that Ravana had some good qualities. He gave away lavish presents to people. He worshipped the Gods Lord Brahma, Lord mahadeva and Agni the God of fire. He was well versed in Vedas and Sastras. He never neglected religious ceremonies. On the advice of Rama, Vibhishana had agreed to perform the funeral rites of his great brother Ravana.

Meanwhile the news of Ravana's death reached the royal palace. Many ladies rushed towards the dead body of Ravana. One woman placed his head on her lap. Many ladies fell on his body. They stood round his dead body and began weeping. They could not bear the loss of their great and powerful husband. Later the chief queen Mandodari came and fell on his dead body. She wept for a long time. She expressed her feelings "Oh! Lord you have left this world leaving me alone. What can I do here with out you and my sons. Yama the God of death was not kind enough to take me when my dear sons lost their lives in the battle. Oh! Lord I centered my thoughts

on you and I thought of serving you till the end of my life. Fate played in another way. No one killed you. Your sins killed you. You committed so many sins in your life. Knowingly you courted trouble by kidnapping Seeta. Seeta brought ruin to you, to your people and to the entire kingdom. You consider Seeta as mere human being. No she is divine person. Rama is not an ordinary human being.

He is Lord Narayana. Seeta is his wife Lakshmi. Rama destroyed entire Janasthana. He built a bridge across the wide sea with Vanara army he destroyed your mighty army. Your men fought with weapons. But Vanaras fought with rocks and trees. How could they get victory over mighty army of yours. You did not think over these events. You simply rejected the good advice given by Vibhishana and other elders. On the advice of your mother, Vibhishana met you personally and advised you, but you simply rejected his advice. It is all fate worked against you. Seeta is not your enemy. Rama is not your enemy. The great enemy is yourself. Your pride and ego ruined you. You were great, powerful enjoyed life, but now you are lying on the ground." Saying these she fell in faint. Rama asked Vibhishana to make all arrangements for the ladies to go back to royal palace. Much against his wishes Vibhishana performed the last funeral rites of Ravana. Later

Rama declared vibhishana as king of Lanka. The crown was placed on his head.

Rama then turned towards Hanuman and asked him to go and inform Seeta about the victory in the great war. Hanuman took the permission from king Vibhishana and proceeded towards Ashokavana to meet Seeta.

He met Seeta and conveyed Rama's message "Oh! Seeta I am conveying the good news to you. I have defeated and killed the ten headed rakshasa king of Lanka, Ravana. He kidnapped you and imprisoned you in Ashoka vana. I spent sleepless nights thinking of you and how to rescue you with the help of Vanaras, we built the bridge across the wide sea, waged war on Ravana and finally captured Lanka. Vibhishana has become the king of Lanka. Now you are living in the house of your brother. He will come to you and bring you here".

Seeta felt immensely happy of the good news. She praised Hanuman for bringing the good news to her. Hanuman wanted her permission to punish Rakshasa women who gave her so much trouble in Ashokavana.

Seeta replied "Oh! Hanuman as mere servants of Ravana, they simply carried out his orders. After the death of Ravana they became my well wishers and friends. You need not worry about them. You inform Rama. I am eager to see him and meet him."

Hanuman went back and informed the same to Rama. Rama asked Vibhishana to go and bring Seeta. Vibhishana went to Ashokavana with some servant maids. They gave holy bath to Seeta, combed her hair properly dressed her in new garments and asked her to wear proper jewels. They carried her in palauquin. The varanas, and the rakshasa men, women and children stood on both sides of the main street to see Seeta who spent nearly eleven months as prisoner in Ashokavana among rakshasa women. Approaching Rama, Seeta got down from palauquin, walked towards Rama lowering down her head. She was so excited to see Rama and touched his feet. There was immense affection in her eyes. Finally the great happiness came to her with tears rolling down from her cheeks. She looked up and saw her Lord's face. She wanted to speak but tears choked her voice and she could speak no more except "My Lord".

