

I L L U S T R A T E D *Jain Rāmāyaṇa*

A Unique Combination of Universal Philosophy & Jain Culture.



Ācāryadeva Śrī Guṇaratna sūriji M.S.

ILLUSTRATED

Jain Rāmāyaṇa

Ācāryadeva Śrī Guṇaratna Sūriji M. S.



Writer

P. P. Dviśatādhika Dīkṣā Dāneśvarī Ācāryadeva **ŚRĪ GUṆARATNASŪRĪŚVARAJĪ M.S.**

Publisher and available at
JINGUṆA ĀRĀDHAKA TRUST

151, Gulalwadi, Kika Street, 1st Floor, Mumbai - 400004. Tel.: 3474791, 3867581.

First Edition : **January 2004** Price : **Rs. 400/-** Outside India : **8 \$**

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED FOR PUBLISHER TO REPRINT OF THIS BOOK OR ANY OTHER CHAPTER.

Also available at

- 1) **MULTY GRAPHICS**
18, Vardhaman Bldg., 3rd Floor,
Khotachi Wadi, V. P. Road,
Mumbai - 400004.
Tel.: (022) 23873222, 23884222
- 2) **NAUTAM R. VAKIL**
A1/D1, Smrit Suman Apt. 28,
Jain Society, Ellisbridge,
Ahmedabad - 380 006.
Tel.: 26576210. Mobile : 9825159617
Email : nautamanautamvakil.com
Web.: www.nautamvakil.com
- 3) **SUGHOSHA KARYALAYA**
Taleti Road, Palitana, Gujrat - 364270.
- 4) **MAHAVEER JAIN
ARADHANA KENDRA**
Koba, Dist. Gandhi Nagar,
Gujrat - 382009.
- 5) **RAMESH COLOR COMPANY**
2, Subramaniam Lane, 1st Floor,
Ratan Bazar View, Chennai - 600003.
Tel.: 5351277 / 4479
- 6) **MOTILAL BANARASIDAS**
41, U - A, Bungalow Road,
Delhi - 110007. Tel.: 2918335 / 1985
- 7) **MANOJ KUMAR B. HARAN**
Bombay Metal Mart, P. B. 285,
Madgaon, Goa - 403601.
Tel.: 722859. (R) 735027 / 034
- 8) **MAHAVEER JAIN UPKARAN
BHANDAR**
Subhash Chowk, Gopipura,
Main Road, Surat - 395003.
Tel.: 7440265, 7439223
- 9) **SEVANTILAL V. JAIN**
20, Mahajan Gali, Zaveri Bazar,
1st Floor, Shop No. 2,
Mumbai - 400002. Tel.: 22404717
- 10) **GURU GAUTAM ENTERPRISES**
Near Adinath Jain Mandir, Chickpet,
Banglore - 560053. Tel.: (080) 2253566
- 11) **K. C. JAIN & CO.**
2 Mount Road,
Hendon, London, NW 43AD.
Tele - 0181-202-9089
M 0850 - 392368
F 0181-202-2830
- 12) **BHARATIBEN HIMAÑSHU SHAH**
26, Old Homestand Road,
Searing Town, New York - 11507
U.S.A. 516 294 7323
- 13) **KINGSBURY PRINTERS, DILIPBHAI,**
242 A Kingbury Road,
Behind Fina Petrol Pump,
N.W.9 London, England.
- 14) **JAIN SAMAJ**
69, Ronle Fields Avenue
Leicester L.E. 32 E.S.
- 15) **Shree Japan Jain Sangh**
7-5 Kitendcho, 3 Chome Cho-Ku
Kobe, Japan.
- 16) **SHREE SWETAMBER SANGH
DEVESIBHAI**
Jain Building Lag. Post Box No. 80 722
Mombasa (Kenya)
- 17) **K. P. SANGHVI**
Samdimon. N. V.,
30, Hovenierstaap,
Room - 609,
2018, Antwerpen (Belgium)
Ph - (O) 2329300 - 2262378
- 18) **AURO GOLD JEWELLERY PVD.
GOLD LINK GOLD**
L.L.C Anil, Kothari Shashi
Kothari Bank of Baroda, Flat No.1301,
13th Floor park, Dubai.
Tel.: 0097143535662.
- 19) **JAIN EDUCATION
FEDERATION OF JAIN**
Pravinbhai K. Shah, Chair person,
50g Carriage wood Circle,
Raleigh NC 27607 - 3969 U.S.A.
Email - education@Jainaorg
Tele. and Fax 919-859-4994.
Web.: www.Jaina.org/www.Jainsim.org
- 20) **NAVAKAR ENTERPRISE LTD.**
143 Te Atatu Road, Te Atatu South,
Auck Land 1008, New Zealand,
(09) 8388425 Bus. 8368714 Home
Fax - 09-8368715



Designed and Printed by
MULTY GRAPHICS

18, Vardhaman Bldg., 3rd Floor, Khotachi Wadi, V. P. Road,
Mumbai - 400004. Tel.: (022) 23873222, 23884222.

E-mail : multygraphics@vsnl.net

Grand Guru :

P. P. Ācārya Śrī Bhuvanabhānusūriśvarajī M.S.



Initiator :

P. P. Ācārya Śrī Premasūriśvarajī M.S.



Author :

P. P. Dviśatādhika Dīkṣā Dāneśvarī Ācāryadeva
Śrī Guṇaratnasūriśvarajī M.S.



Under the Blessings of

P. P. Ācārya
Śrī Jayaghoṣasūriśvarajī M.S.



Author's Guru :

P. P. Ācārya
Śrī Jitendra
Sūriśvarajī M.S.



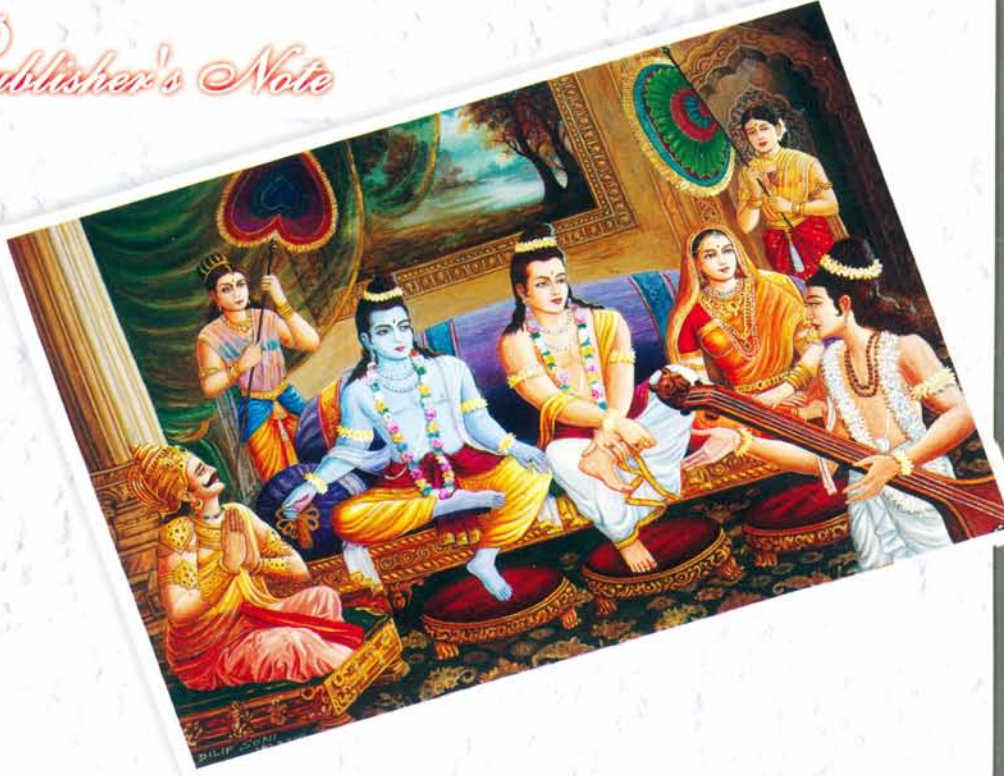
Introduction of the Author

Name	: P. P. Dviśatādhika Dīkṣā Dāneśvarī Ācāryadeva Śrī Guṇaratnasūriśvarajī M.S.
Date Of Birth	: Vīrasaṁvata 1989 Poṣa Suda 4, 1932 A.D. at Padarli (Raj.)
Dīkṣā	: Vīrasaṁvata 2010 Mahā Suda 4, 1954 A.D. at Mumbai
Gaṇi Padavī	: Vīrasaṁvata 2041 Māgsara Suda 11, 1984 A.D. at Ahmadabad.
Paṇyāsa Padavī	: Vīrasaṁvata 2044 Fāgaṇa Suda 2, 1988 A.D. at Jalore (Raj.)
Ācārya Padavī	: Vīrasaṁvata 2044 Jeṭha Suda 10, 1988 A.D. at Padarli (Raj.)
Languages known	: Gujarati, hindi, marathi, saṁskṛta, prākṛta, english.
Literary Creations	: Khavagaseḍhi, Upaśamanākaraṇa etc. in saṁskṛta and prākṛta treatise, A visit to Shatruṅjay in gujarati, hindi and english. 'Jain Rāmāyaṇa' in gujarati, hindi and english, 'The Night mare is over' in english and gujarati.

The study of ancient sciences : Nyāya, Vyākaraṇa, Kāvya, Chanda, Āgama.

- became an ascetic at the age of 21 inspite of being engaged.
- inspired 3200 individuals perform a sāmuhika caitra olī at Jirāvalā tīrtha.
- administered the pledge of asceticism to 28 youths at Surat and to 38 youths at Palitana. Total no. of dīkṣās 232.
- inspired to build Bherutāraka tīrtha, whose installation ceremony was attended by 700 sādhu-sādhvīs, and during the Caitri-oli conducted there, 274 people took a vow of celibacy ie the fourth vow.
- 4700 fasts of three days at Śaṅkheśvarā mahā tīrtha.
- under his aegis, at Surat dīkṣā, group Sāmāyika of 51,000, at Palitana of 52,000 and at Ahmedabad of 5500 men was organised.
- German professor Mr. Clause Broon showered accolades on 'Khavagaseḍhi'.
- delivered Sermons at 42 spiritual camps.
- more than 75 disciples.
- helped more than 90,000 students to enlighten their hearts through free Visvaprakāśa. Patrācāra syllabus under the aegis of Nākodā trust.

Publisher's Note



Rāmāyaṇa is an integral part of the Indian culture since ages. Therefore, we find it published in all the Indian languages. Many Jain versions of Rāmāyaṇa are available. Some of them have pictures in black and white, but the T.V. age or computer age demanded something more than this. The modern time demands attractive four colour pictures; for they make a book not only attractive but also interesting. "One picture is more than a thousand words." Dīkṣādāneśvari Ācāryadevaśrī Guṇaratnasūriśvarājī m.s. had conceived and nurtured a dream of Rāmāyaṇa since past fourteen years. His sermons on Rāmāyaṇa have stirred and touched innumerable hearts at Jodhpur, Pali, Nagore, Jalore, Sirohi, Bikaner, Ahmedabad etc. When he narrated the events from the life of Anjanāsundarī and Sītājī at Bikaner, artist like śrī Dilip Soni, and many other followers of non-Jain faiths also couldn't control their tears. About fourteen years ago, during his cāturmās sojourn at Jalore, Ācāryadevaśrī discussed this noble theme of Rāmāyaṇa with artist śrī Dilipbhai Soni, in the minutest of detail, and a noble mission began. This book, alike ŚrīRāmaji, has taken fourteen years of hardship. It has taken tears and toil, blended with extensive research. In spite of his hectic working schedules, the Ācāryaji has painstakingly completed this book. The future generation will remain indebted to the Ācāryaśrī for this herculean task. Many muniśrīs also have spared efforts in making this book a valuable treasure, cherished by every heart, we are indebted to them.

We thank our sponsors, co-sponsors and the devotees of knowledge. We thank Dilipbhai Soni for the aesthetic and authentic pictures.

Multygraphics team also has enjoyed in publishing this book. We thank them and applaud their spirit of service. We are sure that you will love this book and request you to urge and inspire your friends and relatives also to read this book.

Preface

Since times immemorial Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata have inspired, moulded and impressed the psyche, personality and social relations of the Indians, belonging to any state, any linguistic or ethnic group, following any sect or religion. These epics have originated in ancient āryaland. People of different racial stocks, people speaking different languages, people believing in diverse faiths and rituals resided here. Epics like Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata kept the intrinsic unity of India alive, inspite of the apparent diversity. Starting from India, this epic reached China, Japan, Malaysia, Java, Sumatra, Borneo Kambodia. It has also reached Iran, Arabian nations and Israel. This epic Rāmāyaṇa mingled easily in these diversified cultural backgrounds and at times assumed a totally new form.



In India, Rāmāyaṇa has influenced and moulded our behaviour towards our parents, progeny, spouses and friends, more than any other book, religious edifice, statutory laws, and the preaching of spiritualists. An Indian, whether he is a Muslim, Parsee, Christian or a Jew, is fully or partly conversant with Rāmāyaṇa. There might not be a single person in India, who is ignorant about the noble life of Rāma. Some scholars believe that the stories of Rāma existed in scattered forms, much before Vālamikī Rāmāyaṇa was compiled. Besides the Vālamikī Rāmāyaṇa, mahākavi Tulasīdāsa wrote Rāmcaritamānasa in Vraja language, which is held high in esteem by most of the hindi speaking North Indians. Durgavar compiled Mīta Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali language. Divākara Bhaṭṭa wrote Rāmāyaṇa in Kashmiri language. Ekanātha wrote Bhāvartha Rāmāyaṇa in Marathi and Mahākavi Kampana wrote the Pampā Rāmāyaṇa in Kannada. Most of these versions are loyal to the epic compiled by Vālamikī, but they have a regional fervor of their own. These writers using their muse and genius have at times made additions which are very aesthetic and add to the beauty of the original Rāmāyaṇa.

The Jain culture is an integral part of the Āryan culture. Contrary to the popular belief that lord Mahāvīra founded Jainism, the Jains believe that their pantheon is ageold. It existed much before the advent of Mahāvīra. Ahimsā, satya, asteya, brahmacharya and aparigraha are some of the gifts of Jainism to the modern world. The Jain culture is extensively found in India and some of the nations, surrounding India. However, we must remember that these nations were a part of the ancient undivided āryavrata.

Jain Rāmāyaṇa : The Jain pantheon states that Lord Munisūvrata Svāmī, a Tīrthaṅkara, was born more than 11,75,000 years ago. Suvrata Muni, the spiritual teacher and master of Śrī Rāma, was a descendant of Munisūvrata Svāmī. King Anaraṇya, the grand father of Rāma, was born during his regime. The average life span of a man at that time was much longer. Rāma must have been born much later. The Jain pantheon mentions that Lord Mahāvīra Svāmī learnt about Rāmāyaṇa with his Kevālagyan and narrated it to his disciple Gaṇadhara Gautama, who compiled it in the form of sutras. It reached Śrī Vimalasūri through the oral tradition. About 1996 years ago, he compiled the Rāmāyaṇa in Māgadhī language. This epic was called Paumacariyaṇ.



Most of the people who follow other faiths, and to a certain extent even Jain children and youths are ignorant of the fact that there exists a Jain version of Rāmāyaṇa.

The hectic pace of modern life makes the pursuit of Sanskrit and Māgadhī an impossible contingency. The chances of their learning and mastering these nearly extinct languages and then studying the original Rāmāyaṇa are very remote. I therefore felt that Rāmāyaṇa should be presented to them in Hindi, English and Gujarati. What's more, it should also be translated in languages like Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu etc to acquaint the people of other faiths with this epic.

Jain Rāmāyaṇa attracts and enchants the readers of any age group. The message of renouncement that this book preaches eloquently appeals the serious readers. After having experienced the bitter and sweet lessons from life, and after seeing many of the near and dear ones willingly or unwillingly embrace the death, they too are shattered like Rāma. When Rāma was in a state of delirium because of Lakṣmaṇa's death, diety Kṛtāntavadana and diety Jaṭāyu opened his eyes. They acquainted him to the harsh and yet essential reality that Lakṣmaṇa was dead and Rāma too was going to follow him one day. I am sure, what the celestial duo did for Rāma, this book would do for you.



The valour and detachment found in abundance in this book will definitely attract the youth. Rāvaṇa committed a sinful act by kidnapping Sītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa did not hesitate for a moment before him for his wrong action. Even today, we see a perpetual battle between the good and evil in every walk of life and therefore, like Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, we too must not wince before taking restrictive measures against evil.

The complex relationship between the major characters in Rāmāyaṇa is something unique. These relations have the background and bonds of previous lives. Love, hatred, anger, repulsion and other vista's of emotions have deep roots in the past lives and unseen fruits in the future. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are always ready to put the 'U' before the 'I', together they are willing to lay their lives for the happiness of their parents. Rāma abandons his luxurious life, without thinking twice, so that his father could renounce the world without any unpaid debt.



Lakṣmaṇa follows Rāma during the exile, in order to serve him. He too does not hesitate a moment before taking this major decision. Bharata bears the burden of the crown and scepter only when Rāma orders him to do so. Sītā too follows Rāma, and leaves the palace and cosy life without grumbling. Though Kaikeyi hatches out the evil conspiracy of exiling Rāma, he does not grudge. He bows down to Kaikeyi before leaving the palace and also after he returns. For him, Kaikeyi is not just a stepmother, but a true mother. These relations might be utopian to be true to modern man, but they too can set new ideals for themselves.

In Jain Rāmāyaṇa, we find sati Sītā fully dedicated to Rāma. While she was at Laṅkā, her mind was fully focused on Jineśvara and Rāma. This total surrenderance gave her the strength to endure the enticements and threatenings of Rāvaṇa. She does not blame Rāma, when he abandons her or when he asks her to perform the ordeal. She faces it with stoic courage. Mandodarī, on the other hand,



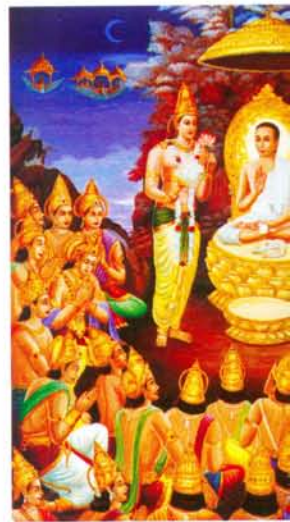
loves her husband to such an extent that she is not only willing to share her love, but becomes his envoy and pleads Sītā to accept his love.

Kauśalyā's heart aches while granting Rāma the permission to leave Ayodhyā, but when the time comes to bid goodbye to Sītā, it bleeds profusely. She is an ideal mother-in-law. Every character in Rāmāyaṇa represents lofty ideals. Rāma is an ideal son, brother, husband, foe and a monk. Sītā is an ideal daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and an ideal ascetic.

The characters like, Sugrīva, Hanumāna, vidhyādhars who can fly, Jaṭāyu and other celestial beings who can perform miracles, attract the children. Hanumāna, who not only possesses enormous strength but also intelligence and humble nature, enthrall the children. The plot of Rāmāyaṇa unfolds not only on the earth, but also in the different levels of the celestial world and the under world. It also embodies the present, past, very remote past and future, in the most fascinating way, and the plot changes these tracks in such a smooth way that mind of the readers is not distracted.

There is a school of thought which believes that when the kṣatriya kings accepted Jainism as a way of life, they began to abhor violence in any form and became totally submissive and docile. This gradually killed the patriotic fervour in their hearts and they became puppets in the hands of destiny. This has brought the downfall of India. Only those who can endure its austerities and the spirit of detachment can be true followers of Jainism. On the contrary, the epics like Jain Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata state that Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Pāṇḍavas resorted to violence in order to vanquish their foes, who were menace to the mankind. In the whole, Jainism preaches its followers to crusade against injustice, immorality and evil behaviour. This aspect of Jainism is clearly seen in the Rāmāyaṇa.

“Vāsudeva hīṇḍī”, the composition of P. P. Saṅghadāsa Gaṇi is the most ancient treatise on Rāmāyaṇa, but “Paumacariyaṃ” written by P. P. Vimalasūrijī is the most popular. “Uttarapurāṇa” composed by P. P. Guṇabhadra M. S. and “Kathāvalī” written by P. P. Bhadrēśvara M. S. are also the Jain Rāmāyaṇas. I have used the following books for reference, “Padmapurāṇa” written by P. P. Ravisena M. S.. “Mahāpurāṇa” written by P. P. Svayambhū M. S.. “Puṇya Candrodāya Purāṇ” of P. P. Kṛṣṇadāsa M. S.. “Śatruṇjayamahātmya” written by P. P. Dhaneśvara Sūri M. S.. “Covana Mahāpurīsa Cariyaṃ” by P. P. Śīlācārya M. S. and Triṣaṣṭī Śālākā Puruṣa Caritra of P. P. A. Hemacandrācārya Sūri M. S. and its english version, translated by Helen M. Johnson P.hd. I express my gratitudes to all of them.



How will this book help the reader ? At first, today we Indians take a perverst pride in aping the western world. We are gradually throttling our own culture, in the name of spirit of modernity and progress. The media is working overtime to create a uniform culture, based on consumerism. We are running after a mirage called comfortable life, which have names like secure life, healthy life, unbiased life. The ancient Ārya values like brotherhood, selflessness, loyalty to the husband etc have become outdated, and self-centeredness is replacing them. We care for “my self”, “my love”, “my opinion”, “my freedom”, “my money”. Family values are disintegrating. In crucial times like this, Rāmāyaṇa can be our excellent guide. It acquaints us with the basic tenets of Ārya culture, and finally explains now to achieve Mokṣa through asceticism.

This book also guides us to take proper decision in the hour of crisis. Everything like conversations, actions, inactions and reactions pauses in this greatest book and help us in our spiritual elavation. Weapons, missiles aircrafts, spacecrafts and architecture that are mentioned in Rāmāyaṇa, speak of their civilization.

A special missile gifted to the King Madhu by Camarendra had a range of thirteen thousand kilometers. It could cover this distance, hit the target, and return into the hands of its owner. This might have been the base for the modern scientists, in the invention of missiles and many more.

The study of Rāmāyaṇa would help us to cope up our personal tensions. Though Rāma was tormented by Sītā's separation, he helps Jaṭāyu, Vajrakarṇa and Sugrīva. Today when all our personal and social relations are gradually loosing their meaning and value, only Rāmāyaṇa could give it, a new meaning and purpose.

The personal, social, political and religious references in Rāmāyaṇa are eternal and can be applied to any situation at any time. Savage barbarians attacked India and demolished the temples and plundered the palaces. They used co-ercion to propogate their religious ideology, but they could not damage our greatest heritage of all times, i.e. Rāmāyaṇa. No amount of their torture and cruel laws reduced the reverence that we have for it. For, it is inter woven in every fibre of our being and it flows in our blood.

Every version of Rāmāyaṇa is in some way different than the other versions because every writer has used his genius to make it dramatic and interesting. We must not really search for the discrepancies and difference in details, but concentrate on the contents. For example, one writer says that Sītā had seen white flowers in the Aśokavana at Laṅkā while others said that the flowers were actually red. We can have aimless and endless debates on this topic and yet would not reach any conclusion. What we must remember is that though Aśokavana was one of the best gardens in Laṅkā, Sītājī could not enjoy its beauty for she perpetually thought of Rāma. It is quite feasible that due to constant weeping, her eyes must have turned red, and those white flowers appeared red to her. Instead of resorting to fruitless discussion, we must try and understand the true essence of the story.

In the same way, while the Vālamikī Rāmāyaṇa mentions that Śrī Rāma was married to Sītā and had only one wife, he had no other woman in his life. Uttarapurāṇ, Mahāpurāṇ and Paumacariyaṁ mentions that he practiced polygamy. Instead of creating rifts over how many women Rāma really married, we should talk about his valour, loyalty and other positive traits. Some believe that Hanumāna was unmarried. Some say that he was married. What we must remember is his loyalty towards Rāma, his strong mind and gentle nature and the enormous physical strength. Vālamikī Rāmāyaṇa states that Rāma had dark complexion while Lakṣmana was fair. Uttarapurāṇ mentions that Lakṣmana was dark and Rāma was fair. We must forget the colour of their complexion and remember the love that they had for one another and their valour. Some say that Rāma was born with supernatural powers and some say that he acquired them after the Dikṣa. Kavi Kālidāsa mentions that the rulers belonging to dynasty of Sūrya, displayed the traits of ascetics in the advanced age. Whether they had the traits of ascetics or whether they were actually ascetics is really insignificant.

Some scholars believe that Rāma was born about 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Some believe that he was born about 11,75,000 years ago. It is quite feasible that his enchanting drama is unfolded again and again after a specified time gap and with minor changes.



The Mahābhārata, belonging to the followers of Vedic tradition, depicts the last moments in the life of Karṇa, the unsung hero of Mahābhārata. Badly wounded by Arjuna's arrow, he was wriggling in pain. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before him disguised as a brahmin and demanded alms. The generous Karṇa did not have anything that he could give to the brahmin. With a sharp stone, he began to knock down his golden teeth. Pleased with his conviction, Kṛṣṇa stopped him and appeared in his original form. He asked Karṇa to ask for a boon. Karṇa requested him to perform his funeral rites on a virgin land, unexplored by any human being. After an extensive search, Kṛṣṇa found a summit of a mountain in the mid ocean, which he thought would be an unexplored land. He reached there and prepared a funeral pyre. When he was about to lay the mortal remains of Karṇa on the fire, he heard a resonant voice recite this verse from the lofty skies. 'Hundreds of Droṇācāryas have been cremated here, three hundred Pāṇḍavas began their last journey from here. Thousands of Duryodhanas were brought here for their last rites and innumerable Karṇa's have been brought here for their eternal repose.' This proves that since the time immemorable, Mahābhārata has been unfolded on the earth many a times. In the same way, Rāmāyaṇa too may have repeated itself many times. We must remember the noblest traits of the descendants of Sūrya dynasty and try to inculcate them in us.

Jain monks and nuns hold Sītā in such a high esteem that when they abandon the sleep in the early morning, they do not even walk a hundred steps, until they remember satī Sītā. Sītā may not be present on this planet right now, but she would remain immortal in the hearts of every Indian. We must remember Rāmāyaṇa and endeavour to enrich our lives through it.

In conclusion, it can be said that, in the beginning, Rāmāyaṇa preaches us our duties towards parents, siblings, spouse, in laws, offsprings and friends, and finally leads us to the abstract and the loftiest concepts like Samyakdarśana, Deśaviratī, Sarvaviratī and finally Mokṣa. The plot of Rāmāyaṇa reveals these ideals step by step. It is said that Rāmāyaṇa is a treasure trove of detachment and dīkṣā. The missive from his friend, inspires Daśaratha's father Anaraṇya, to renounce the world. On seeing the frail and aged chamberlain, Daśaratha remembers the ephemeral nature of the world. Lakṣmana's death leads Lava, Kuśa and Rāma to ascetic life. Rāvaṇa's death leads Mandodarī, Kumbhakarṇa and Indrajit to the path of salvation. The setting sun brings about a radical change in heart of Hanumāna. These and many other Dīkṣā's proclaim the ultimate purpose of life in a clear voice.



There are four kinds of puruṣārthas i.e. efforts in life. They are Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Artha i.e. money and Kāma i.e. fulfillment of carnal desires are puruṣārthas for namesake and they generally create an havoc and compel a

soul to reap harvest of karmas birth after birth. Mokṣa is the true puruṣārtha and Dharma is a mean to achieve it. Retrospection of Rāmāyaṇa would reveal that most of the characters in it have laid emphasis on Mokṣa puruṣārtha. May the reading of Rāmāyaṇa inspire you to the purushartha called Mokṣa and finally lead you to your goal. If I have written anything against the dharmaśāstra i.e. holy scripts in this book, then Micchāmi Dukkaḍaṁ - forgive me.

I L L U S T R A T E D

Tain Rāmāyaṇa

Index



1 King Anāranya's
Mokṣa ... 1



3 Nāradaḥji's concern for
his co-religionists ... 5



2 The coronation ceremony of
infant Daśaratha ... 3



5 Sitā's birth- Bhāmaṇḍala
abduction ... 15



4 Bibhiṣaṇa's wrath ... 7



6 King Janaka's worry ... 17



5 Svayamvara of
Kaikeyī ... 8



8 King Janaka's
abduction ... 19



7 Sitā's Svayamvara ... 22



9 Śānti Snātra mahotsava
in Ayodhyā ... 24



10 Daśaratha grants
Kaikeyī a boon ... 31



11 Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and
Sitā leave for the woods ... 34

12 Kaikeyī repents-
coronation of
Bharata ... 38



13 Rāma meets
Jaṭāyu ... 45

14 Diety Goshirna serves Rāma ... 42

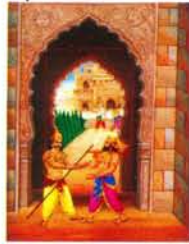


15 Courteous Rāma,
Lakṣmaṇa and Sitā in Avanti ... 41





17
Sītā abduction ... 46



Imposter at
Kishkindha ... 54

18



19
Hanumāna meets
Sītā ... 57



20
The war begins ... 66



21
Lakṣmaṇa wounded ... 67



22
Lakṣmaṇa's duel
with Rāvaṇa ... 69



23
Kūmbhakarāṇa becomes
an ascetic ... 74



Rāma enters
Laṅkā ... 75



24
Bharata and Kaikeyī
embrace ascetic life ... 80



25
Sītā at
Punḍarikapur ... 87



26
Rāma repents ... 88

27
Rāma moves through
the forest with the corpse of
Lakṣmaṇa ... 105



28

29
Hanumāna on
the path of salvation and
Lakṣmaṇa's death ... 100



30



31
Lava and Kuśa
meet Rāma ... 89

32



33
Sītā's Ordeal ... 95

34



35
Rāma attains salvation ... 107



36
The future births of
Lakṣmaṇa,
Sītā and Rāvaṇa ... 110

37

INDEX OF APPENDIXES

1) The Foundation of Rākṣasa Varṇśa	112
2) Previous births of Candragati, Bhāmaṇḍala	113
3) Previous births of Janaka, Daśaratha and Satyabhūti Muni	114
4) Previous births of Jaṭāyu.	115
5) The foundation of Vānara Varṇśa	116
6) Previous births of Meghavāhana, Indrajit and Mandodari	117
7) The relation between Bharata and the elephant Bhuvanālaṅkāra	118
8) Previous births of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Viśalyā, Bibhīṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa, Sugrīva and Sītā	120
9) Past births of Lava and Kuśa	122

* DIACRITERIA MARKS

Before reading this book. please comprehend diacriteria marks used for proper nouns etc.
English words showing the pronunciation of proper nouns etc. used with diacritical marks.

	English alphabet with diacritical mark	English words	English words with diacriteria mark	Proper nouns etc. used in this book
1.	ā	far	fār	Sumitrā
2.	ī	police	polīce	Sītā
3.	ū	rule	rūle	Kulabhūṣaṇa
4.	ṛ	rid	ṛd	ṛṣabha
5.	ṅ	ring	riṅg	Laṅkā
6.	c	touch	touc	Candragati
7.	ñ	lunch	luñch	Kañcuki
8.	ṭ	put	puṭ	Jaṭāyu
9.	ṭh	thunder	ṭhunder	Aṭṭhama
10.	ḍ	wood	woodḍ	Daṇḍakāraṇya
11.	ḍh	adhesive	aḍhesive	Vaitaḍhya
12.	ṇ	hunt	hunṭ	Anaraṇya
13.	t	Tashkend	Taśkend	Bharata
14.	ś	shame	śame	Daśaratha
15.	ṣ	shut	ṣut	Bibhīṣaṇa
16.	ṁ	damsel	daṁsel	svayaṁvara.

King Anaraṇya's Mokṣa

The first Tīrthaṅkara Lord Ṛṣabhadeva laid the very foundation of the social, cultural and religious aspects of human life. His virtuous son Bharata was a cakravartī - sovereign king. He had many illustrious sons; one amongst them was Ādityayaśa, the founder of Sūrya dynasty. Many dignified kings were born in his lineage. During the regime of twentieth tīrthaṅkara, Munisuvrata svāmī, a very considerate king, Anaraṇya, ruled the kingdom of Ayodhyā. He granted asylum to several kings and also helped his loved ones to be debt free. He fathered two sons namely, Anantarathā and Daśaratha, through his consort Pṛthvidēvī.

As a fact, it is too arduous to adhere self duties as a king. Generally, unrestrained power and authority makes a person immensely arrogant and ego-centric. Such a ruler unleashes a reign of terror on his poor subjects. A humble king without arrogance abhors sins and unjust, and values piousness and religion, the cause of infinite exultation. Rulers repulsive of their children like subjects not only undermine human values but also indent the dignity of Kṣatriya's. However, such kings can alleviate the plight of their subjects by abandoning their gratuitous arrogance. The cause of sorrow is sin and adharma-unjust act, while that of joy being virtuous acts, piousness and religion - the cause of Mokṣa. Rulers considering the power and kingdom as ephemeral and transitory, yearn asceticism by renouncing their kingdom. They are

constantly aware that kingdom is nothing but a road to hell and hence rule until appropriate situation does not rise for renunciation.

King Anaraṇya and King Sahasrāmśu of Mahiṣmati were good friends, life prospers on alliance with a good friend. The characteristic of a good friend is his sincere friendship and geniality. He does not desert his friendship even during arduous times. Friends who praise on the face but are back stabbers are fit to be forsaken like a bowl of poisoned milk. A good friend always inspires to lift oneself spiritually. Both the kings, Anaraṇya and Sahasrāmśu shared profound friendship. That was why one day both vowed to renounce together in life. Once, there was a war between King Sahasrāmśu and Rāvaṇa, the king of Rākṣasa dynasty, wherein King Sahasrāmśu was defeated. At that moment, his father Muni Śatabāhu, who had renounced the world earlier, arrived. King Sahasrāmśu accepted Dīkṣā - renouncement under his aegis. He sent the news of his becoming a saint to his friend through a messenger.



King Sahasrāmśu's messenger near King Anaraṇya

Having reached the royal court, the messenger offered obeisance to the emperor and spoke deferentially, "O Mighty King, your bosom friend and my lord emperor Sahasrārṁśu has accepted the vows of initiation, in order to put an end to all internal and external conflicts.

He desires that I convey this news to you in order to refresh your memory, so that you would

remember our mutual decision of embracing initiation together." The emperor thought "Now, that my friend has renounced the world, I too should follow his foot steps and make my existence meaningful." He immediately sent for his family members and expressed his desire to accept the dīkṣā (initiation). The young crown prince, Anantaratha, having realised the meaningless vanity of the material world, decided to follow his father on the path of salvation.



The coronation ceremony of infant Daśaratha

Emperor Anaraṇya handed over the crown to infant Daśaratha, who was barely a month old and accepted the Dīkṣā along with his elder son in the presence of Abhayasena Muni. This action of the king might make many modern readers raise their eyebrows and wonder whether the king was justified in shunning away the multiple responsibilities and becoming a monk.

They might call this escapism, but anyone who is acquainted with the theory of karma will laud the decision of the king. Everyone is born with an invisible bundle of karmas. The karmas are the result of our good and evil actions of the previous lives. These karmas decide our destiny in this life. Our good and evil deeds in this life are added to the ex-

isting karmas. The good deeds reduce the weight of this bundle and evil deeds makes it heavier. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth goes on and on. It just keeps adding to our karmas. A seeker who desires to break this bondage, embraces ascetic life and thus escapes from this vicious circle. Very few virtuous souls realize the meaninglessness of life and a fewer people endeavour to escape from this eternal slavery of karma. Therefore, one must not hesitate while accepting dīkṣā. Many infants lose their parents at a very tender age. Don't they grow up after this cruel blow of destiny ? They do grow up and live a normal life. Infant Daśaratha too grew up into a very fine youth. The most surprising thing however is, there wasn't any internal or external revolt while the child king ruled.

The action of King Anaraṇya proves that our ancient rulers were never attached to the throne. They considered administration to be their divine obligation and therefore they never hesitated when it was time to vacate the throne. The message from Muni Sahasrārṁśu inspired King Anaraṇya to give up the throne and seek the salvation with his son. He soon forgot the pleasures and luxuries of the palace and soon became indifferent towards his corporal self. He practiced rigorous fasts like Chātṭa, Aṭṭhama

and Māsakṣamaṇa (2, 3 and 30 days fast continuously) and thus reduced his karmas to ashes. His soul gradually became purer and purer. Finally, he ended all his ghātī karmas and acquired the Kevalagyāna (Omniscience). The young sage Anantaratha too followed his father's foot prints and made tremendous progress in the spiritual field.

King Daśaratha was a noble soul. As a result of his virtuous deeds, he acquired traits like unparallel valour, courage and presence of mind. There was not even a single instance of internal or external revolt against this child king. In spite of enjoying the supreme authority, King Daśaratha was compassionate towards the poor and downtrodden people. No one who came to him to seek alms ever returned empty handed. Like the eleventh Kalpavṛkṣa-a wish fulfilling tree, he spread happiness and content everywhere. He followed his duties as a ruler and a spiritual seeker diligently and maintained a perfect balance between the two. Young rulers often forget their duties in the ratrace for power. Their crooked actions and manipulations lead to the total destruction of body and soul. Such people live a pitiable life on the earth and reach the lowest and the darkest realms after their death.

2

King Daśaratha marries

On reaching puberty; King Daśaratha tied nuptial knots with three young princesses who had impeccable family backgrounds. His first consort was Aparājitā alias Kauśalyā. She was the progeny of King Sukośala, the ruler of Darbhasthalanagara and Queen Amṛtaprabhā. The second was Sumitrā, offspring of King Subandhutilaka of Kamalasaṁkula and Queen Mitrādevī, the third was Suprabhā, the daughter of the emperor of Rathanupura.

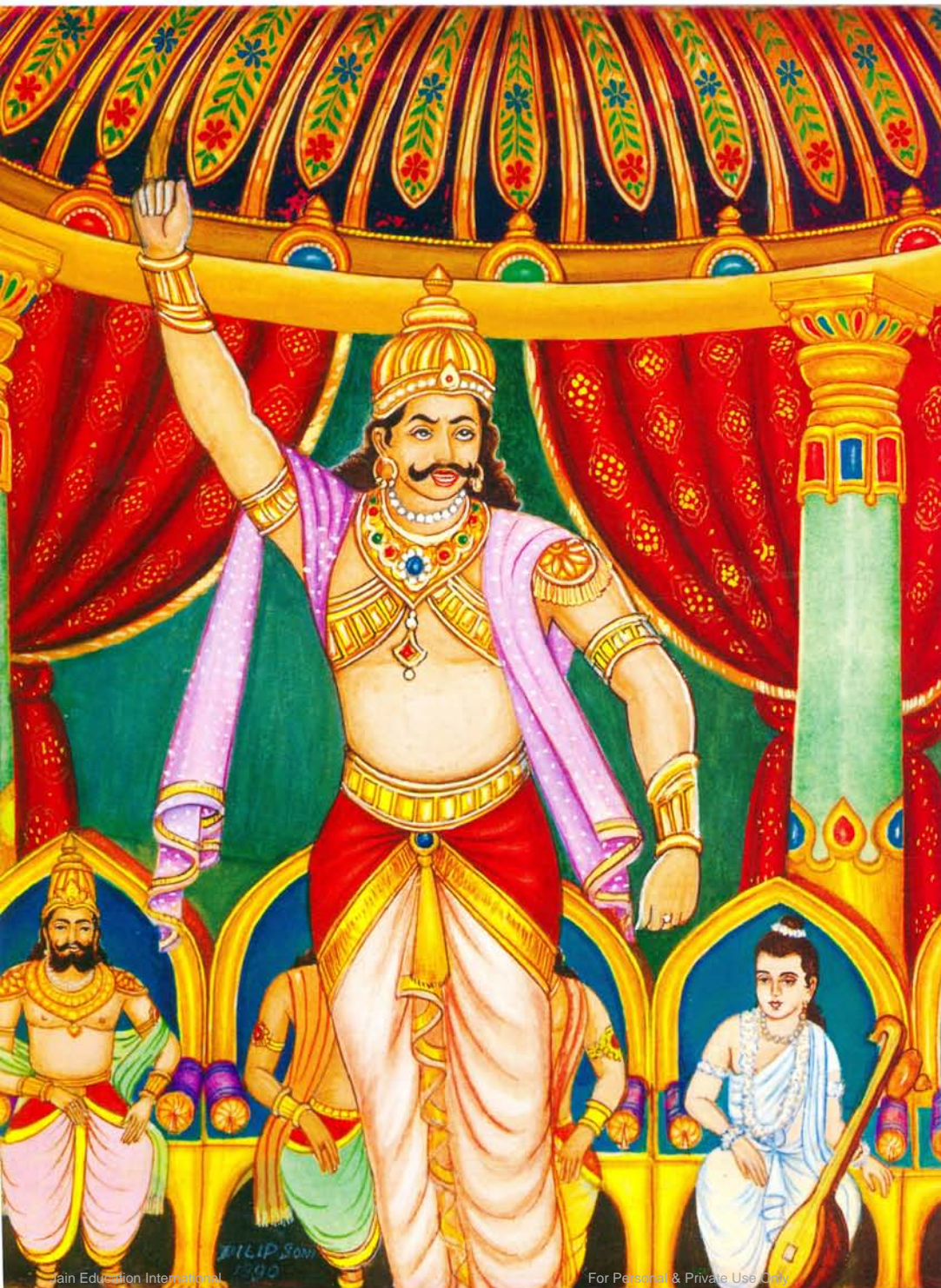
In spite of marrying three most beautiful women, King Daśaratha never ignored his duties as a king and as a soul, desirous of liberation. Our Indian sages have prescribed four essentials for a man viz. Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. The utter most essential is Mokṣa itself and Dharma is its cause. The other two Artha and Kāma are essentials of name-sake, but inviting disaster's in the real sense. Through daily worship, penance and service of ascetics, a man acquires Dharma. Through persistent hardwork and perseverance a man acquires Artha. Through enjoying the corporal pleasures in a right and ethical

manner, a man enjoys Kāma, and as a seeker, he begins his journey towards Mokṣa, the final stage that brings the rotating wheel of life and death to a standstill. The young, handsome and energetic Daśaratha never neglected his duties and obligations while enjoying his marital life. The contemporary man is a slave of the sensual pleasures. He conveniently forgets the duties and obligations connected with matrimony and pursues the sensual pleasures relentlessly. Thus, he not only forgets the Dharma but also becomes its bitter foe. Samyakdr̥ṣṭi persons maintain a proper equilibrium in any situation and accept the life as it comes. He is aware that certain deeds in his previous life make him enjoy the sensual pleasures, but he makes sure that this does not in anyway harm the first two of his duties i.e. dharma and mokṣa. Those who forget dharma and mokṣa, and only run away after the ephemeral pleasures, are universally hated while they are alive and reach the lowest depths of the hell after they die. The Samyakdr̥ṣṭi souls may not altogether sacrifice

the corporal pleasures but definately enjoy them within limits. Therefore, after death they move onto upper realms and keep on progressing till they achieve complete liberation.

❧ Rāvaṇa, the demonic king was born into the Rākṣasa race. He was also called Prativāsudeva. His courtiers excelled in different branches of knowledge. One of his courtiers could foresee the future. Once, Rāvaṇa called him out of curiosity and said, "One day or the other all beings in this universe are bound to die. The dieties who reside in the celestial abodes are called immortals - Amara, but they too have a

prescribed life span. They too are conquered by the death when this span is over. All moving and non-moving beings are bound to diminish. It is imperative that everyone has to die one day. Though death is a non-voluntary action, rebirth is completely a voluntary action. Death is inevitable but rebirth is not inevitable. A person through his deeds can escape from the vicious circle of life and death and seek salvation. In spite of my boundless power, I too cannot evade the death. Therefore, I would like to know how would I die." The wise seer answered, "The future generation of King Daśaratha and King Janaka will be the cause of your death."



Bibhīṣaṇa's pledge in the king's court

When Rāvaṇa's sibling Bibhīṣaṇa heard this, his wrath knew no bounds. Like an erupting volcano, he said, "O wise seer, your utterances are usually the very words of destiny; but this time I will prove you wrong; for I am going to assassinate both Daśaratha and Janaka before their offsprings are born. The prenatal death of both rulers would ensure that there will not be a future generation left who would be the cause of my worthy brother's death. O great seer, your oracles are always true, but this time I, the mighty Bibhīṣaṇa, will change the destiny." Rāvaṇa feared death like any other mortal. He therefore permitted Bibhīṣaṇa to carry out his plan. Sage Nāradaḥ, the wandering mendicant, was a witness to this drama in the court of Rāvaṇa. He, at once left to inform king Daśaratha about what had transpired in the court of the rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa.

Nāradaĳis concern for his co-religionists

Nāradaĳi, an ardent follower of Jainism, loved all his co-religionists more than himself. Therefore, he straightaway reached Ayodhyā. On seeing him, the king rose in respect and having seated him with honour, Daśaratha enquired with due reverence, “O great sage, where have you come from ? what is the purpose of your visit ? you look worried. Kindly tell me everything.” The divine mendicant replied, “O mighty king, I have been to the Puṇḍarīkiṇī nagarī that surpasses the celestial world in granduer, to witness the Dikṣā ceremony of Śrī Simarṇdharasvāmī. From there, I reached the topmost summits of the mountain Meru and offered my humble salutations to the great Tīrthaṅkaras. Then I reached Laṅkā and after paying obeisance to Lord Śrī Śāntinātha, I reached the court of the rāksasa king, Rāvaṇa. A seer in his court prophesied that your son, and King Janaka’s daughter will be the cause of Rāvaṇa’s death. On hearing this, Bibhiṣaṇa rose, and shivering with anger, took a pledge that he would not rest until he killed both you and Janaka. I am here to inform you about this. Kindly stay alert, take care of yourself; and now allow me to depart, so that I can reach Mithilā and make emperor Janaka alert.” With these words, he immediately left for Mithilā and gave Janaka the hor-

rifying news.

The divine sage Nārada held dharma and a pious man in high esteem. His attachment to the noble and pious people was so intense that he sacrificed his own interests in order to help a fellowmen. “Service to co-fellows” was his motto and topmost priority. On the other hand, it can be argued that the virtue of both Daśaratha and Janaka was so great, that it brought sage Nārada to the court of Rāvaṇa; and they learnt about the malicious intentions of Bibhiṣaṇa in time. This is how the divine machinery works. On one hand, those who excel in acquiring the worst of negative virtues design vicious plans that do not serve any purpose, except adding to the burden of their karmas. The lofty virtuous souls on the other hand, silently devastate these plans. The sage, Nārada, could have put the responsibility of passing over the message to Janaka on the shoulders of King Daśaratha, but he considered service to his brothers in faith as true worship, and therefore he left at once for Mithilā and personally handed over the news to King Janaka.

King Daśaratha and Janaka’s retirement to the forest.



King Daśaratha summoned his council of ministers to discuss the grave predicament. After weighing the pros and cons of the situation, they reached a conclusion. They advised that it was imperative that both King Daśaratha and Janaka should handover the burden of administration to the learned council of ministers, and leave their empire at once. They should retire to some forest, disguised as ascetics and return when the circumstances were favourable. The demonic clan excelled not only in warfare but also in magic and sorcery; it would be perilous for both the kings to stay in the palace. Advised thus, both the kings donned the saffron robes of ascetic order and left for the forest. The news of their departure was kept a secret. Then, the ministers ordered the sculptors to prepare effigies of both the kings. The effigies that were prepared painstakingly looked so authentic that no one would know that they were unreal. Aspects like the colour and texture of hair, the toning and colour of the skin, the height, and other proportions, the regal attire and finery were studied in detail by the artists before preparing the dummies. Both the effigies were placed on the royal couches. Then the ministers heaved a breath of relief.

As long as the virtue of soul is intact, the greatest troubles cannot ruffle him. Daśaratha was still a baby when he was coronated, but his virtue was so great that no one dared to attack him, but when his virtue was eclipsed by sins, the same Daśaratha and Janaka were compelled to flee from their luxurious abodes and live the austere life of ascetics. This is the power of our merits and demerits ! Our merits lead us to the path of elation and our demerits lead us to the road of destruction.

When our sins become mightier than virtues, we are afflicted with disasters, emotional upheaval and conflicts, both external and internal. King Subhūma was a cakravartī, sixteen thousand celestial beings bowed down to him in servitude and yet his sins compelled him to die by drowning. King Muñja was compelled to discard his regalia and beg for alms, by his sins. Now it was a time for both Daśaratha and Janaka to reap the harvest of their sins. They wandered from jungle to jungle. The news of their departure was kept a closely guarded secret by the council of the learned ministers. No one, not even the queen's knew this reality.

Two Kings- both noble, both having impeccable background and sound knowledge, left their royal power and embraced a simple life of mendicants. If it is considered rightful to abandon ones kingdom to elude one death then why isn't it fair for the enlightened souls to forsake the whole world, viewing the infinite cycle of birth and death. They might enjoy the wealth, live a comfortable life and yet they do not forget the death even for a moment. Thus, gaining an opportunity they renounce the world and conquer death.



Beheading of Daśaratha's effigy by Bibhīṣaṇa

Alert Bibhīṣaṇa, lurking near the palace of Daśaratha; one night stealthily entered the royal sleeping chamber and noticed the reposing effigy. He pulled out his scimitar and with a mighty stroke beheaded the effigy. He was so overpowered by the love for Rāvaṇa that somehow he gathered the courage to enter the sleeping chamber silently, but after striking the effigy, he was overwhelmed by terror. He did not wait there even for a moment and check whether he had actually beheaded the king or the effigy. The effigy was hollow within and filled with the liquid lac. When Bibhīṣaṇa beheaded the effigy, his scimitar dripped in the liquid lac that resembled blood. He thought his task was accomplished, and was overjoyed. He decided to leave for Laṅkā at once. The ministers rushed to the sleeping chamber followed by Kauśalyā and other queens. They wept and rebuked the cruel destiny. Soon the news of the assassination of king spread like forest fire. The subjects wept loudly. The commanders and vassals hurried to the palace. The funeral rites were performed and the effigy was consigned to the fire. The ministers were overjoyed, yet maintained their mournful looks and made sure that no one learnt the secret. Bibhīṣaṇa thought that the death of Daśaratha brought an end to his dynasty; no matter what happened, there would not be a child birth in the Surya dynasty. Janaka's daughter alone cannot cause trouble to Rāvaṇa. In such contingencies, it would be futile to sneak into the palace of Mithilā and risk the life. He therefore decided to return to Laṅkā.

Though both, King Daśaratha and Janaka had donned the robes of ascetic and wandered in jungle, they cannot be called true sages. They had donned the



saffron robes to elude the death, they were not actually fed up with the palace and its comforts. They were longing to return to their abodes to regain their crowns and scepters. They were therefore not ascetics in the truest sense of the term. An ailing person is often advised to consume only plain water of green grams, but this does not mean that he is fasting or penancing. Likewise, a wealthy man who

walks five kilometers either to save money or keep himself fit, cannot be called a yogi, for his intension is not to undergo 'Penance' that induces pain to the body.

Though apparently, both Daśaratha and Janaka looked like yogis, heart in heart they longed for power and grandeur.

5

Svayaṁvara of Kaikeyī

Moving through the forests, King Daśaratha and Janaka reached Uttarapatha. There, they learnt that the svayaṁvara of Princess Kaikeyī was being organised by her parents King Śubhamati and Queen Pṛthvīśrī of Kautukamaṅgala nagara. The young princess, Kaikeyī, was not only ravishingly beautiful but also an expert and exponent in fine arts.

Svayaṁvara of Kaikeyī

"Svayaṁvara" was a very common practice amongst the blue blooded nobles in ancient India. The eligible bachelors from the surrounding states were invited for the svayaṁvara; the bride to be would then select the man of her liking and offer the garland to him. Sometimes, the invited princes were asked to perform a difficult feat; and the winner would marry the princess. A huge pandal was erected especially for Princess Kaikeyī's svayaṁvara. Reputed rulers like the emperor Harivāhana and many other handsome and eligible youth were invited for the svayaṁvara. Since, no one identified King Daśaratha and Janaka because of their disguise, they were made to sit in the last row.

Bedecked in the finest jewellery and bridal brocade, Princess Kaikeyī entered the pandal. She carried a garland in her dainty hands and was accompanied by a maid. Then began the quest for the prospective bridegroom.



Walking demurely, Kaikeyī would stand in front of every seat. The maid would then introduce the prince seated there, in most ornate language. Kaikeyī would then cast a side glance at the prospective bridegroom. Enticed and enamoured by her beauty and manners, the prince would think, "Am I going to be the luckiest man today ? Will this young princess accept me as her future life partner and add a new meaning to my life ? But I am not the only one here ! there are many others ... and some are even much better than what I am ! everyone is desirous of marrying her but whom would she select ? Am I the lucky one destined to be her husband or is there someone else ?" When Kaikeyī awaited near a prince, his heart would flutter and sway in glee; but when she ignored

him and walked ahead, his heart would be filled with disdain and gloom. Thus, immersing innumerable hearts in the ocean of gloom, Kaikeyī reached the last row where Daśaratha was seated. When she glanced at the disguised king, Cupid struck her heart. She was enamoured by his broad forehead, clear eyes that resembled the petals of a lotuslily. Muscular and proportionate body that was the epitome of manliness. Without thinking for a moment, the young princess offered the garland to the young ascetic.

Emperor Harivāhana and many other nobles were enraged at the rash action of the young princess. Thousands of young, handsome, strong and noble princes were gathered there; yet the princess rejected all of them and selected an ordinary ascetic of dubious origin as her life partner. They thought that it was a preplanned insult. Really speaking, their thinking was wrong, for, a princess has a freedom of choosing any man of her own liking and her decision is final. No questions are asked to her and no coercion is made, but when a soul is blinded by fury, it forgets everything and indulges into the meanest actions.





Charioteer Kaikeyi

The pandal now turned into a battlefield. Emperor Harivāhana and thousands of other princes who were nurturing a dream of marrying Kaikeyi were wrath, when they saw their dreams shattering. They decided to bury their differences and attack the strange ascetic in unison. Kaikeyi volunteered to be Daśaratha's charioteer. Fearless Daśaratha mounted the chariot and began to shower arrows at his enemies.

It is said that a brave man, though all by himself, is like the sun, who inspite of being alone, fills the whole world with bright light. All alone the sun conquers innumerable stars and planets. Daśaratha's chariot moved faster than wind. The brave adversaries of Daśaratha began to fall one after another. Like Śakrendra—the emperor of celestial beings fighting the demonic forces, or like Mrgendra, the emperor of jungle (lion) striking terror among the herds of deer, Daśaratha vanquished the foes. Finally, those who had decided to teach the strange ascetic a lesson, decided to prostrate themselves at his feet. The noble Daśaratha welcomed them with open arms.

Boon to Kaikeyī

The festivities began. In an elaborated marriage ceremony, King Śubhamati handed over his daughter to King Daśaratha. Daśaratha told his demure bride, “Devī, you have made this victory possible ! Kindly ask me for any boon. I am obliged to fulfill it.” Kaikeyī replied. “I would not demand any boon now. However, keep it as a reserve.. I shall ask you to fulfill it, sometime in the future.”

Daśaratha, with his valour, defeated innumerable nobles who were gathered for the svayaṁvara. They now became his vassals. With his new army, Daśaratha moved towards Rājagṛhī. He then vanquished the emperor of Magadha and established his stay over Rājagṛhī. Then he dispatched his envoy at Ayodhyā and asked his three queens to join him at Rājagṛhī. When the queens received this news, they were astonished, and when they got over the initial shock, their hearts rejoiced. They rushed towards Rājagṛhī to meet their beloved husband. Though Daśaratha was too eager to return to Ayodhyā, he decided to postpone his return journey, for, the shadow of Rāvaṇa was still hovering over Ayodhyā.





Four dreams of Kauśalyā

Seven dreams of Sumitrā



Four dreams of Kauśalyā and Seven dreams of Sumitrā

While Daśaratha and his queens were living joyfully at Rājagṛhī, a noble soul from the fifth celestial world descended the womb of Queen Kauśalyā. In the last hours of night, she saw an elephant, a lion, a moon and a sun, in a dream. When she informed Daśaratha about the dream, he was overjoyed. He told Kauśalyā, "Devī ! a women who sees these four auspicious signs delivers Baladeva, the best amongst men. Your virtues in the past reincarnations have made this thing possible." Kauśalyā too was overjoyed. Then onwards, she remained very alert for the wellbeing of her baby.

After nine months she delivered a son with all the favourable marks, resembling a white lotus in complexion. The king rejoiced exceedingly at the sight of his first son, like the ocean, at the sight of the full moon. The baby was named Padma which means a lotus. Later on he became famous as the most illustrious Rāma. The overjoyed Daśaratha generously gave alms to the poor and received their blessings.

Probably, joy is the only thing in the world which increases thousand times when it is shared. The citizens of Rājagṛhī broke into spontaneous revelry. They began to dance, sing and play melodies. They sprinkled water mixed with saffron, musk and sandalwood paste on each other. They distributed sweets. Every home was decorated so beautifully that soon Rājagṛhī surpassed the divine cities Alkāpurī and Amrāvati in grandeur. The inhabitants of these cities felt pangs of jealousy, but they too overcame it and began festive in their own domains. Infant Rāma had the soothing fair complexion like a moon.

After sometime, the soul of a affluent diety left his abode and descended the womb of Sumitrā. She saw an elephant a lion, sun, moon, fire, Lakṣmī and ocean in a dream. When she asked the interpretation of this dream to her husband, Emperor Daśaratha, he was elated. He said, "blessed indeed is your womb, for, you are about to conceive a son, who would be the master of three great lands. He would be a vāsudeva." When Sumitrā heard this, she was overjoyed.

In the due course, she too delivered a baby boy having a bluish complexion. He was named Nārāyaṇa, but later he became famous as Lakṣmaṇa.

This time there was greater celebration and revelry. King Daśaratha organised Snātra-mahotsava, and eight types of pūjās in the abodes of Lord Arihanta. The prisoners were released from jails.

The children began to grow up like a growing moon. Initially, the children slept most of the time but as they grew up, they won every heart with their innocence and impish pranks. Their flawless complexion, radiant faces, curly hair had a magnetic appeal. The children were always found playing with one vassal or the other. Blessed indeed were the parents and everyone else who played with these children, for they weren't ordinary children. They were the souls who were to walk on the path of emancipation.

Gradually, the children reached teenage. They excelled in different branches of education and mastered various arts. The lads, through the virtue accumulated in their former births, mastered the various arts and sciences. The tutors were just a medium for imparting the knowledge. When they crossed their teens, they became so vigorous that with one mighty blow could turn a mountain into a pile of dust. Sometimes purely out of mischief, they would pluck the strings of their bows, which produced such a resonant sound that the hearts of the people struck with terror. King Daśaratha was so much influenced by their muscle power and archery that he would very often think, "My young sons are capable of defeating both dieties and demons. Rāvaṇa too will be vanquished if he dares to attack me. Its now time to return to Ayodhyā." He finally returned to his very own Ayodhyā. The joy of his subjects knew no bounds; when they saw their beloved king and his family. They were especially happy when they saw young Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. This is

the strange cosmic game, perpetually going on in the world. It is called the game of karmas. The inauspicious karmas bring in sorrow and the auspicious karmas bring in joy. The karmas forced Daśaratha to wander as a mendicant and reinstated him on the throne of Ayodhyā.

At Ayodhyā, Kaikeyī witnessed fortunate symbols in a dream before delivering a son. The son was named Bharata. Queen Suprabhā, too delivered a healthy baby. It was prophesied that this babyboy would annihilate legions of enemies. He therefore was named Śatrughna.

6

Sītā's Birth - Bhāmaṇḍala's abduction



Sītā's Birth and abduction of Bhāmaṇḍala

Emperor Janaka too returned to his own kingdom and re-established his sway. As the days passed, the empress Videhā conceived twins. While the twins were still in the womb, Piṅgala – a diety residing in the first celestial world, learnt through clairvoyance-avadhi-gyāna that one amongst the unborn progeny of Videhā was his bitter foe in the past life. The diety thought, 'My foe is about to be born in a regal family. He will enjoy all the comforts and pomp that the noble birth will bestow upon him. I must abduct him when he is born and kill him.' With this cruel intension, he invisibly came to Mithilā and abducted Videhā's newly born son.

He then flew towards the mountain Vaitāḍhya. He had decided that once he scaled the greatest heights of the mountain, he would hit the tender infant on some rock and thus take revenge; but the infant was not destined to die, probably because of his own virtue which he had acquired in his former lives. Probably, the virtue acquired by the diety in his former births rekindled his conscience.

The feeling of hatred residing in the innermost being of the diety somehow subsided when he reached the summit of the great mountain Vaitāḍhya. He began to think, "Through my previous good deeds, I have become a diety. But now, committing infanticide, why should I invite miseries in future births." He then

dressed the infant in the finest clothes and jewellery and left him in a garden called Nandana, situated in the southern ranges of the mountain Vaitāḍhya and soared towards his own celestial abode.

Sitting on an ornate chair in the terrace of the royal palace, Emperor Candragati was enjoying the moonlit night and its bewitching beauty. Suddenly, he saw a brilliant light in the southern ranges of the great Vaitāḍhya mountain. For a moment, he thought that the moon himself had descended on the earth to enjoy a few moments of solitude. He left his palace at once. On reaching the southernmost summit, he noticed a infant swaddled in the celestial finery. The finest jewels on his tiny body were emitting the brilliant light. As destiny would have it; Candragati was the father of that divine infant in his former life[❧]. His heart was filled with love when he witnessed the lovely child. He lifted the infant and returning to the palace placed it on the couch of Queen Puṣpavati.

Queen Puṣpavati had no children and hence considered herself a very unfortunate woman. King Candragati awoke her up and said, "Behold, You have delivered such a handsome young prince." The queen replied, "Through the virtue of my former lives have made me your consort, I have brought you enormous misfortune. I am a barren woman. How can an accursed woman like me ever deliver a handsome baby?"

The king narrated his strange experience to the queen and finally told her, "You have neither conceived this baby nor did you carry him in your womb for nine months. You have not suffered the pains of delivery. Yet you have become a mother. Congratulations to you, for you have given a heir to the throne." Early morning, the news of the royal nativity was announced.

The subjects reacted with a spontaneous revelry. For days, they celebrated the joyful occasion. Diety Piṅgala had gifted the finest earrings studded with the brightest gems to the new born. Their lusture added to the brilliance of the infant's face; therefore he was named Bhāmaṇḍala. As a result of his ill-actions in the former lives, the infant was separated from his mother immediately after birth, but as a result of the virtues he acquired in his former lives, he spent his childhood in the palace of King Candragati, that offered him all the comforts in the world. This indeed is the power of Karma – the result of the good and evil actions in previous lives.

While the subject of King Candragati revealed with joy, clouds of despair and woes had

dampened the hearts of the people at Mithila. Though the emperess had delivered twins; she couldn't even see her new born son. Overcame with grief; she lamented, "God, surely some foe of mine has abducted my baby. Did I, in my former life, deprive some innocent mother of her infant, that I am suffering now? Did I, in my former life, burn some innocent life in the fire of separation? Am I reaping the harvest my evil actions now? God! I was blind and you blessed me with eyes, and once again you have deprived me of my sight. My new born baby is like a tender lotuslily. Where could he be? Why is my child suffering on account of my evil deeds?"

The emperor Janaka offered solace to the wounded heart of his consort with words of endearment. He at once dispatched his trusted soldiers in every direction in quest of his son; but after a prolonged search, they all returned, their hearts laden with grief and despair.

Finally, the royal couple accepted the fact that, it was predestined that they would suffer the separation of their son; because of their own actions in the past lives. They named the baby girl Sītā. Gradually, the royal couple forgot the pangs of separation, for joys and woes both are transitory in nature. They come and go. A wise person remains unaffected by both and strives for emancipation – for, only emancipation is the source of eternal and endless joy.



King Janaka's Worry

As the days passed, Sītā grew up like the growing moon. She was not only endowed with divine beauty, but also with great intelligence and humane nature. She had the lovable restlessness of the holy Gangās, longing for union with her beloved Mahāsāgara. Her eyes resembled the sporting fishes in a river. Sītā was endowed with the regal persona of the goddess Lakṣmī and the boundless intellect of the goddess Sarasvatī. Sītā, with her impish pranks, filled the hearts of her parents with enormous joy and with her compassionate nature and virtues, offered a solace to their wounded hearts. Her intellect assured them that she would handle any situation cleverly and overcome the greatest of the predicaments. Yet, at times their hearts were full of anxiety, for, they did not know what the future had in offing for their daughter. Like any other parents they worried, where would they find a suitable match for their lovely princess?.

Once, the land of the noble emperor Janaka was attacked by the semibarbarian king Antaraṃgatama and his allies. Like deluge, he marched ahead, razing the cities and villages, for-

ests and fields, palaces of elite and the shanties of the poor folks. In spite of his enormous army, Janaka could not control the aggressive barbarians. The barbarians demolished innumerable Jain temples and destroyed the centres of penance. This tormented the heart of the noble king Janaka. It is said that, apart from friends and wellwishers, even the shadow of a man forsakes him in the hour of peril. King Janaka too was undergoing the same experience when he suddenly remembered emperor Daśaratha, his true friend and wellwisher. He immediately dispatched a messenger to Ayodhyā to beseech help in the hour of emergency.

On reaching the court of Daśaratha, the envoy offered his obeisance. The emperor welcomed him warm heartedly, offered him a seat and asked him the purpose of his arrival. The envoy replied, "O Noble King,. Though my lord Janaka has thousands of kins, friends and wellwishers, they all have deserted him in the hour of peril. You are the only friend capable of helping him. During the sojourn in the forest, a strong bond of friendship has been developed between you two. Together you have shared the moments of joys and woes. My lord Janaka is



Envoy of King Janaka in the court of Daśaratha

being tormented by the boundless army of the barbarians, who are plundering the temples of Jineśvara ! O Noble King, You are the worthy descendent of the first Tirthaṅkara Lord Ṛṣabhadeva. A man generally remembers his family deity and friends in the hour of emergency. In you, my master has found a true friend. I therefore beseech you to haste and help him."

He further said, "Sir, you and my master are inseparable as the body and soul, one meaningless without the another. The semibarbarians that have attacked us are the inhabitants of the land, which is situated between the southern ranges of mount Vaitādhya and the northern ranges of the mount Kailāśa. This stripe of land is known as Mayurasāla and it is ruled by the cruel barbarian Antaraṅgama, who hates the regime of Jineśvara. He is joined by many like-minded kings and together they have attacked the Mithilānagarī, like a swarn of locusts. They have vandalised the Jain temples and the sacred places. My master's plight at this moment is like that of the great elephant Gajendra, whose foot has been grabbed by a crocodile."

Though Daśaratha was a kind and a gentle soul, the wrath that lay dormant within him was stirred by the words of the envoy. He immediately summoned his army officers. Rāma, with folded hands, address thus, "My worthy father, you are indeed a true friend, who never hesitates for a moment while helping a friend in the hour of peril. I urge you to grant me and my brothers a permission to teach the barbarians a les-

son. You might probably think that we are too young to tackle the foe, but Sire ! a lion cub, inspite of his tender age, can easily kill a mighty bull.... A tiny cinder of charcoal, in a moment, can turn a mighty forest into ashes, and Sire, we, the noble descendants of Surya, are gifted with two noble traits essential for warrior, valour and kindness, right from our birth. Therefore, do not hesitate in sending us to the battlefield. We shall slay all the barbarians and return victorious."

The words of the noble Rāma shows how young men in ancient India revered their parents. They risked their own lives and endeavoured to save their parents. Today we are living in the age of consumption. No matter what we do, our desires and wants are never satiated. We want to eat nothing but the best, we crave to wear nothing but the best, we aspire for nothing but the best of home. We strive for the best of comforts and luxuries, and while today's youth is in a frantic race to improve his standard of living, the aging and ailing parents still shoulder the yoke of domestic responsibilities.

Having convinced Daśaratha about his own valour, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa left for Mithilā along with their army. Mithilā was seized by the barbarians. Emperor Janaka was under tremendous stress. When



the barbarians noticed the army led by young Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, they attacked it with vengeance. They assumed that they would defeat the young boys within no time and cause a panic among the soldiers.

Retreat of the barbarians

Rāma pulled the string of his bow, and when the enemy heard its reverbrating sound, their hearts were filled with awe and fear. Rāma now began to shower arrows on the enemy. The wounded and bleeding barbarians began to beat a hasty retreat. So far, the morale of Janaka's army was very low and they resembled timid rabbits or deers, but, when they witnessed the valour of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, they too attacked the enemy like lions. The barbarians knew that if they slayed young princes, they could still win the war. Therefore, they attacked Rāma in union, but Rāma retaliated so strongly that the scene on the battlefield was changed. The woes turned into joy. When Janaka heard the cries of victory, he could not believe his own ears. The joy of Mithilā knew no bounds. Suddenly, the city wore a new festive look. People burst into spontaneous celebration of the victory.

Impressed with the valour of Rāma, Janaka announced that his young princess Sitā would be married to Rāma. In Rāma, King Janaka found both, a protector of Jain Shrines and an ideal son-in law. Incidentally, we must remember that Rāma had gone to Mithilā not to marry but to protect the shrines. His devotion to his father made him shoulder such a great task. Rāma was a noble soul. As such, he couldn't bear the aggressions and vandalization of the places of worship. He fought to protect and uphold the true dharma. The spirit of valour that Rāma exhibited at Mithilā was so noble and selfless that Emperor Janaka found an ideal match for his daughter in Rāma.

King Janaka's kidnaping

The learned Indian sages and seers always believe that the transitory world is an illusion. It is full of sorrows and worries. A soul, when it assumes a garb known as corporal body, mainly worries about his own existence, life, death, about his self and about others. He worries about his own safety and safety of his beloved people. Only the ascetics and mendicants who renounce the material world are the most carefree people.

The world, with its illusive nature, tempts and entices even the most learned. Emperor Janaka was an enlightened soul, yet he was worried for the safety of his kingdom and people and the wellbeing of his daughter Sitā. His announcement of Sitā's engagement brought a new set of troubles.

The news of the engagement suddenly brought Sitā in limelight. Everywhere, discussions about her radiating beauty, intelligence and good nature began. When the divine sage Nārada heard them, he too was curious to see Sitā. The sage Nārada is known for his celibacy. His being, his speech and heart bear ample testimony of his virtues and therefore, he is equally honoured at the royal court as well as in the harems. Nārada wanted to have a look at Sitā, purely out of curiosity. He therefore walked straight into her chamber.

Sitā so far had only heard about the divine sage, therefore, she was terrified when she saw him in person. His thin body, heavy belly, yellow hair and a long tuft on his head, his scant clothing and dreamy eyes scared Sitā to such an extent that she began to shiver and screamed, "O Mother, Please hurry up and save me ! There is a stranger in my chamber." The royal bodyguards, servants, maids, gate-keepers and soldiers ran when they heard her screams. Together, they pounced upon the divine sage. One grabbed his throat and another pulled his tuft. Some began to rain blows on him, some kicked him hard. The sage Nārada somehow managed to escape from their clutches and flew towards the summit of mount Vaitaḍhya. On reaching there, he sighed with relief and began to think of what had transpired. He thought, 'Like a lonely cow surrounded by hungry lions, I was assaulted by the savage servants of Janaka. They attacked me without even ascertaining my identity. Sitā is the rootcause of all my troubles and I must take a revenge.'

He further thought, 'I shall draw a beautiful picture of Sitā on a silken scroll and show it to prince Bhāmaṇḍala, the worthy son of King Candragati, who rules southern ranges of this mountain. On seeing

the ravishing beauty of Sītā, his heart will surely fill with a desire to marry her. He will anyhow abduct her. In that case, she will not marry Rāma as berotthed and thus, my bruised pride will get some solace'.

This is called the irony of karma. The divine sage Nārada is lofty soul devoid of any attachment. He knows that the world is an illusion and yet when he was humiliated, his wrath knew no bounds. He was all set to get even with Sītā. Not only that, but he chalked out a diabolical plan to take revenge. His actions in our sacred texts are called "Mohaniya Karmas". When these karmas torment a noble soul, he stoops down to the lowest depths and invites curses on himself and brings misery to others. Sītā, like any other Āryan women in those days, was modest and timid. When she saw an absolute stranger in her chamber, her reaction was natural. She never wanted to humiliate the divine sage Nārada.

Nārada drew a lovely picture of Sītā on a silken scroll and presented it to the young prince Bhāmaṇḍala. When the prince saw the picture, he was immediately afflicted by the arrows of Cupid. He lost his composure, appetite and sleep. He would not sleep for a moment. He would not converse with anyone, nor was he bothered about his appearance and health. The arrows of Cupid are made up of flowers but they harm a man's conscience, constraint and culture. People tormented by love are ruled by impulses and indulge into rash and irrational actions. They sow in haste and reap the harvest in leisure. When the king Candragati saw the plight of his son, he was moved and said, "O Bhāmaṇḍala, my worthy son, what has caused your present state? Is it some secret sorrow or else you suffering from some kind of a malady? Has anyone disobeyed you or given you some trouble? Tell me, I shall immediately punish the culprit." Bhāmaṇḍala did not utter a word, his head was drooped and countenance pale!

Bhāmaṇḍala's silence introduces us to yet another face of our multidimensional culture. Discussions of love in the presence of elders is not encouraged in this land of Āryas. This regard for the elders and gurus is called 'Kulamaryādā'.

The modern culture and its unlimited personal freedom has infact made us savages and slaves of passion. This has brought about a social, moral and spiritual downfall in every walk of life. Bhāmaṇḍala was indeed afflicted by love, but the love did not make him forget his limits as a son. He therefore remained silent. Later on, King Candragati consulted the friends of the young prince and learned the entire account of the picture.

King Candragati immediately sent for the sage Nārada. He received the sage with due honour and after having paid obeisance, gently enquired in the following words, "O divine Nārada - revered

alike by the residents of three worlds, you showed a painting of a ravishing damsel endowed with beauty and brains to my son Bhāmaṇḍala. He has taken a fancy for her and desires to marry her. Could you tell us who the beautiful girl is? Which noble family is she from? I beseech you to enlighten me, so that I can go and meet her parents.' The sage replied, "Oh noble king Candragati, the ravishing beauty, you are talking about, can surpass the celestial goddesses and nymphs in beauty. No offspring of a man can excel Sītā in beauty. Infact, she looks thousand times more beautiful than the picture. For, though I excel in the art of painting, I could not captivate all her beauty in this picture. Your son has fallen in love with Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, whose forefathers ruled Mithilā. I think your son deserves her. May I advise you to hurry and meet King Janaka without any delay?"

King Candragati rushed to the chamber of his son and promised, "The beautiful girl, who has coveted your heart, is Sītā, the princess of Mithilā. I assure you that she alone would be your wife."

Then Candragati called Capalagati, who excelled in magic. He belonged to the family of Vidyādhara. The king ordered Capalagati to reach Mithilā and abduct its king. On reaching Mithilā, Capalagati vidyādhara assumed the form of a fair horse endowed with auspicious marks. With his beauty, he succeeded in enticing King Janaka. A desire to add this extraordinary horse to his stable, smote Janaka to such an extent that he forgot his noble upbringing and the teachings of his parents and teachers. King Janaka was a learned person and yet his covetousness brought him sorrow. Just as the fish and birds, who get entangled in the nets because of their greed for food. Sometimes they lose their life and sometimes they lose their independence. Overpowered by his desire, King Janaka stealthily followed the horse and mounted it. At once the horse galloped and reached the sky. He straightaway flew to Rathanupura-nagara, the kingdom of Candragati. The royal consort, the young princess and the citizens of Mithilā began to lament when they learnt this news.



King Candragati received Janaka with warmth. He embraced him and offered him a seat and said, "O Noble king! the best amongst the Kṣatriyas!, you are indeed fortunate to have a daughter, who is the epitome of beauty, modesty and intelligence. I have

King Candragati being kidnaped



learnt that you have already began a quest for an ideal match for your only daughter. My handsome son Bhāmaṇḍala has youth, valour and all other excellent traits. I think their betrothal would intensify our friendship. Therefore, I request you to think over my proposal and accept it."

Janaka replied "Your proposal indeed would bring a tide of joy in any heart. I find no fault with your son, but I have seen the valour of Rāma, the descendant of the first Tirthaṅkara in the battlefield. Had it not been for his timely aid, I would have been slain long time back. I have promised Rāma that my daughter would marry him. A woman belonging to noble Āryan family is engaged and married only once. In this contingency, I think Sītā's betrothal to your son is a remote possibility."

The King replied, "O Janaka, we have a bond of mutual friendship and love between us. I wanted to add a new dimension to our friendship. I could have abducted Sītā easily, if my son had so desired, but I am a man of ethics and understand your dilemma. I have heard of Rāma and his unmatched valour and now, I wish that Rāma defeats us before marrying Sītā. The celestial deities, who from their lofty abodes rule the earth, have gifted me with two bows. Their names are Vajrāvarta and Arjavāvarta respectively. They both are gaured by dieties. I offer both of these bows to you. If Rāma manages to lift and string them, give away Sītā to him in marriage, and if he fails, then Sītā will marry my son Bhāmaṇḍala. He thus, somehow succeeded in making Janaka accept his proposal. As Janaka had no choice, he agreed. Then Candragati made arrangements for Janaka to return to Mithilā. He followed Janaka alongwith his army and resided on the outskirts of Mithilā.

On reaching Mithilā, king Janaka straightaway headed to the harem and revealed everything that had transpired between him and King Candragati. Queen Videhā sobbed, "Alas! the merciless destiny is giving me mighty blows one after another. Years ago my newborn infant was separated from me ! and now the illfate is about to befall on my beloved daughter. Oh worthy King, even a poorest man amongst your subjects has freedom to marry his daughter to a man of his choice and look at us ! We cannot marry Sītā to Rāma. If Rāma fails to string the bow we will be left with no alternative except complying to the desire of Candragati."

King Janaka assured her thus, "Do not worry my worthy consort ! Let us not forget that Rāma is the descendent of the first Tirthaṅkara Lord Ṛṣabhadeva. I am sure, he would lift these divine bows like dried creepers and string them. I have seen him in the battlefield. He was moving like a whirlwind slaying the enemies. I am certain that Rāma and Rāma alone would marry our daughter Sītā.

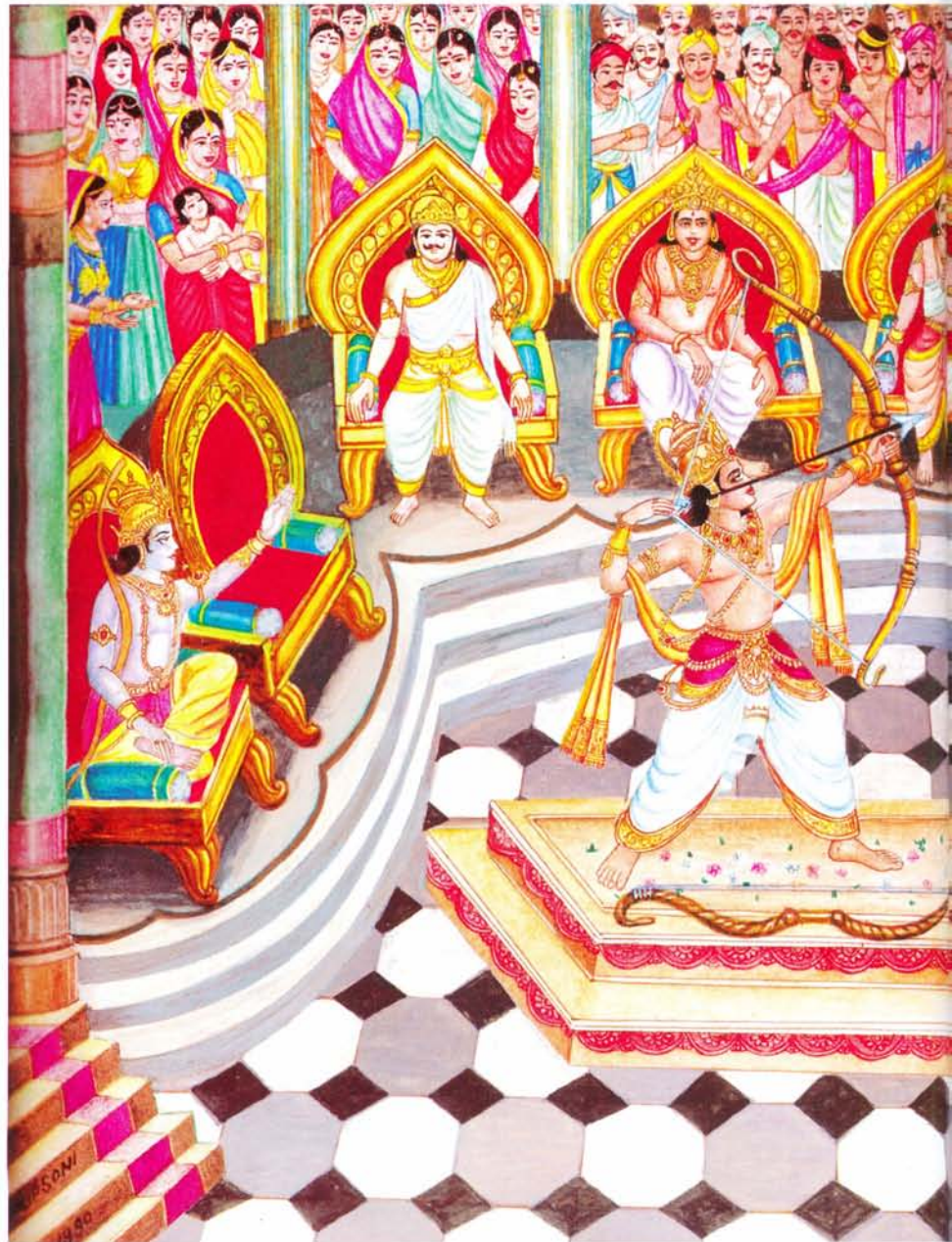
Later on, king ordered his artisans to erect a pandal. The pair of bow was placed in the pandal. He also sent his emissaries to the kings and princes in the surrounding areas. They arrived Mithilā and were seated in the pandal.

9

Sītā's Svayaṁvara

Bedecked in finest attire and jewellery, Sītā entered the pandal of Svayaṁvara along with her friends and maids and worshiped the auspicious bows. Then, she stood in a special place reserved for her. She was carrying a garland of the choicest flowers. Though her facial expressions exhibited modesty and coyness, she looked a perfect picture of confidence and poise. Bhāmaṇḍala, who saw Sītā for the first time in person was once again smitten by Cupid. He thought, 'How true was the divine saint Nārada when he said that words failed to describe her beauty and most gifted hands too cannot capture her beauty in painting.'

The pratihāri- chief gatekeeper announced that the noble youth who would string any one of the bows will incidentally marry Sītā. After the announcement, young princes rose and one by one went near the altar, where the bows were placed, but none of them dared to touch the divine bows because they were surrounded by mighty flames and poisonous cobras hissing menacingly. Those desirous of marrying Sītā would some how reach near the altar but would get struck by terror when they saw the flickering tongues of fire and the cobras. They would hang their heads in shame and return to their seats. Candragati watched these proceedings disdainfully. He was confident that finally Sītā would marry Bhāmaṇḍala.



Sītā Svayamvara

Rāma arose and began to walk like a lion towards the altar. The hearts of both emperor Janaka and his wife were filled with anxiety. When Rāma reached the altar, to everyone's surprise, the flames and the fangs both disappeared. A divine peace and tranquility was experienced by everyone sitting in the pandal. The celestial beings clustered in the different stratas of heaven to watch the scene with great curiosity. Every pair of eyes was glued to the handsome and noble countenance of Rāma. He lifted up the bow known as Vajrāvarta as if it was a toy and placed it erect on a special stand. Then, he bent it like an ordinary cane and put the string on it. He then struck the string. The vibrant twang of the string was clearly heard not only in the pandal but also in the celestial worlds. The joy of Janaka, Videhā and Sītā knew no bounds. Sītā offered the floral garland to Rāma.

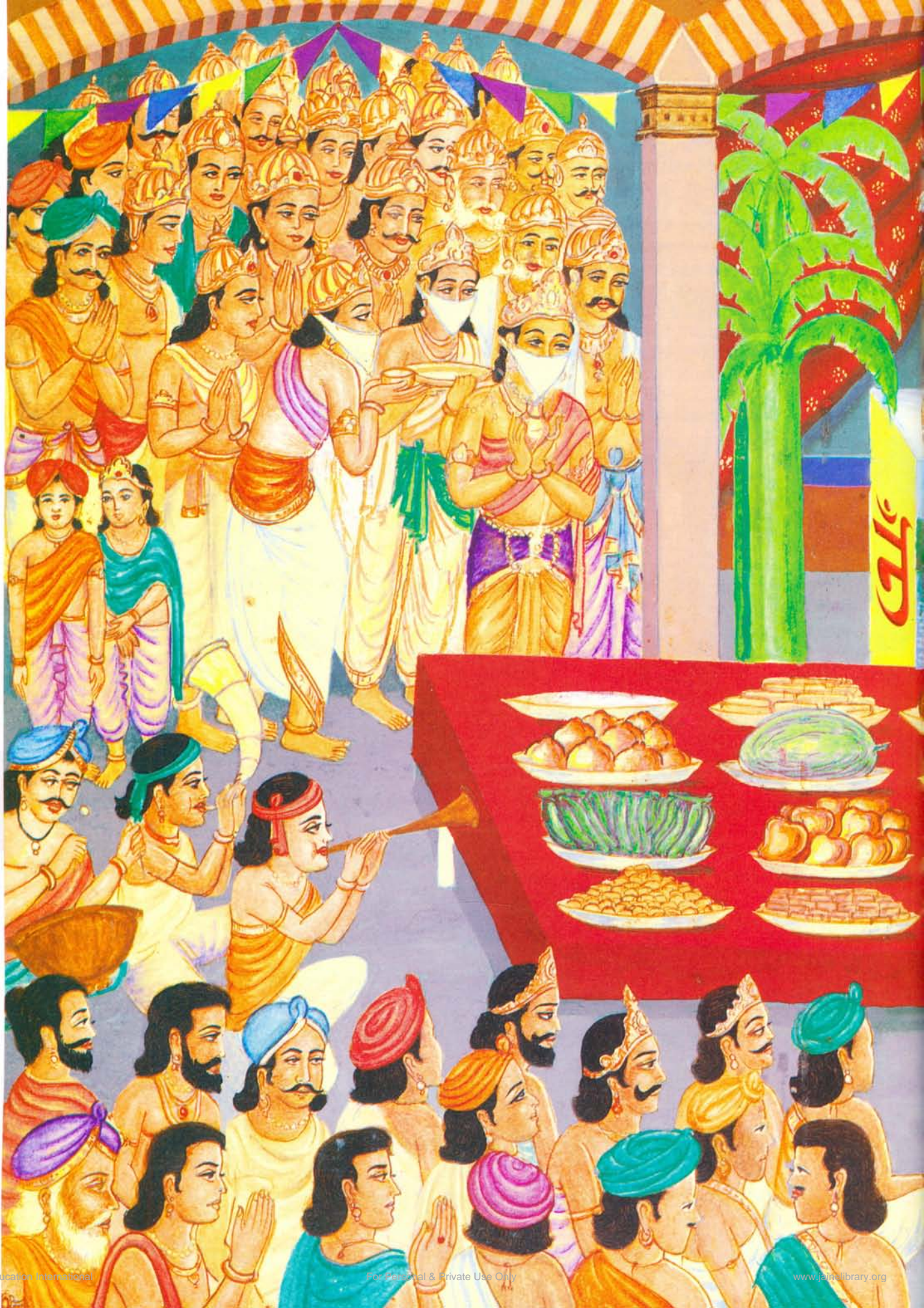


With Rāma's consent, Lakṣmaṇa stepped in the arena. He lifted the bow called Arṇavāvarta and strung it. The twang of this bow was so loud that even the Diggajas- the eight elephants believed to lift the corners of the world on their shoulders, trembled with fear. Vidyādhara kings, who had magical powers, were so impressed by Lakṣmaṇa's display of valour and strength that they offered eighteen young vidyādhara beauties to him. Most of the kings were happy and shared the joy with Janaka but some like King Candragati and Bhāmaṇḍala were so much overcome by gloom and despair that they left the pandal at once.

Ego and vanity are the root causes of sorrow. King Candragati and Bhāmaṇḍala were two great egoists who believed that no mortal could lift the divine bows. Therefore, they were sure that they would emerge victorious but Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa shattered their pride and vanity.

King Janaka dispatched a formal invitation to Daśaratha. He arrived Mithilā with the royal family and a grand wedding was performed, where in Kanakarāja, the younger brother of King Janaka and his consort Suprabhā proposed and married their daughter Bhadrā to Bharata, the younger brother of Rāma, in the same auspicious.

After prolonged celebrations, Daśaratha and his relatives left for Ayodhyā with friends and new daughters-in-law. The citizens of Ayodhyā welcomed them with pomp. The revelry lasted for many days.





Śānti-snātra

On the eighth waxing moon of the auspicious month of Aṣāḍha, King Daśaratha organised Aṣṭāhnikā caitya mahotsava with full pomp. Best of the best ingredients for worship were bought from all over and a ritual called Śānti-snātra was performed.

The auspicious water utilised during this ritual is distributed among the faithful devotees. Kañcukī, the chamberlain of harem, carried an urn full of this auspicious water and left for the sanctum of the chief consort Kauśalyā first. The other maid-servants, then carried the auspicious water to the sanctums of other consorts. It is a common practice to appoint a man of advanced age as a chamberlain. The kañcukī of Daśaratha was a frail man afflicted by old age. The others were young maidens. They reached hurriedly and delivered the auspicious water to the remaining consorts. The frail and aged kañcukī could not match the ladies in speed and therefore, though he left first, could not reach the sanctum of Kauśalyā on time.



Kauśalyā's attempt to suicide

When the chief consort Kauśalyā, eagerly waiting for the auspicious water, learnt the news that everyone else except her had received the snātrajala, the auspicious water, she was dejected. She thought, 'Here I am... the chief amongst the royal consorts and yet everyone else gets the auspicious water except myself. How unfortunate I am ! It is better to embrace death instead of being subjected to further humiliation. I think death alone will end all my sorrows.' Kauśalyā's pride was wounded. The frustration and anger subdued her power of reasoning. A wise Indian sage says, "Anger is born out of self love and affects the power of reasoning. This leads to the total defeat of wisdom and conscience, which in turn causes total destruction."

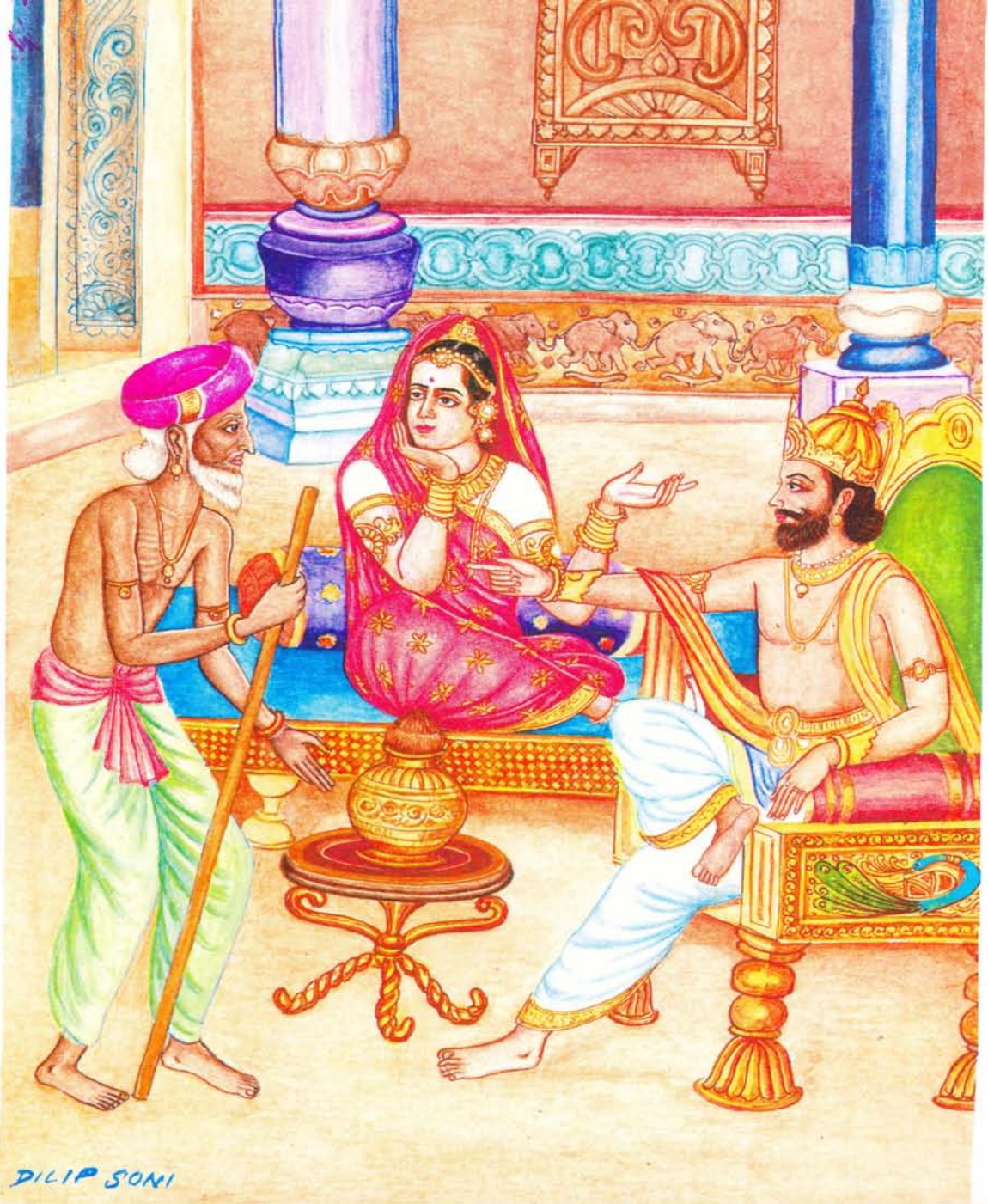
Kauśalyā was a noble soul but her wounded pride led her to selfpity and finally she decided to commit suicide. Suicide is the last resort of the coward. Killing is a great sin, but it can be atoned, whereas, suicide is the greatest sin which has no atonement. What should have been the ideal course

of action for Kauśalyā? She should have thought, probably my husband must have forgotten to send me the holy water. I must send a maid and procure it myself, but so overcome was she by her wounded pride that she decided to end her life abruptly. Fortunately, Daśaratha reached there on time. He was shocked to see a noose around her neck.