Rama spoke, his voice was harsh and his words were cruel. He looked at Seeta and said "Oh! Seeta I killed the enemy and rescued you. This I did to vindicate my honour and my reputation. It was my duty to save you. I have done it. My insult and my enemy have both been wiped out. My power had been displayed to the world and my efforts to save Dharma have been rewarded. My great friend Hanuman carried my orders to the successful end in crossing the wide sea and

punishing the rakshasas by burning their city.

Vibhishana left his brother Ravana and joined me in this great task. You know I am the protector of Dharma. Ravana insulted me in kidnapping you. It is an insult to Ikshvaku family. I waged war and killed him to save the honour of Ikshvaku family. You lived in the protection of my enemy. For a period of eleven months. Your name has now stain on it. Which honourable man will take back his wife who has been living in the house of an enemy for a period of eleven months. My Ikshvaku family is noble. I belong to that noble family. How can I take you back as my wife. I cannot act against Dharma. I am the protector of Dharma not destroyer of Dharma. So Seeta you are free now. You can go any where you like. If you want to be with Bharatha or with Sugriva or with Vibhishana. I have no objection. You can go and live with any one of them. "He turned his angry eyes on her and turned away. He spoke nothing after that. Every one who assembled there were shocked to hear such words from Rama. Both men and women began weeping at the turn of events.

Seeta with faltering voice said "Oh! Lord you are talking like an ordinary man. You belonged to a noble family. I also came from noble family. We lived together for twelve years as husband and wife. Why do you talk like this. During eleven months of imprisonment I was thinking of you only. I swear

in the name of my honour. I have been chaste and pure during my eleven months imprisonment. You compare me with low minded woman. It is not fair on your part to condemn the entire women hood. If you want to test my purity, I am ready. If the test proved other wise will you accept me as your wife. I had been touched by Ravana. when I was helpless and unprotected. I have not committed any sin. The fate worked against me. All these eleven months my thoughts and my love have ever been yours. I have not committed any sin. Why you sent Hanuman to trace me. Why you entered friendship with Sugriva. Why you built the bridge across the wide sea. Why you waged war and killed thousands of people. Why you did all these to save me. Now you changed your mind. You ascribed sin to me. You would have sent word through Hanuman that you were not interested in me and you would have gone back to Ayodhya" with so much of sorrow, she asked Lakshmana. "Oh! Lakshmana you never disobeyed my orders please lit the fire. I want to enter the fire." Lakshmana obeyed her orders and lit the fire. Seeta with folded hands made pradakshanam to Rama and went near the fire, stood for a moment and said "If it is true that my mind has ever been set on Rama and never once swerved from thoughts of him then let Agni protect me or burn me". saying these words she entered the fire. The crowd with so much

of sorrow silently watched the self immolation of Seeta. There were cries of sadness, consternation and woe filled the air Rama bent down his head and shed tears.

All Gods of the celestial world came down to earth. The rishis who were agitated said "Oh! Rama, How can you allow Seeta to enter the fire. You are the creator of the universe. You are the wisest of the wise. You are parama purusha. How can you allow this to happen. How is it you have not recognised yourself to be the leader of Devas. You are the ancient. You are immutable. You are the past, present and future yet you behaved like a common man".

Rama heard these words of great rishis and he said "Oh! great men, you know I am Rama the son of Dasaratha the king of Kosala. I am human being. You speak of so many things. I do not know anything. Let Lord Brahma enlighten me the reason for my birth as human being." Lord Brahma enlighten him "Oh! Rama, I will tell you the truth about yourself. You are Lord Narayana Seeta is your wife Lakshmi. Both of you have taken birth as human beings to establish Dharma in the world by destroying asuras and rakshasas. You pervade everything. You are the creator of the universe Vedas are your breath. You are Purushothama you are the creator of the universe, protector of the Universe and the destroyer of the universe. No one knows you fully. You are every where. You sustain

the entire universe. During pralaya you are seen as Lord Narayana reclining on Adishesha and sea is all round you. Rama I am your heart. Saraswati is your tongue. Seeta and yourself were born as human beings on earth for the sole purpose of killing Ravana. You have accomplished what you were born for".