King Daśaratha convincing Kauśalyā

With great difficulty, he persuaded Kauśalyā to abandon her plan. He threw aside the noose, gently lifted her, and placed her on a couch and asked, "Who has the audacity to hurt your feelings? Who has inflicted great anguish on you, that lead you to such a rash act. Name the person, and I shall punish him." Kauśalyā was still awrath. With great difficulty, she spoke in a trembling voice, 'All your consorts received the snātrajala.... all.... but me....'



The kañcukī's arrival at the palace

Before the King could reply, the aged chamberlain reached the abode of the chief queen. The king took the urn from his hands and sprinkled some water on the head of his seniormost consort and asked the chamberlain, "You were the first to receive the snātrajala. I personally gave you this urn and urged you to hurry up and deliver it to Kauśalyā first. Why this delay?" The kañcukī replied, "Whatever your majesty says is true, I indeed was the first to receive this auspicious urn. It's also true that you ordered me not to tarry and yet I am late, but its not my fault altogether. My advancing age has diminished my strength and ambition. I beseech you majesty to have a close look at me. You will at once know who is the real culprit."

The king had a close look at the chamberlain. The chamberlain, who was once a well built youth, bursting with energy, sharp eyes like an eagle, his body taut, well toned like iron bands... What was left of him now? His head had turned grey, eyes and cheeks were sunk, his limbs were trembling, his senses were slowly deteriorating. He was like a fossil, a bag of bones. This is a universal phenomenon. It is indeed so common that most of us just ignore it, but the plight of kañcukī compelled the king to think that the soul receives a mortal body. He is born, grows up and finally dies. This is repeated for ages and yet his attachment to senses and sensual pleasures just does not subside. Today this chamberlain is standing here with a trembling body, tomorrow I will take his place. The weakening of senses and strength, the affliction of maladies will weaken me further. I must act to stop this vicious circle. Every moment new souls step on this planet to depart and the old ones depart to step

in again, yet the hunger, avarice and greed blindfold a man's conscience. Birth after birth, he relentlessly pursues the pleasures. Poisons destroy only the body when it is consumed but the pleasures destroy the body and soul both, birth after birth. The best remedy to put an end on this is to embrace ascetic life, thus King Daśaratha cultivated the spirit of ascetism. This proves the fact that a virtuous person grabs the unpleasant opportunities to atone his karmas.

One day, Muni Satyabhūti reached the precincts of Ayodhyā. He was the master of four knowledges. On learning the news of his arrival, king Daśaratha along with his family, went to meet the sage. Depressed, King Candragati and Prince Bhāmaṇḍala also reached there. They had returned from the mountain Rathāvarta and were on their way to home. Both the kings reached the place where the sage was delivering a sermon.

Bhāmaṇḍala falls unconscious in Muni Satyabhūti's sermon



Bhāmaṇḍala falls unconscious

With his mystical powers, the sage learnt that Bhāmaṇḍala was frustrated because he could not marry Sītā. He therefore, in brief, discussed the previous lives of King Candragati and his consort Puṣpavatī. He also described the 𑀩previous births of Bhāmaṇḍala and Sītā. He then narrated, how Bhāmaṇḍala was kidnaped at the moment he was born. When Bhāmaṇḍala learnt that he was craving to marry his own elder sister, he collapsed.

After regaining consciousness, he informed King Candragati that whatever the sage Satyabhūti said was absolute truth. King Candragati immediately dispatched his vidyādhara to Mithilā, to return with King Janaka and his consort Videhā. Bhāmaṇḍala bowed down before his elder sister Sītā, and apologised. Sītā also blessed him. Rāma embraced him, and thus the wrong was forgiven and forgotten.

When King Janaka and Queen Videhā reached Ayodhyā, King Candragati told him, how did he find an abandoned baby in the garden on the mount Vaitāḍhya, how he adopted him and finally declared that Prince Bhāmaṇḍala was actually the progeny of Janaka and Videhā. On learning this, King Janaka and Queen Videhā were elated. Her upper cloth was drenched with the milk that began to ooze out of her bosom, when she knew about her son. Bhāmaṇḍala prostrated at their feet, and they blessed him. King Janaka then declared that he desired to hand over the royal crown and the scepter to the crown prince Bhāmaṇḍala and embrace ascetic life. Muni Satyabhūti administered the oaths of renouncement to the great King Janaka.

Later on, King Daśaratha requested the sage Satyabhūti to narrate the account of his previous lives. After the sage finished his narration, he once again realised that the world is transitory. Every action of a man adds to the burden of his karmas. Embracing an ascetic life is the only way that will stop the rotation of the wheel of destiny. King Daśaratha too decided to handover his scepter to Rāma and become a mēdicant.



𑀩 What was the relation between Satyabhūti muni and King Daśaratha in the previous births ? refer Appendix - 3.



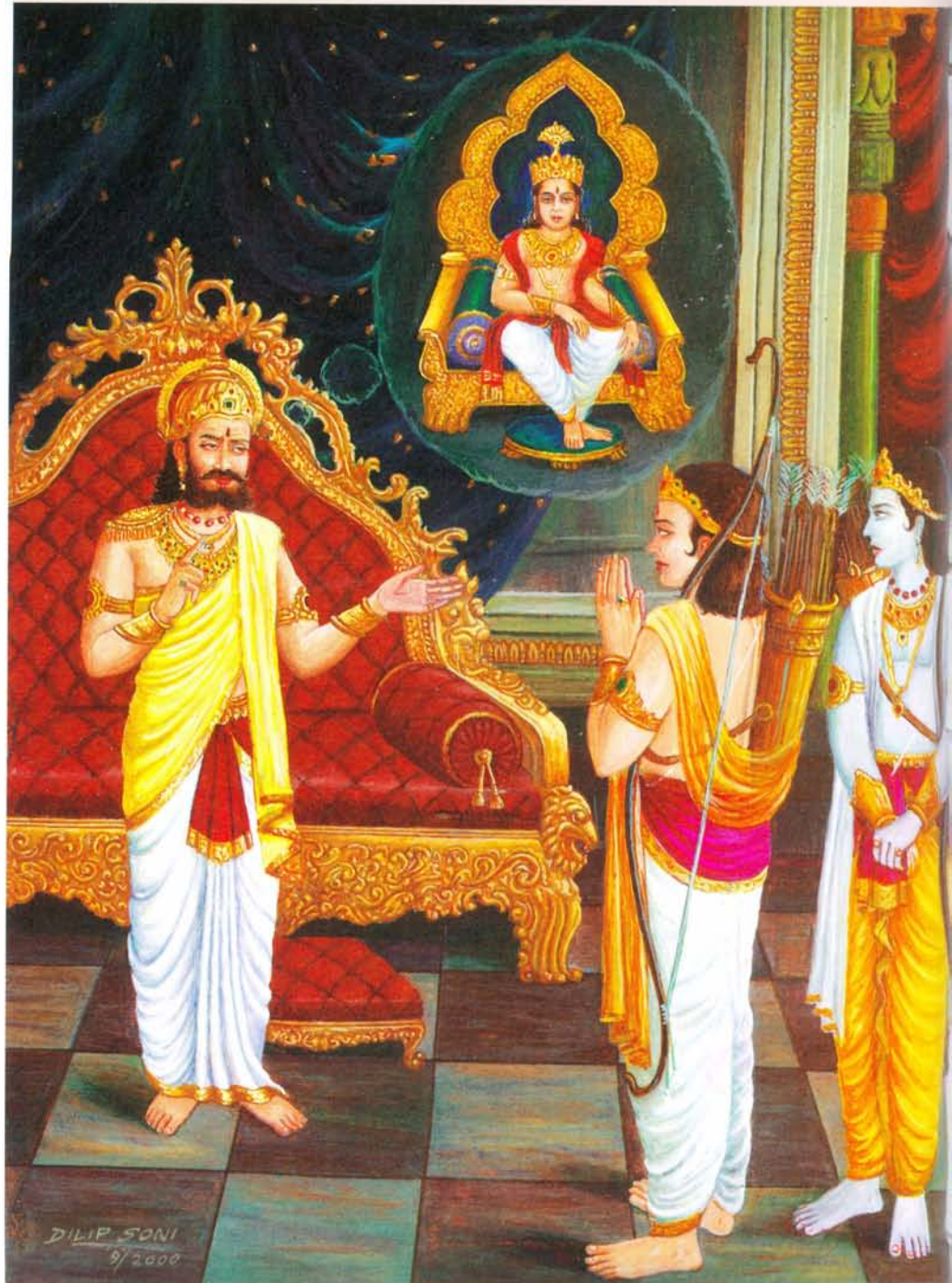
Bharata expresses his desire to embrace an ascetic life : On reaching the palace, King Daśaratha sent for his family members and the assembly of the ministers. He then expressed his desire to become an ascetic. With folded hands, he asked them for their consent, but the wise Bharata intervened by saying, “If you have resolved to renounce this ephemeral world, pray allow me to join you as well; for I shall not be able to endure the pangs of your separation, and I will be exposed to the evil and vile world. I am too eager, to accept the oath of renouncement along with you. By serving you, I shall not only serve my father, but an ascetic as well. This will help me to atone atleast some of my wrong actions of the previous life.”

When Bharata's mother Kaikeyī heard this, she was worried. She thought, 'My husband has already resolved to become an ascetic. If he becomes an ascetic, I will not be called the royal consort, nor will I enjoy the power and the privileges. If Bharata becomes a king, there is still hope for me, for *I would be addressed as the royal* mother and here is my son, all set to shatter my aspirations.' Overpowered by the temptations, she said, "My Lord, everything is possible in this world. The sun may tomorrow rise in the west and set in the east. It might rain in the spring. Everything under the sun may change in due course, except one thing, the promise of a *Satyavādī, a man who speaks nothing but truth.* My Lord, I believe that you are a man who upholds the truth. Do you remember that you had granted me a boon when you tied nuptial knots on being pleased with my charioteership? You owe me a debt, for I have still not asked you for that boon. The religious law says that a person with a debt cannot renounce the world. I truly desire that there shouldn't be any hindrance in your path to salvation."

Daśaratha said, "Dear queen! I distinctly remember my promise. Ask me for anything, except changing my decision of renouncing the world." Kaikeyī said, "My Lord, how can I ever ask you to change your decision and compel you to remain in this materialistic world, which is called a massive swamp by the learned. I only request you to hand over the scepter to my son Bharata." Daśaratha relented and said "Bharata is free to inherit my throne."

Daśaratha hands over the throne to Bharata

Then, he summoned Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and said, "I was compelled to fight a large number of Kṣatriya warriors when Kaikeyī chose me as her respective bridegroom. I could defeat them all, only because Kaikeyī volunteered to be my charioteer. I had granted a boon to her, which she preferred to keep secure for future. Now, she desires that I offer my crown to Bharata, and thus be free from the debt which I owe her. O Rāma! you are my eldest son. You are my heir apparent. *Though the crown belongs to you and you alone, my worthy son,* I am compelled to usurp your rightful claim and hand it over to Bharata, so that I can take the vows without any hindrance."



On hearing this, Rāma said, "My worthy father, you wish to fulfil my mother's desire and make my brother a king. My brother Bharata is young, but still can surpass any warrior in valour. He is also an expert administrator. I am sure, you are handing over your regalia to a worthy person. Do not ever think that you are violating the command of Dharma, and usurping my rightful claim by doing this. Did you ever notice me craving for the power ? Did you ever notice my disrespect towards you ? This crown belongs to you and you alone, and you may hand it over to anyone. I have no desire to sit on the throne, nor do I have a right to disobey you. I am a slave of your slaves. How can I ever disrespect you? You can choose any one as your heir... I have acquired my person by your grace. You have given me the best of everything, taught me the ethics and inculcated moral values in me. You have a full right on my being, my heart and my wealth. May Bharata be coronated, any time you wish. After all, Rāma and Bharata are two inseparable entities. The question of my consent therefore does not arise."

Can a person of modern age think like Rāma? A modern son, placed in a similar situation would not hesitate to defy his father's authority. He may probably deprive his father of everything including the powers, so that he does not face similar problems again in future. Today's unabashed young man would not think twice before dragging his father to a court of law, in order to swallow up his parental property. This is the age of the fifth axis of Avasarpiṇī. One cannot expect anything better from this age.

When King Daśaratha heard Rāma's words that were like a soothing balm to his wounded heart, he was very happy, but Bharata was adamant. He wanted to be an ascetic and didn't crave for power.

He said, "My worthy father, I was the first one, who expressed a desire to be an ascetic. Pray do not impose the kingship on me." Daśaratha said, "Son, Dharma says that one cannot disobey his parents. I had made a promise to your mother, if it remains unfulfilled, it will leave a blemish on my character in the ages to come. Do you want your father to be remembered as a villain and a traitor?"

In order to persuade Bharata, Rāma said, "You have been offered the crown so that our father can be free from his debt. You are not craving for the power. You must shoulder the responsibility that our father has entrusted you with." Bharata, with tearful eyes said, "My worthy brother, you are sacrificing your right to the throne to free father off his debt. I know that I am not worthy of the throne. I appreciate your generosity, but I shall never accept your proposal, for it will amount to greed and covetousness. How can I ever deprive you of your rightful position?" am I not Daśaratha's son and your brother ? no... no.... my coronation is impossible."

Rāma said, "My worthy father, if I stay here any longer, my brother Bharata will never accept the throne. Therefore, allow me to retire from hither. I will stay in the woods for some years like an ascetic. It will compel Bharata to shoulder his responsibilities. You will be free from your debt and thus be able to embrace the vows." This was the devotion and dedication of Śrī Rāma ! He discarded the crown, pleasures of the palace, power and life, without hesitating for a moment. This generosity and selflessness is the essence of the Indian Culture.

There are many versions of Rāmāyaṇa which belong to the faiths other than Jainism. They mention that Kaikeyī had asked for two boons, (1) the coronation of Bharata and (2) expulsion of Rāma.

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā leave Ayodhyā

After convincing King Daśaratha the urgency of his departure, Rāma immediately left for the woods. The very idea of being separated from his worthy son agonised Daśaratha so much that he swooned. When Rāma saw this, he wondered, 'I am leaving this palace that offers every pleasure so that my father can become an ascetic. He has realised the ephemeral nature of the material world and yet, the idea of being separated from me affects him so strongly. My mother is a simple woman, who loves her son more than anyone in the world. What would be her reaction, when she learns about what had transpired in the palace.' On reaching Kauśalyā's chamber, he prostrated himself at her feet and said, "Mother, now onwards you have one more son besides me - Bharata, my younger brother. My worthy father has desired to be a pilgrim on the path of salvation. It is imperative that he must fulfill all his promises, and clear all his debts, before he becomes a monk. Bharata will never accept the regalia in my presence. It is therefore a must that I should retire to the woods. While I am away, my dear mother.... shower all your love and affection on my brother Bharata. Your love, your affectionate touch, your soothing words would be like divine heal for his scalded heart."

Rāma's words, though spoken with utmost love and respect, hit Kauśalyā's heart like a spear, and she swooned. When the maids sprinkled sandalwood water on her, she regained consciousness and lamented. "Woe to me ! why am I surviving inspite of these mighty blows of destiny? On one hand my husband has decided to forsake the world and walk on the path of eternity. On the other hand my son is about to leave me and settle in the lonely forest, infested with wild beasts and birds of prey. How can I survive without you, my Rāma ?.... How, inspite of all these agonies, my heart is still alive? How can I breathe, inspite of these unbearable sorrows. Only death would bring a solace to my heart... but even the gods of death think that I am too unworthy to die! And therefore, I am left to continue living this accursed life, which has no meaning and substance! Why and till how long will I continue to

live like this?"

Rāma said, "Mother, you belong to the clan of Kṣātriyas.... it is the clan of warriors. You must not shed tears like a commoner! Mother, haven't you heard this... when a cub of a lion is fully grown up, his mother, the lioness, just discards him and lets him become an independent survivor in the cruel world. She never worries about the wellbeing or the welfare of her young one. I have reached the stage, where I can take care of myself. You are a lioness. Pray do not be a disgrace to your clan, by your timidity. If I continue to live here, Bharata will never accept the royal crown. It is therefore advisable that I leave the palace at once." Though his words were full of love, yet they failed to bring a solace to Kauśalyā, but she stopped weeping. Rāma then went to the chambers of mother Sumitrā, Suprabhā and Kaikeyī and offered his obeisance to them. He fulfilled all his duties as a son, before he stepped out of the palace.

It is said that every word, every syllable from the greatest epic of Rāma, inspires us to reach the highest realms of spirituality, and ending our sins, however great they might be. Rāma was the epitome of virtue. Kaikeyī and her strong ego brought a great upheaval not only in Rāma's life, but in every life that centered around Rāma. Yet, never once, Rāma spoke ill of her. He respected her as a mother, and revered her as a queen.

For an Āryan woman, total adherence to the will of her husband, is the true dharma. When Sītā heard of Rāma's decision, she did not say him, that if he really wanted to honour the promise of his father, he should have not married her in first place. He had decided to leave the palace, but did not even bother to consult her even once, before taking such hasty steps. How could he discard for the crown and enormous powers that are associated with it? What would happen to her, when he went away? He was concerned only about his parents not her. A modern woman can think in similar lines but not Sītā. She was a true sati!



Sītā begs for permission to accompany Rāma

Sītā, who was modesty personified, bowed down at the feet of King Daśaratha, with folded hands, and addressed Kauśalyā in a gentle voice, "Mother, can the body and soul exist without one another? Can nature and being be separated from each other? In the presence of the sacred fire, I took the vow of being by my husband's side through thick and thin. Mother, my husband has decided to retire to the forest. He will live in humble shanty, eat only fruits and sleep on the modest bed of dry leaves, if he will be living an austere life, how can I live in this palace that offers every comfort, eat the best of the food and sleep on a comfortable bed. The dharma expects me to be at my husband's side during every ordeal. Therefore, grant me a permission to fulfil my duties as a wife."

Kauśalyā loved Sītā more than her own offspring, she said, "Truely, you are the crest jewel of the dynasty that you are born in and the dynasty that you are married into, but remember, Rāma is retiring to the woods to fulfil his father's promise. He is brave as a lion. He will easily get acquainted to the hardships of forest life, but you, my beloved daughter, have never ever been exposed to the austerities of forest life. The thorns that are found in abundance in the forest, will bleed your tender lotus feet. Will you be able to endure the unhindered wrath of nature like the scorching sun, bitter cold and the torrents of rain ? O pride of Āryavrata, when Rāma helplessly sees you undergoing physical and mental pain, how will he feel? The Dharma commands you to be at your husband's side all the time. I, therefore, would not oppose your idea of accompanying your husband to the forest, yet, I will not grant you the permission, for the very idea of your sojourn in forest, makes my body tremble with fear and anxiety."

These utterances of Kauśalyā prove that she was a very down to earth person. She loved her daughter in law like her own daughter. She did not want Sītā to suffer the hardships of jungle life, and yet, she did not refrain her from fulfilling her own duty as a wife. She knew that a man and his wife are inseparable as a body and its shadow. Therefore, though she did not grant Sītā a permission to join Rāma in forest, she didnt even oppose her decision either.

Most of the mothers, who shower selfless love and affection on their sons, treat the daughters-in-law as their bitterest enemy. They spare no efforts in turning the joys of their daughters-in-law into woes, but Kauśalyā was not an ordinary mother. She belonged to the clan of warriors, she was born in a virtuous family and was married into the dynasty of the first Jineśvara - the pioneer of culture and civilization. We therefore can

notice noble traits, which add brightness to the aura *that surrounds the personality of Kauśalyā*. Every character in the epic Rāmāyaṇa is associated with some lofty ideal. Daśaratha is an ideal king, husband and father. Kauśalyā is an ideal wife, mother and a mother-in-law. The progeny of Daśaratha are ideal sons, ideal husbands, ideal friends and ideal enemies as well. Sītā is an ideal daughter, ideal sister, ideal wife and an ideal daughter-in-law. Like her twenty first century counterparts, Sītā did not ask her husband, "Why did you take such a foolish decision? Do you expect me to abide by your stupid whims? You can enjoy hardships if you want, but you can't expect me to sacrifice my comforts." Sītā was an epitome virtue. She could never even dream of humiliating either her husband or in laws. She said to Kauśalyā, "Mother, your blessings will always bring about graces in abundance, while we are in the forest. I cannot endure the hardships of jungle by my own virtue, but your blessings will confer enormous strength in me. I shall now follow the steps of Āryaputra Rāma, as the fragrance of a flower follows the wind."

On hearing Rāma's decision, Lakṣmaṇa was awrath. He thought, "My worthy father is a simple man. He has handed over the crown to Bharata and freed himself from the debt, but I cannot afford to remain quiet. I can declare a war against Bharata, dethrone him, and request Rāma to take the reins of administration in his own hands, but Rāma is a man of noble ideals. He does not value power. He will never accept the throne, and my father.... will his journey to salvation be a serene experience, if he knows what I am planing? Let Bharata be the ruler. I am a sibling of Rāma. I am born to serve my elder brother. Let me follow him, as a shadow follows an object."

Having made this resolve, he bowed down before King Daśaratha and mother Sumitrā and said, "My elder brother Rāma has just left for the jungle to fulfill the promise that my father gave to mother Kaikeyi. He is being accompanied by Sītā. I am a slave of Rāma. May I join them in order to serve?" Queen Sumitrā was a noble lady. She said, "Son, you are a blessing to my womb, you are desirous of serving your elder brother during his sojourn in the forest. How can I prevent you? I confer all my blessings on you. Rāma has already left. Hurry, or else you may not reach him." Though Sumitrā was a

step mother to Rāma, she loved him so much that *she willingly allowed her own son to follow the footsteps of Rāma*.

Queen Kauśalyā was still weeping when Lakṣmaṇa went to her Chamber. She said, "My son Rāma has forsaken me. Your presence is the only balm to my wounded heart. You are the only ray of light that will brighten the gloom and despair that is in my heart. Rāma has already left... atleast you stay here. Who would lit my funeral pyre if you are not here?" Lakṣmaṇa replied, "You are the most blessed woman on the earth. How can the consort of King Daśaratha, and mother of Rāma, weep and lament like a commoner? I was always a slave to Rāma, I am, and shall remain all my life. I beseech you to gather courage and grant me a permission to follow Rāma."

The trio on the way to Forest

On seeing Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā dressed up in simple clothes like common people and leaving for the woods, the citizens of Ayodhyā began to lament. Rāma had embraced the austere ascetic life to honour his father's promise. Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa were following him in order to serve him. On seeing them leave Ayodhyā, the people felt that the very soul of Ayodhyā was fleeing its body. The glitterati and the proletariat together followed Rāma, weeping loudly. They were cursing Kaikeyī and their own fate.

Accompanied by his consorts, King Daśaratha too followed Rāma with a laden heart. Rāma pacified him with sweet, soothing words and requested them to return to the palace.

Bharata was so disturbed that he nearly lost his equilibrium. He refused to ascend the throne, and forgetting his limitations as a son, began to rebuke Kaikeyī in very harsh words. Seeing the plight and anguish of Bharata, Daśaratha immediately dispatched his vassals and ministers to bring back



Kaikeyī repents and Bharata coronated

King Daśaratha summoned Bharata and said,

“I dispatched my trusted ministers and vassals to bring Rāma back, but he did not relent. I have left no stone unturned and am sure that Rāma would not return to Ayodhyā under any circumstances. Hence, Oh Bharata ! my worthy son, ascend the throne and shoulder the yoke of responsibility, so that I can take the vows of ascetic life.” But Bharata was undeterred. He said, “I will not ascend the throne, come what may. I will go to the forest and convince my brother Rāma to return and take his rightful position. I am sure, I will succeed in bringing him back alongwith me.” While Bharata was speaking thus, Kaikeyī appeared and spoke, “My worthy Lord, you have handed over the regalia to Bharata as promised and thus fulfilled your words.” You have cleared my debts, but Bharata values service to Rāma more than the regalia. He will never ascend the throne. Myself and the other mothers cannot endure the pangs of separation of Rāma. Woe to me! overcome by greed, I ruined the lives of my sons and daughter in law! My master, we have four worthy sons and yet none is willing to be the heir to the throne! The life of a woman is meaningless without a husband, and that of the subjects is meaningless without a king. My lord, permit me to leave at once along with Bharata, so that I can plead Rāma to return to Ayodhyā.”

Daśaratha granted her the permission. Kaikeyī immediately left with Bharata. After six days of incessant journey, Kaikeyī saw Rāma, sitting below a tree with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. She alited from her chariot and rushed towards Rāma, muttering, “Son... my beloved son.....” She gently lifted Rāma who had bowed down at her feet and kissed his forehead. She wept loudly when she gathered Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in her arms. Bharata was sobbing uncontrollably. He swooned while prostrating before Rāma. Rāma gently lifted him and placed him on the bed of dried leaves. When Bharata regained consciousness, he began to weep again and said, “Like a celestial being forsaking a non-devotee, you have forsaken me. Do you really believe that I nurture a desire to be a king in my bosom? I have become a subject of mockery and hatred because of my mother. Either allow me to accompany you as you have allowed Lakṣmaṇa, so that I can escape further humiliation, or return to Ayodhyā with me and ascend the throne.

Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. They rushed to Rāma and appealed him to return. Their intelligent arguments, eloquent appeals, and tearful pleas, failed to change the resolve of Rāma, yet they did not lose their hope *and continued to follow him. They still believed that they might succeed in changing his decision and convince him to return to Ayodhyā.*

Soon, they came near a forest, which was so dense that the sun-rays hardly penetrated in it. It was full of outsized trees that struck terror in the hearts of the bravest. No one had ever seen such scary trees before. A river named Gaṁbhīrā was flowing in the forest. On reaching the banks of the river, Rāma, with folded hands, appealed everyone to return. He said, “We are about to undertake a journey full of perils and hardships. Pray return to Ayodhyā and inform our parents that we are safe and sound. Convey our obeisance to them. You have respected and obeyed every word of my father all these days, now respect and obey Bharata, in the same way.”

“We are unfit to serve Rāma. Woe to us !” lamented the vassals and the ministers, but Rāma was unruffled. The trio soon crossed the deep river Gaṁbhīrā and disappeared in the shade of the thick trees. The ministers and vassals returned and narrated everything that transpired in the forest to King Daśaratha.

When you mount the throne, Lakṣmaṇa will be your trusted minister. I, Bharata, will bear a parasol over your head and Śatrughna will sway the flywhisks." Kaikeyī said, "Dear son Rāma, please honour the request of your younger brother Bharata. Neither King Daśaratha nor Bharata are responsible for your misery and plight. If there is any one to be blamed, its me ! I am a storehouse of vices. Loyalty to the husband is the only virtue that I possess. I have inflicted enormous sorrow on my husband, sons and the other queens. Forgive me my son, forgive your wretched mother!!"

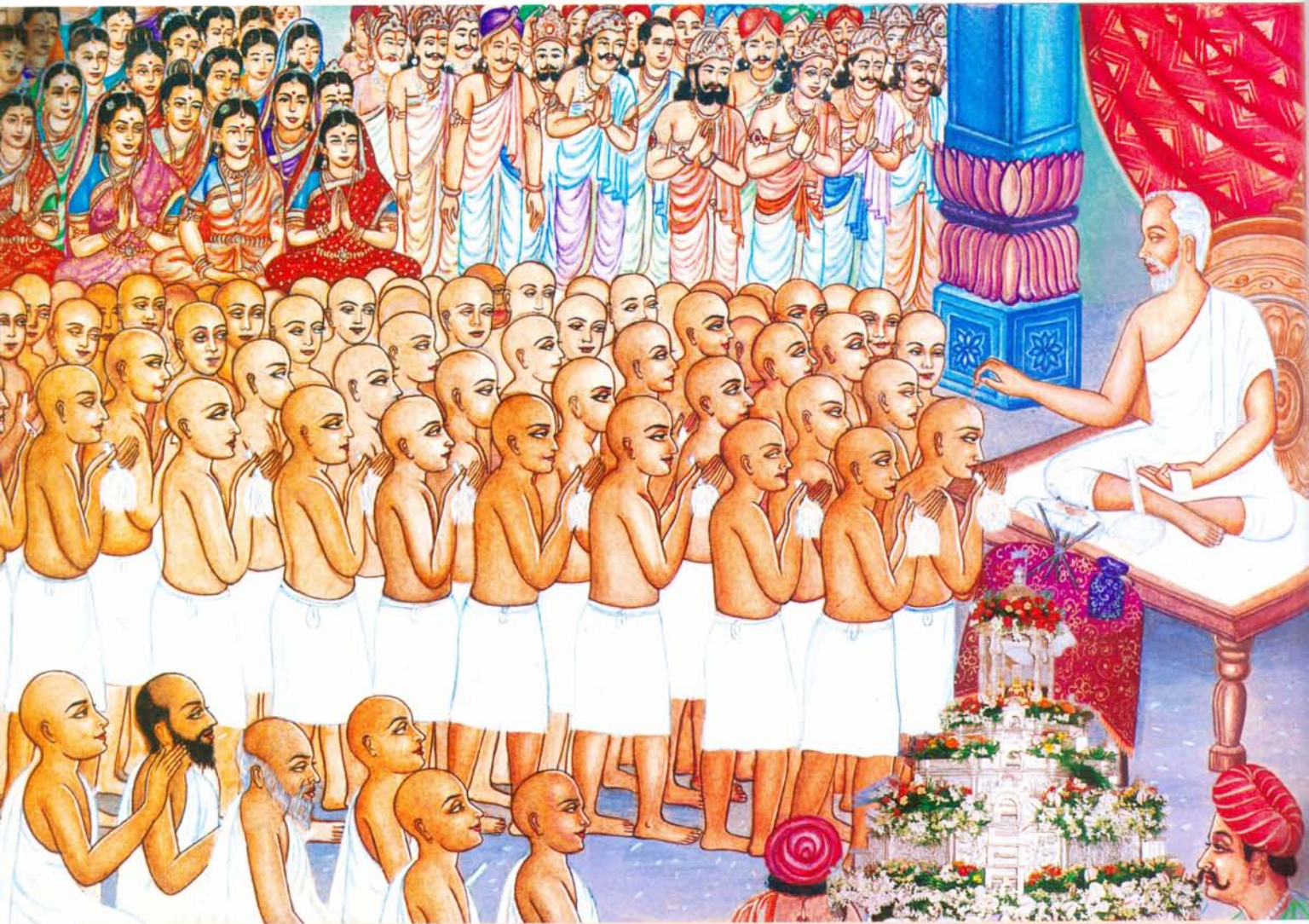
Bharata's Coronation

Rāma consoled his weeping mother and said, "Mother, the promise of a Kṣatriya is like an arrow, impossible to be retrived. I am the son of Daśaratha, the most revered amongst the clan of warriors. Don't you wish that our names and reputation remains untarnished in the years to come ? Father has entrusted the crown to Bharata and I wholeheartedly support and laud his decision. If we do not keep our promises, we will be turned into living corpses. An elder brother is a fatherfigure, and Bharata cannot disobey either his father or me, his eldest brother." Saying this, he asked Sītā to fetch some water and sprinkled it on the head of Bharata, in the presence of his mother and the other trusted ministers, and proclaimed Bharata to be the emperor of Ayodhyā.

He appeased the heart of Kaikeyī with gentle words, then, in a few but appropriate words, he explained to Bharata his duties as a king. Then he embraced him and bowed down before Kaikeyī and other elders and requested them to return to Ayodhyā. When they left, the trio began its journey towards the south.

Bharata upheld the words of his father and elder brothers like Dharma itself. He obeyed the command of Rāma and returned to Ayodhyā with a heavy heart. He ascended the royal throne unwillingly. He called himself a representative and a humble servant of Rāma. He considered the crown to be Rāma's property and himself its custodian.





Daśaratha's vow

Finally, Daśaratha and seventy two of his great warrior friends received the vows of celibacy etc through Muni Śrī Satyabhūti and were involved in the austere penance. Bharata was very much depressed, as he missed Rāma badly, yet he received solace through the worship of Arihanta, the crown amongst the divine hierarchy. He decided that he would look after the kingdom till Rāma returned and then, he would hand over the crown to Rāma and vow.

After leaving the precincts of Ayodhyā; Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā passed through Cittiṭṭa region and entered Avanti. They sat beneath a huge banyan tree. When they observed the surrounding region, they felt as if there was a mass exodus, not very long ago. Out of curiosity, Rāma asked a passerby, "This region looks as if it was occupied by highly civilized people not very long ago. How has it become desolate? Did an epidemic strike in this area which resulted into this devastation? or did some king desirous of extending the boundaries of his territory attacked it?" The passerby answered, "The Avanti region is ruled by King Sirmhodara. His vassal Vajrakarṇa ruled Daśāṅgapura. He is a devotee of the sage Pritivardhana; and has taken a vow that he would never bow down in front of anyone except Lord Arihanta, but since he was a vassal, he had to bow down before his master Sirmhodara. He therefore, got a small icon of Munisuvratasvāmī carved in a gem and set in a ring. He wore the ring in his finger while visiting his master. Instead of bowing down before the king, he would gaze at the mini icon in his ring and bowed down to it. This served two purposes. The vassal would not break his vow and the king would feel that Vajrakarṇa is offering him respect. However, one day the king learnt the truth. His pride was hurt. He considered the purest devotion as an act of treason and decided to kill Vajrakarṇa. A Jain layperson informed Vajrakarṇa

about the king's evil design.

The vassal sent a message to his lord, "My master, I do not possess pride and vanity as you think, but I have taken a vow that I shall not bow down before anyone except Jineśvara Arihanta. I am not an audacious man, but I will not bow down before you." On receiving this message, the angry king has seized Daśāṅgapura. The terrified citizen have fled to save their lives and property. This has made the region look desolate."

On hearing this; Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā reached Daśāṅgapura. Rāma sent Lakṣmaṇa to the court of the emperor as his emissary, Lakṣmaṇa met the king and said, "O mighty ruler, I bring you the message of my brother Bharata, the ruler of Ayodhyā. He would like me to convey you this message, 'Your vassal Vajrakarṇa' has taken a vow that he will not bow down before any one except the Jineśvara, instead of lauding his devotion, you have seized his territory. I request you not to harass him." King Sirmhodara lost his temper when he heard this message. He misjudged Lakṣmaṇa's strength and abilities because Lakṣmaṇa, at that time, was dressed up like a humble pilgrim. He shouted, "Who is this stupid Bharata who is partial to my vassal? I have never heard of him or his dynasty nor do I acknowledge the pauper who has the nerve to enter my royal court and talk with me like this..."

King Sirmhodara, as a prisoner in front of Rāma



When Lakṣmaṇa heard this, he was annoyed. His face and eyes became red. He ground his teeth and said "You are ruthless, and do not understand the decent language. I am here as a representative of King Bharata and I am behaving politely because an emissary of king is expected to be a man of impeccable manners. You do not deserve the courtesy. Rise-up and fight with me. King Sīrṇhodara accepted the challenge and ordered his soldiers to attack Lakṣmaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa pulled out a pillar meant for tying the elephants as if it was a creeper and began to attack his enemy with it. He defeated the entire army within no time. Then, he sprung high in air and mounted an elephant and pulled the upper cloth of the king, tied it around his neck and dragged him like an animal, to the forest where Rāma lived.

On seeing Rāma, the vanquished king hanged his head in shame and with folded hands asked for pardon. Rāma talked to him with utmost respect and made peace between him and his vassal. King Sīrṇhodara gave half of his territory to Vajrakarṇa. Vajrakarṇa gave eight of his daughters to Lakṣmaṇa in marriage and King Sīrṇhodara gave away his three hundred daughters to Lakṣmaṇa. He assured both of them that he would marry those three hundred and eight girls, when he would return to Ayodhyā. Later on, they left towards the mountain Malayā, in the south.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were ardent devotees of Lord Tīrthaṅkaras; and any one who shared their faith was a brother to them. Therefore, they selflessly aided King Vajrakarṇa, a brethern in faith.

15

Diety Gokirṇa serves Rāma



Together, the blessed trio passed many hamlets, villages, cities and reached a forest : by then the rainy-season had set in. They decided to take a prolonged halt of four months in that jungle. Long journey during the rainy season is taboo. The prolonged sojourn of ascetics at one place during the rains is called caturmāsa. The trio stopped beneath a gigantic tree. When a diety named Ibhakarna, residing on this tree, saw the handsome and luminous contours of Rāma, he was terrified and decided to inform his master Gokirna about the arrival of strangers. Gokirna diety possessed Avadhigyan. He knew, who the virtuous and valiant strangers really were.

The city built by diety Gokirna

By using his mysterious powers, the diety built a big city which measured eight miles in length six miles in breadth, in one night. He named this new city "Rāmapuri". He appeared before Rāma and requested him to spend caturmāsa at Rāmapuri. Rāma honoured his request and made Rāmapuri his abode for the four months of rain. After the caturmāsa, they set for a further journey. Gokirna diety gifted a Svayamprabha necklace to Rāma; and a pair of earrings, inlaid with jewels, to Lakṣmaṇa. Sītā was gifted an exotic crest-jewel and a string instrument called Vīṇā.

The trio then passed through forest and reached the outskirts of Vijayanagara, ruled by King Mahidhara. His wife's name was Indrāṇī. They had a daughter called Vanamālā. She had heard stories extolling Lakṣmaṇa, his handsomeness and his valour, since her childhood. Heart in heart, she resolved to marry Lakṣmaṇa. King Mahidhara had heard about the ascetic vows of Daśaratha and exile of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. He felt sorry for the royal trio.

When King Mahidhara realised that marriage between his daughter Vanamālā and Lakṣmaṇa was impossible, he decided to marry her to Prince Surendra of Candranagara. For young Vanamālā, the idea of marrying any other man, besides Lakṣmaṇa, was worth death. She decided to end her life. In the dark night, she stealthily stepped out of the palace and reached the outskirts of Vijayanagara. She tied one end of her upper cloth like a noose around her neck, and the other to the branch of a banyan tree. Rāma and Sītā were fast asleep under the tree, but Lakṣmaṇa was wide awake.

Vanamālā prayed, "O Gods residing in this forest. Since childhood, I dreamt of marrying Lakṣmaṇa, the son of King Daśaratha, but now, I believe that my dream will not be fulfilled. I have decided to end my meaningless existence by embracing untimely death. Grant me a boon that may Lakṣmaṇa be my husband in all my next lives"

Vanamālā attempting suicide

Saying this, she hanged herself. Lakṣmaṇa, at once climbed the tree and brought her down. He rebuked her gently, "O brave āryan lady, you will tarnish the reputation of your father by committing such a rash and cowardly act. Haven't you learnt that suicide is the greatest of all sins. All your life you desired to marry Lakṣmaṇa, and now you are set to end your life when he is near you."



Next morning, Lakṣmaṇa narrated everything that transpired in the night, to Rāma. King Mahidhara reached the outskirts of Vijayanagar when he didn't find Vanamālā. When he saw Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa dressed up like hermits, he thought that they were thieves. Without thinking twice, he attacked them. When he saw the valiant youths defending themselves, he at once realised that they were not ordinary men. He stopped the fight and asked them who they were. When he came to know that the youths whom he misunderstood to be thieves were in fact the progeny of the great Daśaratha, he folded his hands and apologised. He then invited them to his palace and entertained them lavishly. Later, he requested Rāma to grant Lakṣmaṇa a consent to marry Princess Vanamālā.



Lakṣmaṇa's pledge to Vanamālā

While Lakṣmaṇa was making preparations for the further journey, Vanamālā said, "O beloved master of my soul, I have craved to be with you all my life and finally you stepped into my life. Now I will not be able to sustain the separation, even for a moment. I want to follow you, wherever you go. I want to serve you. Pray, marry me and take me along." Lakṣmaṇa said, "At present, I am a menial serving my brother and sister-in-law. If you come along with me, my life will definitely be more pleasant, but it might make me lax towards my duty. If I ignore you and remain attentive to my duty, I will make your life miserable. I neither desire to cause inconvenience to my elders nor do I desire to add to your plight. Therefore, I request you to stay here. When we will return to Ayodhyā, I shall definitely take you along. This is my solemn promise. If I break it, may the sin of dining after sunset be on my head forever." Dining in the night is one of the most condemned action mentioned in Jain scriptures. It is denounced by our sages and scholars. It leads us to the gate of the hell.

From Vijayanagara, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa walked towards mount Vanśasāilya. A city called Vanśassthala is situated in the ranges of this mountain. On reaching there, Rāma noticed that terror reigned the city. Every citizen including the king appeared to be terrorised by some unknown, unseen element. A man informed Rāma that since past three nights, great commotion was heard on the summits of the mountain. People failed to discern what caused the commotion. They were so scared, that they left the city before sunset and returned early next morning. The trio climbed the mountain. On reaching the top, they noticed the sages Jayabhūṣaṇa and Kulabhūṣaṇa in penance. The worthy trio bowed down before them and then sang devotional songs.





Atonement of Commotion by Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa

After sunset, a diety named Anaṅgaprabha descended to the mountain. He had vicious inclinations and was the cause of the commotion. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa challenged him for a combat. Anaṅgaprabha could not match the two young men in valour and fled. The two sages that were penancing attained the purest knowledge which is called Kevalagyāna.

The celestial beings descended on the mountain to celebrate the occasion. Grand festivities began. King Surprabha of *Varṇasasthala* arrived to felicitate the sages and the brave warriors. A shrine of Arihanta Prabhu was built on the mountain; since then the mountain *Varṇasasthala* became famous as Rāmagiri. From there, they entered Daṇḍakāraṇya.

16 Jaṭāyu meets Rāma

Trigupta muni preaching the trio

Mount Mahāgiri, in the dense forest of Daṇḍakāraṇya was made a temporary dwelling place by the trio. One day, Trigupta and Sugupta, two monks belonging to the cāraṇa category, reached mount Mahāgiri flying by air, to end their one month's fast called Māsakṣamaṇa. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa received them with warmth and offered them food etc.

The celestials in the heaven were very pleased with their generosity and showered costliest gems and fragrant water, from the skies above. King Ratnajati of Kambudvipa, alongwith two dieties, arrived there and gifted him a unique and mystical chariot and horses of renowned pedigree. A ill bird named Gandha, residing in thick forest, descended from the tree, being disturbed by the fragrant shower. Just as he gazed at the two monks, he recalled his previous births. *The strange experience, however, unnerved him, and he swooned.* Sītā sprinkled water on him. On regaining consciousness, he touched the feet of the holy monks. The moment he touched their feet, he was at once healed by the power of touch-medicine which they possessed. His wings received a golden hue and crest that resembled luminious gems, grew on his head. This crest is called Jaṭā in Sanskr̥ta and the bird acquired a new name- Jaṭāyu. Rāma asked the monks, "This is a carnivorous bird and when he touched your feet, we noticed a total transformation not only in his external appearance but also in his spiritual makeup."



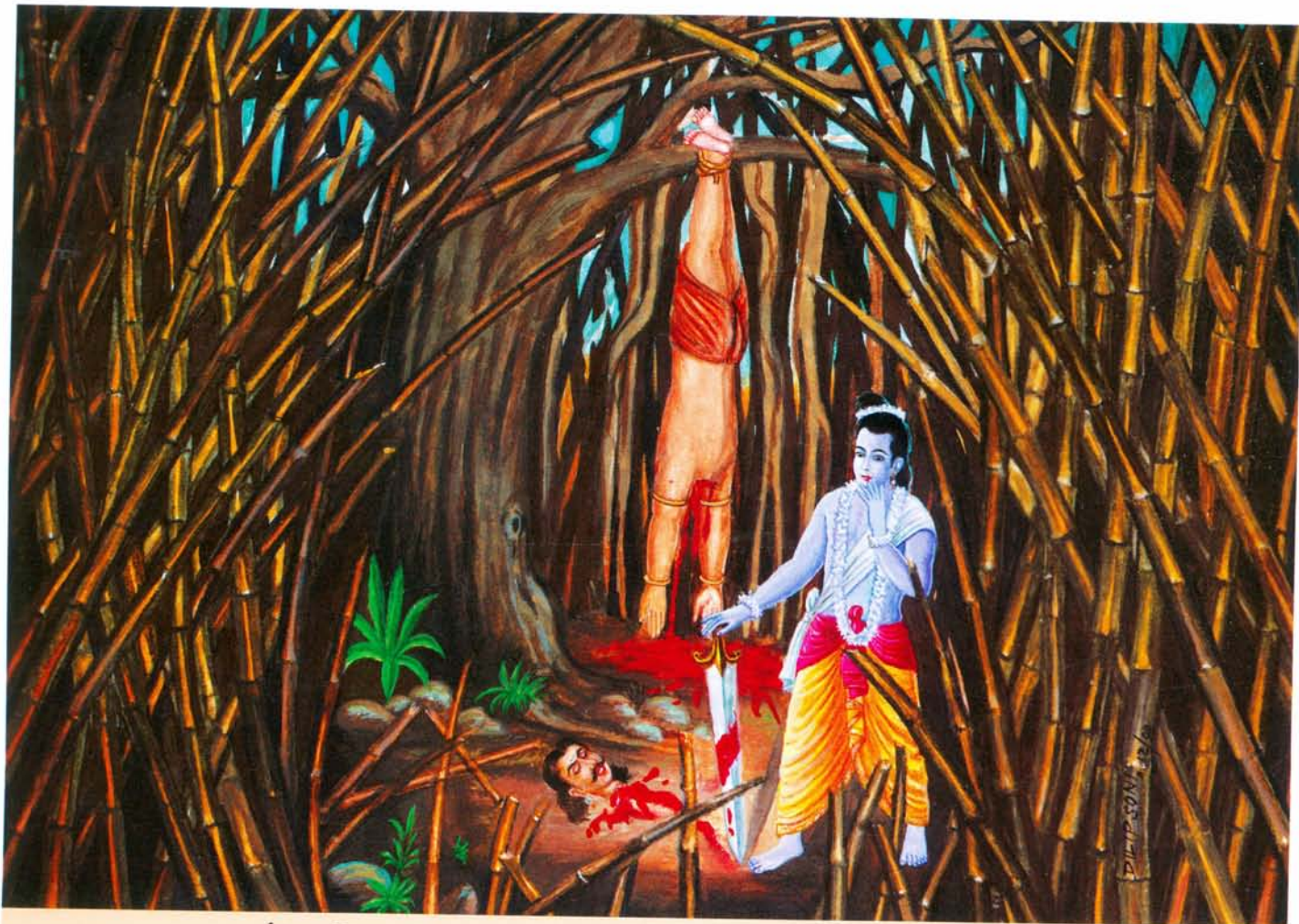
Then the monks through their knowledge narrated the 𑀩past lives of the bird. The bird, once again, touched the feet of the monks. He was so overwhelmed with devotion that he pledged that he would renounce his habit of consuming carnivorous food and eating after sunset. The monks told Rāma, "Now onwards, this bird shares your faith, he is now your brother in faith. It is your duty to protect his life and spiritual wellbeing." Then, the sages blessed them all and soared in the sky. The trio with utmost reverence offered Jaṭāyu a seat in their chariot and left further.

Rāvaṇa, the king of Demon clan had a sister

named Śūrpaṇakhā. She was married to a king called Khara and had two sons namely Śambūka and Sunda. Śambūka wanted to possess Sūryahāsa, a mystical sword, and despite of his father's warnings reached Dandakāraṇya to appease the deity, who possessed this sword. It is imperative for a man desirous of having the sword, to practice an austere penance for twelve years and a week, in caverns surrounded by thick bamboo trees. Śambūka practised the austere penance for twelve years and four days. As a result, Sūryahāsa sword was clearly visible in the sky. Only three days of penance were left, after which Śambūka was going to be the master of the mystical sword.

17

Sītā's abduction



Śambūka, beheaded in between bamboo trees by Lakṣmaṇa

While walking through the forest, Lakṣmaṇa reached near a cave which was surrounded by thick bamboo trees. He noticed bright rays, penetrating through the long bamboo leaves. When he looked above, he noticed the divine sword. Lakṣmaṇa just raised his hand and beheld the sword. Poor Śambūka spent the prime time of his life to possess that divine sword, and Lakṣmaṇa procured it effortlessly. With a resounding swish, he struck the bamboo trees with the newly found sword. Śambūka had hanged himself upside down on one of the branches because the austere penance demanded it. The sharp sword separated his head from the shoulder and the headless body began to dangle from the tree.

𑀩 For the past lives of Jaṭāyu refer appendix - 4.

Lakṣmaṇa was aghast at this sight, he said, "I have struck some innocent man with this sword. Woe to me for this cowardly act." He at once rushed to Rāma and narrated him what had transpired.

Rāma identified the sword, the moment he had a brief look at it. He said, "This is the divine Sūryahāsa sword. The person who was accidentally slain by you was practising penance to possess it. Unfortunately, he breathed his last before he could obtain it. His uttarasādhaka - helper has to be somewhere in the vicinity."

Śūrpaṇakhā, the mother of Śambuka, was im-

patiently awaiting for the completion of her son's penance. She was counting days, dreaming that her valiant son would possess the sword and emerge out more powerful. She was sure that her son's penance would bring him enormous success. Overwhelmed with joy, she reached the spot, where Śambuka carried out his austerities. She was bearing exotic food and fruits alongwith other things, required for a formal worship. On seeing her dear son's head slashed, shocked and horrified Śūrpaṇakhā lamented loudly. When her outburst of emotion subsided, she noticed some foot prints. She trailed them and reached where the holy trio resided.

Śūrpaṇakhā approaches Rāma

When Śūrpaṇakhā noticed the handsome features of Rāma, she was enamoured. She totally forgot that she was married and had two sons and one of them was just dead. With folded hands, she expressed her love for Rāma and requested him to marry her. Rāma replied, "I am already married to this noble woman. You may propose my younger brother who sits yonder." Struck by the arrows of Cupid, she rushed to Lakṣmaṇa and requested him to marry her. Lakṣmaṇa replied, "At first you approached my elder brother, and declared your love for him. You are therefore, like a sister-in-law to me. How can I accept you? as, a sister-in-law is a mother figure to me?"





Lakṣmaṇa's battle with Khara

Śūrpaṇakhā felt humiliated because both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa rejected her. Now she remembered that her son was no more. She rushed to her husband and informed him about the death of her beloved son. King Khara was furious and immediately summoned his army of fourteen thousand vidyādhars and approached for a battle. Lakṣmaṇa pleaded Rāma to stay with Sītā, to protect her, and obtained permission to leave for a solitary warfare.

Rāma said, "My brother, may victory be yours! My words not only express my blessings but also the enormous confidence that I have in your valour. Nonetheless, if you are in trouble, make sound that resembles the roaring of a lion, I shall immediately rush for your aid."

Śūrpaṇakhā Provoking Rāvaṇa

While the brave Lakṣmaṇa was combat- ing with the army of four- teen thousand Vidyādharas, Śūrpaṇ- akhā hurried to Laṅkā, for she required an ally to strengthen her husband's side. She met Rāvaṇa and said, "Two trespassers, who have established their sway over Daṇḍakāraṇya, have murdered your nephew Śambūka. My husband Khar, who has resolved to avenge the death of his dear son, is indulged in a fierce battle with Lakṣmaṇa. The army consisting of fourteen thousand Vidyādharas, is helping my husband to vanquish the foe, and yet, they can't succeed.... This re- minds me of Garuḍa, the son of Vinītā, who alone pounces on the legions of snakes and shreds them.

While Lakṣmaṇa is engaged in a fierce battle, not very far away sits his elder brother, en- joying the solitude in the arms of his wife. Both the brothers are egois- tic and overconfident. I beseech you, my mighty brother, to resolve to de- ception and abduct Sītā, who is married to Rāma. Haven't I told you that she surpasses all the women of the three worlds in beauty. Grab her hand. This gem amongst women is des- tined to be yours - the gem amongst warriors. If you do not obtain her woe to you !"





DILIP SONI
30-12-2000



Rāvaṇa's gross nature arouse, when he heard Śūrpaṇakhā's words. Overcome by the desire of possessing Sītā, he mounted his aircraft Puṣpaka, and reached Daṇḍakāraṇya within no time. There, he saw Sītā accompanied by Rāma. Rāma's noble face, gleaming with the spiritual radiance and valour, his muscular body, that accentuated the enormous strength within and the swiftness of his limbs, that resembled a lightening, struck terror in his heart. He ran away, trembling with fear. When he reached a safe distance, he recalled Avalokinī vidyā. The vidyā immediately appeared before him like a slave. Rāvaṇa expressed his desire of abducting Sītā, and requested the vidyā to help him. Avalokinī vidyā said, "Rāma has asked his brother to imitate the roaring of lion, in the hour of peril. If you roar like lion, the misguided Rāma will abandon Sītā and run to help his brother. This is the only way in which your task will be accomplished." Rāvaṇa requested the vidyā to imitate the roaring of a lion, and she complied. When Rāma heard the sound of roaring, which was infact made by the Avalokinī vidyā, he said to himself, "My brother possess the strength of thousands of elephants. He can never be vanquished by any warrior in the three worlds, yet, this sound indicates that he is in trouble. What should I do?" Sītā said, "Rush, my beloved master, rush and help your brother, before the fourteen thousand vidyādharas *tear him into shreds. Rāma hastened to the battle-field.* The nature, through ominous signs and indications, warned Rāma of the cruel blow of destiny that awaited him, but Rāma was so distraught that he paid no heed to them.

Rāvaṇa, abducting Sītā

After the departure of Rāma, Rāvaṇa immediately descended from his aircraft, lifted Sītā and rushed to his aircraft. Sītā was lamenting loudly. On hearing Sītā's desperate cries, Jaṭāyu said in mind, "O Sītā, the consort of my master, do not worry. Here I am to rescue you." He shouted at Rāvaṇa within, "O deceptive Rāvaṇa, why are you running away like a coward? fight with me if you can !" Saying this, he attacked Rāvaṇa.

Jaṭāyu was mad with anger and attacked Rāvaṇa with his sharp beak and strong talons. Rāvaṇa's body began to bleed profusely. Like a plough that torments the earth, Jaṭāyu's strong talons tormented Rāvaṇa's chest. Though Rāvaṇa was stronger than Jaṭāyu, he could not endure Jaṭāyu's wrath. Finally, with a mighty stroke of his sword Rāvaṇa cut off one of his wing and with a loud thud, he fell on the earth, wriggling with excruciating pain. As said earlier, Rāvaṇa was stronger than Jaṭāyu, he had the best of the weapons, Jaṭāyu had none, yet had the biggest asset called dharma. Those who believe in dharma must fight with adharma, how-

ever weak they might be, so that they can atleast derive the joy of not shirking from their duty. The scriptures mention that when the dharma is about to face extinction, or when the actions based on dharma are in peril, even the weakest of the person should resist, without consulting anyone.

King Ratnajaṭī's attack

Rāvaṇa's aircraft was now flying over the ocean. Sītā was lamenting aloud. Ratnajaṭī, the ruler of Kambudvīpa, heard Sītā's pathetic pleas. He flew in the air, with a sword in his hand. Ratnajaṭī was the king of vidyādhars. The vidyādhars are endowed with mysterious powers but Rāvaṇa was more powerful than Ratnajaṭī. By using his magical power, he shattered all the powers that Ratnajaṭī had. Finally, Ratnajaṭī lost his consciousness and fell above the mountain Kambu, situated in Kambudvīpa. However, the cool sea winds helped him regain the consciousness.

Rāvaṇa was a Prativāsudeva, the lord and master of the three division's of land. He was strong as well as intillegent, but Sītā's beauty arosed the beastly instinct that was within him and

he was compelled to abduct Sītā. In order to win over Sītā's heart, he began to address in a courteous language. He said, "Do not lament O Sītā, the most beautiful maiden in the three worlds ! I am Rāvaṇa, the overlord of innumerable kings on the earth and celestial world. When you become my most favourite consort, your domain too will extend in the earth and heaven. Everything that I possess shall naturally be yours. So far, the stars and planets in your natal chart did not favour you, therefore you remained associated with a mere mortal. Rāma should have made some gigantic achievements that would match your beauty. I shall achieve what Rāma has not achieved so far. I am so enamoured by you that I am willing to laydown all my treasures and powers at your feet and be your slave."

While addressing Sītā in a courteous tone,



Rāvaṇa bowed down. He was about to place his head on Sītā's feet, but Sītā was a true ārya woman, who considered even a casual touch made by a man other than her husband, as an action of abhorrence. She placed her feet aside and shouted, "Stay away O Savage! Your instincts have overcome your senses. How dare you glance covetously at a woman, who is not married to you. Your end is inevitably awaiting."

Soon, Rāvaṇa reached Laṅkā. His ministers had gathered at the percents to welcome him. His arrival was marked with festivities that lasted for days. Highly elated, Rāvaṇa entered Laṅkā. He took

Sītā to the Devaramaṇa garden, which was situated in the eastern side. Trijaṭa and other women belonging to the demon clan were given the charge of Sītā. Sītā sat below a red Aśoka tree. While entering Laṅkā, Sītā took a pledge that she would not consume food and water, until she received the news that both, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were safe.

When Lakṣmaṇa noticed his brother running towards him, he was surprised and asked, "Brother, why have you left Sītā alone and come here?" Rāma said, "Dear Lakṣmaṇa, when I heard the sound of roaring that you made, I perceived that you were in danger and rushed to help you." Lakṣmaṇa said, "I never made the roaring sound. I am convinced that some sly person has deceived us. Pray rush back and take care of Sītā. I will vanquish the foe and return very soon." Rāma hurried to his place and noticed that Sītā was nowhere around. He searched for her, called her loudly, but when he did not receive a response, overwhelmed with sorrow, he swooned.

Rāma, chanting 'Navakāra' to the wounded Jaṭāyu

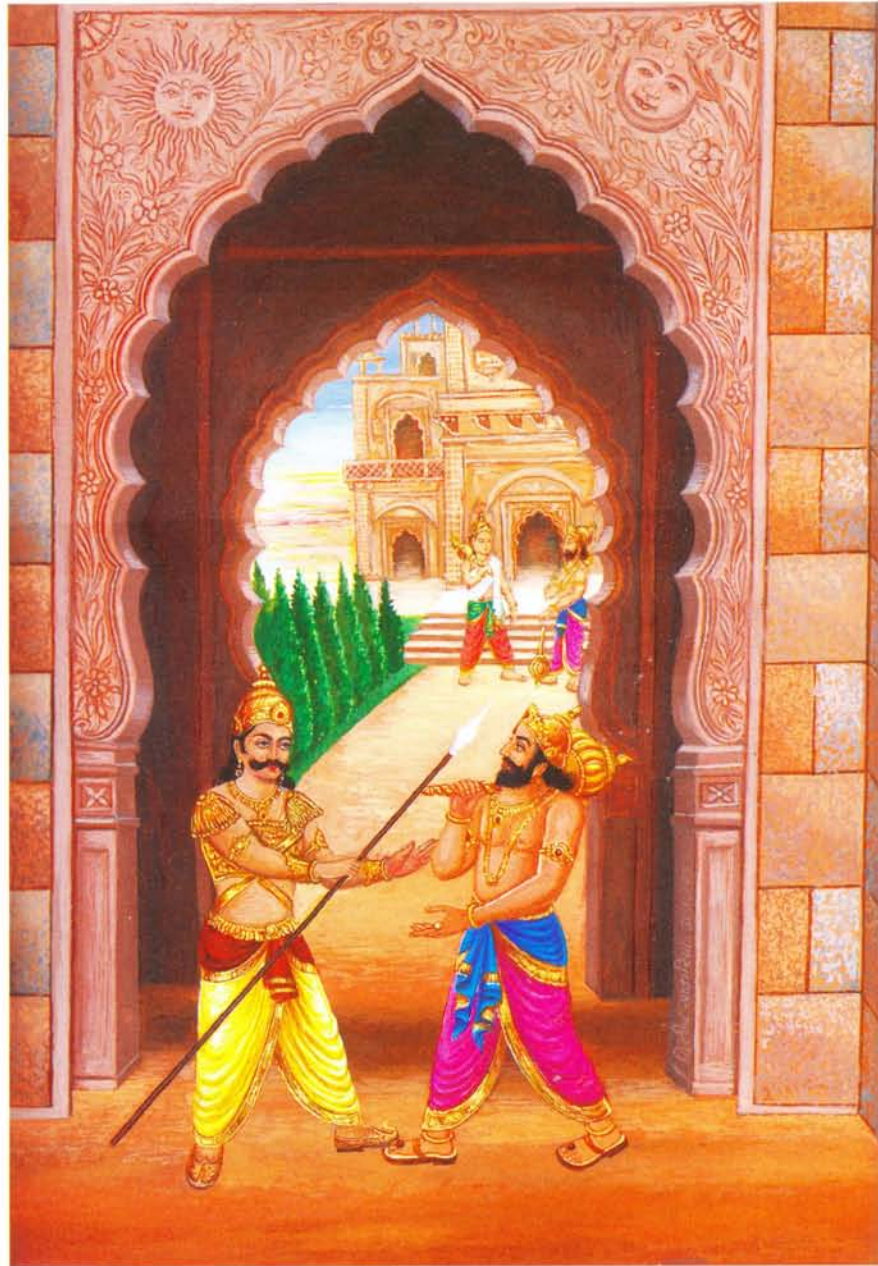
On regaining the consciousness, he noticed Jaṭāyu, who was about to breathe his last. Selfless Rāma rushed to his side, folded his hands and chanted the Navakāra Mahāmantra. The bird went in a trance when he carefully heard every syllable of the mantra, recited by the noble Rāma. With a complete peaceful heart, he breathed his last. On account of hearing the Navakāra Mantra on the deathbed, Jaṭāyu's soul was elevated to the celestial world, where he was born as a diety.



नवकार महामंत्र
 नमो अरिहंताणं
 नमो सिद्धाणं
 नमो आयरियाणं
 नमो उवज्झायाणं
 नमो लोए सब्बसाहूणं
 एसो पंच नमुक्खारो
 सब्ब पाव प्पणासणो
 मंगलाणंच सब्बेसिं
 पट्टमं हवइ मंगलं ।

After the war was over, Lakṣmaṇa took Virādha to Rāma. There, he learnt the news of Sītā's abduction. Virādha, at once, sent his warriors in quest of Sītā, but none of them succeeded. Finally, Virādha said, "If both of you honour us by visiting Pātālaṅkā, we will search for Sītā there. At the entrance of Pātālaṅkā, Sunda, the son of Khara, challenged Virādha for a duel, but when he saw Lakṣmaṇa, he was struck with terror. Somehow, he managed to escape from Pātālaṅkā and headed straight to Laṅkā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa reinstated prince Virādha on the throne of his father, King Candrodara. The new king, Virādha, shifted his residence in Sunda's abode, while Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa occupied the palace of Khara.

18 Imposter at Kiṣkindhā



The gaurd, obstructing Sugrīva

King Sugrīva, who ruled Kiṣkindhā, belonged to the 𑂔race of apes. His wife Tārā, was a unique blend of beauty and virtue. Sāhasagati vidyādhara was enticed by her beauty. One day, by using Pratāriṇī vidyā, he asumed the form of King Sugrīva and entered Kiṣkindhā. At that time, the real king, Sugrīva was entertaining himself in a garden nearby. The crooked imposter Sāhasagati was waiting for an opportunity to enter the harem. As he was about to enter the harem, the real Sugrīva reached the main gate of the palace. The gate keeper did not let him enter the palace.

Candragati, the son of Vālī, and the nephew of Sugrīva, grew suspicious of the imposter and stopped him from entering the harem. The army was summoned. The similar resemblance between the two Sugrīvas left them wonderstruck. Sugrīva's own trusted warriors and friends failed to point out the imposter, this led to a division in the army. Finally, Hanumāna was summoned by Sugrīva. He too failed to recognise the imposter. As a last resort, Sugrīva sent a missive to Rāma, requesting him to rush for his rescue. He further promised that, if, by Rāma's grace, he could get rid of the imposter, he would forever, be Rāma's slave, and aid him in his quest for Sītā. Though Rāma was afflicted with misery, he rushed immediately to help Sugrīva, for, Rāma was kindness personified. Sugrīva challenged the imposter for a duel. A fierce battle was fought between them. When they inflicted mighty blows on each other, the earth trembled with their maces. The resemblance between Sāhasagati and Sugrīva was so striking that even Rāma could not catch the imposter.

Finally, Rāma lifted his famous bow called Vajrāvarta and plucked its string. The string made such a fierce sound that the Pratāriṇī vidyā left Sāhasagati's person and ran like a scared deer. Everyone could now see Sāhasagati in his original form, trembling with fear. "Sinner Sāhasagati, how dare you cast a covetous glance on a lady married to someone else?" shouted Rāma angrily. Next moment Rāma's arrow struck Sāhasagati's heart, like lightning, and he fell on the earth, bleeding profusely, and breathed his last. Rāma reinstated Sugrīva on the throne of Kiṣkindhā. Sugrīva was ready to offer thirteen of his daughters to Rāma in marriage but Rāma refused, saying that, the quest of Sītā was his topmost priority and therefore, it wouldn't be fair for him to marry. When the news of the death of Khara and Dūṣaṇa reached Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa's wife Mandodari and the other ladies belonging to the royal family went into mourning. While they were weeping, Rāvaṇa's sister Śūrpaṅkhā too reached there. When she saw Rāvaṇa, she began to beat her breasts and lamented loudly, "Your enemy has murdered my husband, my brother-in-law and my beloved son. He mercilessly slaughtered fourteen thousand strongest vidyādhara, that were a pride of my husband. You had coronated my son as the ruler of Pātālalaṅkā. He too has been dethroned and is roaming like a pauper.... my son, who surpassed

a lion in strength and valour, who striked terror in the hearts of his enemies, is now running away like a timid rabbit. I, your widowed sister, surrender myself at your feet and beg to avenge the humiliations that I have suffered. The souls of our dear departed will not rest in peace, until you vanquish their foe"

Rāvaṇa consoled his sister, who was weeping uncontrollably, and said, "Dear Sister, are you not acquainted with the valour of your brother Rāvaṇa? I am the master of weapons, missiles and sorcery. Besides that, I possess enormous physical and intellectual strength. I am the lord of three khaṇḍa's. My name strikes terror in the hearts of dieties, stars and planets. My sister ! while sharing your grief, I solemnly assure you that the impertinent mortal, who has murdered your husband and his kin, cannot run away from my clutches. I shall never rest till I annihilate him."

His heart was tormented by the strong desire and passion that he felt for Sītā. This and his sisters plight, for her departed husband and son, ruined his sleep. He would remain wide awake throughout the night. Mandodari noticed this and asked, "My beloved master, you are the ruler of the three major khaṇḍa's. The dieties envy your wealth and power. You have everything in the world and yet, like an ordinary mortal, you seem to be worried about something. I am your wife, your better half. Your plight has ruined my happiness. Please tell me the reason of your sorrow, and let me know if I can help you." Rāvaṇa said, "In spite of me being prosperous, brave and powerful, Sītā has no place for me in her heart. This has given restlessness to my heart. This has deprived me of my sleep. If you could be my envoy, and plead to her about my suffering, she might respond to my love and offer herself to me. I have vowed in the presence of my gurus that I shall never have physical relations with any woman, against her will. If Sītā voluntarily comes over to me, I shall not only be able to satisfy my senses, but the promise given to my gurus shall also remain unbroken".

¶ Once, Rāvaṇa went to Mount Meru, where Muni Anantavīrya was preaching. After bowing and respecting him, he heard the preachings. At the end, he asked the muni, "How will I die?" The muni answered, "You are a prativāsudeva, therefore your death will be by the hands of vāsudeva, and its cause will be other women." At that time, he took a pledge that he would never have physical relations with any woman against her will.



Mandodari, persuading Sītā

No woman ever likes to share her husband with another woman, but Mandodari was a devoted and chaste woman, who considered the happiness of her husband the most important. In spite of the fact that Mandodari was a sati- high born and belonged to a noble family, she went over to entice Sītā, so that her husband would be happy. On seeing Sītā, she said, "O Noble Āryan woman, I am Mandodari, the most beloved consort of the mightiest Rāvaṇa. You are indeed a fortunate woman, because you have bewitched my husband. He, who strikes the terror in the hearts of dieties, planets, yakṣās and demons, is mad in love with you. If you accept his love, I shall be indebted to you not only in this life, but also in the lives to come. I shall be your slave for ever and ever."

Hearing this, the livid Sītā replied, "Can there be a comparison between a lion, the lord of jungle and a fox, the slave of greed: I have been married to noble Rāma, who surpasses Cupid in handsomeness and the most virtuous person in virtue. How can I ever respond to your husband's pleas, who is nothing but a slave to his passion. Your husband desires that I be his wife ! and you.... you have the nerve, the audacity to come here as his envoy, go away, for your presence here will destroy my virtue, go.... go away at once." After this, Rāvaṇa visited Sītā many times. At times he courteously expressed his desire, at times he spoke with terror in his trembling voice. He tried his best to convince Sītā, yet she remained unaffected by his approach. Then,

Rāvaṇa created the illusions of scary owls, cats, evil spirits like piśāca, vetāla and preta by using sorcery, but he neither succeeded in distracting her, nor could he strike terror in her heart. Sītā prayed the pañcaparameṣṭhi in her heart. She never thought of anything besides the pañcaparameṣṭhi, dharma and her spouse.

When Bibhiṣaṇa heard that Rāvaṇa was enamoured by Sītā and had abducted her, he decided to meet her. The next morning, he met Sītā and after greeting her, he said, "O āryan woman, your divine beauty and impeccable etiquettes testify your noble birth. Whose daughter are you? Who is the worthy man, whom you have married? Where

have you come from? Who brought you here? Have no fear, for though I am the sibling of the King Rāvaṇa, I treat a woman, married to someone else, as my sister. Pray, tell me your account." Sītā trusted Bibhiṣaṇa and narrated him everything beginning with her infancy to abduction. Bibhiṣaṇa immediately rushed to Rāvaṇa, when he learnt who Sītā was, and said, "My brother, now the destruction of the demonic dynasty is inevitable. Have you forgotten the oracle, uttered by the learned seer? Don't you remember that, he predicted the progeny of King Daśaratha and Janaka to be the cause of your death? I beseech you to return Sītā to Rāma with due honours, before he attacks Laṅkā alongwith the valiant Lakṣmaṇa, and turns it into ashes." When Rāvaṇa heard this, he began to tremble with rage. He shouted, "Coward Bibhiṣaṇa, you aren't worthy of calling yourself my brother. Aren't you aware of my physical strength and valour? I shall resort to convince Sītā to accept my love, in peaceful ways. If she still refuses, I shall resort to seduce her. If Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa attacks Laṅkā, I shall kill them, and offer their bodies to Yama- the lord of death."

Bibhiṣaṇa said, "Strange indeed are the plays of destiny ! I myself entered the sleeping chamber of Daśaratha and murdered him. Yet, he is alive- who can explain this miracle? No one can avert the destiny. My lord, you have resolved to end your life and bring a dishonour to our future generation till eternity. I am your sibling, devotee and slave. Pray give my request a thought." Rāvaṇa remained unaffected by the overwhelming appeal of Bibhiṣaṇa and decided to impress Sītā with his wealth and grandeur. He mounted Puṣpaka, his aircraft, along with Sītā and took her around Laṅkā. He showed her gardens, forests, mountains made up of precious stones, springs, rivers, and the resorts that surpassed heaven. He wanted to impress Sītā with his wealth and power. Sītā was a true sati and therefore remained unaffected by Rāvaṇa's display of wealth.

When Bibhiṣaṇa failed in convincing Rāvaṇa about acquitting Sītā, he decided to summon the council of ministers and discuss the grave situation with them. He said, "You learned council of ministers are like trustworthy family members to us and therefore, I feel no hesitation in discussing the predicament that is hanging over our heads. My brother Rāvaṇa has been foolish to fall in love with Sītā, and his passion for her is indeed so great that he has lost his power of reasoning. Like a moth that jumps on the flame and destroys itself, he is inviting his own death, by falling in love with Sītā. A man who follows false religious doctrines cannot be

won over by logical arguments, likewise, my brother has lost his senses, for he is under the spell of love that is, but fatal. Many kings including Hanumāna are the allies of Rāma, for he is just and righteous. If we act wisely, we can still avert the destiny and avoid the total annihilation of our race." Bibhiṣaṇa, later installed a vidyā called Āśālikā on the fortress of Laṅkā and also made the necessary preparations for war.

19 Hanumāna meets Sītā

Sugrīva meets Rāma

The pangs of Sītā's separation tormented Rāma to such an extent that he almost became depressed. Lakṣmaṇa was enraged when he saw this. He reached to the palace of Sugrīva and in a harsh voice said, "O unworthy Sugrīva, how dare



you become so complacent, while my brother Rāma is tormented by misery? How can you indulge into the pleasures of heaven, while my brother has become almost ill by grief? You promised him that you will personally leave kiṣkindhā in quest of Sītā, the moment you were reinstated, and here you are a slave of sensual pleasures ! Don't you remember your promise. Rise-up and join me, or else I will be forced to slay you as Sāhasagati."

The remorseful Sugrīva begged to be forgiven and immediately sent the bravest of his soldiers in quest of Sītā. They searched the islands, oceans, mountains, and innermost depths of the earth. Sugrīva himself reached Kambudvipa. Ratnajaṭi Vidyādhara thought, "Rāvaṇa has deprived me of all my vidyās and now, he has sent his trusted ally Sugrīva to kill me." Ratnajaṭi's anxiety was not baseless because Sugrīva was really a trusted ally of Rāvaṇa. In the meantime, Sugrīva came near him and said, "In spite of seeing me, you didn't arise to welcome me. You are a vidyādhara, proficient in Ākāśagāminīvidyā - the power of flying. How could you become a victim of lethargy? Have you forgotten the rules of hospitality?"

Ratnajaṭi replied, "Neither am I a victim of lethargy, nor have I forgotten the rules of hospitality. When I saw Rāvaṇa flying in his Puṣpaka aircraft along with Sītā, the beloved consort of Rāma, whom he had abducted, I challenged him, for I wanted to free Sītā from his clutches. I fought bravely, but he deprived me of all my vidyās and dropped me on the earth. Since then, the clouds of fear are hovering above my head. I therefore did not arise, in spite of seeing you. Please forgive me."



Sugrīva brings Ratnajaṭi at Rāma's feet

King Sugrīva was endowed with a generous heart. He not only accepted the apologies of King Ratnajaṭi, but also brought him to Rāma. Ratnajaṭi bowed before him. Rāma arose and embraced him. He then, smothered Ratnajaṭi with many questions, for the vidyādhara king was the last person who had seen Sītā. Ratnajaṭi described the anger, frustration and wailing of Sītā, vividly.

On receiving the news of Sītā's abduction, her brother Bhāmaṇḍala and the emperor of Pātālalaṅkā, Virāḍha joined Rāma's side along with their armies. Rāma asked Sugrīva and Bhāmaṇḍala, "How far is Laṅkā, the empire of King Rāvaṇa?" They replied, "It does not really matter whether Laṅkā is far away from here or near because, none of us can match Rāvaṇa in physical strength, and in the art of magic and sorcery." Rāma said, "I wish you would only guide us to Laṅkā. My brother Lakṣmaṇa has the strength to defeat not only Rāvaṇa, but also his entire army."

He alone is capable of slaying Rāvaṇa and free Sītā. I desire to fight a battle with Rāvaṇa, and do not really care whether I win or loose." Lakṣmaṇa said, "Show me the burrow of that cunning fox, Rāvaṇa. He has tarnished the image of the Kṣatriya clan with his obscene act. I shall cut off his head and cleanse this tarnished image. I want all of you to be the spectators of this great event."

Jāmbavāna said, "Young warrior, we know that you, with your enormous strength and mastery of warfare, can slay Rāvaṇa in a moment, but I recall the prophesy of Muni Śrī Anantavīrya, a great sage of the past, who had said, "The man who lifts up the Koṭīśīlā will slay Rāvaṇa. I therefore appeal you to accompany me to Koṭīśīlā. When you lift it, we will be assured that you alone are destined to slay Rāvaṇa." Lakṣmaṇa accepted the proposal of Jāmbavāna. Then, he flew with him and reached near the Koṭīśīlā. Lakṣmaṇa lifted the heavy stone, as if it was a flower. This indeed assured Jāmbavāna that Lakṣmaṇa alone will be the cause of Rāvaṇa's death. Together they reached Kiṣkindhā.

A senior man said, "The battles always bring about enormous loss of wealth and life, therefore, as far as possible, battle must be avoided. Wisemen have mentioned that an envoy should be sent in the camp of the adversaries. If the envoy, with diplomacy, succeeds in bringing about a truce, then war must be avoided. Let us too send our envoy to Laṅkā, who would first meet Bibhīṣaṇa, for inspite of belonging to the clan of demons, he is a man of ethics. He can persuade Rāvaṇa to free Sītā. If Rāvaṇa ignores his pleas, he might forsake him and join us. When our last efforts to avoid the war fails, we will resort to battle." The suggestion of the aged man was accepted unanimously. Sugrīva, with a permission from Rāma, sent Śrībhūti to bring noble Hanumāna, a trusted ally and true friend.

When Hanumāna received the missive from Sugrīva, he hurried at once and reached Kiṣkindhā. Sugrīva took him to Rāma and said,

"Here is Hanumāna, the worthy progeny of Pavanaṅjaya. Unparallel in strength and modesty, he has always been to my side in difficult times. Besides valour, love and courtesy, he has noble traits like truthfulness, honesty, purity of the soul, and selflessness. No one can excel him in strength and intelligence. Therefore, I think it would be appropriate to send Hanumāna in quest of Sītā."

Hanumāna replied, "I am a humble being, yet since the emperor Sugrīva has high regards for me, he is showering praise on me unnecessarily. Many of his warriors can not only match me in strength and intellect but also excel me. Yet, if you command me to start for Laṅkā, I must obey you. What should I do when I reach Laṅkā? May I lift the entire demonic clan and bring it to you, or shall just capture the boastful Rāvaṇa alongwith his kin? or may I kill Rāvaṇa alongwith his entire family and bring back Sītā to you?"



Rāma, handovering his ring to Hanumāna

Rāma said, “Hanumāna, who possesses enormous strength, is capable of doing anything, yet I request you to only find the whereabouts of Sītā. When you meet Sītā, pray hand over this ring of mine and tell her, “O Sītā, your beloved Rāma is being tormented by your separation. Rāma thinks of nothing but you. Can the soul be separated from its abode, the body? How can Rāma remain alone in your absence? O Sītā, you possess the purest traits of an ārya woman. I fear that you will end your life, if you find my separation hard to endure. I request you to control your emotions. We shall be reaching Laṅkā very shortly, and once we reach there, Lakṣmaṇa will pounce on Rāvaṇa like a lion and end his life. O Hanumāna, you will be successful in your mission, yet I shall be obliged if you bring back her crest-jewel. Seeing and touching that jewel will reduce my pangs of separation to a certain extent.” Hanumāna bowed down before Rāma and said, “Bless me and all my efforts, O Noble Rāma! I shall return as early as possible and beseech you to stay here, till I return!” with these words, Hanumāna left for Laṅkā.

On the way, Hanumāna came across the city Mahendranagarī, ruled by his grandfather in law. He recalled that the king had exiled his mother, therefore he thought, “Why not shall I take revenge of the injustice done to my mother.” Thus, he defeated his grandfather-in-law and uncle-in-law, Prasannakīrti, in a battle that followed and sent them near Rāma.

Further, Hanumāna reached the island Dadhimukha, where two munis were standing still in a penance. Three irreproachable girls were also penancing there. Impetuously, a forest - fire broke and endangered their lives. Hanumāna came to their rescue and with his power, brought the sea water and deceased the fire. At that moment, those girls achieved the vidyā's - power. Hanumāna directed their father, King Gandharvarāja with his troops to Rāma.





Hanumāna entering the mouth of Āśālikāvidyā

Bibhīṣaṇa was scared that the folly of his brother would route the entire clan of Rākṣasas. He had therefore installed a fierce vidyā called Āśālikā at the entrance of the rampart surrounding Laṅkā. This vidyā was as fierce as calamity and was surrounded by fire. She hissed like a legion of snakes. Her mouth was constantly open. She would not let any stranger in. When anyone tried to enter Laṅkā, she would just grab and swallow him. When Hanumāna reached the outskirts of Laṅkā, he came face to face with the fierce Āśālikā. When the Vidyā noticed Hanumāna, she shouted, "O foolish ! Where are you off to? I am hungry; probably the benevolent providence has sent you to be my lunch." With these mocking words, she opened her mouth wide, and in entered the valiant fearless Hanumāna alongwith his mace. The vidyā closed her mouth, all pleased with herself, but Hanumāna tore open her stomach and came out like the radiant sun, who emerges out of thick black clouds.

Hanumāna's engagement with Laṅkāśundarī

He then demolished the rampart that surrounded Laṅkā, as if it was an earthen vessel. When Vajramukha, the incharge of the rampart, saw it crashing down, seething with anger, he attacked Hanumāna. Hanumāna killed him in no time. When his daughter Laṅkāśundarī heard that her father was no more, she was blind with fury. She rushed out like a streak of lightening and attacked Hanumāna. She hit him again and again with her mace, but the mighty Hanumāna was unperturbed. With a mighty blow of his mace, he destroyed all her weapons. Surprisingly, the face of Laṅkāśundarī softened. With a coy ex-

pression on her face, she murmured, "Who are you, O the valiant of valiants? I was furious when I learnt of my father's death, but now I remember the prophery of a monk, that whosoever slays my mighty father, would marry me. I therefore request you my love, to accept my hand. I am indeed fortunate to marry you." The chivalrous Hanumāna married her according to the Gandharva rites. After sunset, he set towards Laṅkā.

Hanumāna, convincing Bibhiṣaṇa

Next morning, he met Bibhiṣaṇa in the later's abode. Bibhiṣaṇa honoured him by his exquisite hospitality and asked him the purpose of the visit. Hanumāna said, "Your brother Rāvaṇa has abducted sati Sītā against her will. I request you to have a talk



with your brother and convince him that this rash act will not only ruin his earthly life but also affect his future lives, in the ages to come. Pray, request him to set Sītā free at once, or else Rāma will destroy his entire clan.” Bibhīṣaṇa replied, “You are indeed a true devotee of Rāma, you speak nothing but the truth. I have myself urged my brother to set Sītā free and avoid the war many times, but he did not give a heed to my advice and warnings. I will try to convince him again. He might insult me, he might bruise my self-esteem, yet I will do my best for the existence of my beloved motherland, Laṅkā”

Hanumāna left the palatial abode of Bibhīṣaṇa and reached the Devaramaṇa garden. From far away, he noticed Sītā beneath a red Aśoka tree with her hair disarrayed. Her eyes were downcast and flowing with tears. Rigorous fasting for three weeks, had weakened her body, but not her resolve. Her face was pale, yet when she raised her face, her eyes resembled twin flames. She was motionless like an ardent yogini. Her mind, her thoughts and her downcast gaze was focussed on Rāma. When Hanumāna saw her, he thought, “Blessed is my life, for I have seen a Mahāsati. Now I realize, why Rāma has become disgusted by Sītā’s separation. Rāvaṇa has two kinds of retribution against his folly. Rāma will inflict a very painful death on him, and once he is dead, his soul will be tormented by the merciless retinue of Yama for a prolonged period.”



Sītā, astonished on seeing Rāma's ring.

Hanumāna used his mystical powers and made himself disappear. He came close to Sītā and dropped Rāma's ring in her palms. When Sītā saw the ring of her beloved Rāma, her joy knew no bounds.

Trijaṭā, who was guarding Sītā alongwith other sentinels, noticed Sītā's face gleaming with joy. She rushed to her master and said, “Victory to you O Rāvaṇa. Since past three weeks, Sītā's face looked pale and pathetic. Some miracle has brought her enormous joy today. I am sure that she has forgotten her husband Rāma and is willing to marry you.”

On hearing this, Rāvaṇa immediately dispatched his favourite consort Mandodari to Sītā. In spite of being humiliated by Sītā earlier, Mandodari once again went to convince her. She said, “Sītā, Rāvaṇa is endowed by not only enormous strength but also by handsomeness and wealth. He is the epitome of masculine beauty and you are the most beautiful maiden in the three worlds. Unfortunately, though he loves you the most, you do not reciprocate his love. Today, I see your face gleaming with ecstasy, and therefore venture to say, the destiny is about to shower its choicest blessings on both of you.”



I beseech you to accept the undaunted and intense love of my lord Rāvaṇa. If you accept his love, the entire harem, including me, shall be your slave for the life time.

Trembling with wrath, Sītā shouted, "Go away, If seeing the repulsive face of your husband is a sin, seeing your face is the greatest sin. In a short while from now, you will witness my beloved husband standing next to me. Your husband Rāvaṇa is about to follow the footsteps of Khara and Dūṣaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa, my brother-in-law, will fasten the noose of Yamarāja around your husband's neck." Thus rebuked by Sītā, Mandodari sadly arose and slowly walked towards the harem.

Hanumāna appeared before Sītā and offered her obeisance. With hands folded, he said, "Mother, you are indeed the most blessed maiden on the earth, for you are married to my lord Śrī Rāma. I am his humble slave and envoy. Śrī Rāma and his brother are absolutely safe, but the miseries of separation have affected him considerably. My lord Rāma had given me this ring when I set out in your quest. I shall be leaving you very soon, but once I reach Kiṣkindhāpurī, the valiant of valiants Rāma and his brother Lakṣmaṇa will attack this abode of sins. They will vanquish the foe and release you."

When Sītā heard this, tears of joy began to roll down on her cheeks. She said, "Who are you, O ocean of Strength? How did you cross this vast ocean? Where is Lakṣmaṇa and my lord Rāma. When and how did you meet him? How did he look when you saw him last? Hanumāna answered with reverence, "Mother, I am the son of Pavanaṛjaya and Aṇjanāsundarī. With the help of *Ākāśagāminī vidyā*, I managed to fly across the vast ocean. Lakṣmaṇa and your lord Rāma are at Kiṣkindhā nagarī. Being separated from you has affected both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa equally. Rāma hardly converses with anyone. He has never smiled or laughed, ever since you are separated from him. Lakṣmaṇa looks as pathetic as a calf, who has been separated from its mother. There is no joy and peace in his heart, ever since you have been abducted. Sugrīva, the ruler of Kiṣkindhā, advised your lord Rāma, to dispatch me in your quest and thus I

reached here, carrying Śrī Rāma's ring with me. Lord Rāma would like to have your crest jewel, for it would be a testimony to the fact that I really met you."

After a lot of persuasion, Sītā finally ended the fast which lasted for about three weeks. Then, she handed over her crest jewel to Hanumāna and said, "Here is the crest jewel which my lord wanted, take it carefully to Śrī Rāma. I request you to start your return journey at once, or else there would be a great trouble."

Smiling softly, Hanumāna said, "Mother, I am your infant, therefore your worry about my safety is natural, but I am a humble slave of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who can conquer the three worlds. If you order me, I shall vanquish Rāvaṇa along with his army in no time and then carry you on my shoulders to my master Rāma." Sītā said, "Dear son, I firmly believe that, no one, born of a man, demon or a celestial being can match you and surpass you in strength, but an Āryan woman considers even a slight and casual touch of man, other than her husband, worse than the sting of death. I therefore request you to hurry up and meet Rāma, so that he rescues me from here!"



Hanumāna said, "Mother, your word is a command for me, but pray, allow me to display my strength to these foolish people. Rāvaṇa considers himself to be the supreme warrior. He does not even acknowledge the strength and valour of others. I must show him a few samples, of what Rāma's slave is capable of."

Devastation of Devaramaṇa garden

Hanumāna began to devastate the garden like a wild elephant. He uprooted the heavy aśoka, bakula, mandāra, mango and banana trees and tossed them in the sky. There was a great commotion in the Devaramaṇa garden. Hearing it, the gatekeepers came rushing. They carried heavy clubs in their mighty hands and attacked Hanumāna with their clubs fiercely. He retaliated by hitting them with the trees that he had uprooted. A valiant man might be alone, he might be without weapons and he might be surrounded with troubles, yet he never loses his spirit."



Some of the gatekeepers, who somehow managed to save their lives, came rushing to Rāvaṇa and narrated him the whole incident. Rāvaṇa immediately ordered his eldest son, Akṣayakumāra, to attack Hanumāna and kill him. A fierce battle was fought between the two. Finally, Hanumāna killed Akṣayakumāra. Rāvaṇa then ordered his younger son Indrajit to arrest the miscreant. Indrajit tried all the weapons that he possessed on Hanumāna, but none of them could hurt his strongest body. Finally, he threw Nāgapāśa on him. Hanumāna could have easily freed himself from the Nāgapāśa, yet he wanted to meet Rāvaṇa face to face therefore, he did not free himself. The soldiers then dragged him to Rāvaṇa.

When Rāvaṇa saw him, he shouted, "Have lost your senses, you absurd? Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are mendicants. They eat fruits, dress up in shabby clothes and live in hut. What will they offer you, even if they are highly pleased ? Hey imbecile, you risked your life for the sake of those fools. You have been in my service in the past and now you're an envoy of the foe, therefore, the rules of Dharma prevent me from killing you?" Hanumāna said, "Since when am I your servant and since when are you my master? You used to ask us for help when you needed it and we helped you. My worthy father, Pavanaṇjaya, rescued you and your brother-in-law Khara from the clutches of Varuṇa. When the son of Varuṇa attacked you, I protected you, but now, I shall never protect you, for you have abducted a woman, who is already married to someone else! I think exchanging conversation with you is grievous sin. Who can protect you from the wrath of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa? You are a coward and so is your entire clan!". When Rāvaṇa heard the words of Hanumāna, he began to tremble with rage and said, "You have left me and joined my enemy, therefore you too have become my enemy. I must slay you, for you are a foe, but the trouble is that you are an envoy, and therefore I must not kill you, but I can punish you for your lack in polish and obscene behaviour. I shall therefore, straddle you to a donkey and parade on the streets of Laṅkā. The people will laugh at you. They will jeer and mock you." When Hanumāna heard this, he was enraged. He freed himself from the Nāgapāśa and

leapt like a streak of lightening. He kicked the crown of Rāvaṇa and broke it into pieces. Maddened by anger, Rāvaṇa shouted, "Catch him, catch that impertinent fool... arrest him.... behead him..... but the soldiers of Rāvaṇa were so terrified by the awesome Hanumāna that they did not venture to obey their master. With his mighty blows and kicks, Hanumāna demolished the loftiest palace, abodes and exquisite terraces. On reaching Kiṣkindhā, he

handed over to Rāma, the crest jewel that belonged to Sītā. Rāma was shocked with emotions, when he saw the crest jewel. For a moment he thought that he was seeing Sītā in person. He kissed the crest jewel many times and clasped it near his heart. He then embraced Hanumāna and blessed his head. Hanumāna narrated him the delighting and thrilling experience of Laṅkā.

20

The war begins

Rāma and his warriors marched towards Laṅkā. They visited Velandhara nagara on the way. The kings Samudra and Setu, who ruled this mighty kingdom, joined Rāma's army. Rāma reached Suvelagiri and defeated its proud King Haṁsaratha and encamped there. The spies of Rāvaṇa kept him informed about the slow and steady marching of Rāma's army. Rāvaṇa's generals Hasta, Prahasta, Marica, Sāraṇa began to make preparations for the war. Rāvaṇa blew his conchshell. The echos of the war march began to be heard all over Rāvaṇa's domain.

As a last attempt to avoid the war and the subsequent damage, Bibhiṣaṇa met his brother Rāvaṇa. He said, "My worthy brother and Lord of Laṅkā, abducting a woman married to someone else is the biggest sin, condemned by the religious edicts and social norms equally. Your rash act will not only cause your own destruction, but also end your dynasty forever. Your action will not let you rest in peace, even after your death. Rāma has arrived here to release Sītā, and no matter what happens, he shall release her. Pray, welcome Rāma, extend your hospitality and handover Sītā to him. If you do as advise, you shall not only save your own life, but the lives of your subjects too. But, if you have decided to behave stubbornly, you are inviting plague and pestilence on yourself and the entire clan.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa crushed Vidyādhara Sāhasagati and Khara, as if they were pests. Hanumāna is a humble servant of Rāma, but don't you remember the devastation brought about by him a short while ago? My valiant brother, you are greater than Indra in wealth and valour, yet I am sure that you will not be able to endure the wrath of Rāma. Your carnal passions and desires are going to end your life".

Before Rāvaṇa could say anything, Prince Indrajit arose and said, "Uncle, you are a disgrace

to our clan; Eversince your birth, you have been timid and coward. You are the main blemish on the reputation of our dynasty. My worthy father had vanquished Indra and captured his kingdom. If you insult him, you are inviting your own death. You are the traitor, who had deceived my father earlier.

Have you forgotten that you had vowed to assassinate both Daśaratha and Janaka. What happened to your vow? You are the dimwit, the fool, who couldn't distinguish between an effigy and a real person. You endeavoured to bite more than what you could chew. You left to assassinate Daśaratha and what did you kill? an effigy, and made us complacent with your deceit, and now you are trying in vain to strike terror in the heart of my father. Friends, relatives and wellwishers are the people, whose advice one must sought in the difficult time. You are neither a friend nor a wellwisher and relative. A valiant foe is better than a coward friend like you."

Bibhiṣaṇa said "Dear child Indrajit, I do not support the enemy, nor am I a traitor, but you are a traitor in the garb of a son. The carnal desires have blinded your father, above that, he is a victim of overconfidence and vanity. Since you support the unethical actions of your father, you are equally responsible for the future carnage. Dear Indrajit, you are still young; why are you inviting the pestilence, that will exterminate our clan for ever." Then turning to Rāvaṇa, he said, "You are going to be vanquished because of your evil desires and designs, and this worthless son of yours will be a mute witness to the deluge that you have invited." Rāvaṇa's anger was kindled and when he heard this, he raised his scimitar to attack Bibhiṣaṇa. Bibhiṣaṇa pulled a pillar and raised it in defence but Kumbhakarna and Indrajit intervened, and prevented the duel. Trembling with rage, Rāvaṇa shouted, "Even swines do not forget the hands that feed them and remain loyal to their master in the difficult times. You are worse than a swine, for you have forgotten what I have done for

you. Go away. I do not want you and your advice." Bibhiṣaṇa couldn't tolerate this insult. He left at once and decided to join Rāma's side. When Sugrīva and his warriors noticed Bibhiṣaṇa, approaching them alongwith his army, they were disturbed and annoyed, for they thought that Bibhiṣaṇa had come to fight, but vidyādhara Viśāla pacified them by saying - "Friends! we need not quail at the sight of Bibhiṣaṇa, for he is the only ethical soul in the demon clan. He tried his best to avert the war, but Rāvaṇa humiliated him in a harsh language in front of the assembly and disowned him. He therefore, seeks refuge at the lotus feet of Rāma." Bibhiṣaṇa reached the place where Rāma was seated and bowed at his feet. Rāma embraced him and said, "Peace unto you Dharmātmā Bibhiṣaṇa." Bibhiṣaṇa said, "O Rāma! I have forsaken my unjust and unethical brother Rāvaṇa for ever and now, I am willing to be your humble servant." Rāma said, "Greetings and welcome O Bibhiṣaṇa, Your presence will definately strengthen my army. I promise you that you shall be coronated as the ruler of Laṅkā after we achieve the victory."