Rama listened to the words of Lord Brahma and wondered at his words. At the same time Agni the god of fire came out of the fire carrying Seeta in his hands. He said "Rama, your wife Seeta has been given back to you. There is no taint on her name. Her character is pure. During her imprisonment she had been thinking of you only. Ravana tempted her many times by offering the first place in his royal palace. But she did not yield. Please believe me and accept her as jewel among women".

Rama came forward, took Seeta's hand and said "I know Seeta is pure she stayed as prisoner in his royal palace for a period of eleven months surrounded by rakshasis. If she had not gone through the test by fire which is supposed to purify her, the people would have spoken ill of me. Rama the son of great Dasaratha was blind with love and he accepted Seeta who stayed for eleven months in the house of his enemy. He accepted her because he was blind with love'. To avoid this comment I wanted her to under take this test of entering fire.

I know Seeta is pure she cannot live with out me. I can not live without her. I know she is capable of protecting herself".

Both Rama and Seeta united together, every one was happy.

Lord Mahadeva asked Rama to go back to Ayodhya and relieve Bharatha from his duties. He was waiting for Rama's arrival.

Indra approached Rama and requested him to go back to Ayodhya. Rama requested him to give back the lives of Vanaras who lost their lives in the battle field. Indra agreed to do. The Vanaras who died in the battle field, rose from the battle field.

King Dasaratha descended from heaven, embraced Rama and Lakshmana. He asked Rama to excuse him for banishing him into the forest. He blessed Seeta. After taking leave of them he went back to heaven. All Devas and rishis went back to their celestial world.

Vibhishana approached Rama and requested him to accept his offerings of silk garments, jewels and holy water to take bath. Rama with a smile appreciated his gesture and said that his mind was with Bharatha. He was eager to meet him and convey his blessings to him. He was so dear to Rama who treated him with all affection and Love. Then Vibhishana said that his brother's Pushpakavimana would take them all to Ayodhya with in a short time. Rama accepted his offer.

Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana were ready to ascend Pushpakavimana. Rama asked Sugriva and Vibhishana to bring their followers along with them. All leaders ascended pushpakavimana. On the way Rama described and showed the places where he killed Ravana and Kumbhakarna. He showed the place where Lakshmana killed Indrajit. He showed the other places where Sugriva, Jambavan, Angada, Neela, Hanuman killed other rakshasas chiefs including Ravana's sons. He showed the sea shore where he met Vibhishana and his four friends. Then he showed Kishkinda where he killed Vali and made Sugriva as king of Kishkinda. The wives of Vanara chiefs welcomed them. On the request of Seeta they accompanied their husbands to Ayodhya. The victorious party reached the great ashramam of Bharadwaja. The sage welcomed them and offered hospitality. He told Rama that he knew the entire story of his success in Janasthana, his friendship with Sugriva, the search for Seeta, building of great bridge on the wide sea and his final victory over Ravana. He requested Rama and his party to stay back in his ashramam for a day to accept his hospitality. Rama agreed to stay back for a night in the ashramam.

Rama called Hanuman and asked him to go to Shringiberapura and convey his good wishes to Guha and then to Ayodhya. He asked Hanuman "You go to Bharatha tell him everything. Tell

him of my home coming. Then observe him. If he is happy of my coming back well and good. If he is not happy, please come and inform me of the result. I will not stand in his way. Let him continue as king of Kosala". Hanuman touched the feet of Rama and flew away in the air.

Hanuman first went Shringiberapura and informed the victory of Rama and his home coming. Guha and his entire group felt very happy.

Hanuman then went to Nandigram in the guise of a brahmachari. He saw both Bharatha and Shatrugna dressed in tree bark and deer skin. They had matted hair. They were lean because of fasting. Their faces looked pale and they lost the glow of royal princes. He met them and saluted them. He told them that he had come from Rama "Rama on the request of Bharadwaja stayed at his ashramam this night and he will be coming back here tomorrow morning. He wanted me to convey this news to you both". Both Bharatha, Shatrugna felt immensely happy and told him "You gave us happy news. We were waiting for this happy news for the last fourteen years. You have brought me the life giving elixir, the news of Rama's home coming". Both the brothers embraced Hanuman. Hanuman assumed his original form sat by their side and told them the entire story of Rama, his wars against rakshasas and finally liberating Seeta from the

clutches of Ravana by killing him. He told them that Rama and others were coming in Pushpavimana which could carry any number of persons with great speed.

Bharatha felt happy and issued orders to his ministers to make all arrangements to receive Rama. Pushpakavimana reached the village Nandigama. Every one who assembled there cried "Rama. Rama". Their happy sound reached the skies. Bharatha and Shatrugna rushed to Rama and touched his feet. They embraced Lakshmana. They made salutation to Seeta. Bharatha met Sugriva, Vibhishana and other leaders welcomed them.

Rama saw his mother Kausalya and fell at her feet. His tears washed her feet. He made similar salutations to Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Then he met sage Vasishtha and prostrated before him. All people of Ayodhya stood watching Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana. They were so happy of their coming back to Ayodhya. Bharatha took Rama's padukas in his hands and went to Rama. He placed Rama's feet in them and said "Oh! Rama I have guarded your padukas and your kingdom all these fourteen years. Now I am surrendering them to you. Please accept them and relieve me from my duties. You take charge of the kingdom, the treasury, the granary, the army and the city. By your grace and blessings I have increased them ten fold. Please take charge of them".

Rama so pleased. He embraced Bharatha with tears in his eyes. After pleasantnies, Rama asked Pushpakavimana to go back to its original owner Kubera. Pushpaka Vimana rose from the ground and flew in the air towards North.

The entire royal path from Nandigama to Ayodhya was decorated with various flowers and rangoli. The men and women expressed their joy by singing and dancing. Rama and others reached the royal palace. After fourteen years Rama drove in his chariot in the streets of Ayodhya.

Sage Vasishtha made all preparations for Rama's coronation. All the four brothers removed their matted hair. They had holy bath. They dressed in silk royal garments and wore jewels. They were ready for coronation. The three queens of king Dasaratha dressed Seeta in royal fashion. She wore royal garments and jewels.

Vasishtha asked Rama and Seeta to sit on jewelled throne. He sprinkled on their heads with sacred Ganga water. Vasishtha recited vedic mantras and placed Ikshvaku jewelled crown on the head of Rama. He proclaimed Rama as king of Kosala. Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Jabali, Kashyapa, Katyayana, Gautama and Vaidya blessed both Rama and Seeta. Shatrugna held the white umbrella, Sugriva held one chamara Vibhishana took another chamara in their hands and stood by the side of Rama and Seeta. Indra sent garland of Lotus and necklace of pearls from heaven and the God of wind vayu brought them.

The devas came down to see the coronation. The Apsaras danced on the occasions. On this happy occasion Rama gave cows to Brahmans. Gold, Silver and new clothes to men and woman of Ayodhya. He specially honoured Sugriva and Vanara chiefs with rich presentations. In the same way he honoured Vibhishana and his four friends. Rama in the presence of all announced Bharatha as Yuvaraja. Sugriva with his Vanara chiefs went back to Kishkinda. Vibhishana and his four friends went back to Lanka. Rama ruled for many years. He performed Asvamedha and other yagas. He ruled Kosala kingdom like his father Dasaratha. He uphold the fame and name of Ikshvakus the race of the Sun.

The people of Ayodhya were happy and contented doing the rule of Rama. The wild animals and other animals did not attack the people and the crops on the land. There were no thefts. The people followed Dharma of the land. Ramarajya gave people absolute happiness.

He who reads Valmiki Ramayana will be purified and will not be made to suffer in life. It gives long life. The childless will have children after reading or listening to the story of Rama. The poor man will become rich if he followed Dharma. The kings will get victory over the enemies. Rama is Lord Narayana. Seeta is Goddess Lakshmi. Both have taken human birth to establish Dharma in the world.

Aum Shanti - Aum Shanti - Aum Shanti



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