Rāma and his forces stayed at the island Haṁsadvīpa for a week, before reaching their destination- Laṅkā. Finally, they reached the outskirts of Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa too stepped out alongwith his army.

21

Lakṣmaṇa wounded

When Rāvaṇa saw the best of his warriors dying one after another, he himself came forward to fight the foe. None of Rāma's commander could match Rāvaṇa in strength and skill. Soon they were weary. Now, Rāma decided to face Rāvaṇa but Bibhiṣaṇa urged him to tarry. He volunteered to face Rāvaṇa's instead of Rāma. When Rāvaṇa saw his own blood ready to fight him, he said, "Coward Rāma calls himself the progeny of the valiant Daśaratha, and facing me on the battlefield strikes terror in his timid heart, therefore, he sends you, a worthless creature to fight with me. Your treason deserves a death sentence, but you happen to be my brother and though you do not deserve it, I still love you and care for you. My brave brother Kumbhakarṇa and son Indrajit have been captured by the enemies. I can pierce the timid hearts of both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with only one arrow and when my task is accomplished, I will rescue my brother and son."

Bibhiṣaṇa replied, "Brother, you are mistaken. Rāma, in fact, was very anxious to punish your impertinence, yet I requested him to wait, so that I might meet you once again and convince you to stop your futile attempts. No matter what you do,

A fierce battle was fought between the two armies. Rāma's commanders Nala, Nīla and Hanumāna killed three of the most important commanders of Rāvaṇa, respectively Hasta, Prahasta and Vajrodara. When Kumbhakarṇa and Sugrīva entered the battlefield, Sugrīva lifted Kumbhakarṇa and hit him on the earth. Seeing the plight of mighty Kumbhakarṇa, Rāvaṇa hurried to the battlefield, but Indrajit requested him to wait, and attacked Sugrīva. Meghavāhana was fighting with Bhāmaṇḍala. When Indrajit and Meghavāhana came to know that they could not overcome even an ordinary soldier of Rāma's army, they decided to use a weapon called Nāgapāśa on Sugrīva and Bhāmaṇḍala in order to capture them. When Rāma came to know about this, he offered a prayer to the diety Mahālocana. Pleased with Rāma's devotion, the diety Mahālocana gave him a pestel, a chariot and a power called Simhanināda. He gifted Lakṣmaṇa with a chariot and Gāruḍī vidyā, that would break off the Nāgapāśa. Lakṣmaṇa rushed towards Sugrīva and Bhāmaṇḍala alongwith the new vidyā. The lasso of snakes that held the two commanders as captive disappeared. When the valiant Sugrīva and Bhāmaṇḍala were freed, there was an enormous uproar of joy in Rāma's army. In this battle, Kumbhakarṇa, Indrajit and Meghavāhana were held as captives.

you shall never win this war, for you are not shielded by virtue. I still request you to release Sītā and hand her over to Rāma with due honour. I am neither scared of death, nor do I desire the throne. I deserted you because I wanted my reputation to remain unblemished in the ages to come. You are my brother, thus you are adorable to me. I do not desire to be a mute spectator of my brother's assassination. Pray free Sītā now, and I will leave Rāma for ever and join your side. I shall spend the rest of my life in your servitude. I desired to convey you this and nothing else". Rāvaṇa's conscience was blinded with fury. He rebuked Bibhiṣaṇa in a harshest tone and plucking the string of his bow, attacked him. The earth began to tremble under their feet. Finally, Rāvaṇa, with outstretched hand, meditated for a moment, and a śakti named ॥ Amoghavijayā was in his hands. Dharmendra had gifted it to Rāvaṇa. It was bright and fierce like a forest fire, surrounded by innumerable flickering tongues of fire.

॥ Once, Rāvaṇa was praying on Aṣṭāpada tirtha. Unexpectedly, the string of his instrument viṇā broke down. At that time, he pulled out a nerve from his hand and tied it to the viṇā. Pleased by his devotion, Dharmendra diety gifted him with Amoghavijayā vidyā.



Rāvaṇa's duel with Lakṣmaṇa

The gigantic śakti, with her outstretched hands, appeared as if she wanted to destroy the whole universe. Rāma knew that though Bibhīṣaṇa was an able warrior, he lacked the strength to endure the śakti. He told Lakṣmaṇa, "Bibhīṣaṇa, our trusted ally is being killed with Amoghavijayā. Rush to his side and help him." Lakṣmaṇa stood in between Rāvaṇa and Bibhīṣaṇa and challenged Rāvaṇa to fight with him. Rāvaṇa said, "I have summoned this śakti not for you, but for this traitor, who, with his shameful behaviour, has disgraced the clan and brought an ill fame to Laṅkā. If you desire to protect this worthless being by offering your life, then may your desire be fulfilled." Rāvaṇa infact was trying to scare Lakṣmaṇa but inspite of Rāvaṇa's eloquence, he remained unchanged. Finally, Rāvaṇa released the śakti in the direction of Lakṣmaṇa. Bhāmaṇḍala, Sugrīva, Nala, Nīla and Hanumāna, through their weapons and missiles, tried to overpower the śakti, but it hit Lakṣmaṇa in the chest and he collapsed.

Overwhelmed by anger, Rāma attacked Rāvaṇa and deprived him of his chariot five times. Finally, Rāvaṇa thought, 'Lakṣmaṇa can never be freed from the clutches of Amoghavijayā and will surely die before the sunrise, and griefstricken Rāma would end his own life by committing a suicide. This will end the war, and victory will be mine. I must not waste my energy fighting any longer.' While Rāvaṇa was thinking such, the Sun sets. The Āryans do not fight after sunset. Rāvaṇa, therefore retreated to Laṅkā.

Rāma also returned to his camp after sun-

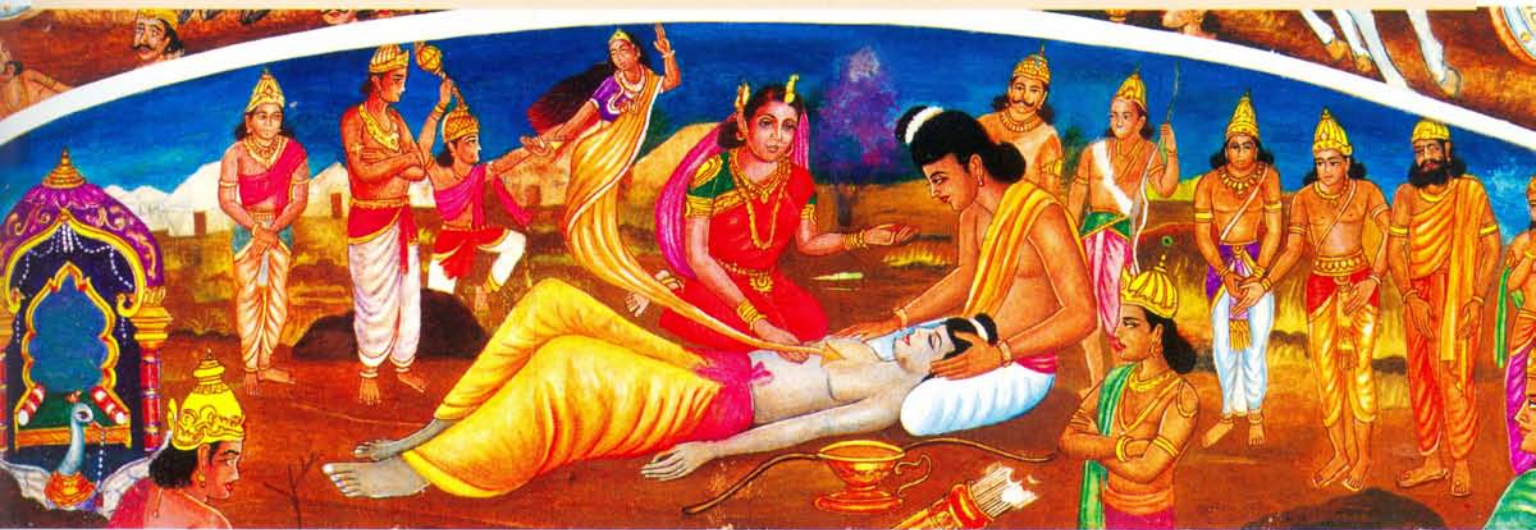
set. When he saw Lakṣmaṇa lying on the earth motionless, he swooned. Sugrīva and others sprinkled water on Rāma's face. After a while, Rāma gained his composure and began to lament. In Laṅkā, Sītā received the sad news of Lakṣmaṇa's plight. She too began to weep. A master of Avalokinī vidyā however assured her that Lakṣmaṇa would be ready to fight by next morning. Bibhīṣaṇa informed Rāma, "A man, however strong he may be, remains alive only for a night, after he has encountered Amoghavijayā. Incantations of mystic syllables and other rituals may work as an antidote. In the meantime, one of the soldier pleaded a vidyādhara to have a look at Lakṣmaṇa, who laid motionless. The Vidyādhara said, "Bharata's maternal uncle Droṇamegha has a daughter named Viśalyā. She is a pious soul, who has practiced austere penānces in her previous births. If the bathing water of pious Viśalyā is sprinkled on Lakṣmaṇa, the cruellest Amoghavijayā will be forced to leave him. When Rāma heard these words, he immediately ordered Bhāmaṇḍala, Hanumāna and Angada to reach Ayodhyā first, and then leave for Kautukamaṅgalapura of King Droṇamegha, alongwith Bharata.

Bhāmaṇḍala, Hanumāna and Angada left for Ayodhyā. They met Bharata and told him what had transpired at the battlefield. Bharata immediately left with them to Kautukamaṅgalapura. They requested King Droṇamegha to send his daughter Princess Viśalyā with them. King Droṇamegha remembered the prophery of a wiseman made long time back. It said that Princess Viśalyā will marry Lakṣmaṇa, the son of King Daśaratha. He therefore allowed Viśalyā to accompany them. From Kautukamaṅgalapura, they reached Ayodhyā and leaving Bharata there, they headed straight to the army camp.

Viśalyā, healing Lakṣmaṇa

When the pious Viśalyā touched Lakṣmaṇa, the śakti Amoghavijayā was terrorised. She hurriedly left Lakṣmaṇa's person, and as she was fleeing away, Hanumāna caught her. With folded hands, she pleaded, "I am the sister of Pragyapati Mahāvidyā. Dharṇendra had handed me over to Rāvaṇa. I have no enmity against either Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa. When Rāvaṇa requested to strike Lakṣmaṇa, I struck him. I would have certainly accomplished my task, had it not been for Viśalyā. I can't endure her power. Therefore, I have left Lakṣmaṇa's person. Pray let me go

away." Hanumāna left her and she disappeared. Viśalyā touched Lakṣmaṇa once again. Later on, Lakṣmaṇa's wounds were annointed with the paste of sandalwood and other medicinal herbs. Lakṣmaṇa arose as if he was in deep slumber. His wounds were healed. Rāma embraced him and narrated the entire account of Viśalyā. The bathing water of pious Viśalyā was sprinkled on the entire army. Rāma then asked Lakṣmaṇa to accept the hand of Viśalyā. A solemn ceremony was performed where Lakṣmaṇa married Viśalyā and other one thousand maidens.



22

Lakṣmaṇa vanquishes his foe

Next morning, when Rāvaṇa saw Lakṣmaṇa in the battlefield, he was aghast. He murmured, "I thought that we will be the victors, but with Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield, I do not think that I will succeed in freeing Kumbhakarna and Indrajit." Rāvaṇa's trusted ministers approached him and said, "Master, now we have been left with no option. Unless we release Sītā and hand her over to Rāma, the freedom of your valiant brother Kumbhakarna and son Indrajit would remain a remote possibility. We think that you must make peace with Rāma, otherwise, the end of our clan is inevitable." Rāvaṇa paid no heed to their advice and sent Sāmanta, his trusted envoy, to Rāma.

Sāmanta bowed down before Rāma and said, "I am Sāmanta, the most trusted envoy of King

Rāvaṇa. I am here to convey the missive of my master, which says, If you release my brother Kumbhakarna and son Indrajit, and allow Sītā to stay with me, I shall give you half of my empire and three hundred beautiful maidens". Rāma said "I neither desire half of Rāvaṇa's empire, nor aspire for the three hundred beautiful maidens. If your impertinent master frees the sati Sītā, I will immediately release his warriors." The envoy said, "You cannot afford to defy my master, the mighty emperor Rāvaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa managed to remain alive inspite of being attacked by Amoghavijayā because of sheer good luck, but my master has innumerable śakti's, mightier than Amoghavijayā. Why are you unnecessarily sacrificing your brother's life at the altar of the Lord of death? Why are you inviting the wrath of Ravaṇa for

the sake of an ordinary mortal woman?"

On hearing this, Lakṣmaṇa was infuriated. He said, "Foolish envoy, your obstinate master does not know the strength of his enemy. The death hovering above him has made his senses so numb that he is uttering like a child. Go and convey him these words, 'O barbarian, woe to you and your clan. Come over and fight with me, if you have courage. O timid, has the valour of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa struck so much terror in your heart that you are now eager to talk of peace. No matter what you do, you cannot elude the death that is hovering above you and your cursed domain.'" The envoy passed on this message to Rāvaṇa. After hearing it, he summoned the minsters. The wise minsters once again advised him

to release Sītā and warned him, "If you still insist on acting stubborn then death and devastation will be the reigning supreme in Laṅkā shortly."

Depressed and desolate Rāvaṇa decided to perform austerities in order to appease Bahurupiṇī vidyā. He visited the temple of Lord Śrī Śāntinātha. He prostrated before the holy icon and sang praises of the lord. Then, he sat on a stone gem with counting beads in his hand. Mandodarī ordered Yama to proclaim a royal order throughout Laṅkā. The order said, "The king desires that counting from now, the citizens of Laṅkā will spend two days in worship and prayers. Those who break the royal command will be put to death." The spies of Sugrīva brought this news to their master. Sugrīva rushed over to Śrī Rāma

and said, "My master, we can tackle Rāvaṇa as long as he does not obtain the Bahurupiṇī vidyā. If he succeeds in this penance, we will never be able to vanquish him. It is imperative to create obstacles in his penance." Rāma replied, "Rāvaṇa is crooked by nature. He may create obstacles in the penance of others. I cannot do it and I would not do it."

Rāvaṇa, penancing for Bahurupiṇī

When Rāma refused to obstruct Rāvaṇa's penance, Aṅgada and other warriors reached the secret place, where Rāvaṇa was involved in the austere penance. By using magical spells, Aṅgada had made himself and others invisible. On reaching his destination, Aṅgada said, "Rāvaṇa, I can clearly see the terror of Rāma that is visible in your eyes. You call yourself a devotee of Lord Śāntinātha and yet like a non-believer, you indulge into mystical rituals. I condemn you for your deplorable practice. You, like a coward, abducted Sītā in Rāma's absence. See, what am I doing to your wife." Saying this he began to drag Mandodarī by pulling her hair. She began to lament and begged Rāvaṇa to rush for her rescue, but he was so engrossed in his worship that he did not even lift up his head....



Pleased with Rāvaṇa's undaunted devotion, Bahurupiṇī vidyā appeared in person; illuminating the night skies by her effulgence. She said, "I bless you my child Rāvaṇa. I am pleased with your devotion and perseverance. I can enchant the entire universe. Your foe Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are insignificant non-entities before me!" With folded hands Rāvaṇa said, "Mother, I am aware of the enormous power that you possess. Yet, I venture to say that your help is not required now. When I remember you in the hour of peril, please rush and be by my side for help." "So be it" said the vidyā and disappeared.

When he learnt about the humiliation of Mandodari, he said, "Who is Aṅgada? Probably some worthless soldier of the idle Rāma. Anyway, he will shortly be sacrificed at the altar of Yama, the god of death." Rāvaṇa finished his daily oblations and reaching to the Devaramaṇa garden told Sītā, "I have been very humble, honest and courteous to you all these days. You have humiliated me and the queen in the rudest way which amounts to treason.

I could have put an end to your existence in a minute. Yet, my love for you is so great that I am reluctant to take such drastic steps. Now, I have no alternative left. I shall first kill your worthless husband and then break my vow. I shall make you mine, against your will"..... when Sītā heard this, she swooned, and regaining consciousness she said "Do as you desire Rāvaṇa, if you kill the valiant Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, I shall fast unto death. I prefer painful death more than the luxuries of your palace." When Rāvaṇa heard this, his heart was filled with remorse. He thought, "What is impossible for Rāvaṇa, the conquerer of three lands? I can cultivate in a barren land, but cannot make this frail woman, love me. She is indeed a true Āryan woman! I have stooped to such lower depth to obtain her that people will detest me for ages. I have tarnished the fame of my forefathers. I shall however capture both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as prisoners of war and then hand over them Sītā. I shall, by this action, be salvaging the honour and reputation of both, my ancestors and my clan.





Lakṣmaṇa's duel with Rāvaṇa

Next morning, Rāvaṇa witnessed many ominous signs that foretold a grim future for him, yet he entered the battlefield. Lakṣmaṇa who was eagerly awaiting for his arrival, attacked him with vengeance. Lakṣmaṇa's brilliant archery filled Rāvaṇa's heart with awe and shock. At this critical moment, he pleaded Bahurupiṇī vidyā to rush for his help. At once, innumerable Rāvaṇas came rushing to Lakṣmaṇa, wielding their weapons from east, west, north, south above and below. Lakṣmaṇa mounted the eagle and flew all over the battlefield, defending himself and counterattacking Rāvaṇa. He incessantly showered arrows at Rāvaṇa. Seeing his valiant and indomitable spirit, Rāvaṇa's heart was filled with despair and despondency. Finally, he folded his hands and concentrated his mind on the Sudarśana disc, the emblem of Prati-vāsudeva. Next moment, the great disc was in his hands. Rāvaṇa spun the disc in order to give it a momentum and directed it towards Lakṣmaṇa. The disc circumambulated reverently around Lakṣmaṇa and rested in his right hand. Lakṣmaṇa was a Vāsudeva and therefore, the disc couldn't hurt him. Rāvaṇa now remembered the words of the seer. Bibhiṣaṇa, once again approached him and pleaded, "Brother it is still not too late. Please promise Rāma that you will release Sītā now!". Rāvaṇa shouted angrily, "Go away you traitor, so what if the Sudarśana cakṛa fails? I can still, with a mighty punch, kill Lakṣmaṇa and win the war." Lakṣmaṇa spun the disc and hurled it at Rāvaṇa. The disc, with a fierce sound, hit Rāvaṇa and dismembered his chest. Like a huge tree, axed by a woodcutter, Rāvaṇa fell on the earth and breathed his last. There was an uproar of victory in Rāma's army. The dieties, from their lofty abodes, showered flowers on Lakṣmaṇa. Rāvaṇa's soul left the body and reached the fourth hell.

Kumbhakarna becomes an ascetic

When Bibhiṣaṇa saw his brother falling on the earth and gasping, he was overcome by grief and remorse, he wanted to end his own life but Rāma grabbed the dagger which he was about to plunge in his own heart. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa then escorted lamenting Bibhiṣaṇa and Mandodari to Rāvaṇa. They consoled Bibhiṣaṇa saying, "War is the dharma for a Kṣatriya. Your brother was a true Kṣatriya. He never avoided war. He fought like a true warrior and died like one. He embraced death on the battlefield."

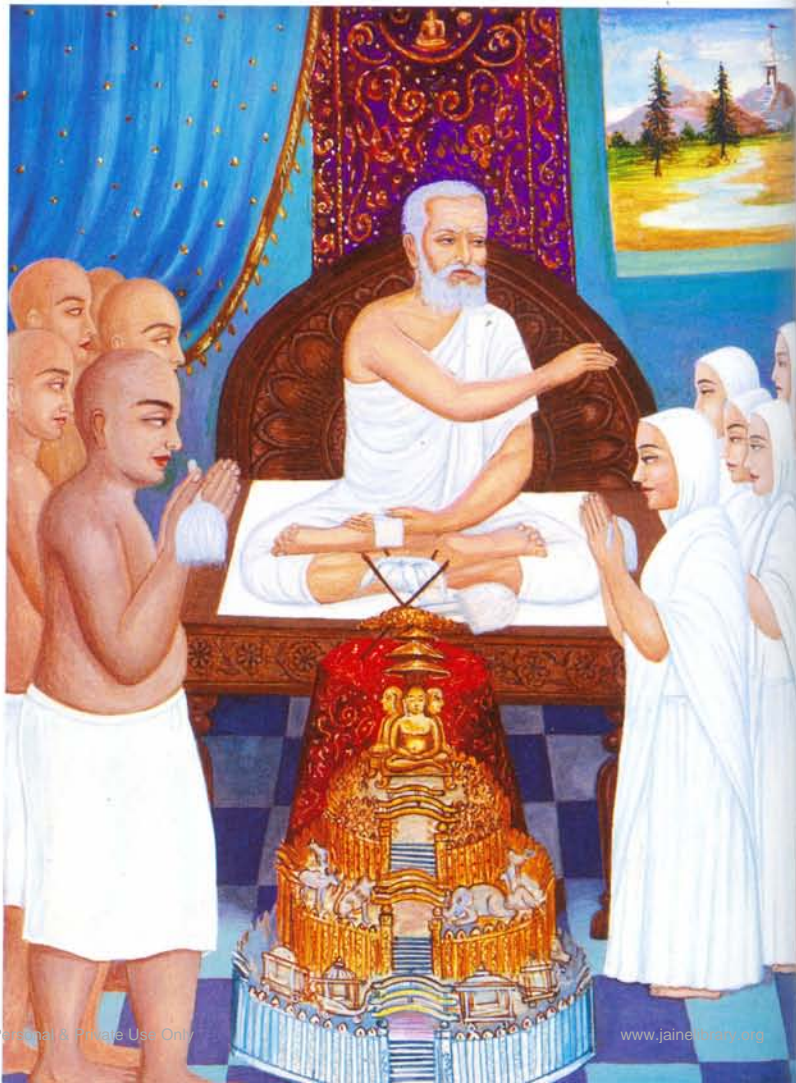
When two Kṣatriyas fight, the victory of one and death of another is inevitable. The one who wins the battle, receives the adulation of mortal men, but the one who dies in the battlefield, receives the adulation and applause of the warriors. The dieties will remember and praise the valour of your brother. Now, let us perform his funerary rites and the rituals that will follow the funeral." He then released Kumbhakarna, Indrajit and the other warriors.

Weeping unconsolably, Bibhiṣaṇa, Kumbhakarna and Indrajit applied Gośirṣa sandalwood paste and camphor paste to the mortal remains of Rāvaṇa. After elaborate rituals, Rāvaṇa's body was consigned to the fire. More rituals followed the funeral. Rāma addressed Bibhiṣaṇa, Kumbhakarna, Indrajit and Meghavāhana, "We fought this battle to free Sītā. I do not desire money and power. I do not wish to annex Laṅkā to the empire of Bharata. I return you the land and everything that the victory has conferred upon me." Kumbhakarna and Mandodari replied, "War and death are the inseparable aspects of Kṣatriyas life. Yet, the death of a near and dear person has shattered our souls. Life is ephemeral, death is inevitable, only salvation is eternal. We do not desire the power, pleasures and pomp. We want to be ascetics and strive for emancipation."

The hectic pace of modern times has made us so insensitive that although we encounter and dodge death in our daily life, we do not stop and give a thought to it. Everyday, we hear or read about the sad demise of some very well known, little known, or totally unknown persons, yet we do not realise that what has transpired with someone today, is bound to be our fate sometime in the future. Our scriptures say, "The body and its existence is ephemeral, the power and wealth are not the true friends of a soul. The death is nearing us every minute but we must not let these uncertainties dishearten us, and attempt to ac-

quire dharma and virtue. The best way of acquiring virtue is to embrace the ascetic life."

Most of us consider life after death a mere hogwash. We believe that we are born only once, and must enjoy the life thoroughly. This is what the media preaches. Earthquakes, floods, accidents, bombs that bring away unprecedented devastation are discussed with relish at the dining tables. We mutter a few words of sympathy for them. We send in money medicines, and discarded clothes to help them. If we are atheist, we pray for their souls but our compliance or probably timidity does not make us think about our death. Kumbhakarna, Indrajit, Meghavāhana and Mandodari belonged to the demonic clan and yet, the death of Rāvaṇa helped them reach the loftiest realms. They were indeed noble souls. We call ourselves human being and yet, we are ruled by the sensual pleasures. We see the great cosmic dance of death everyday on televisions, read about it in the newspaper and yet, we embrace the ephemeral and ignore the eternal.....



Kumbhakarṇa and others embrace an ascetic life

When the dual nature of the world is understood by a person, he seeks solace in only ascetic life, and the merciful providence never lets him down. Kumbhakarṇa and the others realised the transitory nature of the world. They were eagerly waiting for the arrival of some lofty soul, who would lead them to the eternal path, and their virtue brought Muni Aprameyabala in the garden called Kusumāyudha. The sage had mastered on the four branches of knowledge. He received the ultimate Kevalagyāna during his sojourn at the Kusumāyudha garden. The dieties descended to celebrate the joyous occasion. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa and others rushed to pay their respects to the sage. Indrajit and Meghavāhana were so impressed by the knowledge and the oratory of the sage that they asked him questions related to their former lives. ५

When they heard, how their souls had travelled from one body to another since ages, they reached the summit of disgust. Finally, Kumbhakarṇa, Indrajit, Meghavāhana and Mandodari embraced the ascetic life.

24

Rāma enters Laṅkā

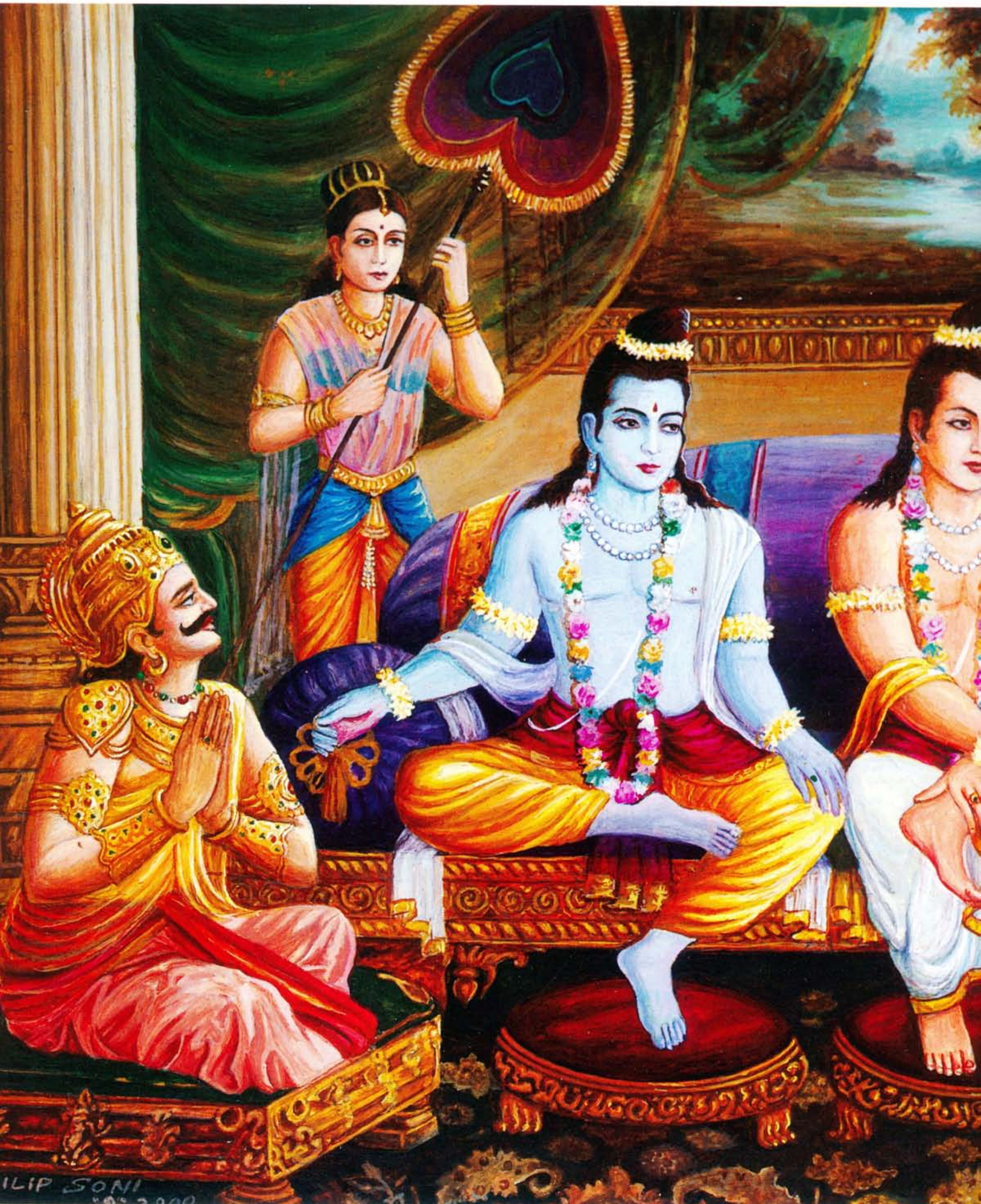
Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the commanders ceremoniously entered Laṅkā. They received a spontaneous welcome from the citizens of Laṅkā. They straightaway rushed to the Devaramaṇa garden and met Sītā, who was eagerly waiting for their arrival. Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumāna bowed down to Sītā. From there, they rushed to the palatial temple of Lord Śāntinātha. Bibhiṣaṇa had already made arrangements for an elaborate pūjā. Best of the flowers, fruits and sweets were arranged at the altar. Saffron, sandalwood paste and uncooked rice was placed in the golden bowls. Fragrant insenses and exotic lamps added an enigmatic touch to the sanctum sanctorium. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā and others performed an elaborate pūjana. From the temple, they went to the royal court. Pointing at the exquisite throne, Bibhiṣaṇa said, “Laṅkā, the island which belonged to the demonic clan, is now yours. Pray, ascend this throne and take what is rightfully yours. I would prefer to be a soldier in your army. I appeal you as a citizen of Laṅkā and as a sole survivor of the royal family.”

Rāma said, “Have you forgotten what I promised you when you joined my side. I had promised you that the throne of Laṅkā will be yours after our victory. I think your selfless devotion towards me has inspired you to speak thus, but I shall not rest until your coronation.” Rāma summoned the high priests and selected an auspicious day for the coronation. After the grand coronation, they went to the palace of Rāvaṇa.

King Sirmhodara and others, who had promised to give their daughters to Lakṣmaṇa, reached Laṅkā with their retinue. Lakṣmaṇa was married to those Princesses.

Indrajit and Meghavāhana, who had embraced the austere life of mendicants, performed rigorous penance and ultimately found emancipation at Vindhyācala. This place later on became famous as Megharatha. The sage Kumbhakarṇa found emancipation on the banks of river Narmada. This place became famous as Pṛṣṭarakṣita.

At Ayodhyā, Kauśalyā and Sumitrā were very tense and worried because they hadn't received any news of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. One day, Sage Nārada arrived Ayodhyā. When he met Kauśalyā and Sumitrā, he asked them the reason of their worries. They told him the entire account beginning from the departing of Rāma to the Viśalyā's journey to Laṅkā. They were aware that a great battle was being fought between Rāma - Lakṣmaṇa on one side and the demon king Rāvaṇa on the other side, but they didn't know whether Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were dead or alive. They were unaware whether the battle was over yet. They knew about Rāvaṇa's strength and his mastery over magic and withcraft, but they did not know whether Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa could endure the wrath of Rāvaṇa. When the Sage Nārada heard about the plight of Kauśalyā and Sumitrā, he promised them that he would visit Laṅkā personally, and bring Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā back.



ILIP SONI



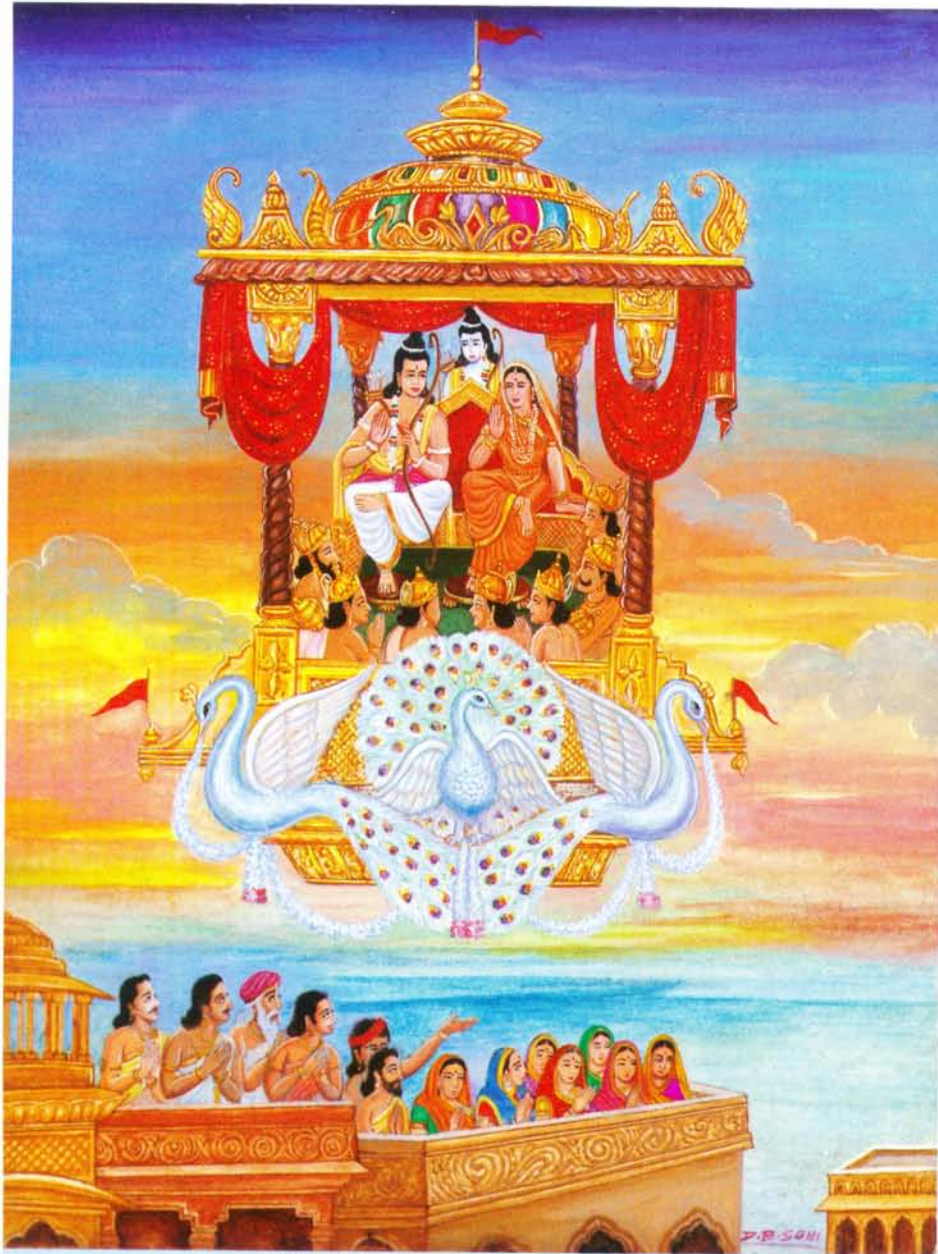
Nāradaji's arrival at Laṅkā

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā spent six happy years at Laṅkā. When the sage Nārada arrived at the court of King Bibhīṣaṇa, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa personally welcomed him. Nārada revealed to them that their mothers Kauśalyā and Sumitrā were worried about them.

When Rāma heard this, he said, "O great king Bibhīṣaṇa, your devotion and hospitality indeed lured us to such an extent that we have stayed here for six long years, enjoying the luxurious life, while our mothers were spending sleepless nights. I hope the pangs of separation do not end their lives, before we meet them. O king, pray, do not think that your hospitality had any flaws that made us think of Ayodhyā, but we must leave. Kindly grant us the permission."

Bibhīṣaṇa said, "Rāma, when you leave, we will once again be subjected to darkness and despair yet, I would not like you to prolong your stay, for I am aware of the pangs experienced by mother Kauśalyā and Sumitrā. Yet, I beseech you to extend your sojourn here for sixteen days more. My sculptors and artists, till then, will transform Ayodhyā into Alkānagarī of Kubera. Pray, stay here for another sixteen days, it will also prepare us to live without you, your esteemed brother and consort Sītā."

The sage Nārada hurried Ayodhyā and informed everyone that Śrī Rāma will shortly be arriving with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. The joy of Kauśalyā and Sumitrā knew no bounds, when they heard this. In the meantime, the artisans from Laṅkā reached Ayodhyā and within sixteen days, transformed Ayodhyā into the domain of Kubera, Alkāpurī.



The trio's arrival at Ayodhyā

On the sixteenth day, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā mounted Puṣpaka, the aircraft and left for Ayodhyā. King Bibhiṣaṇa and all the citizens of Laṅkā had gathered to bid them farewell. At Ayodhyā, Bharata and Śatrughna mounted elephants and left to receive Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. When they saw Puṣpaka at the horizon, they descended the elephants and walked bare feet.

When Rāma saw Bharata and Śatrughna, he too descended from the aircraft. Bharata and Śatrughna fell on Rāma's feet and wept uncontrollably. Rāma embraced them and offered them seats in the aircraft. The artists played enchanting music in the lofty skies as well as on the earth. Ayodhyā was reverberating with the beatings of drums, gongs and cymbals. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā greeted the people, who had stormed to receive them with folded hands, and rushed to the palace.



Rāma and others pay homage to their mothers

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā prostrated at the feet of Kauśalyā, Sumitrā, Suprabhā and Kaikeyī. Viśalyā and the other girls touched the feet of their mothers-in-law. The mothers-in-law blessed them and wept for a while. No one could speak a word. Then, Kauśalyā praised Lakṣmaṇa, for forsaking the pleasures and serving Rāma and Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa praised Rāma and Sītā, who loved him like their own child. Lakṣmaṇa rebuked himself for killing Śambuka accidentally.

He said that, his curiosity to grab the Candrahāsa sword led to the death of Śambuka, which subsequently unfolded a new drama. By the blessings of God, guru and mothers, they finally vanquished Rāvaṇa and returned to Ayodhyā. Bharata arranged festivities in honour of the virtuous trio.



Bharata and Kaikeyī embraces ascetic life

One day, Bharata approached Rāma and said, "I desired to be a mendicant and seek the salvation and yet, our virtuous father and you ordered me to rule Ayodhyā. By the grace of God and your blessings, I endeavored to rule this empire to the best of my abilities, but now, I am fed up of the materialistic world, and wish to hand over to you, what is rightfully yours. I beseech you to ascend the throne and accept the crown and the scepter, so that I would be free to renounce the world and live the simple life of an ascetic."

When Rāma heard this, his eyes were full with tears. He said, "Bharata, my beloved brother, do you think that the desire to be the ruler has brought me back to Ayodhyā ? I am here to be with my mothers and you. Bharat! if you renounce the throne and the world, you are renouncing us as well. We have met after such a prolonged period of separation and now you wish to leave us ? How will we survive if you leave us ? Previously, you had accepted the scepter to honour my word. I command you again to take care of this empire."

Bharata's aquatic sports with the royal women

When Bharata heard this, he was ready to leave, but Sītā, Viśalyā and the other women from the harem urged him to join them in aquatic sports. The women did this to divert Bharata's mind from his decision. Though Bharata wasn't interested, he agreed to join the royal women in their aquatic sports.

Having completed the sport, he was standing at the banks of the lake. An elephant named Bhūvanālakāra reached there. Sweet smelling nectar oozed from his forehead, which made him restless. To everyone's surprise, the restless and aggressive elephant calmed down when he saw Bharata. In the meantime, Sage Deśabhūṣaṇa and Sage Kulabhūṣaṇa arrived there, who possessed Kevalagyāna. Rāma rushed in order to receive them. He asked, "Why this aggressive elephant became totally docile when he saw my brother Bharata ?" The Muni explained how the elephant was associated with Bharata since many lives^५. On seeing Bharata, the elephant remembered his previous lives and thus became docile. When Bharata heard the account of his former lives, he became more detached and Rāma granted him the permission to take the vows of initiation.



Coronation of Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā abandoned

After King Bharata renounced the world and accepted the vows, many noble kings and vidyādhars came over to Rāma and urged him to handle over the responsibilities of the kingdom as a king, but Rāma said, "The auspicious signs, that our mothers dreamt of, indicate that Lakṣmaṇa will be a Vāsudeva. It is therefore advisable that he be coronated as a king." Lakṣmaṇa was coronated as a king on Rāma's insistence. He was also declared to be the Vāsudeva. Rāma was declared as Baladeva. Vāsudeva Lakṣmaṇa handed over the Rākṣasadvīpa to Bibhiṣaṇa, Vānaradvīpa to Sugrīva, Pātālalaṅkā to Virādha and Hanupura to Pratisūrya. Bhāmaṇḍala was handed over Rathanupura. Hanumāna was given Śrīpura and finally, Śatrughna was given Mathurā. Lakṣmaṇa was married to sixteen thousand women. Viśalyā, Vanamālā and four others were his favourite consorts. Rāma had four ॥ consorts; viz. Sītā, Prabhāvatī, Ratiniḥā and Śrīdāmā.



Bharata and Kaikeyī achieve omniscience and salvation

Many other kings expressed their wish to follow the footsteps of Bharata. Finally, alongwith other kings, Bharata accepted the vows of Dīkṣā. Along with three crore sages, he attained salvation at Siddhagiri mahātīrtha. His mother Kaikeyī too embraced the austere life of an ascetic. She practiced penance and other austerities and finally both of them achieved Kevalagyāna and salvation.



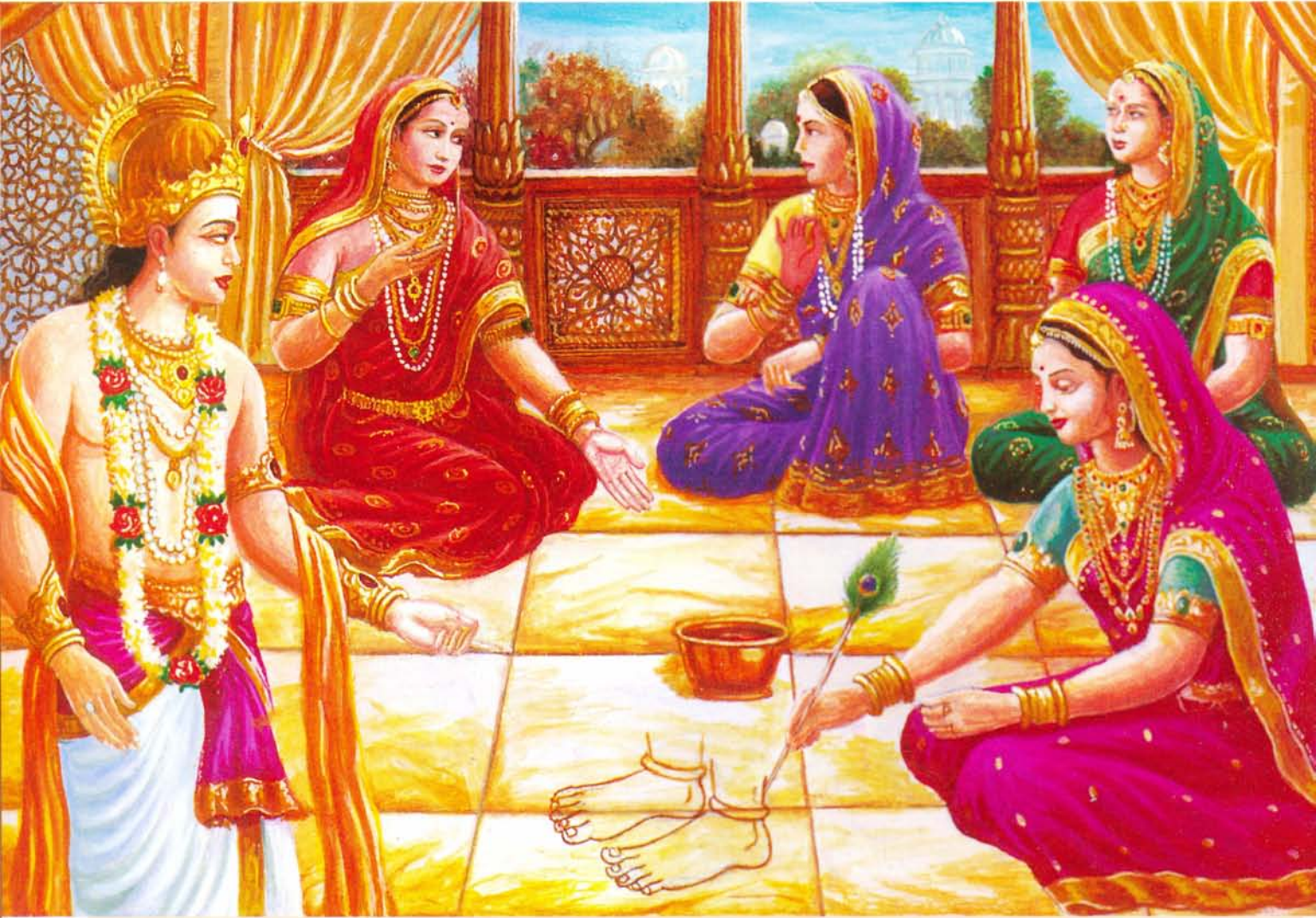
Sītā's Dream

One night, Sītā dreamt in the late hours of night that two eight legged animals descended the divine aircraft and entered into her womb, through the mouth. When she woke up, she vividly described the dream to Rāma. He said, "Dear, your dream indicates that you are about to deliver two valiant warriors."

॥ Many other Rāmāyaṇas also mention that Rāma had many queens. Refer Uttara Purāṇa (68 - 47/48/49), Mahā Purāṇa (70-13)

Pregnant Sītā became the dearest consort of Śrī Rāma. Therefore, the other queens burnt with jealousy. Jealousy is detrimental to friendship or any other human relation. It is the biggest obstacle in

the path of the one, who seeks salvation. Jealousy separated Anjanāsundarī from her husband for twenty-two long years.



Sītā, sketching Rāvaṇa's feet

One day, the co-wives asked Sītā, "Was Rāvaṇa, who abducted you, a very handsome person ? Could you draw a picture of Rāvaṇa, so that our curiosity can be satisfied ?". Sītā said, "I have never seen his face, therefore I can't draw the picture. I have seen only his feet." The co-wives said, "Then pray, make a picture of his feet, we are too eager to have a look at them." Sītā was righteous, humble and was very

simple person by nature. She never knew that the sly co-wives were hatching a conspiracy. At once, she ordered the maid to fetch colours and quills. While she was making a picture of Rāvaṇa's feet, Rāma entered the harem. The co-wives rushed towards him and said, "Look, your favourite consort has still not been able to forget Rāvaṇa. If you need an evidence, look at the picture of his feet, sketched by her."

When Rāma saw the picture that Sītā was making, he at once knew that it was actually a conspiracy. He did not rebuke her, nor did he change his attitude towards her. Her co-wives, through their trusted maids, spread a rumour that Sītā still loved Rāvaṇa. Such baseless rumours can be spread easily. Very soon, people were seen gossiping about Sītā and her character. The Rāmāyaṇa versions belonging to non-Jains refer a washer-man, who raised questions regarding Sītā's character and her relations with Rāvaṇa.

Rāma and Sītā in a garden

When the spring arrived, Rāma asked Sītā to retire to a garden called Mahendradityāna. This garden was famous for its flora and fauna. Sītā said that she desired to worship Arihanta Prabhu. Any desire expressed by a pregnant is related to the unborn child, for, it straight away affects the foetus. Rāma ordered the gardeners to decorate the garden with exotic flowers and make adequate arrangements for pūjā. Sītā performed an exquisite pūjā in accordance with the religious rules. Later, they watched the spring festival, where the citizen broke into spontaneous revelry along with the devotion to Arihanta Prabhu. When the royal couple was watching the Vasanta-festive, suddenly, Sītā's right eyelid began to twitch and flicker. She indicated this to Rāma. He said, "This sign indicates ill luck that is about to befall on you."



Sītā said, "Haven't I reattributed for all my sins during my separation from you and my stay at Laṅkā." What can be more ominous than your separation?" Rāmā said, "Do not get disheartened O Devī, joy and woes are the results of our deeds in the past. No matter what we are, we have to pay for all our deeds. Deeds of merit bring joy and evil doings bring woes. Pray, retire to your abode and spend your time in the worship and adoration of the Arihanta paramātmā. Inauspicious karmas come to an end by worship and charity."

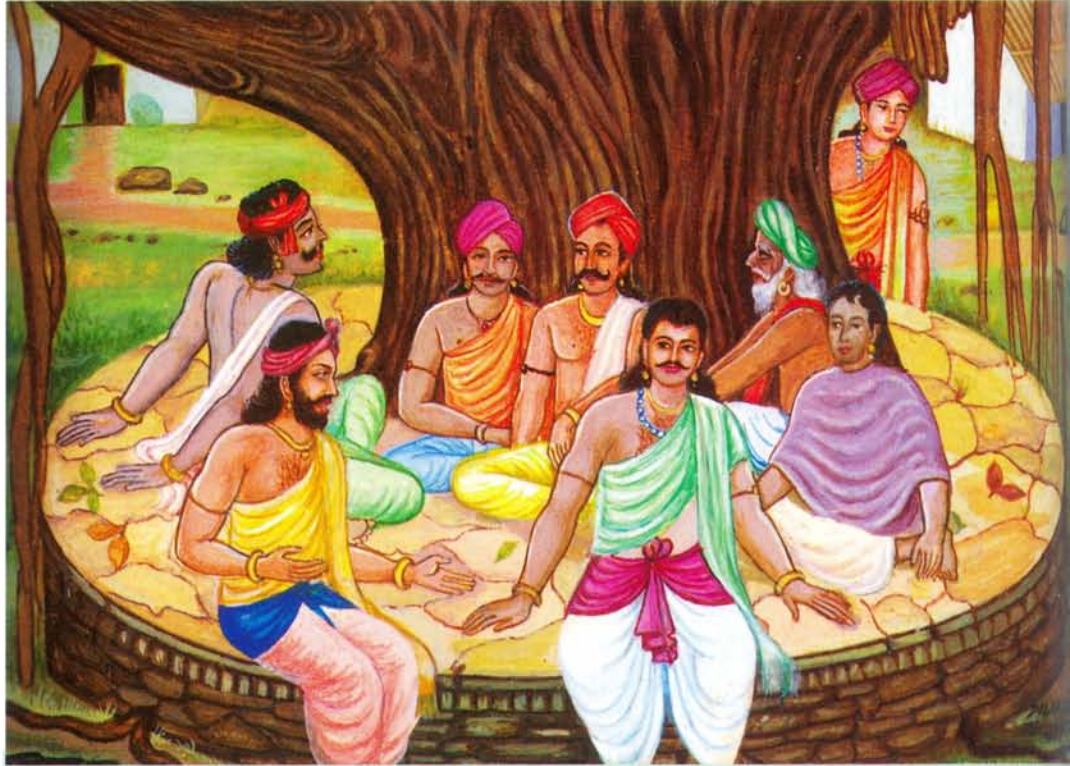
Rāma had a few trusted spies like Vijaya and Sūradeva. Every evening, they would travel incognito through Ayodhyā. They would keep Rāmā abreast with everything that transpired in the empire. A few days after the spring festival, both Vijaya and Sūradeva came to visit Rāmā. They were trembling with fear and appeared disturbed.

Rāmā assured them that their life was safe, no matter whatever they told him. After much persuasion and coaxing, Vijaya said, "Lord, I have no words to report what the people are discussing at villages, hamlets and cities. Yet, since you have assured me the safety of my being, I must tell you everything. The people are raising questions regarding the moral aspect of devī Sītā's character. They say Rāvaṇa had abducted devī Sītā against her will. She stayed at Laṅkā for a prolonged period against her will. She might or might not have accepted Rāvaṇa's amorous proposals, but Rāvaṇa was a lewd person. Beautiful women were his weakness. Probably, he must have threatened her, enticed her, mentally tortured her, or physically forced her into accepting his love, or he might have simply imposed himself and had relation with her against her will, for desirous have no morals.

The learned say, the character of a woman and luck of man may change any moment. Even the dieties, who master various branches of knowledge, cannot predict the character of woman and the future of a man. Their arguments have no grain of truth, but they are logical. Even a false comment, accepted at mass, appears to be true. This should not be ignored

and delt seriously, as it can malign the fame of Sūrya dynasty."

When Rāmā heard this, his sorrow knew no bounds. He was about to lament, but a man of impeccable background does not express his emotions in public. In a very composed voice, he thanked the spies and asked them to retire. When the spy Vijaya left, Rāmā thought, 'Woe to my birth and upbringing in the royal family.' Though enormous powers are conferred on the kings, they are in fact ordinary menials, who serve the lowest of the subjects. A true devotee is scared of the wrath of a deity, a king likewise cannot afford to offend the feelings of his subjects. Sītā is loyal to me. She is a sati and has no blemish, yet she is bringing me illrepute. I can endure it on personal level, but how can I tarnish the name of Sūrya dynasty?"



Rāmā, spying in disguise

One night, Rāmā left the palace, disguised as a commaner, so that he could hear the gossip of the people. He heard a group of people questioning the character of Sītā. They were saying, "A frail women can be forcibly abducted by a strong man, how can we believe that Rāvaṇa would have controled himself for so long and retain the purity of Sītā ? Surely, Rāvaṇa must have forced Sītā to have relations with him and look at Rāmā, he still hasn't left her. He is indeed blinded by her beauty and does not care for the glory of Sūrya dynasty. A member of royal family cannot just ignore the public opinion, shame to Rāmā." When Rāmā heard this, his heart was filled with gloom and despair. He returned to the palace and dispatched the spies for their routine rounds.

The spies again returned to the palace in the late hours of night, but when they reached Rāma's sanctum, they found that King Lakṣmaṇa was also present there. When Lakṣmaṇa heard about the public opinion, he was annoyed. Trembling with wrath, he shouted, "For anyone who dares to question the purity of mother Sītā, I am Yamarāj, the God of death. I shall step out and cut those wagging tongues." Rāma said, "Dear brother, muds lingering on Sītā's character is a frequent event in our empire. The spies have time to time informed me about this occurrence. I have myself stepped out in disguise and heard people not only criticizing Sītā, but also hurling abuses at me as well. It is time to denounce Sītā. For a man of our upbringing, nothing is more valuable than the family reputation. Moreover, the surgeons prescribe amputation of a limb etc when the gangrene sets in. Sītā is an inseparable part of my being, but her presence is poisoning my reputation. If I divorce her, I will be incomplete, imperfect, but I am forced to forsake Sītā, to guard the fame of our dynasty. As it is said, when an event of total destruction arises, a wiseman saves on half and carries on his work. Total destruction is really unbearable. In fact, life without Sītā is worse than death, but I will have to sacrifice my love and personal happiness at the altar of our family's name." Lakṣmaṇa said, "Pray do not forsake Sītā because the people find her moral character dubious. Common people are invariably double mouthed. Today, they are questioning her loyalty to you. Tomorrow, they will be heaping praises on her. What's more, don't you think that Sītā is being punished for the offence she has never committed. Won't it be injustice? Sītā is pregnant and you cannot forsake her at such a crucial time? Who will take care of her when you leave her? She is carrying the heir to the noblest dynasty on the earth. Her plight will cause unprecedented damage to the future of your progeny." Rāma said, "I agree that the collective memory of the people is very weak, yet at present, the public opinion is against Sītā and we cannot afford to ignore it. When people unite, they can topple mighty

rulers. I am left with no alternative except renouncing Sītā." Saying this, he sent for general Kṛtāntavadana.



Lakṣmaṇa, pleading at Rāma's Feet

Emotional Lakṣmaṇa fell at his brother's feet and began to sob. He repeatedly said, "Sītā is a Mahāsatī. Your action of renouncing Sītā is not only inappropriate but also unethical." Rāma did not pay heed to his pleas, but he did not give up. He repeatedly appealed his brother to let Sītā live with him. Finally, Rāma lost his temper and said, "Brother Lakṣmaṇa, I desire that you do not discuss this topic with me anymore. I have heard enough, and remember, no matter what you say, you can't change my resolve." After hearing this, the crestfallen Lakṣmaṇa covered his face with the upper cloth and dragged himself away with great difficulty. He was a king. He could have ordered Rāma to change his decision, but he preferred not to argue with his elder brother.

When the general Kṛtāntavadana arrived, Rāma said, "My able general, your ability and foresight has always brought us victory, but today I order you to perform a job which is unpleasant, unethical and yet essential. I am sure that you must have heard the libelous and slanderous accusations made by the citizens of Ayodhyā against Sītā. Though I know that there is no substance in them, I have still decided to forsake Sītā, in order to protect the reputation of Sūrya dynasty. You are aware that Sītā is pregnant and she desires to worship Sammata Śikhara. I order you to be her charioteer. Leave the precincts of Ayodhyā under the pretext of taking her for a pilgrimage. When you reach the dense forest, leave her alone and return."

Kṛtāntavadana immediately rushed to Sītā's sanctum and said, "Your husband and my master Rāma has ordered me to escort you to Sammeta Śikhara, for he knows that you are eager to visit this holy center of pilgrimage. He wants us to begin our journey right now." Sītā believed it and mounted the chariot without asking any question. The nature, through the ominous signs, tried to warn Sītā about the tragedy that was about to unfold, but for Sītā, Rāma words were the words of God and Rāma's desire was the desire of God. She went ahead without any hesitation.

The chariot crossed the precincts of Ayodhyā and entered the forests. It covered a great distance and finally halted in a dense forest called Śrīmhanināda. Kṛtāntavadana descended from the chariot. His face was ashened. Tears were constantly flowing from his downcast eyes. When Sītā noticed the pale countenance of the general, she asked, "General Kṛtāntavadana, why have you stopped the chariot? Why is your face pale and eyes downcast?"



Sītā collapsed

Kṛtāntavadana replied, "I am your servant, hence, I cannot humiliate you with either harsh words or behaviour, yet I am compelled to perform this unpleasant task. For a prolong period, you stayed at the abode of Rāvaṇa, whose weakness for women is world known. People in Ayodhyā are making slanderous statements regarding your purity and character. Unfortunately, Rāma has learnt about it through his spies. He pondered over this perilous situation and finally decided to forsake you. King Lakṣmaṇa repeatedly urged him to change his decision but Rāma remained adamant. Finally, he ordered me, an impure and lowly person, to perform this horrible task. I have been ordered by Rāma to discard you in the thick forest and return. I shall be leaving you shortly. Pray, forgive me. You have done me no wrong and yet, I am ruining your happiness. The power of your virtue will keep you alive." When Sītā heard his words, she swooned.

The charioteer thought that the impact of the news he just delivered was too much for Sītā to bear and therefore she gave up her life. He considered himself responsible for this tragedy and began to weep. After sometime, Sītā regained her consciousness and began to lament and swooned once again. The cool forest breezes helped her to regain consciousness. She controlled herself and after a while, asked the general, "How far are we from Ayodhyā?" Kṛtāntavadana replied, "Mother, your question is meaningless, for, even King Lakṣmaṇa could not break the strong resolve of Rāma. I think you can never return Ayodhyā. We are now hundreds of miles away from Ayodhyā. If you desire to convey any message to

my lord Rāma, speak it to me without any hesitation. I shall convey every word that you utter." Sītā said, "When you reach Ayodhyā, inform your master, if the gossiping of a few idle rumourmongers really unnerved you, why didn't you ask me to perform Agnidivya! When a woman's character becomes a debatable issue, she resort to Agnidivya. If you really cared for your dynasty, you should have ordered me to perform this ordeal! Did you desire that I spend rest of my life with a stigma attached to my name? whatever has happened with me is my destiny, whatever that will happen to me will be my destiny. I have no alternative. I shall face it without grumbling. Lord! you have forsaken me, believing the utter untruth spread by vicious minds, but pray, do not forsake the eternal Jain dharma, believing the falsehood spread by the false seers. Surrendering oneself to Arihanta Prabhu leads him to the ultimate emancipation. Convey my obeisance to my mothers-in-law, and my blessings to Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna - and O worthy general, I request you to return to Ayodhyā. May your path be free from all obstacles and may your journey to salvation be smooth and troublefree."

The general bowed down to Sītā and returned to Ayodhyā. He remembered the noble words of Sītā, her serene countenance. Rāma has been totally unjust to her and yet, she didn't utter a word of protest. In fact, she still cares for the spiritual wellbeing of Rāma. Her message to Rāma reflects the purity of her heart! blessed indeed is she. Her name will be remembered and revered in the ages to come, said the general to himself.

27

Sītā at Puṇḍarikapura

King Vajrajaṅgha's invitation to Sītā

The forest Sīmhanināda was so dense that it could fill even the hearts of brave warriors with terror. Sītā was a woman. She had no weapon to protect herself. She was pregnant and belonged to a royal family, not accustomed to the forest life alone. Previously, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were constantly with her; now she was alone. Her life at Laṅkā was empty, yet she lived with the hope that Rāma would one day release her. Now, she was all alone, forsaken, with no hope. She stumbled while walking and wept uncontrollably. "This is the result of my unauspicious deeds. I cannot and must not blame any one", she muttered. Suddenly, she stopped weeping when she saw some soldiers and royal guards. The men were shocked to see Sītā all alone, unescorted. 'Who is this beautiful lady? Why is she alone? Why is she weeping? Is she a goddess or a yakṣiṇī, who resides in this forest? If she is a goddess, why is she lamenting like an ordinary mortal?', they wondered, while they stood transfixed there. Suddenly, they heard the call of their master, the king. He too had heard the lamentations of Sītā and guessed, this is the voice of a noble woman, totally loyal to her husband. She is pregnant and tormented by the burden of woe.



When the king came closer to Sītā, she thought that he was a man of evil intentions. She took off her ornaments and threw them before the king. She misunderstood him to be either a thief or a man, desirous of molesting a woman, but the king assured her saying, "Sister, though you have never seen me earlier, pray, trust me. I do not want your ornaments, nor do I intend to molest you. Wear your ornaments and tell me who are you ? Which heartless man has forsaken you in this dense forest? Your troubles are troubling me. Please, share your sorrows with me. I am your brother."

Then the king's chief minister, Sumati addressed Sītā, "Devī, my master's name is King Vajrajaṅgha. He is the offspring of King Gajavāhana and Queen Bandhudevī of Puṇḍarikapūra. My master is an ardent devotee of Jineśvara and treats women, married to other men, as his sisters. We had come to this impenetrable forest to catch wild elephants. We have accomplished our task and were about to leave, that is when we heard your lamentations. We are eager to share your woes and trust us, no one will ever know anything that you tell us. Pray, believe us.'

Sītā realized that her fears were baseless. She disclosed them everything. Both, the king and his minister wept when they heard Sītā's story. Finally, the king said, "Devī, from now onwards you are my sister. Treat me as Bhāmaṇḍala and pray, come over to my palace. Rāma has discarded you to respect the public opinion and I am sure that after some days, he will realize his folly. He will then set out in your quest, and when he finds you, he will take you back to Ayodhyā, but till then, I think you must stay at your brother's place. A woman is safe either at her husband's home or brother's home. Have faith in me and come over to Puṇḍarikapura. Stay at my palace till Rāma beckons you to Ayodhyā." He, then ordered for a sedan. Sītā mounted it and went to Puṇḍarikapura with King Vajrajaṅgha. She had no qualms now. The king allotted her a special palace next to his and she spent her time in worship and penance.

Rāma repents

Kṛtāntavadana returns from the woods

General Kṛtāntavadana left Sītā all by herself at the forest named Simhanināda and reached Ayodhyā. He straightaway reached the palace and narrated Sītā's last missive word by word. When Rāma heard it, he began to lament. He said, "Woe to me ! I being scared of some idlers have forsaken my true friend, Sītā. I have left her to keep my foolish pride intact. Alas ! I have discarded a gem and embraced a pile of dust. How cruel was I to drive her out ! She is innocent, she is pregnant..... I have treated her like a non living object and she never grumbled even once. What's more, she cares for my salvation and asks me to remain loyal to the eternal truth. How did the thought of her abandonment come to my mind?"



Lakṣmaṇa said, “Sītā loved you more than her ownself. How much she must have lamented, when she heard the cruel words of the general Kṛtāntavadana. She could endure your separation last time because she had a hope that you would one day reach Laṅkā and release her, but now that you have forsaken her, she has no reason to live. By now, the pains of your separation must have taken away her life.” Rāma said, “I am sure that she is alive because of her virtue.” Lakṣmaṇa said, “In that case, I beg you to hurry... Please, take the general Kṛtāntavadana and other vidyādhars along with you. Search through the forest extensively and bring her back, before she breathes her last. Rāma immediately left along with the general and other vidyādhars. They combed the entire forest, yet did

not get a single clue that proved whether Sītā was alive or dead. So, they concluded that some animal of prey might have eaten her. Filled with despair and gloom, they returned to Ayodhyā. Strangely, now the people began to criticize Rāma. They said, “How cruel is Rāma to discard his innocent wife. She is pregnant and yet, he abandoned her, and Sītā Sītā did not even grumble or complain. She endured this gross injustice silently and wished Rāma to be an ardent follower of lord Jineśvara. Blessed be the name of Sītā, and woe to Rāma.” The public opinion is indeed like mṛdaṅga, a percussian instrument used by Indian musicians. It is played from both sides. The public opinion, that so far denounced Sītā, suddenly began to favour her and abhorred Rāma. Strange indeed are the ways of the world !

29

Lava and Kuśa meet Rāma

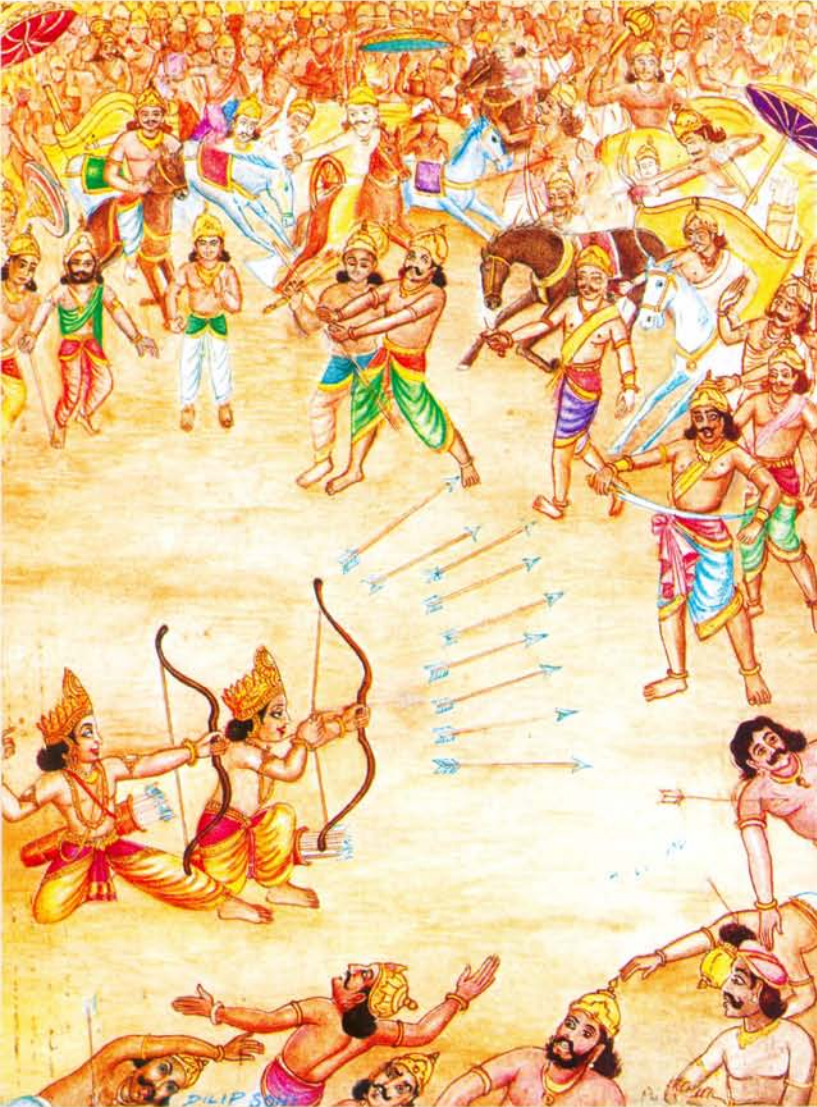
Sītā delivered twins at Puṇḍarikapura. King Vajrajaṅgha, Sītā's brother in faith, celebrated this joyous occasion with such a pleasure and pomp that it left an everlasting impression in the hearts of the people. They said, “This celebration surpasses all other former celebrations, never before have we witnessed such a grandeur and brilliance.” The baby boys were named as Anaṅgala and Madanāṅkuśa. They later on became famous as Lava and Kuśa. Sītā and King Vajrajaṅgha loved the babies more than their own selves. The excellent nourishment, impeccable upbringing and a proper amount of love helped the babies grow day by day.

Once, a layman named Siddhaputra reached the sanctum of Sītā. He had been out for a pilgrimage of mount Meru with the help of Ākāśagāminī vidyā. He had reached Sītā's abode traveling through the skies. Siddhaputra also was a master of Aṣṭāṅga Nimitta. He asked Sītā some questions connected with her life at Mithilā and Ayodhyā. Sītā narrated her story to him. He said, “Both your sons have auspicious marks on their bodies. They will surpass Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in valour as well as intelligence.



Therefore, do not feel anxious about their future. Sītā requested the layman Siddhaputra to stay at Puṇḍarikapura and be a teacher of her sons. The layman agreed and soon under the gaurdianship of the worthy Siddhaputra, the two lads mastered different branches of knowledge and arts. When they stepped into puberty, King Vajrajaṅgha and Queen Lakṣmivati offered their daughter princess Śaśicūlā and thirty two girls to Lava.

Duel of Lava and Kuśa with King Pṛthu



King Vajrajaṅgha then proposed King Pṛthu and Queen Amṛtavati of Pṛthvipura to offer their daughter Princess Kanakamālīkā to Kuśa, but King Pṛthu refused saying that he did not desire to offer his daughter to a man of dubious family background. Enraged by his reply, King Vajrajaṅgha declared a war against him. However, the army of King Pṛthu was so powerful that King Vajrajaṅgha's army could not face it and began to beat a hasty retreat. Then, the young Lava and Kuśa entered the battlefield. Both young men attacked the enemy with such a vengeance that it was now King Pṛthu's turn to beat a hasty retreat. The young men Lava and Kuśa laughed heartily and mocked them.

They said, "Here are the famous and seasoned warriors of impeccable backgrounds, running for their lives ! and guess, who has defeated them ? We, young and inexperienced lads of dubious backgrounds." King Pṛthu said, "Your valour bears the testimony of your noble background, blessed indeed is the dynasty that you are born in ! My friend Vajrajaṅgha had really chosen an ideal life partner for my daughter, but I, like a fool, insulted him and you. A virtuous daughter indeed marries a man like you. Pray, forgive my imprudence." With these words, King Pṛthu made peace with King Vajrajaṅgha and got his daughter Kanakamālīkā engaged to Kuśa.

Nārada's arrival

While King Vajrajaṅgha, King Pṛthu and other kings were seated in the former's tent, the divine sage Nārada arrived there. King Vajrajaṅgha asked him whether he knew anything about the dynasty to which Lava and Kuśa belonged. The sage Nārada narrated them their entire history related to the Sūrya dynasty. He then described the childhood of Rāma, his bethrotal to Sītā. The abduction of Sītā, and finally her renouncement, in detail.



When the young Lava and Kuśa heard the narration of the divine sage, they thought, "If our father Rāma really cared for the public opinion, he had many options other than forsaking mother Sītā in wilderness, yet he did such a grave injustice. Why? What must have compelled him to take such a rash step?". Lava asked the divine sage with reverence, "O divine sage, could you tell us how far is Ayodhyā from here, where our father and uncle lives?". Nārada said, "Ayodhyā, your father's abode, is at the distance of sixty four yojanas." When the young man heard the sage's reply, they told Vajrajaṅgha, "Uncle, we desire to meet our father Rāma and uncle Lakṣmaṇa. Could you grant us the permission to do so?"

King Vajrajaṅgha consented. A few days after this incident, a grand marriage ceremony was solemnized, where Kuśa and Kanakamālīkā tied the nuptial knots.



Lava and Kuśa bows Sītāji and leave for Ayodhyā

In the return journey, Lava and Kuśa defeated many kings and finally reached Puṇḍarikapura along with the kings Pṛthu, Vajrajaṅgha, Ruṣa, Lampāka and Kāla. When they prostrated at the feet of Sītā, she blessed them saying, "May both of you acquire the stature and valour of your father, the illustrious son of Daśaratha." Lava turned to Vajrajaṅgha and said, "Uncle, you have already granted us the permission to visit Ayodhyā. We desire to start our journey now. Pray, request King Ruṣa and King Lampāka to accompany us. We want a vast army that resembles the boundless ocean.

May the conches be blown. We want to witness the valour of the man, who renounced our mother, who has no blemish." When Sītā heard this, her eyes were filled with tears. She said, "My young and inexperienced boys, you are not aware of your father's valour. You are inviting death by declaring a war against your own father. Your victory against King Pṛthu and some other insignificant kings have added to your vanity. Rāvaṇa was the master of Laṅkā, he had conquered the three lands and yet your uncle, with his disc Sudarśana, tore his chest, as if it was a old piece of cloth. If you really wish to meet your father and uncle, be modest. The ancestors

should be revered like Gods. Courtesy and modesty to the forefathers bring in abundant blessings." Lava and Kuśa replied, "O illustrious mother, you speak nothing, but truth, but do you expect us to meet our father like cowards ? We think, even he would feel ashamed, if we do so, and why do you worry about the result of the war ? Whether he wins or we win, ultimately it's the victory of our Sūrya dynasty." Having said this, they marched towards Ayodhyā. Sītā was weeping uncontrollably. 'If everything happens as Lava and Kuśa have said, there is no reason to worry but if God forbid, one of the four dies, how will I survive ?' she thought.

Lava-Kuśa seize Ayodhyā

Lava and Kuśa reached the outskirts of Ayodhyā and laid a siege.

The spies of King Lakṣmaṇa observed this and informed their master, "Lord, two young men have surrounded Ayodhyā along with their army. Their looks indicate their noble background and upbringing, but the question is, can these inexperienced young men endure your wrath ? Like a devastating forest fire, your valour will char their lives and wipe their names out forever. We think their end is now inevitable." Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and other army officers accepted the challenge of the young warriors and stepped out.



Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa's duel with Lava-Kuśa

The war commenced, but whenever either Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa tried to pierce the hearts of their young foe, they were overwhelmed by love and missed their aims. They could not handle

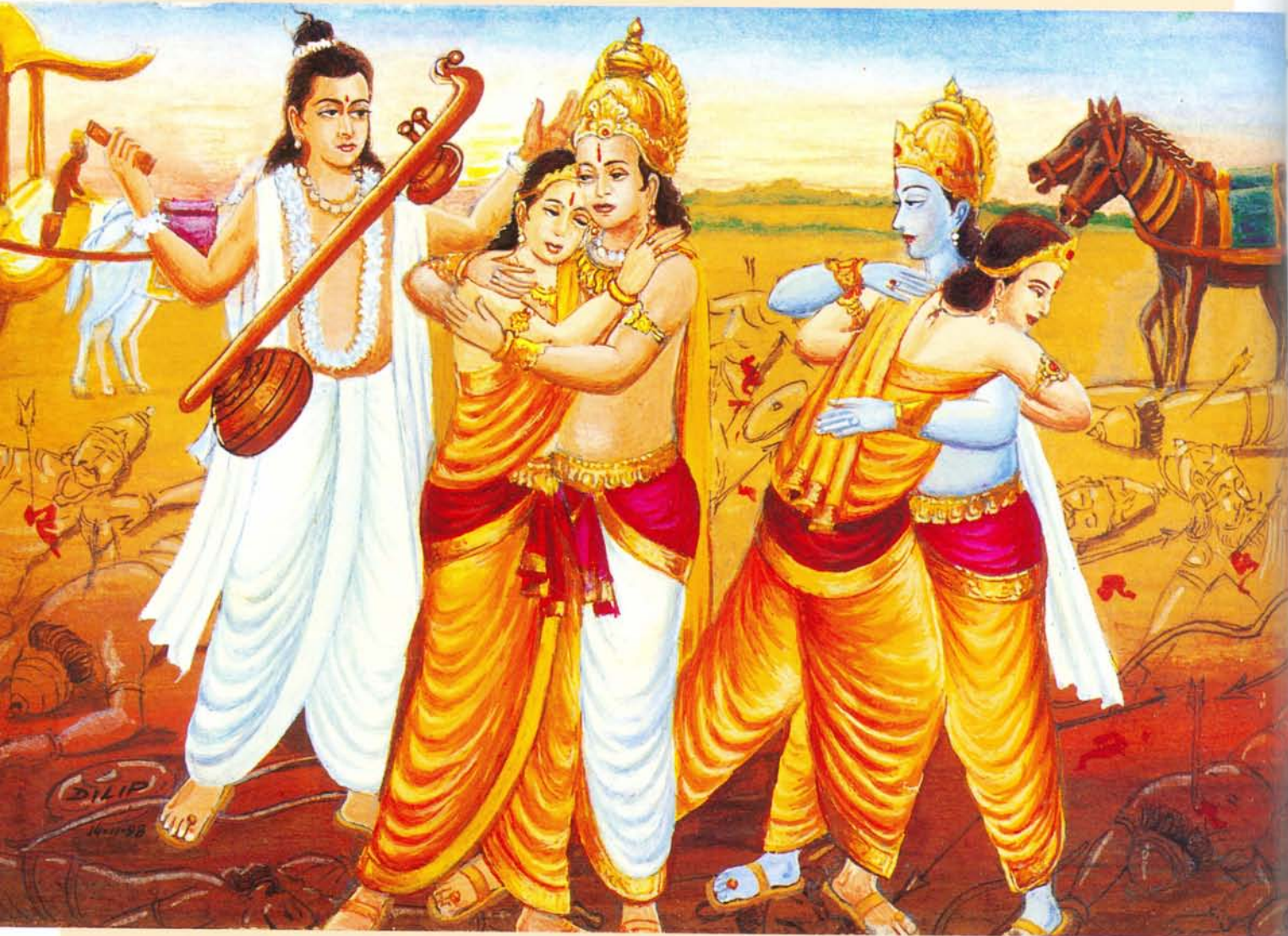
their weapons. Their arrows did not reach the target, but the young warriors showered arrows on their army. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa plucked the strings of Vajrāvarta and Aṇṇāvarta bows, but



their own soldiers were struck with terror. When they heard the fierce sound that the strings emitted, they began to run helter and skelter to save their lives. Finally, Lakṣmaṇa hurled the Sudarśana disc at Lava, but circumambulating Lava, it returned to Lakṣmaṇa. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were very tense when they watched

this strong phenomenon. They wondered, "Why are we witnessing strange things today? Aren't we Vāsudeva and Baladeva, or are these young men new Vāsudeva and Baladeva? Does this mean that the illustrious Sūrya dynasty is about to meet its end?"

Arrival of Nāradaĳi and greetings between Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa and Lava-Kuśa



Suddenly, the sage Nārada, through aerial path, reached the battlefield. When he noticed the gloomy faces of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, he asked, "Why am I witnessing mourning instead of rejoicing? The scriptures say that a son should surpass his father in bravery and valour. These two lads that have cast a shadow of gloom on your countenance are in fact the progeny of illustrious Rāma and sati Sitā. They are Lava and Kuśa. They have come to prostrate at your feet under the pretext of aggression. Lakṣmaṇa, you hurled the Sudarśana disc at your own nephew, and what happened? The failure of the Sudarśana disc is an ample testimony of the fact that these young men are your own flesh and blood. One of your ancestors, Bharata hurled this disc at his brother Bāhubalī, without any suc-

cess. This disc is bound to fail if you hurle it at your flesh and blood. Rejoice, for you have met your own descendants after so many years, and whats more, they have defeated you. This is the time for celebration."

Rāma experienced a mixed feeling of shock, surprise, shame and joy. He stood transfixed for a while and then descended from his chariot and walked towards the young men alongwith Lakṣmaṇa. When the young warriors noticed their father and uncle approaching, they too descended from their chariots and walked towards them, bowing their heads. They fell at the feet of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and anointed their feet with tears. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa gathered them in their arms.

When Sītā witnessed the valour of her sons and their subsequent reunion with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, she was overjoyed. She then left for Puṇḍarīkapura in the aircraft. Here, in the battlefield, Rāma met King Vajrajaṅgha for the first time. He embraced King Vajrajaṅgha and repeatedly said, “For me, you are second Bhamaṇḍala. You have really taken the best care of my offsprings in my absence, and along with valour, you have also inculcated moral values in them. I shall be indebted to you for-

ever. You have not only saved the life of my beloved Sītā, but also given a new life to the Sūrya dynasty.”

Then, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa returned to Ayodhyā with Lava and Kuśa. By then, the news of Lava and Kuśa had already spread in Ayodhyā. People thronged to have a glimpse of their beloved little princes. Along with the Sūrya dynasty, the entire nation celebrated this occasion. People rejoiced and celebrated this joyous occasion for many days.

30

Sītā’ ordeal

Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Bibhīṣaṇa, Hanumāna, Aṅgad and others met Rāma and said, “Sati Sītā has been separated from you since quite some time and yet, she managed to survive in a strange land, only because of her two sons, Lava and Kuśa. Now, since you have brought the children to Ayodhyā, she might find life aimless and meaningless. The separation from both husband and children will result into her untimely demise. We therefore request you to grant us a permission to rush to Puṇḍarīkapura and bring her back, so that you can spend the rest of your life together.”

Rāma said, “I know that the rumours against Sītā’s character are baseless. She is as pure as the holy river Gangā, yet I desire that before she rejoins me, she should face an ordeal called Agnidivya, in front of the citizens of Ayodhyā. When the fire will testify that Sītā has no blemish on her character, people will stop wagging their tongues, and then, we can stay together without any obstruction.” Rāma ordered Sugrīva to erect a massive pandal on the outskirts of Ayodhyā and sent him to Puṇḍarīkapura. Having bowed down before Sītā, Sugrīva said, “Mother, my Lord Rāma has dispatched me to you because he too is tormented by your separation. He has therefore sent the Puṣpaka aircraft. But, before you reunite with your virtuous husband, he wants you to perform an Agnidivya, the ordeal that will prove your innocence. I therefore request you to board the aircraft, so that we may start our journey to Ayodhyā.” Sītā said, “My lord has just managed to get over the tragic situation which my separation created. I do not desire to return to Ayodhyā and give him more agonies. The people, who said that my character was dubious, would now say, look at Rāma, he first deserted his wife and now he wants her to perform an ordeal.”

Sugrīva said with reverence, “Rāma is aware that you are purer than the purest woman. Yet, he is requesting you to face the ordeal, to convince the people that your character is above reproach. He does not want your name to be slandered when you return to Ayodhyā. He wants to spend the rest of life with you without any trouble.” Thus convinced by Sugrīva, Sītā agreed to return to Ayodhyā with him.

She mounted the aircraft and reached a garden named Mahendra, situated on the outskirts of Ayodhyā. Lakṣmaṇa and other kings requested her to stay at the palace but Sītā firmly refused, saying that she would re-enter Ayodhyā and the palace, only after the ordeal. Rāma visited her and said, “Devī, people doubt that you have stayed at Laṅkā for a prolonged period. They do not care whether you lived there willingly or unwillingly. They know that Rāvaṇa had no scruples. They doubt whether Rāvaṇa had immoral relations with you, with or without your consent. I think you must perform an ordeal, which will end their doubts, once and for all.”

Sītā laughed and said, “You are indeed a noble and intelligent soul, yet you exiled me without ascertaining whether I was really guilty. You didn’t even give me a chance to prove my innocence. You have punished me without any investigation and after so many years, you are making me perform an ordeal ! This is marvelous ! I am an Āryawoman, How can I disrespect your order. You wish that I perform an ordeal, now you decide the time and place. I shall face any ordeal that you choose for me.” Rāma said, “Dear Sītā, I know you are a sati- the purest woman, yet I want to prove that the baseless allegations made by the people are wrong. Therefore, I wish you to perform an ordeal.”

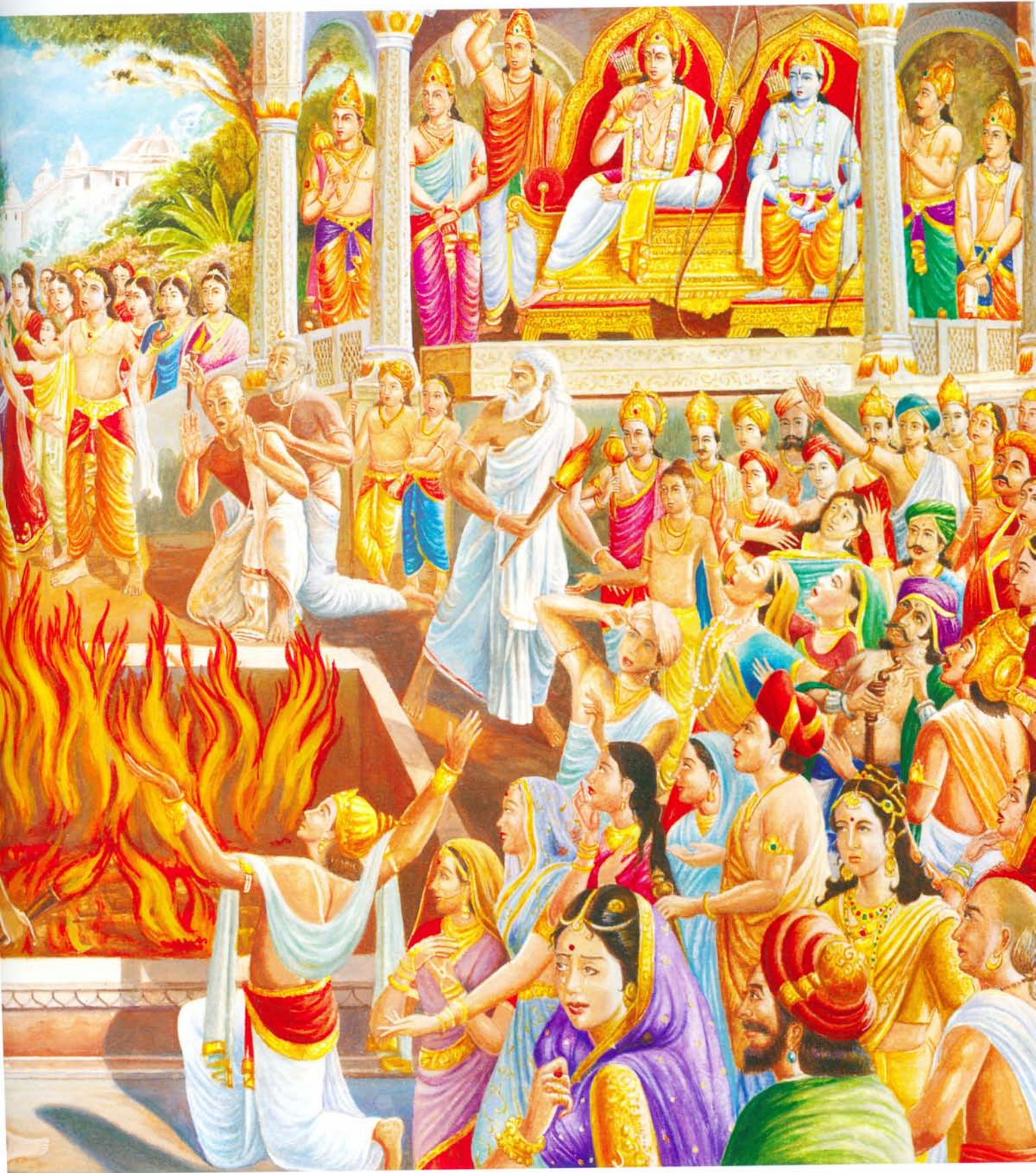
Sītā said, "I am ready to perform all the five types of ordeals. I shall enter a pit of fire, consume the grains of rice that have been enchanted, run my tongue over the blade of a sword, climb a weighing scale or drink molten lead. You are free to select the ordeal for me."

Everyone who was present there, including the sage Nārada protested, "O Rāma ? What has happened to your prudence ? Why are you asking a Mahāsati to perform an ordeal, when her innocence is proven beyond doubt?" Being enraged Rāma replied, "O People! you have accused that Sītā is a woman of no scruples. Your mudslinging, gossiping and accusations in Sītā's case were so great that, though I knew whatever you said had no grain of truth in it, yet I was compelled to abandon her. Today you are proclaiming that she is innocent and tomorrow instigated by some miscreant, you might argue that she is guilty. I want your doubts to end once and for all, and the only way to do it is an ordeal."

Sītā enters the fire pit

Rāma ordered his men to dig a pit that was three hundred cubits in length and breadth, and two fathoms in depth. It was dug on the outskirts of the city and filled with sandalwood. After an elaborate pūjā, the sandalwood was lighted. Soon, the flames leapt up as if they were eager to embrace the skies. When Rāma saw the effulgence, he became tense. Sītā reached near the pit. She had bathed, and wore dazzling clothes and jewellery. Her serene countenance did not display a trace of fear. With folded hands she paid obeisance to the Pañca Parameṣṭhi and then said, "O Agni, O divine beings, the mighty kings and the people who are here to witness the ordeal hear, I Sītā, the daughter of Janaka and consort of Rāma, proclaim that if I have, through my body, mind and speech, longed for any man besides my husband Rāma, while I was awake, asleep or dreaming, then O Agni! burn my body into ashes so that the people will tread on it, and if I am not guilty, turn this fierce fire into pleasant and soothing waters." Having said this, she fearlessly entered into the pit.







Sitā, sitting on a lotus above the water and Lava - Kuśa besides her.

In a moment, the flames turned into coolest of waters. Fragrant lotus-lilies were seen floating on it. A gigantic lotus had opened, displaying a golden throne. Sitā was seated on the throne. Her body glittered like molten gold. She was bedecked in exquisite finery, and resembled the goddess Lakṣmī. The waters sprung out of the pit and began to spread everywhere. Soon, the water engulfed the pandal and this reminded the people of the great deluge.

Frightened Vidyādharas flew in the sky. People on earth were struck with terror and pleaded, "Mercy on us ! O Mahāsati Sitā. Pray, do not let us drown !!" Sitā arose and touched the water with her hands. The water turned back and returned into the pit. The pit now resembled a huge lake. Multitudes of swan and lotuses with dazzling hues were seen floating on the water. The dieties sang songs in the honour of Sitā. They broke into dancing as well. They showered the divine flowers on her. People, including the divine sage Nārada, were dancing with ecstasy.

Sītā's renunciation

"Blessed be your name O Mahasati Sītā", shouted the elated mobs, but but Sītā was engrossed in her own thoughts. Then, she spoke in a clear voice, "O Rāma, the illustrious descendant of Daśaratha, inspite of being completely innocent, people tarnished my name, and you abandoned me in the dense forest. I blame neither the people nor you. I suffered at Laṅkā and then at the dense Sirmhaninada forest, but I do not blame Rāvaṇa or you. The fire that just now declared my purity is nothing compared to fire of your separation. The fire of sepeation charred the innermost depths of my being twice. I know, this is the result of my own karmas. We are born, we commit karmas and suffer from them in the next births, and again and again we add to our karmas. How long will this vicious cycle go on ? I am fed of material life and resolved to accept the ascetic vows that will destroy all my karmas and lead me to salvation." Saying this, she uprooted her long hair and handovered them to Rāma.

Those who witnessed this solemn moment were reminded of the acceptance of asceticism of the great Tirthaṅkaras. They too uproot all their hair and hand it over to Indra, the emperor of the celestial realms.

The awestruck Rāma found this too great to endure. He swooned, but before he regained conciousness, Sītā had already reached the kevalagyāni saint Jayabhūṣaṇa. There, she took the oaths of renunciation and joined the order of a sādhyā named Suprabhā, and practiced austerities and penance. When Rāma regained his conciousness, he did not find Sītā around.



he screamed, "Where is Sītā ? Why are you all standing like statues ? Why are you silent ? Don't you love and value your life ? Brother Lakṣmaṇa! ask someone to fetch my bow and arrows. These mute imbeciles have no right to live. I am drowning in the ocean of sorrow and yet, none of these people are rushing for my rescue."

Sensing the gravity of the situation, Lakṣmaṇa pleaded, "My lord and master Rāma! these people whom you desire to kill are not your enemies, but your trusted subjects and ministers. They are like your own progeny, hence you can't punish them for the mistakes that they have never committed. Being scared of the public censure, you abandoned Sītā and thought you have done no wrong. How can you blame Sītā, who being scared of the vicious cycle of life and death, has embraced an ascetic life? She plucked all her hair in your presence and left for penance under the aegis of the sage Jayabhūṣaṇa. You must follow her, and when you see her, laud her decision. Till today, Sati Sītā walked on the path of purity, now Sādhvi Sītā will take steps on the path of salvation. Pray, hurry up to meet her."

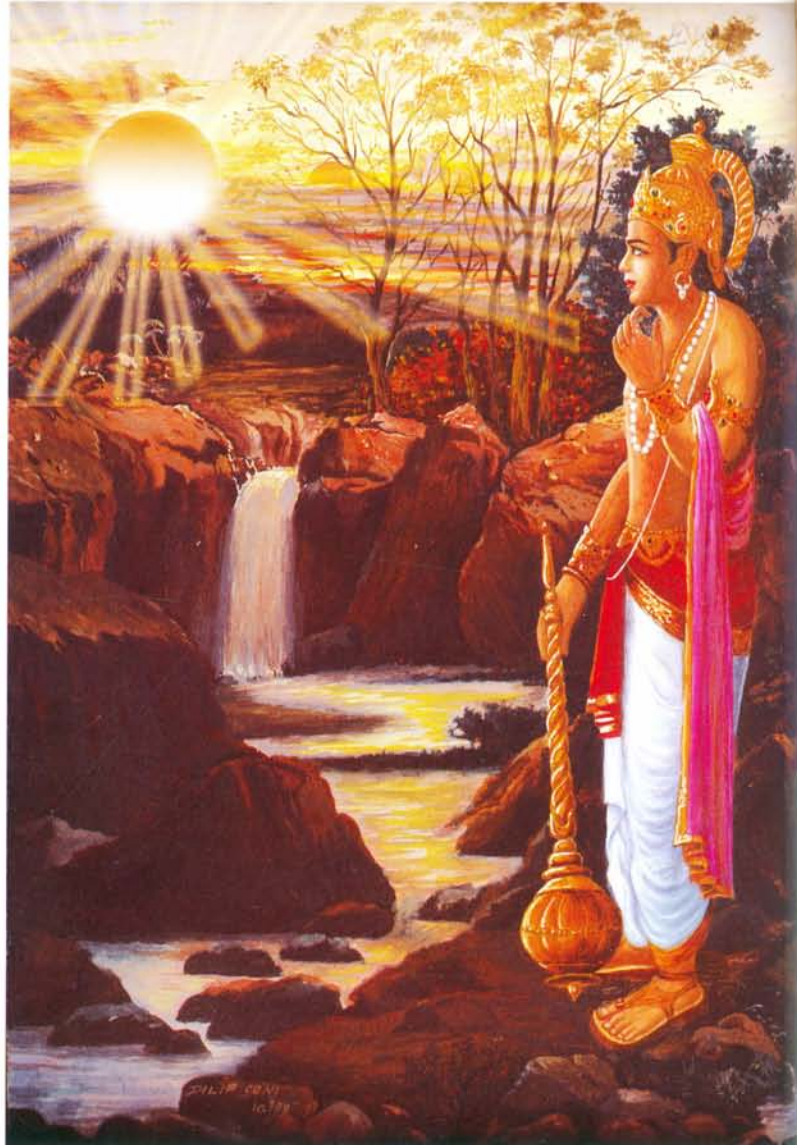
When Rāma heard the soothing words of Lakṣmaṇa, his heart was pacified. He said, "Sītā, who was my wife, have become a mendicant, and I wholeheartedly support and laud her decision." Then he reached near the sage Jayabhūṣaṇa and silently heard the sermon. He then asked him, "Am I a lofty soul or non-lofty, downtrodden soul ?" The sage replied, "Rāma, you are a very lofty soul, who will achieve the salvation at the end of this life." Rāma said, "Sītā has realized the transitive nature of the world. She has realized that everything in this world is ephemeral, and therefore she has forsaken me, but I still have attachment for my brother Lakṣmaṇa. How will I get over it ?" The sage replied, "The virtue that earned you the title of Baladeva is not yet exhausted, when it gets over, you too will renounce the world and finally reach the salvation. Then, Bibhīṣaṇa asked, "O enlightened soul, pray, tell us which

For previous lives of Bibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumāna, Bhāmaṇḍala and Sītā, refer appendix-8

karmas brought the defeat and death to my brother Rāvaṇa ? Why am I, Sugrīva, Bhāmaṇḍala, Sītā, Hanumāna and *Lava-Kuśa so much attached to Rāma ?" In answer to this, the muni explained them their previous lives in details and finally told them the reason of their attachment to Rāma. The soothing words of the sage moved their heart and filled it with serene peace. Kṛtantavadana, the general and charioteer of Rama's army, accepted the vows of renouncement. He practiced the austerities and penance, and after his death, was reborn as a diety in fifth celestial world. Sādhviji Sītā practiced different types of penance for sixty years and met her death after a fast of thirty days. After her death, she was reborn as Ācyutapati Indra in twelfth celestial world.

31

Hanumāna on the path of salvation and Lakṣmaṇa's death



Hanumāna attains disgust

Once, Hanumāna scaled the loftiest mountain Meru, to visit the temples dedicated to the tirthaṅkaras. At the time of sunset, he began his return journey. He saw the luminous solar disc, gradually immersing in the sea, and the radiant sky, gradually turning into an ocean of darkness. He thought, every day, the sunrise, in a mute language, proclaims the advent of evening which is in offing. It proclaims that everything in the world is bound to an end and is transitory. Whatever is born, dies, whatever that is created, is bound to perish. People worship the rising sun. but the setting sun is all by himself, no one offers prayers to it. When I left for Laṅkā in the quest of Sītā, I was in the prime of my life, I was like a rising sun. By the grace of God, I am still strong and able, but by the time I reach the twilight years, I too will be like the setting sun ... all by myself, but before this happens, let me make some efforts to escape the transitory world and embrace the eternal. Only through renouncing the world and all its short living pleasures, one can reach the salvation."

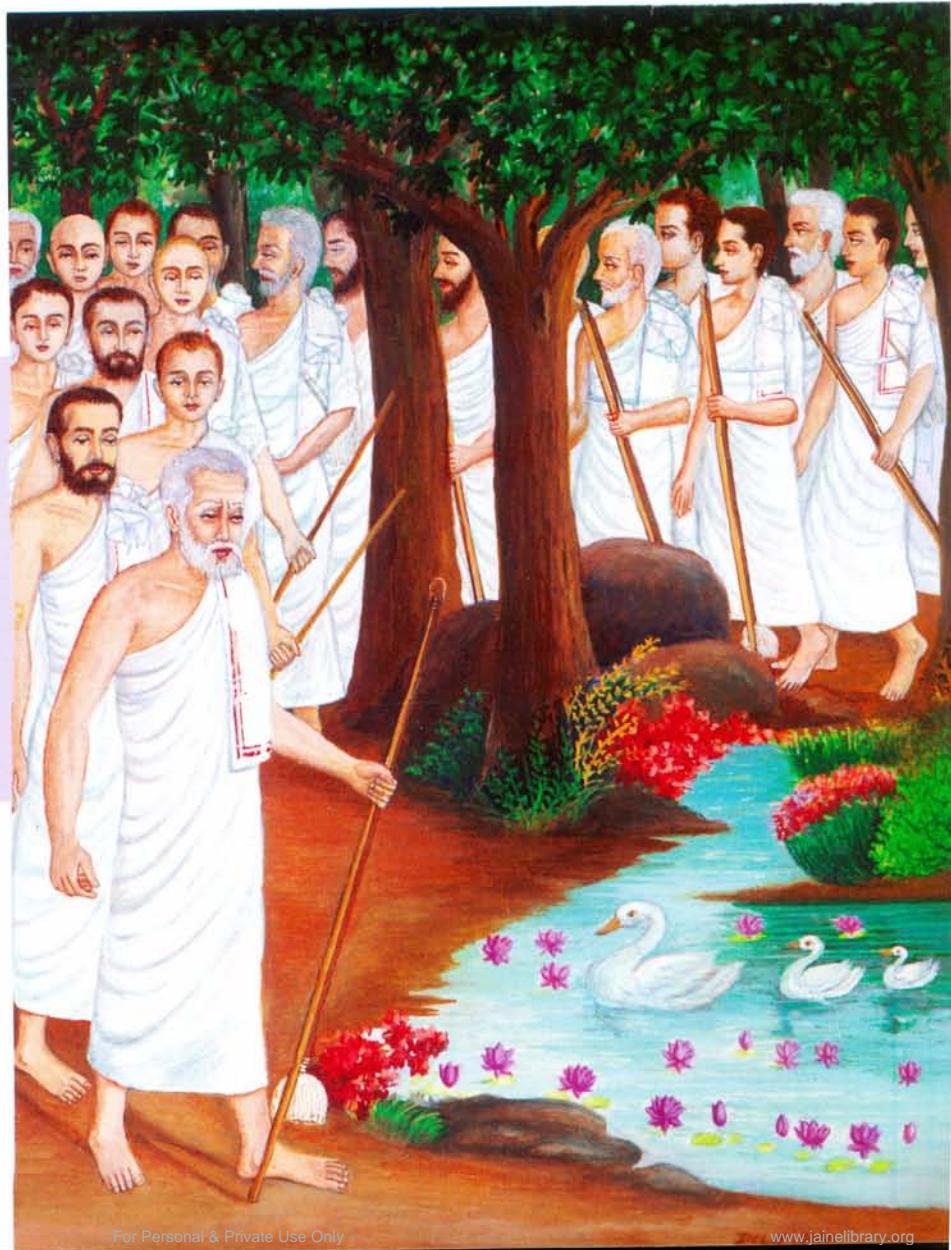
Muni Hanumāna's Vihāra

When he reached home, he at once handed over the empire to his heir and became an ascetic. Śrī Dharmaratnācārya sage initiated him into a new realm and they began their Vihāra-journey by walking barefoot. His entire harem accepted the vows. Hanumāna, through meditation and *non-action*, *vanquished both, the virtues and sins*, and finally achieved the salvation.

When the news of Hanumāna's dīkṣā reached Rāma, he thought, 'In spite of being endowed with every materialistic comfort and power, why did Hanumāna embrace initiation, which give nothing but hardship and pain?' Indra, the emperor of the celestial worlds learnt about Rāma's thoughts through avadhigyāna-clairvoyance, that he possessed. He, as usual sitting in the assembly of the dieties, revealed

to everyone what Rāma was thinking, and added, "Rāma is a noble and lofty soul, who is certainly going to achieve salvation in this life, yet like other mortals, he is mocking the eternal path of salvation. Who can understand this enigma of Mohaniya karmas, which entice and enchant the heart and mind? The attachments are indeed strange! The reason for this strange behaviour of Rāma is his deep attachment for Lakṣmaṇa. This has hindered the awareness in his heart."

The entire assembly of the celestial beings was awestruck when it heard this. Two of the dieties were especially moved, 'The deep love between two of the mortal beings is applauded by none other than Devendra, the emperor of dieties.' In order to test this love, they descended the skies and reached Ayodhyā. They reached the palace, and using their magical powers, created an illusion that depicted the death of Rāma. Rāma was seen lying motionless on his couch and the women in the harem were lamenting, "O Rāma, why have you forsaken us? You freed the entire universe from fear, and why are you lying motionless? What has caused your untimely demise?"





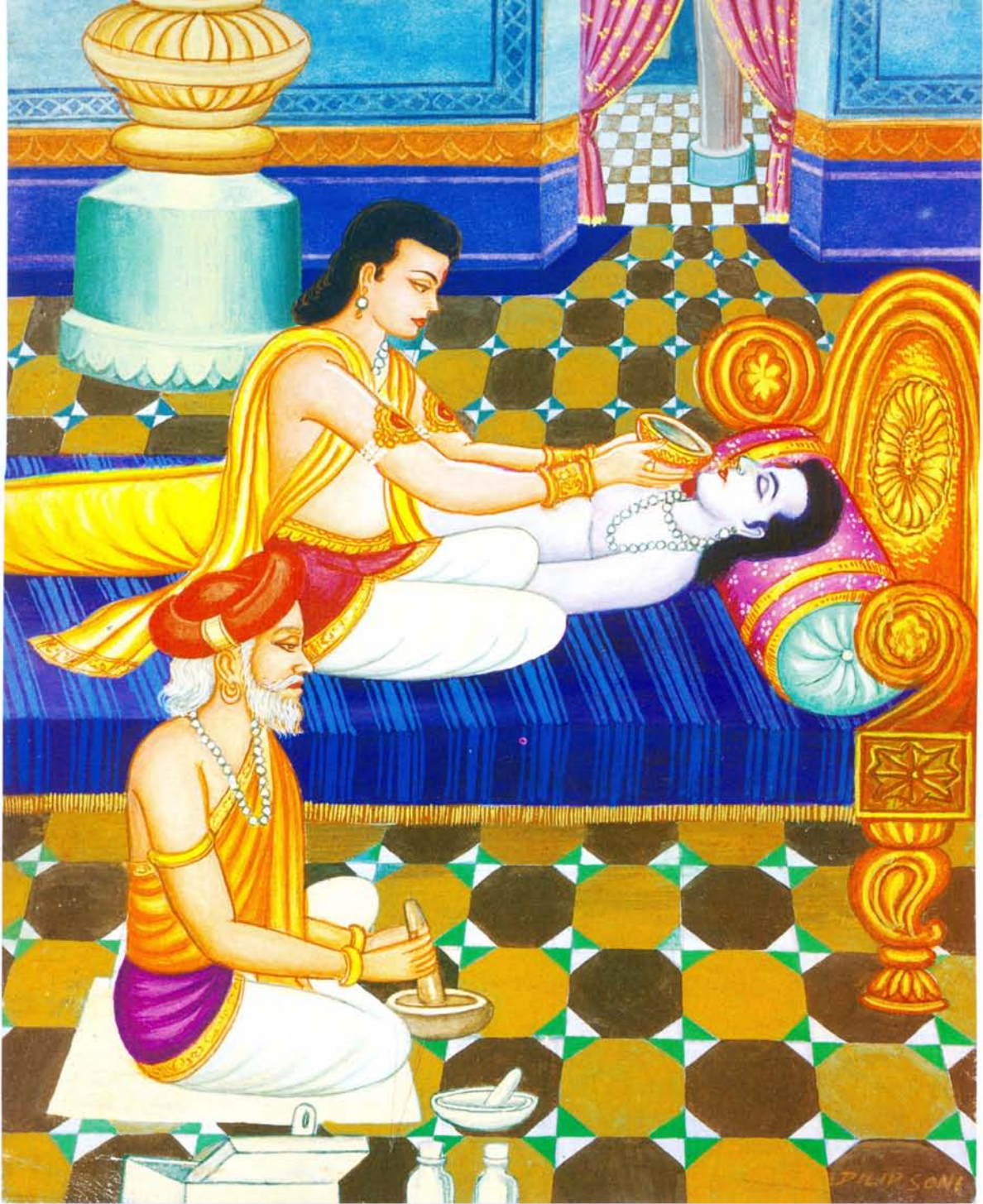
imprudence caused his death ! Woe to us !", and thus rebuking themselves, they climbed the lofty skies and returned to their abodes. When the women in the harem noticed Lakṣmaṇa lying motionless, they summoned the doctors, and when they declared that he was dead, they began to lament.

When Rāma heard the uproar, he came rushing to the sanctum of Lakṣmaṇa and scolded the weeping women, "Why are you weeping ? What evil curse befell on you? which untoward incidence has made you let your hair loose and clap your foreheads? Look at me, I am alive and my brother, sleeping on this couch, is also alive. Some evil malady or planet is troubling him, he will be alright by medications and prayers. Send for the doctors and astrologers at once."

Lakṣmaṇa's death

When Lakṣmaṇa saw the women beating their foreheads and lamenting with their hair disheveled, his heart was filled with sorrow. How strange is the destiny of fate. My brother, whom I loved more than myself, is dead. Why did Yama, the lord of death, play this cruel prank on me ?" While the gloom struck, Lakṣmaṇa was thinking this. Suddenly, he gave up his ghost. When the dieties saw Lakṣmaṇa lying motionless, they repented and said to each other, "Alas ! what have we done ? Lakṣmaṇa, the noble and lofty soul, was a refuge to the entire world and we with our



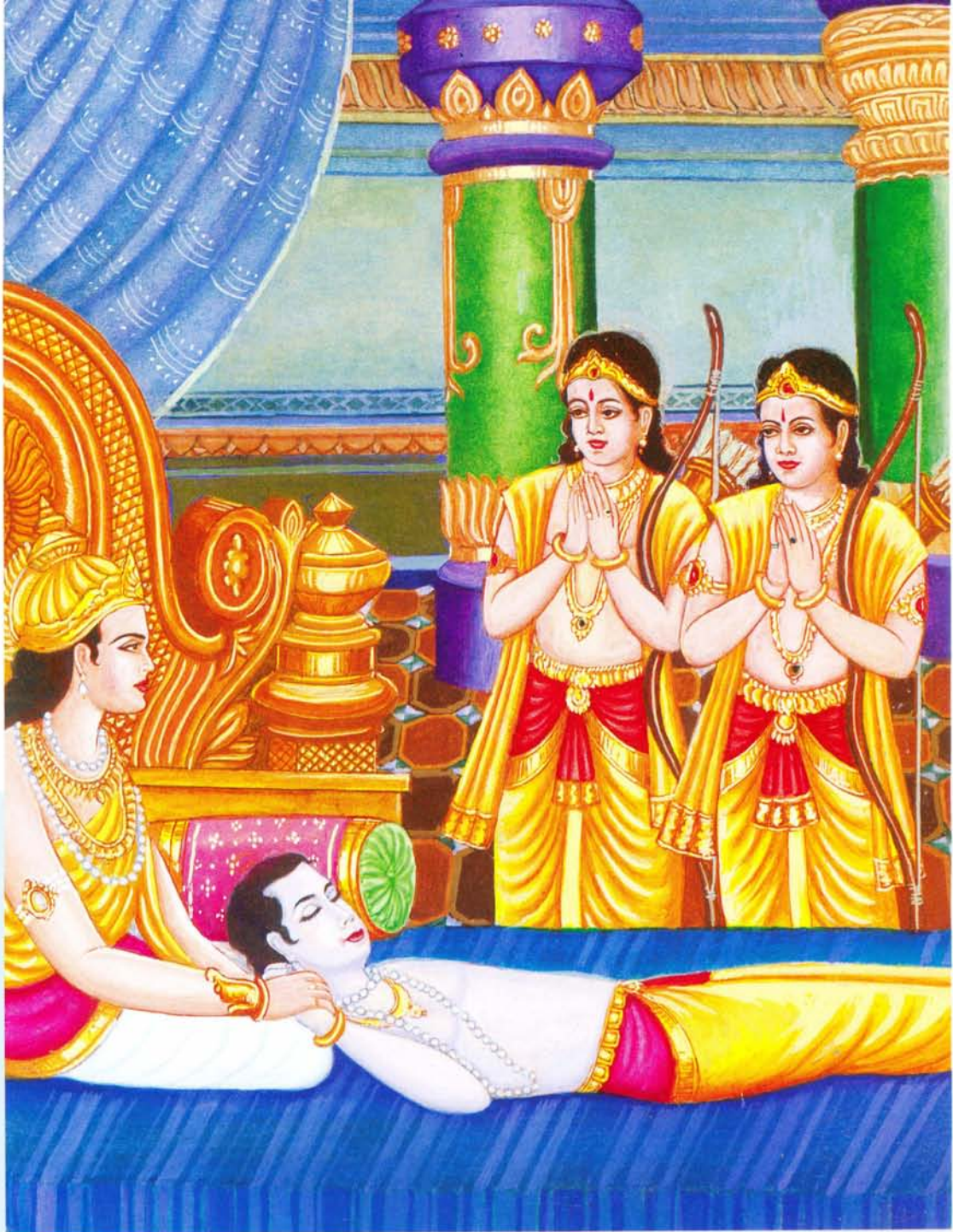


Rāma feeding medicines to dead Lakṣmaṇa

The doctors, astrologers, seers and tāntrikas were summoned. Lakṣmaṇa was given medicines and magical potions. Mantras were recited and pūjās were performed, but all in vain, because, his soul had already deserted the body.

When Rāma realised that his dear brother wasn't waking up, he began to weep. Bibhiṣaṇa, Sugrīva and Śatrughna rushed there. When they learnt about the tragedy, they too began to lament. Kauśalya and the other mothers, Rāma's daughters-in-law and the other women began to lament. While weeping, they swooned. The entire Ayodhyā went into a mourning.

Lava-
Kuśa
asks
consent
to re-
nounce



When Lava and Kuśa saw the premature death of their uncle, they were disgusted. With folded hands, they requested Rāma, "Illustrious father, everyone that is born has to die sometime or the other, yet no one knows when the death will strike. A man should always be prepared to leave this world any time. Seeing the tragic death of your brother and our uncle has created a feeling of detachment deep within us. We do not wish to stay in this world which offers little pleasures and boundless sorrows. We want to follow the footsteps of our mother. Kindly, grant us a consent to embrace the life of ascetics."

When Rāma granted them the consent, they left home and obtained the vows from the sage Amṛtaghoṣa. The premature death of their uncle, created a deep feeling of detachment. The mortal remains of their uncle were still uncremated. The entire household was mourning and yet, when the intense desire of taking a step towards eternity arised in their hearts, they wasted not a minute. By means of the best tapas, they achieved the kevalagyāna and finally attained salvation.

32 Rāma moves through the forest with the corpse of Lakṣmaṇa

The sudden and unexpected death of Lakṣmaṇa had a deep impact on Rāma. He swooned and remained unconscious for hours, and when he regained consciousness, he lamented. His unwillingness to accept the fact that Lakṣmaṇa was no more finally led to delirium. Rāma began to address his brother as if he was alive. He would say, "Arise, O my brother Lakṣmaṇa, my young sons, who should have shouldered the responsibility of administration with you, think that you are dead. They have left me and followed the footsteps of their mother. I feel lonely and therefore you must awake from this prolonged slumber ! get up ! get up at once." Bibhiṣaṇa would frequently hear this and feel disturbed. Once he said, "My lord Rāma, you are braver than the bravest and more valiant than the most valiant, why are you not accepting the truth that King Lakṣmaṇa is no more. Your timidity is repulsive and obnoxious. Come, let us perform the funeral of our beloved Lakṣmaṇa." Hearing this, trembling with anger, he shouted, "Why don't you leave me and my brother

alone? Why do you desire to perform the funeral of a person who is alive? Go away and perform the funeral of your own brothers. My brother Lakṣmaṇa will live a long life. Come on my brother, do not get annoyed with me for the folly of these imbeciles. Talk with me. You must not get angry like an indecent and lowborn person." Having said this, he lifted the mortal corpse of Lakṣmaṇa on his shoulders and left.

Rāma would bathe the body and anoint it with oil and sandalwood. He would himself serve meals to Lakṣmaṇa, who was no more. He would embrace, kiss, change the clothes and rest near the body all the night. We must remember that the body of a vāsudeva is made up of certain particular molecules and therefore the rigor mortis and decomposition does not set in for atleast six months after the death. In case of other mortals, the rigor mortis and decomposition starts within a few minutes.

Jaṭāyū's efforts to enlighten Rāma



Jaṭāyu, who had been reborn as a diety in the fourth strata of the celestial world, saw Rāma's plight and he descended on the earth in order to enlighten him. (1) He reached near Rāma and began to water a dead tree. When Rāma noticed his folly, he said, "Friend, no amount of water can bring this tree back to life. It will never ever bear leaves and fruits no matter what you do."

(2) Then he spread fertile soil on the rock, added cowdung and other fertilizers to the soil and planted a sapling in the soil. When Rāma saw him toiling, he said, "Friend ! you are wasting your time. The sapling will not remain alive on this rock, even if you spread the most fertile soil and fertilizer." (3) Later Jaṭāyu poured some sand in a grind stone and be-

gan to grind it. Rāma inquired, "Brother, what are you upto ?" He answered, "I am crushing the sand in order to obtain oil." Rāma said, "Why are you wasting your time and energy ? This is impossible, inspite of your sincere and unceased efforts." (4) At last he yoked an dead ox and began to plough the field. Seeing this, Rāma said, "Dear man, how can one plough the field with an dead ox." When Jaṭāyu heard this, he smiled and said, "You are an enlightened person, then why are you carrying this corpse on your shoulder. This corpse symbolizes ignorance." When Rāma heard this, he was angry. He clasped the body of Lakṣmaṇa close to his heart and shouted, "Why are you calling my brother a corpse? Can't you see he is alive and sleeping. Go away before I slay you !"

Rāma's general and charioteer Kṛtantavadana, who was reborn as a diety, learnt about Rāma's plight through his Avadhigyaṇa. He assumed a human form and appeared before him. He was carrying a dead body of a woman on his shoulders. When Rāma saw him, he asked, "O foolish man! why, are you carrying a dead body on your shoulder ?" The diety answered, "Pray, do not talk such inauspicious words. Why are you calling my dear wife a dead body ? and if you are aware that my wife is dead, why are

you carrying the dead body of a man on your shoulder ?"

This necessitated Rāma to think seriously and finally, he accepted the truth that his brother Lakṣmaṇa was no more. Jaṭāyu and Kṛtantavadana again appeared before him and revealed their identity. Rāma, then cremated the mortal remains of Lakṣmaṇa and performed the funerary rituals.



Rāma attains salvation

Rāma's renunciation

Now, Rāma too realized the transitive and unpredictable nature of the world. He decided to become an ascetic. He wanted to coronate his youngest brother Śatrughna as the emperor of Ayodhyā. But Śatrughna said, "I am not interested in power and recognition. Pray, do not impose the burden of the crown on me. I want to take the ascetic vows with you, so that both of us can walk on the path of salvation together." Rāma then coronated his grandson, the son of Lava, Anaṅgadeva, as the emperor of Ayodhyā. He then went to a descendant of the Tīrthaṅkara Munisuvrata Svāmī named Suvrata muni. Rāma, Śatrughna, Sugrīva, Bibhīṣaṇa and other sixteen thousand rulers gave up their comfortable life and took the vows of initiation. Along with them, thirty seven thousand women from noble families accepted the vows on this solemn occasion and stayed in the company of a nun named Śrīmatī.

When a noble soul renounces the world and walks on the path of renunciation, thousands of others become eager to follow him. At the noble feet of his teacher and mentor Suvrata Svāmī, Rāma studied the Pūrvāṅgaśruta and practiced austerities. After performing many penances, Rāma, who was now called Rāmarṣi, obtained a permission from his mentor and left for a deep forest. He made the jungle his abode and stayed there without a trace of fear and anxiety. Rāma muni obtained the Avadhigyan during his sojourn in the forest.

Once, Rāmarṣi entered a city in order to end his two day fast which is called chaṭṭha in religious terminology. When the citizen heard the news of Rāmarṣi's arrival, they were overjoyed. The men rushed to receive him at the gates. The women awaited his arrivals with eatables of various delicacies. There was a great commotion in the city. It scared some of the captive elephants. They broke their iron chains and ran amuck. Rāmarṣi did not accept food from any one. He had decided to end his fast with ujjhitaāhāra. The edibles which a man does not either desire to consume himself or keep at home is called ujjhitaāhāra. He straightaway

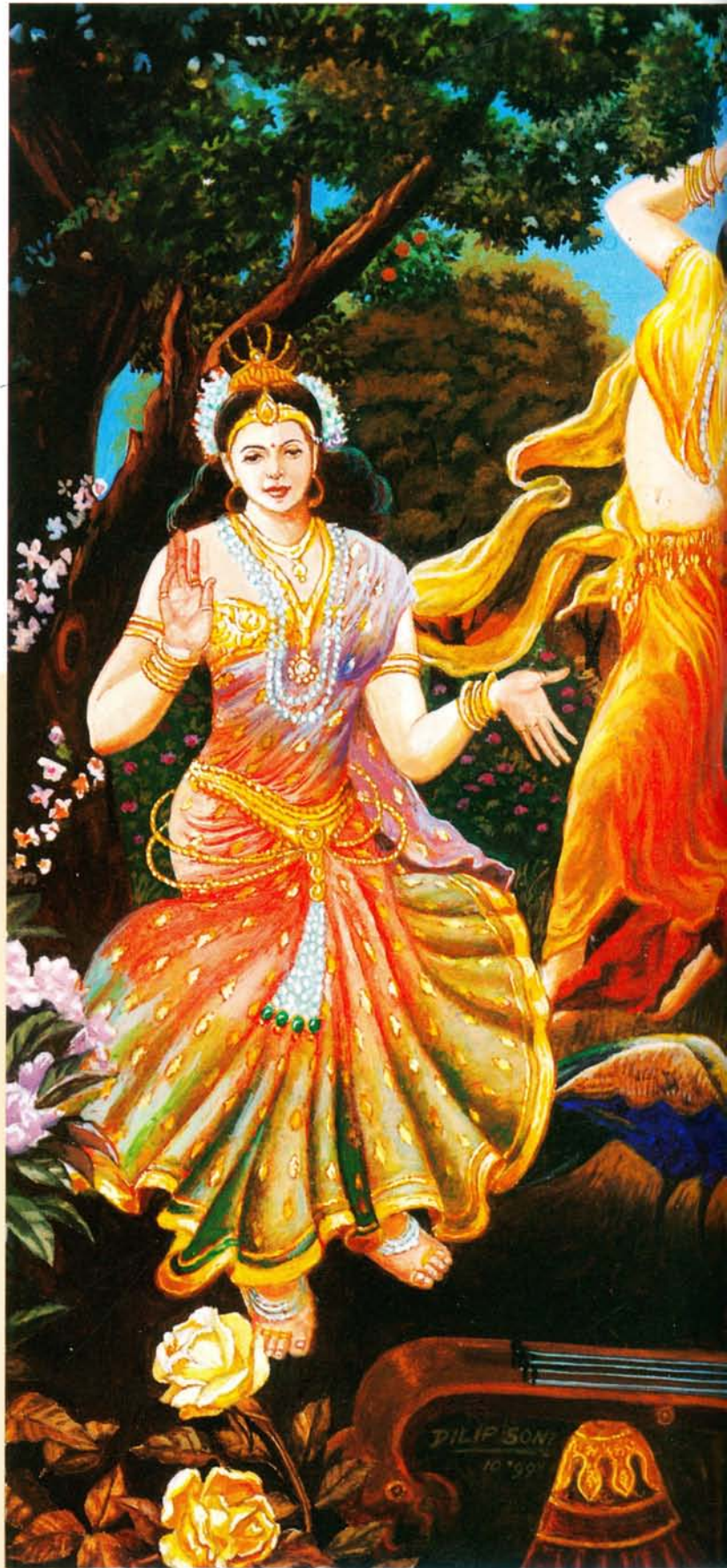


reached the palace of King Pratinandi, who served him the *ujjhitaāhāra*. The celestial beings showered gold and gems on the earth where Rāmarṣi received it. When Rāmarṣi returned to the forest, he thought that whenever I visit the city, there is a commotion. Therefore, he decided to move only in forest for collecting the *gocari* and end the fast. He himself began to neglect the body and practised meditation for hours standing in *Kāyotsarga* position. Sometimes for a month, sometimes he fasted for two, three or four months, some times he would sit in a position called *Paryāṅkāsa* and meditate, sometimes he would sit in a position called *utkāṭāsa* - the position of milking cows. Sometimes, he would raise both the hands while meditating, sometimes he stretched them horizontally and meditate. Sometimes, he would stand on his toes and meditate. Once, he travelled to *Koṭiśīlā*. He sat on the rock and with the help of *Kṣapaka Śreṇī*, practiced *Śukla* – meditation.

Upasargas by Sītendra

Avadhigyanī Sītā, who was now reborn as Acyutapati Sītendra, noticed the austerities of Rāma and began to wonder. "In case Rāma achieves *kevalgyāna* he will be free from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and our reunion would not be possible. If I anyhow manage to draw him back to the material world, then our reunion would be feasible."

Sītendra, using the mystical powers that he now possessed, turned the forest into a beautiful garden. Swaying to the breezes of spring, mango, campaka and jasmine trees displayed the best of their blossoms. The cuckoo's song enthralled the atmosphere. The fragrant and colourful flowers aroused love. Sītendra, accessed the form of Sītā, dressed up in finery, and demurely stood in front of Rāmarṣi, accompanied by the damsels of Vidhyādhara clan. Sītā said, "O Rāma the master of my soul, now I am repenting the greatest folly of my life. I made the biggest blunder by refusing your love and becoming an ascetic. These Vidhyādhara damsels are craving for your love; and hope that you will abandon the ascetism and marry all of them. We will happily live together and play erotic games. Forgive me, for I ignored your love and became an ascetic." When Sītā finished her talking, the vidhyādhara damsels played and sang erotic *rāgas* and *rāgiṇīs*. These rendering of the *rāgas* filled the atmosphere with the fervor of love.





How dangerous indeed is the Mohaniya karma? The Acyutapati treats woes and joys, friends and foes equally. Sītā, with her virtue, was reborn as Acyutendra and yet, spared no efforts to disturb Rāmarṣi's penance. The unabashed declaration of Sītendra's love and the provocative music did not stir Rāmarṣi a bit.

Rāmarṣi attains kevalagyāna

Finally, on the twelfth night of the waxing moon of the month Māgha, Rāmarṣi achieved the kevalagyāna. Sītendra and the other celestial beings celebrated the festival of kevalagyāna. Two dieties stood at the left and right side of Rāma with flywhisks. Rāmarṣi was made to sit on a golden throne. A parasol made of gold was held above his head. He began to preach his first sermon. At the end of the sermon, Sītendra asked him about the future lives of Lakṣmaṇa, herself of and Rāvaṇa. Rāmarṣi then revealed their future vividly.

34

The future births of Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā and Rāvaṇa

Rāvaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa felt intense hatred for each other. They both would, in one life, endure the fruits of their evil actions and earn virtue. Rāvaṇa went to the fourth hell and Lakṣmaṇa became a vaikriyaśarīrī.

Then, they would be reborn at the Vijayāvati nagarī situated in the eastern Mahāvīdeha. Sunanda and Rohiṇī would be their parents; and Rāvaṇa would be reborn as Jindāsa and Lakṣmaṇa would be reborn as Sudarśana. They both would be ardent followers of Jainism. This is the strange irony of karma. Two of the bitterest foes in one life would share the same womb.

When they would die, they would be dieties in the first celestial world. This would be their third birth.

During their fourth life, they would be reborn as human beings at the Vijayānagarī and lead the life of a śrāvaka.

From there, they would be born as two different individuals, not related to one another, in the Harivarṣa land as yugalika persons,

In the sixth life, they would be dieties. Then, they would be the offsprings of King Kumāravārta and Queen Lakṣmī at Vijayāpuri. Their names would respectively be Jayakānta and Jayaprabha. They would follow the religion preached by the Jineśvara.

After their deaths, they would be dieties in the sixth celestial world.





Sitendra then would leave the twelfth celestial world and will be Sarvaratnamati cakravartī in the Bharata kṣetra. Rāvaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa would leave the sixth celestial world and will be his offsprings as Indrayudha and Megharatha respectively. Strange indeed are the ways of karma! Rāvaṇa, who had abducted Sītā will be reborn as her son in his tenth reincarnation, and Lakṣmaṇa, who slayed Rāvaṇa, would be born as his brother ! Cakravartī Sītā's soul in this life would renounce the world and accept the order of ascetics. After death, it would reach a Anuttara devaloka named Vaijayanta.

Indrayudha, the soul of Rāvaṇa will achieve five good births and be a Tirthaṅkara. Sītā would descend from Vaijayanta and become the first disciple i.e. gaṇadhara of Rāvaṇa. Finally, both of them will achieve salvation.

Megharatha, the soul of Lakṣmaṇa will achieve many auspicious forms after he finishes his life as the son of Sarvaratnamati cakravartī.

Then, he would be Cakravartī at the Ratnacitrā nagarī, which is the crest jewel of Puṣkaravara island situated at end of Mahāvideha. From there, after taking few good births and becoming a Tirthaṅkara, he will achieve salvation.

Kevalagyani Rāmarṣi continued to live as a nomadic ascetic for another twenty five years and after his demise, achieved salvation at Siddhagiri Mahātirtha, along with three crore Jain asectics.

Friends ! Rāmāyaṇa is a vast and boundless ocean. We have churned it and found some precious jewels which have been presented in this book. May the reading of this abridged version aspire you to make a detailed study of Rāmāyaṇa. May it help you achieve the spiritual elavation. Read it, discuss it with your friends, relatives, and well wishers. This Lokottara Rāmāyaṇa is the ocean of detachment and salvation. It preaches that even the worst of worst soul can achieve salvation, if he truly repents and endures the fruits of his action.

A soul achieves salvation on the basis of his own endurance and efforts, which is known as Puruṣārtha.

Table

	Lakṣmaṇa	Rāvaṇa	Sītā
1	Vaikriya Śarirī	4 th Hell	12 th Heaven
2	Sudarśana (Bros.)	Jinādāsa (Bros.)	
3	1st Heaven	1st Heaven	Cakravartī (Father) Anuttara Gaṇadhara
4	Human being	Human being	
5	Yugalika	Yugalika	
6	Heaven	Heaven	
7	Jayaprabha (Bros.)	Jayakanta (Bros.)	
8	6th Heaven	6th Heaven	
9	Megharatha (Son)	Indrayudha (Son)	
10	Many good Births	5 good births	
11	Cakravartī	Tirthaṅkara	
12	Many good Births		
13	Tirthaṅkara		

Appendix- 1 The foundation of Rākṣasa Vamśa

Innumerable years ago, the first Tīrthaṅkara Śrī Rṣabhadeva ruled the earth. He created harmony in discord. People during this age were selfless and innocent. He was the pioneer of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. Bharata cakravartī was the progeny of Lord Śrī Rṣabhadeva. Ādityaśāśa, the son of Bharata cakravartī is the founder of Surya dynasty. King Anaraṇya, Daśaratha, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were born in this dynasty.

When Lord Rṣabhadeva renounced the world and became an ascetic, two of his grandsons Nami and Vinami were absent. They frequently visited their grandfather, who now was an ascetic, and demanded land for themselves. Finally, diety Dharaṇendra summoned them both and handed them two ranges of the mountain vaitāḍhya. He also taught them many vidyās. Mount Vaitāḍhya divides the Bharata kṣetra into two parts. King Vinami ruled the northern ranges of Vaitāḍhya and King Nami ruled its southern ranges. They were the founders of the Vidyādhara race. Innumerable rulers were born in these two dynasties. Some achieved salvation and some achieved goodhoo.

During the regime of Lord Śrī Ajitanātha Svāmī, the second Tīrthaṅkara, King Pūrṇaghana ruled Rathanupūra, situated in the southern ranges of Vaitāḍhya, and King Sulocana ruled Gaganavallabha nagara in the northern ranges of Vaitāḍhya. King Pūrṇaghana wanted his son prince Ghanavāhana to marry princess Rūpavatī, the daughter of King Sulocana. Pūrṇaghana, therefore sent a formal proposal to Sulocana, but the seers in the royal court advised the king to marry his daughter to Sagara cakravartī, the cousin of Lord Ajitanātha. He decided to follow the advice of his seers.

This decision bruised the vanity of King Pūrṇaghana. A fierce battle was fought between him and the King Sulocana. This was an aimless war. The wounded ego of King Pūrṇaghana took away thousands of lives. Finally, King Sulocana was killed by his foe King Pūrṇaghana. King Sulocana's progeny prince Sahasranayana and princess Rūpavatī managed to elude the enemies and take a shelter in the forest. They once met Sagara cakravartī in the forest. The young prince Sahasranayana gave his sister Princess Rūpavatī to Sagara cakravartī in marriage. Sagara cakravartī allotted him some land and coronated him as a king.

As days passed, King Sahasranayana became a powerful ruler. He declared a war against King Pūrṇaghana and Prince Ghanavāhana in order to avenge his father's death. In a fierce battle that ensued, King Pūrṇaghana was killed. His son Ghanavāhana sought a refuge at the lotus feet of Śrī Ajitanātha, who made him fearless. King Sahasranayana too gave up his pride and reached the feet of Lord Ajitanātha. They both learned about their past lives in the sermon delivered by the Lord. Ghanavāhana praised the Lord. Rākṣasa, the emperor of a clan of Vyantara Deva said to Ghanavāhana, "You have made an excellent achievement by seeking a refuge at the lotus feet of Lord Ajitanātha Svāmī. I request you not to return to your original kingdom situated in the southern ranges of the mount Vaitāḍhya. Instead, visit the Rākṣasa island and rule there." He then taught many vidyās to Ghanavāhana and gave him a mystic garland protected by dieties, for, Vyantarendra considered Ghanavāhana his brother in faith. Thus, Ghanavāhana became the ruler of Laṅkā in Rākṣasa Island. His wife Suprabhā delivered a son, who was named Mahārākṣasa.

Once, King Ghanavāhana went to pay obeisance to Śrī Ajitanātha Svāmī and hearing his sermon, he wondered, "Oh! I have become a slave of my senses. The love of a woman has shackled me! I am sinking deeper and deeper in the swamp which is called power! I am deceiving none but my soul. The life is an illusion. How can I trust my body that will perish any day, any time? Thus, when I cannot trust my ownself, how can I trust others? Can the unlimited political power, my family conferred in me, prevent the evil things that the future has in offing? Why should not I give up everything that is shortlived and embrace the eternal." Thus, overcome by detachment, he coronated his son Mahārākṣasa as the king and then went to Lord Śrī Ajitanātha Svāmī. He made a great progress in realms of spiritualism and finally achieved mokṣa. The inhabitants of Rākṣasa island became famous as Rākṣasas. These people were not ugly or hideous, nor were they carnivorous or cannibals. They were human-beings belonging to the category of vidyādhars. King Ghanavāhana was the pioneer of this race. Innumerable illustrious kings were born in this race. During the regime of Munisuvrata Svāmī, Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna, and Bibhiṣaṇa were born. Their father's name was King Ratnaśravasa.

Appendix-2 Previous Births of Candragati, Bhāmaṇḍala etc

In Kṣetrapur, Sāgaradatta had a son Guṇadhara and a daughter Guṇavati. Guṇavati died without marrying and became a Gazel in her next life. Guṇadhara was born as deer. After many births, the soul of Guṇavati was born as Sarasā. Guṇadhara's soul was also born as Atibhūti, a male child of a brahmin Vasubhūti and his wife Anukośā at Dārugāma, which is situated in Bharata. Atibhūti married Sarasā.

A Brahmin named Kayāna took a fancy for Sarasā and abducted her. When a person becomes a victim of carnal desire, he does anything prohibited by the religious tenets. Sarasā's husband Atibhūti, accompanied by his parents, went to the jungle in quest of his wife. Vasubhūti and Anukośā met a sage in the jungle. They learnt the finest nuances of religion through the sage and became ascetics. After death, according to Paumacariyaṃ, they became dieties in the Lokāntika, whereas Triṣaṣṭhiśalākā Puruṣa caritra says they both became dieties in the first celestial world and after many births, Vasubhūti's soul became King Candragati and Anukośā's soul became Queen Puṣpavati.

Sarasā, the abducted wife of Atibhūti, too, learnt about the true dharma through a sādhviji and she too became an ascetic. After her demise, she was born as a devī in the second celestial world. From there, she was born as Vegavati, daughter of Purohita Śrībhūti. Once, she made a false acusation of Sudarśana Muni and later accepted the life of an ascetic. After her death, she was born in fifth celestial world and then was born as Sītā.

Sarasā's husband Atibhūti was frustrated, when he could not find her. His unhappy life and unhappy death made him a swan in his next life. Once, this swan was badly wounded by a ferocious kite. He fell at the feet of an ascetic, bleeding profusely. The compassionate sādhu recited the Namaskāra mahāmantra, so that the wounded bird would die peacefully. The virtue of listening to the Namaskāra mahāmantra on the deathbed made the swan, who was the soul of Atibhūti, a Vyantara deva with a life span of ten thousand years. When he completed his life as a Vyantara deva, he was reborn as Prince Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita of Vidagdhanagara.

Kayāna, who used to cast a covetous eye on other

women, after his many births, was born as Piṅgala, the priest of King Cakradhvaja. Atisundarī, the daughter of King Cakradhvaja, and Piṅgala both used to study together. Kayāna's soul changed many forms, but it was still unscrupulous. He developed a fancy for the princess Atisundarī, and abducted her and brought her to Vidagdhanagara. This shows that an unrepentant soul remains unchanged inspite of thousands of births. In the past birth, the evil Kayāna had abducted Sarasā and in this birth, the evil Piṅgala abducted Princess Atisundarī. He made the forest his permanent abode. He would sell grass and wood in order to make his living.

Once, prince Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita noticed Atisundarī and both fell in love at first sight. In the past birth, Piṅgala abducted Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita's wife. Hence, in this birth, his wife Atisundarī was abducted by Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita and the score was equalized. But he was afraid of his father, therefore they shifted to Dūrgadeśa and began a new life. Piṅgala, like a lunatic, roamed everywhere in quest of Atisundarī. One day, by same virtue, he met Muni Guptasuris'varaji and became an ascetic. Piṅgalaṛṣi then became Piṅgala diety.

Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita looted near the perincincts of Ayodhyā, which was then ruled by Daśaratha. Once, he was caught by King Bālacandra and brought to the court of King Daśaratha. King Daśaratha was enraged when he saw him, but he somehow regained his composure and released him. Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita returned to the jungle. Once, he met Muncandra muni in the jungle. The counselling of the muni brought him the infold of śrāvaka dharma. After his death, he was born as Bhāmaṇḍala, the son of King Janaka and Queen Videhā. When Janakas wife Queen Videhā delivered the twins, Piṅgala learnt about it through his Avadhigyaṇa and was enraged. He abducted the baby boy in order to kill him, but this time, his conscience weakened his vengence and he left the baby at the Nandana garden. We have noticed the irony of karma. Atibhūti and Sarasā were husband and wife in one life, and when Atibhūti was reborn as Bhāmaṇḍala, Sarasā became his sister Sītā.

Table

Piṅgala diety	Bhāmaṇḍala	Sītā	Candragati	Puṣpavati
	Guṇadhara (Brother)	Guṇavati (Sister)		
	Deer	gazel		
	Many birth	Many birth		
Kayāna	Atibhūti (Son)	Sarasā (Son's wife)	Vasubhūti (Father)	Anukośā (Mother)
Many birth	Many birth	2nd Heaven	Lokāntika deva/ or 1st heaven.	Lokāntika deva/ or 1st heaven.
		Vegavati	Many births	Many births
	Swan	5th Heaven.		
	Vyantara deva			
Piṅgalaṛṣi	Kuṇḍalamaṇḍita			
Piṅgala diety	Bhāmaṇḍala (Brother)	Sītā (Sister)	Candragati (King)	Puṣpavati (Queen)

Appendix-3 Previous Births of Daśaratha, Muni Satyabhūti and King Janaka

Bhāvana, a trader, lived in Senāpuranagara with his wife Dīpikā. They had a daughter named Upāsti. She hated the ascetics. This sin made her life miserable, and after her death, she was born in different species of animal life many times. Then, she was born at Candrapuranagara as Varuṇa. Varuṇa was very generous to the ascetics and treated them with reverence. In his past births, this very soul hated ascetics, but when his sins were cleansed, became their ardent devotee. A generous person is born as a great man in his next birth. When Varuṇa died, he was born as a yugalika man at the Uttarakuru, situated in the Ghāṭaki khaṇḍa. Being a soul of minimum sins, when the yugalika Varuṇa died, he was reborn as a diety. After living a very long life in the celestial world, he was born as Prince Nandivardhana, the son of King Nandighoṣa of Puṣkalavijaya. His father King Nandighoṣa coronated him and accepted the ascetic life. After completing his life as a diety in the celestial world called Graiveyaka, he was born as Muni Satyabhūti.

Nandivardhana was a faithful follower of Śrāvaka dharma. He became a diety in the fifth celestial world after his death. From there, he was born as Prince Sūryaṇjaya, the son of King Ratnamālī of Śaśīpura nagara, situated in the northern ranges of the mount Vaitaḍhya. Once, King Ratnamālī declared a war with the proud ruler of Simhapura. On reaching there, he tried to put the entire city ablaze by using his Āgneya Vidyā. Suddenly, a diety from the eighth celestial world appeared before him and said, "Do not do this.... pray refrain... do not

commit such a rash and thoughtless action, for you shall reap its harvest in the next life. In one of your past lives, you were King Bhūrinandana. I was then your priest and my name was Upamanyu. Once, you pledged that you will give up the habit of consuming meat. I misguided you and made you eat meat. I was then assassinated by a strong man, named Skanda and born as an elephant, but was killed in a war. Then, I was born as your son, Prince Arisūdana. When I remembered my past births, I became an ascetic and was born as a deity in the eighth celestial world. But you, in your life as Bhūrinandana, suffered a lot and became a python. From there, you went in the second hell. After enduring the tortures of hell for a prolonged time you were born as King Ratnamālī. The consumption of meat has given you so much of grief. Now, do not add to it by setting this city abaze. I was Upamanyu your royal priest and now I am a diety. I am here to prevent you from committing this heinous crime and the worst of sins."

When the diety finished his speech, King Ratnamālī and his son Sūryaṇjaya were filled with disgust. They both accepted the dīkṣā and became mendicants. Ācāryadeva Śrī Tilakasundarasūrīśvarji Mahārāja initiated both, King Ratnamālī and his son in the order of asceticism. After death, they became dieties in the seventh celestial world and when they completed their span as dieties, Sūryaṇjaya was born as King Daśaratha and King Ratnamālī was born as King Janaka. When Upamanyu finished his span in the eighth celestial world, he was born as Prince Kanakarāja, the younger brother of Janaka. When King Daśaratha heard about his rebirth, he felt the urge to become an ascetic. The irony of karma is evident in the fact that in one life Ratnamālī and Sūryaṇjaya were father and son and in other birth they became relatives. Upāsti, a girl who hated ascetics, was born as King Daśaratha. When we realise this irony of karma, we must give up adharmā and strive for salvation.

TABLE

King Kanaka	King Janaka	Daśaratha	Satyabhūti Muni
		Upāsti	
		Many Birth	
Upamanyu (Priest)	King Bhūrinandana (Father)	Varuṇa	
Elephant		Yugalika.	
Arisūdana (Son)		Diety.	
8th Heaven.		Nandivardhana (Son)	Nandighoṣa (Father)
	Python.	5th Heaven.	Graiveyaka
	2nd Hell	Sūryaṇjaya (Son)	
	Ratnamālī (Father)	7th Heaven.	
	7th Heaven		
Kanaka (Brother)	Janaka (Brother)	Daśaratha	Satyabhūti Muni

Appendix-4 The previous births of Jaṭāyu

King Daṇḍaka ruled Kumbhakāraṇa naga situated in Bharata kṣetra. He was married to Princess Purandarayaśā, the daughter of King Jitaśatru, who ruled Śrāvastinagari. King Jitaśatru had a son, named Prince Skandhakumāra. Once, Pālaka, the chief minister of the King Daṇḍaka, came to Śrāvasti to visit the court of King Jitaśatru. A scholarly debate was on, in the court of Śrāvasti. Young prince Skandhakumāra defeated the seasoned chief minister Pālaka in the debate. Pālaka felt humiliated and decided to take a revenge. Young Skandhakumāra decided to be a monk, when he realised how the karmas entangle a soul in their clasp, for ages and ages. He and five hundred other princes were initiated into the monkhood by Munisuvratasvāmī. After extensive scholarly pursuits and penance, he was felicitated by the title of Ācārya. He became famous as Ācārya Khandhakasūrisvaraji.

Once, after obtaining a consent from his mentor, Ācārya Khandhakasūrisvaraji left for Kumbhakāraṇanagara, to preach his sister Purandarayaśā. He desired to explain the transitory nature of the world to his sister, so that she could take steps to achieve renunciation. He was accompanied by five hundred of his disciples. When the chief minister Pālaka heard about the ācārya's arrival, he decided to avenge his defeat, for he had been nurturing a grudge against the ācārya for years. He secretly buried many weapons in the garden on the outskirts. Visiting different places, Ācāryaśrī arrived at Kumbhakāraṇanagara and stayed in the garden near the percents of the kingdom. King Daṇḍaka his dignitaries and citizens visited him. When they heard the sermon of the ācārya, they were spellbound.

King Daṇḍaka returned to the palace and was resting in solitude. Taking advantage of this, the crooked minister entered his chamber and said, "Your Majesty, I am your humble slave and pray for your well being. I am here to warn you that the man who is masquerading as a monk is in fact a hypocrite. He is tired of the austerities and desires to embrace the material world. He is here to dethrone you. His five hundred disciples are in fact trained warriors and each one is as powerful as thousand warriors. They have dug trenches in the gardens and hidden a lot of weapons in them. Pray, dispatch your sentries to the garden to recover the concealed weapons. The king was enraged, when his sentries returned with the hidden weapons. The king said, "You really are my most trusted and worthy minister. Now that you have unearthed the secret plan of these imposters, I hand them over to you. Do with them as you please."

When the cruel minister heard this, he was overjoyed. He ordered the blacksmiths to make a huge machine for crushing humans. He then put the disciples of the worthy ācārya in the machine, one after another. The serene and unruffled ācārya asked each one of them to perform "Niryāmaṇā"- the final devotion. He said, "Pālaka is not your foe, but a true brother and a wellwisher; for he is giving you an opportunity

to quickly atone and cleanse the karmas, which takes ages of austerities to be cleansed. This painful death will minimise your karmas." Thus, four hundred and ninety-nine of the disciples achieved the Kevalagyāna while they were being squeezed into pulp and achieved salvation.

The last disciple was a young boy, while he was being dragged on to the machine; the ācāryadeva earnestly pleaded to Pālaka!, "I cannot endure the sight of this boy's meeting his end painfully. Pray, squeeze me into pulp first, you may do whatever you desire to this young muni, once I am dead." Pālaka said, "So you are the one who preaches detachment? You love this young disciple so much that your heart will bleed when you witness him being minced gradually. The boy shall be killed in your presence." The young muni too obtained the Kevalagyāna while being crushed and achieved salvation, but the ācārya who was emotionally tormented thought to himself "I have sincerely practised my austerities and, if I have unfalteringly followed my academic pursuits then, may I be conferred with an opportunity to revenge Daṇḍaka and Pālaka with their entire clan and nation." He was squeezed into pulp and was reborn as a diety named Vahnikumāra. Vahni in Sanskrit means fire.

The ācārya's 'Rajoharaṇa' was stained with blood. A kite thought it to be a huge chunk of meat and grabbed it into its talons. While he was flying high, his grip on the Rajoharaṇa was weakened and it fell in the courtyard of the ācārya's sister. Purandarayaśā lifted it and identified it as the same Rajoharaṇa, which she had gifted to her brother Ācārya Khandhaka sūrisvarji. She began to sob uncontrollably. Devī Naradattā- the Śāsanadevī of Lord Munisuvrat Svāmī, lifted her tenderly and brought her to the Lord. Her boundless sorrows turned into tranquility at the mere sight of the Lord. She then embraced the ascetic life.

The diety Vahnikumāra, who in his past birth was Ācārya Khandhaka sūrisvarji, set ablaze the King Daṇḍaka and the chief minister Pālaka alongwith their entire clan and entire nation in order to avenge the death of the five hundred munis. Since then, that area became famous as Daṇḍakāraṇya. The chief minister Pālaka went to seventh hell after his death. King Daṇḍaka was reborn in thousands of species, living a painful life and more painful death. Finally, he was born as a vulture, inflicted with diseases. His name was Gandha. The sight of Muni Sugupta reminded him of his past births. Muni Sugupta was gifted with Sparsalabdhī- a power of soul by which anyone becomes disease-free, by a mere touch. When the vulture touched him, it was healed. His wings received a golden hue. His beak became radiant like a coral and his feet glew with the bright red effulgence of Padmarāga. His body glittered like precious gems and he developed a crest that resembled a tuft, therefore he became famous as Jaṭāyu.

Appendix-5 The foundation of Vānaravamśā

Vālī, Sugrīva, Aṅgada and Hanumāna are referred to as Vānaras- apes in the epic Rāmāyaṇa. They weren't monkeys or apes, but they were Vidyādhars belonging to the clan of apes. Why were they called apes when infact they were specially abled men?

During the regime of Lord Śreyānsanātha, the island named Rākṣasa was ruled by King Kīrtidhavaḷa. During these days, King Atīndra ruled Meghapuranagara, which was situated in the southern ranges of the mount Vaitāḍhya. He had a son named Śrīkānta and a daughter named Devī. She surpassed the celestial beings in beauty. When she reached puberty, King Puṣpottara of Ratnapuranagara proposed King Atīndra that princess Devī be married to his son Padmottara. He had a daughter Padmā. King Atīndra did not accept the proposal and gave away his daughter Devī to King Kīrtidhavaḷa of Rākṣasadvīpa in marriage. The enraged king Puṣpottara nurtured enmity against King Atīndra and Prince Śrīkānta. It is common for a man to treat anyone, who does not respect his opinions and views, as an enemy. It is not ethical to impose one's own point of view on others. Since the king of Ratnapura lacked this understanding, he developed enmity with Atīndra, the king of Meghapura.

Once, the young prince of Meghapura, Śrīkānta, had been out for an excursion. During his return journey, he noticed Princess Padma, the daughter of King Puṣpottara. The princess too noticed him and both fell in love at the first sight. For a moment, the princess thought, "I wish that this handsome prince abducts me, so that we can spend the rest of life together." The wise prince understood what the princess thought, he gathered courage and immediately grabbed her by hand and carried her in his aircraft. The maids of the princess raised a commotion. When King Puṣpottara learnt that his beloved daughter has been abducted by the son of his deadliest foe, he was enraged. He summoned the army and boarded his aircraft. He, at once, began the search for his daughter.

The young prince Śrīkānta hurried towards Laṅkā and sought a refuge from King Kīrtidhavaḷa, who was married to his sister. He narrated his love story to King Kīrtidhavaḷa. In the meantime, King Puṣpottara traced him and laid a seize to Laṅkānagara. King Kīrtidhavaḷa sent his emissary to King Puṣpottara. The emissary said, "O King, you wanted your daughter to marry a man of your choice, but your daughter has willingly selected Prince Śrīkānta as her life partner. We must respect her

view and must refrain from fighting. The war and its subsequent results will ruin the joy and and life of your own daughter, whom you no doubt love more than your ownself. On behalf of my king, I appeal you to join the nuptial of Prince Śrīkānta with Princess Padmā and confer your blessings on them. I think, this is what the time demands.

A maid came hurriedly to the King Puṣpottara and said, "Master your daughter Princess Padmādevī desires me to convey you this message. She said, 'I was not abducted forcefully, but willingly moved with Prince Śrīkānta. I, by my own will, have chosen him as my life partner.'" When King Puṣpottara heard this, he was pacified. He happily joined the grand wedding proceedings, and having blessed the couple, left for Ratnapura.

Kīrtidhavaḷa, the king of Laṅkā, said to Prince Śrīkānta, "Pray, do not return to Meghapura, for you have many enemies in the southern ranges of the mount Vaitāḍhya. I do not say that you are not capable of tackling them, nor do I think you to be a timid person, but it is not right to live under a constant threat of aggression. What's more, we love you so much that the thought of being separated from you, strikes our heart with a terror. Besides Rākṣasadvīpa, I also rule the Vānara, Sīṃhala, Barbarakula and many other islands. You may settle down in any island of your choice and rule it without any fear. Prince Śrīkānta accepted this proposal and selected the Kīṣkindhānagara in Vānara island as his kingdom. King Śrīkānta was not only kind and friendly to the human beings, but also to the apes and monkeys, that were in abundance at the Vānara island. He appealed the citizens to take care of the apes and not to hurt them. He served the best food to the apes and monkeys. The citizens too followed the example of their king. They accepted the monkey as a totem. The picture of a monkey received a place of honour on their national flag and insignia. Thus, the inhabitants of the Vānara islands, though they were Vidyādhara humans, were called Vānaras-monkeys. Their clan became famous as the clan of apes. King Śrīkānta was the first king of the Vānaras and his son was the valiant Vajraṇṭha.



Once, King Śrīkānta noticed Indra, the king of the celestial world, flying in his aircraft in the direction of Nandiśvaradvīpa. He was accompanied by several other dieties. Seeing them, King Śrīkānta felt the urge of going for a pilgrimage to the Nandiśvaradvīpa. He boarded his aircraft but no matter what he did, the aircraft didn't proceed further. King Śrīkānta's heart was filled with sorrow. "How unfortunate I am indeed! I couldn't go for a pilgrimage, when I desire," he said to himself. He further thought, 'I must not blame anyone except myself for this unfulfilled desire. Probably, I did not perform enough penance in my last births. What is the use of this throne and power, when I cannot visit this holy place? What is the use of having a wife, son and family? What is the use of this royal court and the courtiers? The courtiers are nothing except sychophants. Its high time, I think about my soul.' When the introspection revealed the truth of the material world, he said, "I must endeavour to walk on the path of salvation now. But unless all my desires, passions, and emotion sink into nothingness, I cannot take steps towards renunciation. I must adore the lord and observe celibacy, I must not please my

senses and surrender to the will and word of the lord. This is impossible until I become an ascetic. In order to appease the sins, I must revolt to forgiveness. In order to follow celibacy, I must observe the nine guptis. I must nip the cause of sins in bud by surrendering to the will of God, and for this, I must renounce the world." He then handed over the throne to his son Vajrakaṇṭha and became an ascetic. He performed austere penance and finally achieved salvation. King Vajrakaṇṭha was followed by the worthy and valiant kings like Ghanodadhiratha, Kiṣkindha, Ādityarāja and Vālī.

Though Vālī and Sūgrīva belonged to the tribe of Vānars-apes, Pavanañjaya and Hanumāna did not belong to their clan. They were Vidyādhara. Uttarapurāṇa and many other works of Rāmāyaṇa mention that Princess Padmarāgā, the daughter of either Vālī or Sūgrīva, was married to Hanumana and he was absorbed in the tribe of the apes. According to many other versions of Rāmāyaṇa, Hanumāna practised celibacy since childhood. He was unmarried and combined wit, knowledge and enormous muscle power.

Appendix-6 The Previous Births of Indrajit, Meghavāhana and Mandodarī

Prathama and Paścima were two poor brothers, who resided in Kauśāmbinagarī. They discovered the true dharma through an ascetic called Bhāvadatta and became mendicants.

After many years, they once again reached their native place during the month of spring. The climate was pleasant and everyone celebrated the advent of spring. When Paścima muni saw King Nandighoṣa and his consort enjoying the festivities, he said to himself, 'I wish to become a prince as a result of my penance.' The other ascetics tried to convince him that his reasoning was wrong, for, one embraces the austere life of a mendicant, to minimise karmas and achieve salvation. They urged him to take his words back, but Paścima muni did not pay heed to their advice. When he died, his soul entered the womb of queen Indumukhī and he was born as Prince Rativardhana. When he stepped into the threshold of youth, he too, like his father, indulged into amorous games with his wives. His elder Prathama muni practised selfless and desirefree penance, and after his demise was born

as a mighty diety in the fifth celestial world. Through his Avadhigyan, he learnt that his brother of the past birth was born as a prince, and was indulged into seeking sensual pleasure. He, therefore appeared before the young prince Rativardhana and narrated him how he sunk deeper and deeper into the swamp of desires. When the prince Rativardhana heard this, he remembered his past birth. He repented and became an ascetic. The acquired virtues, once fulfill the passions, but gradually leads to miseries. Rativardhana repented for his folly and immediately embraced an asectic life to atone his sins. He managed to free himself from the shackles of sins, acquire virtue and was born as a diety in the fifth celestial world. When their tenure as a diety came to an end, both of the brothers became kings of Vibudhanagara, situated in Mahāvīdeha Kṣetra. Both initiated ascetic life and became dieties in the twelfth celestial world. From there, they both were born as Rāvaṇa's sons, Indrajit and Meghavāhana. Indumukhī, the mother of Rativardhana muni, after many births, was born as Mandodarī and became Rāvaṇa's wife.

Table

Indrajit	Meghavāhana	Mandodarī
Prathama (Brother)	Paścima (Brother)	
	Rativardhan (Son)	Indumukhī (Mother)
Fifth heaven	Fifth heaven	Many births
King	King	
Twelfth heaven	Twelfth heaven	
Indrajit	Meghavāhana	Mandodarī

Appendix-7 The relation between Bharata and the elephant Bhuvanāṅkāra

When Lord Śrī Ṛṣabhadeva became an ascetic, four thousand kings renounced the world and joined him. He would not consume food or talk with anyone. He just moved from one place to other. Kaccha and Mahākaccha, the chief munis, were asked by the others, "When and how would they eat?" The Munis replied, "We do not know, for we did not ask Lord anything before our initiation and now, Lord does not answer any query. Now, we are between the horns of a dilemma, for, we can neither return home, nor can we survive without food. Thinking this, they started a new cult, which had comparatively lenient rules. It was called the cult of Tāpasa's. Candrodāya, the son of King Prahlāda and Surodāya, the son of King Suprabha were two of those Tāpasas. After many births, Candrodāya was born as Prince Kulāṅkara of Gajapuranagara and Surodāya was born in the same city as brahmin Śrutirati. In due course of time, Prince Kulāṅkara was coronated.

Once, when the King Kulāṅkara was on his way to the hermitage of a tāpasa, he came across a muni, who possessed avadhigyaṇa. The muni said, "O Great king ! you are on your way to meet a tāpasa, who is performing pañcāgni sādhanā. When you reach his hermitage, you will notice a pile of wood, which would be utilised as fuel. A snake has somehow got into the pile. The snake, in his past birth, was your grandfather, King Kṣemāṅkara. Hurry up and free the poor snake." King Kulāṅkara was restless, when he heard this. He rushed to the hermitage and freed the snake from the pile of fuel. He began to wonder, "My grandfather was a noble king and yet his karmas made him a crawling reptile. My fate could be worse than this, if I do not take care of my soul." This chain of thoughts created an urge to renounce the world in his heart.

In the meantime, priest Śrutirati, who in fact was a reincarnation of Surodāya, hurried to the king and said, "O mighty king, Jain dharma is not a part of your family tradition, yet, if you are really keen on being initiated into ascetism, by all means do it, but not now. You may do so, when you reach the twilight years. Why are you disrupting

the pattern of administration." When the king heard this, he was disheartened and began to wonder, "What should I do now." His queen Śrīdāmā had adulterous relation with the royal priest Śrutirati. When she saw her husband in a tensive mood, she thought, "The king has certainly learnt about my adulterous liasion with his priest. I must hurry and murder him, before he exposes me."

She and the priest Śrutirati hatched a conspiracy. Śrīdāmā served him poisoned meal and killed her own husband. This is the irony of karma. Priest Śrutirati conspired to kill Kulāṅkara, his own friend of past birth. Woe to the carnal desires, for, they induced an Āryan woman to assassinate her own husband.

After many rebirths, both the king and the priest were born in the family of a learned brahmin as twins. The twins were named as Vinoda and Ramaṇa. Ramaṇa left Rājagṛhī to learn the vedas. Vinoda was married to a brahmin maiden named Śākhā. When Ramaṇa finished his academic pursuits, he returned to Rājagṛhī, but the night sentinel did not open the gates of the city. Ramaṇa, therefore decided to spend the remaining night in the temple of a yakṣa, which was situated at the outskirts. Vinoda's wife Śākhā had adulterous relations with a brahmin named Datta. She had agreed to meet him during the advanced hours of night in the same temple, where Ramaṇa was sleeping. She reached the temple as usual and her husband Vinoda followed her. When she saw Ramaṇa, who was fast asleep, she thought that he was her lover Datta. She woke him and they indulged into passionate action. Seeing this, Vinoda attacked his own brother with a sword. Ramaṇa pulled out his dagger and in a fierce duel that ensued, Ramaṇa was killed. Śākhā plunged Ramaṇa's dagger in the heart of her husband and murdered him.

Vinoda's soul transmigrated through many births and was born in the family of a rich trader as Dhana. Ramaṇa's soul too transmigrated through many cycles of birth and was born in the same family. He was named Bhūṣaṇa. He married thirty two young maidens at his father's insistence. Once, he was enjoying the beauty of the night on the terrace, accompanied by his wives. During the fourth hour of the night, he saw

the dieties descending the earth in order to celebrate the Kevalagyāna festival of Śrīdhara muni. His heart was filled with tranquility. He descended the steps and left to pay obeisance to Śrīdhara muni, but a venomous snake bit him. He died with a good intension. Hence, he passed through good births many times and was born in Mahāvīdeha kṣetra as Prince Priyadarśana, the son of Acala Cakravartī and his wife Queen Hariṇī. Since childhood, his mind was inclined towards dharma. He wanted to renounce the world at a very tender age, but his father got him married to three thousand beautiful maidens. During his lifespan as a layman, he performed excellent penance for sixty four thousand years. When he died, he was born as a diety in Brahmadevaloka. Dhana's soul travelled through the cycle of birth and death.

He was then born as Mṛdumati at Potanapura, in a brahmin family, but he was rude and imprudent. His father therefore threw him out of the home. The young boy cultivated bad habits as there was none to control him. He was an expert gambler and mastered many arts and cheated people in order to earn his livelyhood. His expertise in gambling made him very rich. He then became friendly with a harlot called Vasanta. But the twilight years brought a radi-

cal change in him. He left all his vices and became an ascetic. He too became a diety in Brahmadevaloka, but his debaucheries in early life forced him to take birth as an elephant Bhuvanālaṅkāra in the forest of the mount Vaitāḍhya. Priyadarśana's soul was reborn as Bharata, after he finished his tenure as a diety in Brahmadevaloka. When the elephant Bhuvanālaṅkāra saw Bharata, he remembered his past births and was pacified.

TABLE

The elephant Bhuvanālaṅkāra	Bharata
King Candrodaya (Tāpasa)	King Surodaya (Tāpasa)
Kulaṅkara	Śrutirati
Many rebirth	Many rebirths
Vinoda	Ramaṇa
Many rebirths	Many rebirths
Dhana	Bhūṣaṇa
Many rebirths	Good births
Mṛdumati	Priyadarśana
Diety in Brahmadevaloka	Diety in Brahmadevaloka
Elephant Bhuvanālaṅkāra	Bharata

Appendix-8 Previous Lives of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Viśalyā, Bibhīṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa, Sūgrīva and Sītā



A trader named Nayadatta, resided at the Kṣemapuranagara in the southern Bharata. He had two sons Dhanadatta and Vasudatta. They had a friend called Yagyavalkya. In the same city, a noble trader Sāgardatta had a son Guṇadhara and daughter Guṇavati. When Guṇavati reached puberty, her father engaged her to Vasudatta. But her mother Ratnaprabhā, a greedy woman, secretly engaged her to a rich man Śrīkānta. Yagyavalkya, somehow came to know the vicious plan of Ratnaprabhā. He revealed it to his friends Dhanadatta and Vasudatta. One night, Vasudatta attacked his rival Śrīkānta. A fierce duel ensued and both the young men died while fighting with each other.

Both were reborn as deers in the jungles, situated on the slopes of the mount Vindhyācala. Guṇavati remained a spinster throughout her life and was born as a gazel. The animosity between the two deers was so intense that they fought with each other for the gazel, and after death, they continued the vicious cycle of birth and death for a long period.

Dhanadatta, the elder son of Nayadatta was so shattered by his brother's death, that he lost faith in his dharma and wandered through the forest like a lunatic. One night, he saw an ascetic in jungle and asked him for some food. The muni replied, "We do not store food even for the day, You too, must not eat or dine after the sunset, for, in the darkness after sunset, many micro-organisms grow tremendously all over. They cannot be seen by naked eyes. Eating after sunset leads to the first gate of the hell. When Dhanadatta heard this, he became a śrāvaka and lived a virtuous life. After his death, he was born in the first celestial world. From there, he was born at Mahāpuranagara as Padmaruci. He became a great śrāvaka.

Once, he was riding to Gokul. He came across an aged bull who was about to breathe his last. He halted and descended from his chariot and recited the Navakāra mantra in the ears of the bull. When the bull died, he was born as Prince Rṣabhadvaja. The enormous latent energy in the Namaskāra Mahāmantra

made this feasible. Once, he reached the place where he lived in his previous birth and remembered his past birth vividly. He erected a gigantic Jina temple there. One of the temple walls depicted a dying bull and a young man murmuring something in his ears. He ordered the sentinels, "Anyone who can interpret the enigma behind this strange scene should be brought to me at once."

Once, Padmaruci reached in the vicinity of the Jina temple. When he noticed the strange picture, he said, "This is me, and I know what is the picture about." The sentinel took him to Prince Rṣabhadvaja. The prince asked him "How could you solve the mystery of the enigmatic scene?" Padmaruci answered, "I can, for I myself recited the Namaskāra Mahāmantra in the ears of a dying bull." The prince said, "I was that dying bull. I have acquired the loftiest status because of this mantra. Had it not been for you, I would have still been an animal of somekind. You are my mentor, my master and my lord. Pray, take my empire, be a ruler and let me be your slave."

Padmaruci and Rṣabhadvaja lived a very virtuous life as śrāvaka and when they died, they were elevated to the Lāsāna - second devlok and became very mighty dieties. From there, Padmaruci's soul was born as Prince Nayanānanda at Nandāvarta nagara. He lived a virtuous life and after his demise went in the fourth celestial world called Mahendra; From there, he was born at Purvavideha as Prince Śrīcandra. In this life, he renounced the world and accepted an ascetic life. Muni Samādhigupta initiated him into the fold of ascetism. After his death, he was elevated in the fifth celestial world known as Brahmadevaloka as Indra and from there, he was born as a very mighty ruler Rāma. The soul of Rṣabhadvaja was born as Sūgrīva, during the times of Rāma.

The soul of Śrīkānta, after transmigrating through many cycles of births and deaths, was born as King Śambhu of Mṛṇālakandanagara. His enemy Vasudatta too travelled through innumerable lives and was born in the family of the royal priest of Mṛṇālakandanagara as Śrībhūti. Guṇavati, whose love created a rift between Śrīkānta and Vasubhūti, was born as Vegavati the daughter of Śrībhūti. After one rebirth, she was born as Sītā.

For the other lives of Sītā refer appendix-2



Why was Sītā criticized ?

Once, Sudarśana muni was performing penance by meditating in a standing posture called Kāyotsarga. Thousands of people would gather to pay obeisance to him. Once, Vegavatī jokingly told the people that she had seen the sadhu in the company of a woman. She further said that the muni was not as great as the people thought him to be. She rebuked the people for their blind faith in a debaucher, masquerading as a muni. The people believed her and began to criticize the muni, but the muni never spoke an angry word either to Vegavatī or to the people, for he had developed Samatābhāva i.e. tolerance.

Yet, he decided that he would not end his Kāyotsarga as long as he would absolve from this crime, which he had not committed. A diety, who was devoted to the great Sudarśana muni, turned Vegavatī's face black. Her father Śrībhūti realised the grave mistake which his daughter had committed and he reprimanded her in very harsh words. The terrified Vegavatī declared in front of a congregation that the muni's conduct was above any reproach. She further said that she made these false and baseless allegations only to observe the patience of the muni and finally begged for pardon. She then became a Śrāvīkā, laywoman of a very high spiritual stature, and was elevated to a fifth celestial world after her death. When she was born as Sītā, she was blamed by the people of Ayodhyā because she didn't confess in her previous life for committing the sin of blaming the muni.

Why did Sītā become the cause of Rāvaṇa's death?

King Śambhu (Rāvaṇa), enticed by the beauty of Vegavatī (Sītā), made a formal proposal to her father Śrībhūti (Lakṣmaṇa). He refused it because the king was not the follower of Jainism. Thus enraged, the king murdered him and raped her daughter Vegavatī. Vegavatī cursed him saying that she will be the cause of his death in future. Hence, Vegavatī, who was born as Sītā, became the cause of his death.

The soul of King Śambhu transmigrated and was born as Prabhāsa brahmin. He was initiated into Dīkṣā by Vijayasena muni. Once, the ascetic Prabhāsa muni noticed a king of vidhyadhars named Kanakadhvaja, flying with his entire retinue towards the Sammeta śikharaji for a pilgrimage. His granduer

made him resemble Indra, the emperor of dieties. Prabhāsamuni, influenced by the granduer of Kanakadhvaja, wished to possess his granduer by the power of his penance. After death, he was reborn as a diety in the third celestial world and from there, he was born as Prativāsudeva Rāvaṇa. He was the ruler of three divisions of Bharata. Due to his ill deeds, he went to the fourth hell after his death. The brahmin Yagyavalkya, who was the friend of Vasudatta and Dhanadatta, transmigrated through many lives and was born as Bibhīṣaṇa.

How did Śrībhūti become Lakṣmaṇa?

Śrībhūti, who was murdered by his master, King Śambhu, was elevated to the celestial world. From there, he was born as Punarvasu, a vidyādhara at the Supraṭiṣṭhitapura. Once, overcome by his carnal desires, he abducted Princess Anaṅgasundarī, the daughter of Cakravartī Tribhuvanānanda of Puṇḍarikavijaya nagara. The king sent his vidyādharas to catch him. Punarvasu was badly wounded, while fighting with the vidyādharas. Anaṅgasundarī fell off from the aircraft. Fortunately, she fell on the thick cluster of creepers and was saved. Punarvasu desired to have Anaṅgasundarī for himself, but his desire remained unfulfilled. Then, he became an ascetic, but heart in heart, he wanted Anaṅgasundarī to be his life partner in return of the virtue that he would acquire as an ascetic. After he completed his tenure on the earth as an ascetic, he was elevated in the celestial world, from there, he was born as Lakṣmaṇa.

Anaṅgasundarī made the forest her new abode and practiced austere penance. Finally, she stopped consuming food. She became very frail. One day, a python swallowed her. She was elevated to the celestial world called Līlāna devaloka as a goddess. She was then born on the earth as Princess Viśalyā. The virtue, that she had acquired by her penance in her pre-birth as Anaṅgasundarī, was still intact, therefore she neutralized the power of Amoghviṇaya vidyā.

The lines of karmas are strange. Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, in their pre-births, were father and daughter.



ter. King Śambhu (Rāvaṇa) killed Śrībhūti (Lakṣmaṇa). As a revenge, Rāvaṇa was killed by Lakṣmaṇa.

Summary :- The soul of Dhanadatta, transmigrated through the births of Padmaruci, Śricandra etc and

was finally reborn as Rāma. Padmaruci recited the Navakāra mantra for the spiritual upliftment of the dying bull. The bull was born as Sūgrīva and joined Rāma. Dhanadatta and Yāgyavalkya were friends and their friendship remained intact even when Dhanadatta was born as Rāma.

Table

Sūgrīva	Rāma	Lakṣmaṇa	Sītā	Rāvaṇa	Bibhiṣaṇa	Viśalyā
	Dhanadatta (Brother)	Vasudatta (Brother)	Guṇavati	Śrikānta (Foe)	Yāgyavalkya (Friend)	
	1st Heaven	Deer	Gazel	Deer	Many births	
Bull	Padmaruci	Many births	Many births	Many births		
Rṣabhadvaja						
2nd Heaven	2nd Heaven					
Many births	Nayanānanda					
	4th Heaven					
	Śricandra					
	5th Heaven	Śrībhūti (Father)	Vegavati (daughter)	Śambhu (Foe)		
		Heaven	5th Heaven	Many births		Anaṅgasundarī
		Punarvasu		Prabhāsa		2nd Heaven
		Heaven		3rd Heaven		
Sūgrīva	Rāma	Lakṣmaṇa	Sītā	Rāvaṇa	Bibhiṣaṇa	Viśalyā

Appendix-9 The past births of Lava-Kuśa

A Brahmin named Vāmadeva at Kākandī Nagarī had two sons, Vasunanda and Sunanda. Once, both of them served a worthy ascetic, who was observing a fast of one month known as Māsakṣamaṇa in the Jain texts. Because of this act of virtue, they were born as yugalika men in Uttarakuru. From there, they were elevated to the celestial world called Soudharma. Then, they were born at Kākandī nagarī as Prince Priyaṅkara and Prince Śubhaṅkara of the King Rativardhana and Queen Sudarśanā. They ruled their subjects, for a long time and finally renounced the world and became ascetics. Then, they were elevated to

graiveyaka devaloka. Finally, they were born as Lava and Kuśa. Queen Sudarśanā, their mother in a previous birth, was born as their teacher Siddhaputra.

Table

Lava	Kuśa	Siddhaputra
Vasunanda (Brother)	Sunanda (Brother)	
Yugalika	Yugalika	
1st heaven	1st heaven	
Priyaṅkara (Son)	Śubhaṅkara (Son)	Sudarśanā (Mother)
Graiveyaka	Graiveyaka	Many births
Lava	Kuśa	Siddhaputra

WE ARE THANKFUL TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS EDITION
SHRI K. P. SANGHVI CHARITABLE TRUST

Shri Pavapuri Tirth
IN ONE VIEW.....

The magnificent Pavapuri Tirthdham spread over 500 Bighas (87,12,000 sq. ft.), shaped and constructed by Jain Swethamber Murtipujak Tapagach, Visha Oswal "Sanghvi Punamchandji Dhanaji Bafna K. P. Sanghvi Family" residents of Malgaon, Sirohi, Rajasthan, is well known for its beautification & glory. The presence of the temple of Lord Shankeshwar Parshwanath, on this piece of land, adds to its grace & glory.

Along with a Dharamshala & Bhakti Bhavan, this Tirthdham takes care of more than 5300 cows by not only providing shelter but also cattle fodder, green grass, water, veterinary treatments etc. With this, it appears that belief of "Ishavasyam Idam Sarvam" (in Sanskrit) is disembark? God is omnipresent. This holy land is blessed by the visits of Lord Mahavira and temple of Lord Shankeshwara in its centre. Tapovan's beauty is added by 20000 roomy trees. For devotees, a plan for 500 sandalwood trees is proposed. It is an ocean of Jivdaya and seven kshetras of Jainism. This garden is flowered

with flowers of Devotion, Donation, Courage and Service. It is a new Kalpvruksha "Shri Pavapuri Tirthdham Jivmaitri Dham" on this great land (marudhara).

There is a remembrance temple (Guru mandir) in the memory of Shri Pavapuri Tirthdham's Inspirator Pratisthapak, Kalikal's Kalpataru, Adhyatmayogi Acharya Bhagwant Shrimad Vijay **KALAPURNASURISHWARJI** Maharaj. To commemorate the 2600th anniversary of Lord Mahavira, the construction of Pavapuri Jal mandir and Lord Mahavira's Deshna in form of Samvasran Temple was commenced. There are events depicted on Lord Mahavira's twenty seven births(Bhav), 24 Tirthankar's Kaivalya tree and Charan Padhuka, Tirthdhiraj Shri Shatrunjaya Giriraj's creation alongwith Shri Shatrunjaya dam etc. The holiness of this land is irrigated by the penance and meditation of 5000 attham fast's devotees, thousands devotees of Oli and Chaturmas (4 months) etc. The glory of this holiest place is added by the visits of thousands of priests.

**SHRI PAVAPURI TIRTHDHAM TRUST MANDAL &
K. P. SANGHVI CHARITABLE TRUST**

MUMBAI - SURAT - MALGAON



Jai...
Jai...
Jai...

Shri Pavapuri Tirthdham
Jivmaitri Dham



.....THANKS TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS EDITION.....

(2) Amritalāl Gulābachandajī & Riteshkumār Amritalālji

Takhatgarh (Rajasthan)



**Shrimati Fancyben
Mānekchandji Ramanī**
(Wife)



**(3)
Mānekacandajī
Kapūrachandajī Ramanī**
Khivāndi (Rajasthan)



**Sushri Veena kumari
Mānekchandji Ramanī**
(Daughter)

PATRONS

- 1) Saṅghavī Bābulālaji Acālāji - Sheoganj
- 2) By the inspiration of sādhvī Pūṇitārekḥāśrījī
Bābulālaji Ratanchandji - Takhatgarh
- 3) By the inspiration of
Muni Shree Munisharatna Vijayji M. S.
Saṅghavī Saremalaji Bherāji - Beḍā
- 4) Bharatabhai
- 5) A Layman - Davangere
- 6) By the inspiration of sādhvī Mokṣeśarekḥāśrījī
Sha Ratanchandji Pratapji
- 7) By the inspiration of sādhvī Prīṇeśarekḥāśrījī
Sankaliben Kundanamalajī Saṅghavī - Pādarālī
- 8) Sha Lalitkumarji Bhuramalji Sadariya - Pindwara
- 9) By the inspiration of Muni Matiratna Vijayji M. S.
Vimalchandji Ghevarchandji Jain - Isali - Mumbai

CO-PATRONS

- 1) Dīptibena Girīśabhāi - Bhavnagar
- 2) By the inspiration of sādhvī Kiraṇarekḥāśrījī
Sha Anandkumarji Mithalalji - Bijapur Karnataka
- 3) In the remembrance of the initiation
of Jayeshbhai and Darshanaben.
Sha Uttamchand Hathichand & family
Borivali, Mumbai.
- 4) Sāgaramalajī Vīrabhāṇajī - Beḍā
- 5) Pukharājajī Kapuracandajī - Beḍā
- 6) By the inspiration of sādhvī Nimeśarekḥāśrījī
Sha Jugarajji Otarmalji Revatada
- 7) By the inspiration of Panyas Raviratnavijayji M.S.
Velangari Siddhagiri Navanu Yatra
General Fund by Saṅghvi Shantilalji Roopaji
- 8) Sha Champalalji Rikhabchandji - Chandarai
- 9) Sha Pukharajajī Pratapaji - Takhatgarh
- 10) Sha Hansarajji Kalalji - Puran
- 11) Pravinbhai Chimanlal Sheth - Vav
- 12) Sha Bhurmalji Megaji
- 13) Sha Babulalji Pratapji
- 14) By the inspiration of sādhvī Alokikrekḥāśreeji M.S.
Shrimati Manjulaben Jaysukhbhai
Thakarasi Sangvi - Bhavanagar



illustrated
Jain Rāmāyaṇa (Hin.)
released by
Reverend
Chief Minister
of Rajasthan,
Ashok Gehlot at the
CIRCUIT HOUSE,
Jaisalmer

Chief Minister
of Rajasthan,
Ashok Gehlot,
assisted by
Colonel Sonaram Gandhi,
member of
PARLIAMENT (INDIA)
& **Mahendra Bafna** of
Jain Community.



Releasing-ceremony of
illustrated
Jain Rāmāyaṇa

The Minister of
power & electricity
Kaushik Patel,
Minister
Goradhanbhai Jhapadiya,
& The President of
Anandji Kalyanji
Pedhi -
Sheth Shri Shrenikbhai,
kindled the auspicious
lamp in the
releasing ceremony of
Jain Rāmāyaṇa



Deputy P. M.
Lal Krishna Adwani
released the illustrated
Jain Rāmāyaṇa
in Guarati
at Ahmedabad,
assisted by
Sunil Singh,
Deputy Chairman
of mines



Khavagasedhi

Only after 6 years of initiation, his holiness has described the āKṣapaka Śreṇiā. It equalās 20,000 verses written in Prakṛta and Sanskr̥ta. The professor of Berlin university, Clause Broom, has also praised this script.

Tension to Peace

(Guj-Hindi) Rs. 10/-

Attain peace through various time tested techniques.



The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Cha Gau

(Hin, Guj, Eng) Rs. 30/-

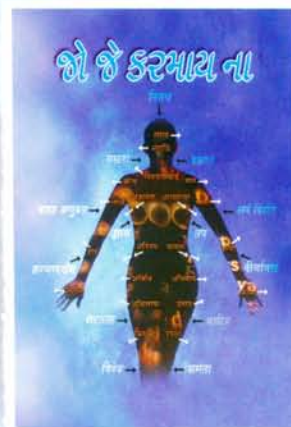
A mental pilgrimage to 6 ā gauā of the palitānā.



Bandhanakaraṇa

(Sanskṛta) Rs. 100/-

His Holiness has written a commentary on this script, which equals 15,000 verses



Jo Je Karmaye Na

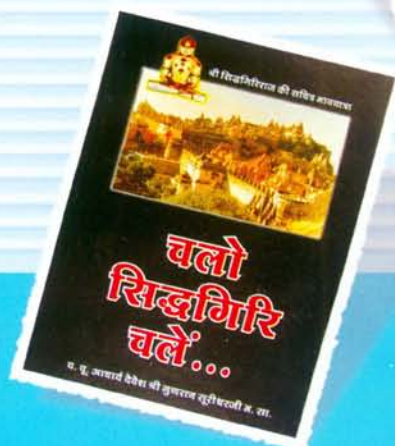
(Guj-Hindi) Rs. 20/-

A guide to confess the dreadly sins and purify the soul.

The Night Mare is over

(Guj, English) Rs. 100/-

Hanumāna's mother Añjanāsundari's heart touching tale with occassional 4 colour pictures.



A Visit to Shatrunjaya

(Guj-Hindi, Eng.) Rs. 200/-

A detailed guide to every place on the holy Śatruñjaya hill with complete history. Contains about 250 colour photographs by Theo Vogel of France.



illustrious

Bhaktāmara Stotra.

(Hindi-Guj) Rs. 30/-

Bhaktāmara Stotra with 44 colour pictures of Lord Ādinātha.



Coming Soon -

Jain Mahābhārata

90 colourful pictures on imported art paper.
For the first time in Hindi, Gujarati and English.

Upaśamanākaraṇa (Prakṛta/Sanskṛta)

Rs. 100/-

Describes Upaśamaśreṇi in
Prakṛta and Sanskṛta which equals
15,000 verses.



Cālo Anānupurvi Gaṇiye

(Hindi - Gujarati)

Rs. 40/-

Chant the Anānupurvi
with colourful pictures.



Paryuśaṇa Mahāparva Nā Pravacano Ane Saṁvatsarika Kṣamāpanā

(Guj-Hin) Rs. 10/-

8 Sermonās of the Paryuśaṇa festival.
It can also be sent to near and
dear ones for asking forgiveness.



Citramaya Tatvagyaṇa

(Hin-Guj) Rs. 40/-

14 Rajlok, 2 1/2 Island, 9 tatva etc.

17 subjects are described with
colourful pictures.



Re Karma āri Gati Nyāri

(Guj-Hindi)
Rs. 20/-
How does the
soul gain karmas
every moment
and
what are its
consequences ?



Śatruṅjayādi Cāra Mahātirtha Diśā Darśaka Yantra

Residing in any part of the world,
you can know the direction of Śatruṅjaya,
Śaṅkeshvara, Sammetśikhara or Nākodā and
pray to the lords from where you are.
An unique gift.



Chalo Apane Sācā Jain Baniye

A detailed description
of the 6 duties
of a śŚrāvakaā.



Definations of *J* terms related to *Sanskṛta* words

Acyutapati	- Lord of 12th celestial world.
Agni	- Fire
Amoghavijayā	- A mystical weapon that kills ones foe within a night.
Anārya	- Non Aryan.
Anuttara	- Topmost five celestial worlds.
Arihanta	- Supreme lord of Jains.
Aṣṭāṅga Nimitta	- Astrology.
Aṭhthama	- Continuous 3 days fast.
Avadhigyaṇa	- Clairvoyance.
Avalokinī Vidyā	- A mystical power by which one can know about the future.
Avasarpiṇī	- Age of decay in which everything goes on decreasing.
Ācārya deva	- A title recieved by the holy preacher of Jains.
Ākāśagāminī vidyā	- A mystical power by which one can fly in air.
Bahurūpiṇī vidyā	- A mystical power by which one can make innumerable postures of himself.
Baladeva	- Brother of Vāsudeva.
Cakravartī	- Sovereign king, who conquers all the 6 divisions of Bharata land.
Cāturmāsa	- 4 months of the rainy season.
Chatṭha	- Continuous 2 days fast.
Deva	- Male diety
Devaloka	- Celestial world.
Devī	- Female diety.
Dharaṇendra	- Lord of the clan of Nāgakumāra dieties.
Dharma	- (1) Religion, (2) Duties.
Dharmātmā	- Religious person.
Dikṣā	- Initiation.
Dvīpa	- Island.
Gandharva	- A kind of marriage.
Gāruḍi vidyā	- A mystical power that breaks Nāgapāśa.
Ghāti karma	- Karmas that destroys 4 main virtues, ie. complete knowledge etc., of the soul.
Gocari	- Holy practise of Jain monks by which they accept food.
Graiveyaka	- 9 celestial worlds situated above the 12 heavens.
Indra	- Lord of celestial beings.
Jineśvara	- Supreme lord of the Jains.
Karma	- Deeds or a bunch of particles achieved by a soul through his own deeds.
Kāyotsarga	- A meditation in standing posture.
Kevalagyāna	- Omniscience.
Khaṇḍa	- Part of land.
Kotiśilā	- A huge and heavy stone.
Kṣapaka śreṇī	- A spiritual procecedure of attaining Omniscience.
Kṣatriya	- A clan of warriors.
Kṣetra	- Land.
Lokāntika	- 5th Celestial world.

Mahāsati	- A women who treats all other men, besides her husband, as brothers and father.
Māgha	- Fourth month of the hindu calender, according to VikramaSāmvata.
Māsakṣamaṇa	- Continuous 30 days fast.
Mohaniya karma	- A kind of Karma that causes delusion, fascination and affection in the soul.
Mokṣa	- Ultimate salvation.
Muni	- Monk

Namaskāra Mahāmantra	
(i) Navakāra	- Holy enchant of the Jains.
Nāgapāśa	- A mystical weapon that wringles snakes around one.

Pañca Parameṣṭhi	- Five supreme authorities of the universe.
Pañcāgni sādhanā	- A penance of enduring heat from four sides burning woods and from above by the dazzling sun.
Paryāṅkāśana	- Squatting position of meditation.
Pīśāca - preta	- Ghost
Pratāriṇī Vidyā	- A mystical power that changes ones body figure.
Prativāsudeva	- Emperor of 3 parts of Bharata who is defeated by Vāsudeva in his end
Pūjā	- Worship.
Pūrvāṅga Śruta	- Spiritual knowledge of a high stage.

Rajoharaṇa	- A symbol of Jain monks used to save small organisms.
Rāga - Rāgiṇī	- Musical tones and rhythm.
Rṣabhadeva	- First Tīrthaṅkara.

Samyakdrṣṭhi	- Person who possess firm faith in Jainism.
Sādhu	- Male ascetic.
Sādhvī	- Female ascetic.
Simhanināda	- Roar of a lion.
Snātra Jala	- Auspicious water.
Śānti Snātra Mahotsava	- Holy rituals performed especially for peace.
Sudarśana Cakra	- A dish like weapon possessed by vāsudeva etc.
Svayamvara	- A marriage by self choice.
Śakti	- Power
Śantinātha	- 16th Tīrthaṅkara
Śrāvaka	- Layman of Jainism, who accepts some vow.
Śukla	- Highest stage of spiritual meditation.

Tapa	- Penance.
Tāpasa	- A cult of monk who eats only fruits and lives in forest.
Tīrthaṅkara	- Supreme Lord of Jains.

Utkatāsana	- Sitting position of meditation as of milking.
Uttarasādhaka	- Helper of a person, who tries to achieve something.

Vamśa	- Race
Vāsudeva	- King who conquers 3 out of the 6 parts of Bharata.
Vaikriya Śarirī	- A special kind of body possessed by dieties etc.
Vidyā	- A mystical power.
Vidyādhara	- A person who possess mystical powers.
Vīṇā	- Musical instruments - fiddle/lute.
Vyantarendra	- Master of dieties of Vyantara caln.

Yakṣa	- Clan of diety, residing on the earth.
Yama	- The Lord of death.
Yugalika	- A kind of human beings, born as twins, and enjoy happy life and death.

